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RESEARCH REPORT

ARTISTIC GUTS AND SOCIAL GORE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF URGENT THEATRE-MAKING WITH REFERENCE TO THE ORIGINAL MUSICAL PRODUCTION *"FREEDOM"*

by

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ABSTRACT

This research is an autobiographical case study of 'urgent theatre' with specific reference to the original musical theatre production, *Freedom*. The study attempts to map influences, approaches, artistic and creative decisions and choices, drawn from my experience as a playwright and director. The study draws from political theatre in South Africa, studies of violence and theatre, and theoretical performance perspectives using autobiography as a methodological principle. This case study will seek to define urgent theatre, its processes and practice, and its aesthetic as a form of South African theatre.

Key Words: autobiography; creative identity; political theatre; Urgent Theatre; violence



Freedom. **Photographer: Sanmari Marais**

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my grandmother, Johanna Shalati Shisana and my aunts Nelly Makhubela and Yvonne Shisana.

DECLARATION

I declare that Artistic Guts and Social Gore: An Autobiographical Study of Urgent Theatre-making with reference to the original musical production *Freedom* is my own work and all the sources that I have used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

Name: A.W Sekhabi

Signature



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Date: 04 June 2020

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction: Who am I?

My name is Aubrey Sekhabi. I am a playwright and director. I am also the Artistic Director at the South African State Theatre (SAST), an agency of the South African Department of Arts and Culture. I joined the SAST in 2002 after serving the North West Drama Company for eight and half years where I was appointed at the end of 1993, at the age of 24, as Artistic Director of the North West Arts Council (Drama Company), formerly known as the Bophuthatswana Arts Council (BOPAC).

1.2 Problem statement

A research problem is one which requires a researcher to find the best solution for a given problem, i.e., to establish how an objective can be optimally realised in the context of a given environment. There are several factors which may complicate the process. For instance, the environment may change, affecting the efficiencies of the courses of action or the values of the outcomes; the number of courses of action may be extensive/overwhelming; or persons not involved in making a decision may be affected by it and react to it favourably or unfavourably. All these elements - or at least the most important of them - may be thought of in the context within which a research problem exists (Kothari, 2004, P. 25).

I have created theatre about what happens around me. My work is raw, violent, and urgent. Despite my extensive experience and wide reading, I have been unable to identify a theoretical framework that is a perfect fit for and underpins my work and the type of product it becomes. Is it a combination, a variation, or perhaps a derivation from an existing theoretical framework? If so, how can we describe it? If not, then it must be identified, named, and contained in the bag of alternatives available to creative practitioners in their creative choices.

This research has developed a theoretical construct for what I term, 'Urgent Theatre'. I have examined Urgent Theatre using an autobiographical approach, with specific reference to the musical theatre production *Freedom* (See appendix A). I wrote, directed, and staged *Freedom* for the State Theatre in February 2018 and June 2019 as an urgent response to the #FeesMustFall student uprising. *Freedom* has served as a case study for my autobiographical examination of Urgent Theatre.

Freedom follows the story of Phindile Ndlovu, a 24 year old female student at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), and a leader of the #FeesMustFall student movement. Coming from a poor background in Umhlabauyalingana, KwaZulu Natal, Phindile depends on her superstar rapper boyfriend, Flex, for her tuition and accommodation fees. While she leads the charge for free education, she is also a victim of her abusive boyfriend and of the state.

Urgent Theatre, is a form of theatre that defines the plays I make. It is the type of theatre that responds urgently to current socio-political events. When unacceptable socio-political challenges become a daily occurrence, and those observing the occurrences are forced to the realisation that these socio-political ills are recurrent and are not going away, anxiety kicks in. With issues such as gender-based violence, murder, and rape manifesting in rapid succession in the South Africa of today, they stop being mere recurring stories and become a crisis. When this happens, I, as a story teller, must act and act immediately and with urgency. I am often consumed with the sense that if the story is not shown and told, and the gravity of its impact highlighted, we may find ourselves at the point of no return at which, to be abused by the state, to kill, to rape, and to abuse women and children become the norm - we acquiesce by silence.

This research articulates and identifies the type of work I produce. I have reflected on my influences, approach, artistic and creative decisions, and my choices. By so doing, I have constructed an informative and original account of the identity of my type of theatre.

1.3 Research aim

I have mapped the influences, approaches, artistic and creative decisions and choices that have shaped my work as a playwright, director, and artistic director. I have also examined *Freedom* as a case study of what I have come to term, Urgent Theatre. Through the case study of *Freedom*, I have clarified and demonstrated the theatre-making, directorial, and writing processes and aesthetics that inform Urgent Theatre.

1.4 Research questions

Within the above mentioned context, my research answers the following questions:

- In what ways does my biography inform what I choose to call Urgent Theatre?
- What influences my theatre-making process and creative choices?

- What can we learn from the aesthetics of and processes in the original musical production of *Freedom* with reference to Urgent Theatre?

1.5 Rationale

There are three key reasons why I conducted this study.

On 19 May 2019, I attended the funeral of a long-time schoolmate in Soshanguve. That is where most of my work is set or where my characters originate. After the funeral, we stayed for *'di after tears'* or *'wie sien ons'.* 'Di after tears' or 'wie sien ons' is colloquial township speak for gathering to socialise, reminisce, and drink alcohol after a funeral. We mingled with old friends from our youth. One of our old-time teachers, Mr Kutu, joined us and we started talking about *Freedom*, which at the time was running in the Opera at the SAST. Mr Kutu reminded me and the rest of the 'after tears' attendants, of one of my earliest plays which I wrote at the age of sixteen, *Save the People*. The shooting of a young athlete, a 100 and 200 meters sprinter called Ben, by his police-officer neighbour, nicknamed Rambo inspired that play. Mr Kutu remembered most of the detail and what I believed was an inner circle secret. In the opening scene, we killed a person who was mistaken for an 'impimpi' or police spy. Although a significant image, the main reason I decided to eliminate him was that the actor playing the character was mediocre and I wanted him on stage for the shortest time possible! Mr Kutu's remarks about this work, written some 32 years ago, brought me to the realisation that the work must have been memorable and made an impact - it had not all been in vain. As I drove home that afternoon, I could not help but think about my body of work.

I realised that in *On My Birthday*, Richard dies; in *Silent Voice*, Masah, Charlie X kills six cash-in-transit guards, and a white farmer dies; Khala dies in *Not with My Gun;* in *MARIKANA: The Musical*, the police killed all 44 miners; and in my latest offering, *Freedom*, Bonafide and Felix Abadu are killed. I spent the next couple of days pondering over my work, rediscovering the similarities, differences, my inseparable role as playwright/director, and the influences I bring to the work. In *On My Birthday*, Richard beats up his wife Lebo and rapes her; in *Not with My Gun*, Jake, King, and Brains beat up Kobus; and in *Silent Voice,* Masah is brutally tortured and shot in the head; while in *Freedom* Phindile's boyfriend beats her up and rapes her.

Firstly, I have explored the use of violence and socio-political influences in my plays and placed them within a theoretical framework to illustrate the concept of my theatre-making method.

After I wrote my first play at the age of sixteen, I practised as an independent producer for eighteen months after graduating from the University of Witwatersrand. For twenty-six years, I have practised as a professional and artistic head of provincial and national theatres. I have vast experience in the field, and yet I have not published my work - save for *Inter-racial* which I co-wrote with Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom.

Secondly, I have used the research as a compelling basis to publish my work. In my career as playwright and director I have written and directed two plays as an amateur, one as a student, and seventeen as a professional; all in all, 20 plays. I have also written and directed projects for national events, corporate events, and television. In all these years of creativity, I just kept going, never looking back to interrogate and reflect on my works or trace their artistic origins, influences, processes, choices, methods, purpose, and significance through an autobiographical lens.

Finally, I have undertaken this research to place my works in context and in the archives in order to produce knowledge and generate new opportunities for learning and emulation.

1.6 Theoretical framework

Autobiographical theories, violence and theatre, and political theatre theories underpin this research. In order for the essence of my research to be realised, which is to document my practice, in-depth critical reflection on my work will form the major part of this autobiographical submission.

Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985, p. 3 in Mezirow, 1990, p. 1) refer to reflection as a "generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experience in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations". By this definition, reflection would include making inferences, generalisations, analogies, discriminations, and evaluations, as well as feelings, remembering, and solving problems (Merizow, 1990, p. 1).

The terms 'reflective practice' and 'critical reflection' are often used interchangeably. Both involve an on-going scrutiny of practice, based on identifying the assumptions underlying it.

In Schon's thinking, reflective practice is a way of reducing the gap by unearthing the actual theory embedded in what professionals do, rather than what they say they do. In this sense reflective practice is essentially a way of improving practice (Fook, 2007, p. 440-441). This often involves examining the assumptions of everyday practice. It also tends to involve the individual practitioner in being self-aware and critically evaluating his or her responses to practical situations (Finlay, 2008, p. 1). The point is to recapture practice experiences and mull over them critically in order to gain fresh understandings and so improve future practice. This is understood as part of the process of life-long learning (Finlay, 2008, p. 1).

Critically, reflective practice is a process of inquiry involving practitioners in trying to discover and research the assumptions that frame how they work (Brookfield 1998: p. 197). Hoyrup, (2004 in Hickson, 2011, p. 381) states that critical reflection must include the social aspects of reflection, and happens when the individual is able to understand and challenge the validity of his or her assumptions. To engage in critical reflection means that we must understand our experiences in their social context and also understand how we can use this knowledge to develop our practise in the future (Hickson, 2011, p. 831).

Grace in Stephenson (2010, p. 215) states that:

> "[T]he last three decades have witnessed the rise of autobiography and biography. These genres have a long history, but it is only recently that they have become so ubiquitous. One reason for this is that "we live in a culture of me or I at a time when access to this cultural production is easy. Digital technology linked to the internet facilitates as never before both creation and publication of autobiographical works."

Reflecting on one's life is not foreign to autobiography. When I reflect on my life I rely on memory to pull the pieces of my life together. The Greek origins of the word autobiography -autos (self), bios (life), and graphein (to write) - indicate that autobiography refers to a person's written story of their own life. Autobiographies can include a birth to publication account, or a significant or defining period of time in a life (Power et al, 2011, p. 40). Abrahao (2012: p.30) states that:

> "[M]emory is a key-element of autobiographical research. It is an essential characteristic of the narrator and the component for narration. It is a component with

> which the researcher works in order to (re)construct elements of analysis that may help in understanding the object of study."

Maynes, Pierce and Laslett (2008 in Walker, 2017, p. 1896) state that autobiographical stories are more than personal narratives. Stories reflect a set of values and norms that govern a person's learning and sense of logic. General features of lives and experience can be revealed through individual accounts and life stories (Lewis-Beck, Brayman & Liao 2004, p. 45). Written autobiographies can be considered as a rich data-set of 'lives' to be explored and analysed in their own right, in terms of what they can reveal about lives, the setting, organisation, culture, event, or moments in time (Lewis-Beck et al, 2004, p. 45) Chamberlayne at al. (2000, p. 7 in Haynes, 2004, p. 402) argue that:

> "[T]o understand oneself and others, we need to understand our own histories and how we have come to be what we are. We make our own history but not under conditions of our own choosing, and we need to understand these conditions of action more if our future making of our own history is to produce outcomes closer to our intentions and projects."

Creative practices are always informed by who we are as subjects embodied in time and space, with our own cultures and histories (although it is nevertheless to be noted that some endeavours are unproblematically taken to be more universal and less personal than others) (Heddon, 2008, p. 7-8).

This research is an autobiographical case study of *Freedom* with reference to Urgent Theatre.

A case study is an intensive study of a singular unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units (Gerring, 2004, p. 342). In the review of literature on single cases v multiple cases, Gustafsson (2017, p. 2) refers to different authors when explaining a case study:

> "[I]t is not easy to describe what a case study is because there is no easy explanation (Solberg Soilen & Huber, 2006,). A case study can be defined as an intensive study about a person, a group of people or a unit, which is aimed to generalize over several units. In a case study the focus is based on a special unit (Jacobsen, 2002). Another, similar, definition is that a case study is an analysis of systems that are studied with a comprehensive view by either one or several methods (Thomas, 2011). The case study

> method is not aimed to analyse cases, but it is a good way to define cases and to explore a setting in order to understand it (Cousin, 2015)."

Yin (2003, p. 13) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident".

In choosing *Freedom* as my case study, I have provided knowledge on what I choose to call Urgent Theatre in that *Freedom*, in a way, represents a culmination of most of my work which I see as representative of what I mean by Urgent Theatre. As I focussed on the making of *Freedom*, I have reflected critically on its aesthetics, processes, and practices.

In a sense, all theatre is political. Theatre's context and referent is the world, and as McGrath observes: "There is no such thing as a de-politicized world." (2002, p. 199). Kritzer (1995-2005, p. 1) states:

> "[W]hile theatre is not the only art form with political dimensions, it offers a unique forum for the political by involving audiences in a perceptible, if ephemeral, social reality through the operation of its conventions. Evidence of the close and perhaps intrinsic relationship between politics and theatre, can be found in the long history of the government regulation of theatre in degrees and forms that have not been applied to music, visual art, or written fiction."

Kerr (2005, p. 216) agrees and points to the South African situation under apartheid:

> "[M]oreover, the new forms of communication available to Black South Africans were scrutinized fiercely by the white authorities, and every step possible was taken to use legislation to obstruct expression of black solidarity. A whole forest of laws was erected intended to smother any expressions of popular dissent. Prominent among these were: the Entertainment Act of 1931 introducing legal censorship, the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act forbidding quotations from banned authors, the Public Safety Act of 1953 forbidding any activity the Ministry of Justice deemed to subvert authority, the Group Areas Act of 1960 enforcing segregated housing and the Publication Entertainment Act of 1963 segregating white and black audiences except under special license. The State of Emergency declared in 1986 gave the authorities a whole new set

> of extra-legal powers aimed at preventing assembly of Africans for "subversive" purposes; anti-apartheid drama could be made to fit those criteria."

Kirby (1975, p.129) has a different view on all theatre being political: "Some of the people who claim that all theatre is political seem to confuse 'political', 'social', and 'economic'." Of course, all theatre exists in a certain socio-economic context. By definition, it involves an audience; it is not a solitary activity. However, this does not mean that it necessarily concerns government, or that it must take sides in politics.

In addressing violence on stage and during performance, Nevitt (2013, pp. 2-3) state that:

> "[S]imulated violence, in which the violence and its physical effects are illusory and no bodily harm is done, is connected with the reality in so many ways that it quickly becomes impossible to assign it a simple definition of not 'real'. Actual violence, when the harm is happening, as it appears to be, is such a common feature of the news that many people have developed a spectatorial distance from it. We know it is real but paradoxically its impact can be less immediate and strong, and less long lasting and troubling, than the impact of some simulated violence presented in theatres."

After reading this, I immediately went rummaging in my study for director's notes on my previous works. My memory was telling me that in an interview or director's note, I had once alluded to the reality of violence when it is unfolding before your eyes. I just could not remember which play and eventually found Steyn du Toit's review of *Silent Voice* in the *Cape Times* (20 Oct 2014).

In it, she refers to my director's note for *Silent Voice*:

> "Violence breeds Violence and we live among and some of us with violent people. Sometimes you seem unaffected by violence because you read about it and see it on the news. It is so far removed from you. It only gets real when you experience it, when it is close to you, when you know someone" (Director's Note, *Silent Voice*, 2012).

In my work, I want it real: the violence is physical, you see it, you see blood splatter, you see and hear gunshots ringing, heads banging, drownings in a sink, kicks flying. However, it is important to note that the violence is performed with outmost care. The aggressor inflicts no

pain on the victim. In fact, in all the violent scenes, the victim him or herself is the actor - the aggressor simply nudges them to act. For example, if a victim bangs his or her head against a wall, he or she are not thrown against the wall by the aggressor, instead he or she throws him or herself against the wall while the aggressor simply follows the victim's movement. Having discovered this piece of reference to my own work, Nevitt's Frick's observation as quoted above, resonated with me as a writer and creator even more strongly.

In this work, I have used autobiographical theories, critical reflection theories, political theatre theories, and violence to show how *Freedom* is an embodiment of what I choose to call Urgent Theatre.

1.7 Literature review

A literature review distils the existing literature in a subject field. The aim of a literature review is to summarise the state of the art in a specific subject field (Rowley & Slack, 2004, p. 32). From this review of earlier and recent work, it becomes possible to identify areas in which further research will be beneficial. All research needs to be informed by existing knowledge in relevant subject areas. The literature review identifies and organises the concepts in relevant literature (Rowley & Slack, 2004, p. 31). Hart (2018, p. 13) defines a literature review as the selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic, which contain information, ideas, data, and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed.

I have used three main types of literature for this research: Protest and South African Theatre during and post-apartheid; Violence and Theatre; and Political Theatre. I reviewed this literature and brought an original view of the identity of my work.

Coplan (2008, p. 265) describes African National Theatre formerly the Bantu Peoples' Theatre before being re-organised by Routh in 1939 as "South Africa's first radical, committed theatrical organisation". The presentation of Radebe's *The Rude Criminal,* a play about pass laws, is a case in point. The fifties saw a number of plays which addressed purely social issues without focusing on political content. Most of the works such as those of Teda de Moor, attempted authentically to portray "rural, migrant and urban African Culture" (Coplan, 2008,

p. 266). Tracey and Masinga's *Chief Above and Chief Below* did the same in Xhosa and Zulu (Coplan, 2008, p. 266). Even Fugard's *No-Good Friday,* addresses the individual's stance against gangsterism (Coplan, 2008, p. 267). During the fifties and the sixties, there were no plays dealing directly with the political status of the country. In 1961, the apartheid government shot and killed 69 people during a pass protest in Sharpeville, but even then, popular producers and directors like Kente "carefully avoided dramatizing the wider political issues underlying the suffering and frustrations of Urban Africans" (Coplan, 2008, p. 269).

As early as the 1980s, South African theatre began to respond with an intensity which matched that of the apartheid regime's efforts to maintain its tyranny. During the post-1976 period, theatre appeared to shift from being what could tentatively be termed a *Theatre of Anger* directly after the first violent confrontations between the police and the students, to something more akin to a *Theatre of Reflection* towards the close of the 1980s. The point is that, directly preceding and following the 1976 trauma, theatre became highly abrasive, propagandistic, and confrontational in style, with the major works of the period clearly displaying a far greater commitment to political commentary than to the aesthetic.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw fundamental change in South Africa political prisoners were freed, the banning orders on political organisations were lifted, and many repressive laws repealed.

> "It is clear that political change on such a scale will engender, indeed already is engendering change in many aspects of theatre. As the now "irreversible" move towards a hopefully democratic, non-racial, post-apartheid South African society gathers pace, the nature of the required changes will become more apparent. This will affect the themes playwrights write about, the formal aesthetics they adopt and the theories evolved about their work in like measure. Past achievements will have to be re-evaluated as new priorities are established. New forms of theatrical organisation will have to be put in place more appropriate to altered political circumstances" (Davis & Fuchs, 1996, p. 3).

In the light of political changes sweeping South Africa, Purkey (Davis & Fuchs, 1996, p. 3) asked these critical questions:

> "Can theatre continue to maintain its autonomy and to exercise its critical role? Can one rethink form and find new content? Can a concept of post-protest literature be developed? Can theatre involve itself in the process of societal transformation? How might theatre contribute to a post-apartheid society?"

After many years of protest theatre, South African theatre had to grapple with change, post-apartheid. Now that there was a new political dispensation, did this mean that politics would no longer form part of the South African theatre narrative?

If the playwright and the actor have any serious and significant function in the new South Africa, it will be to explore the forms, actual and potential, of South African social reality. This will be done, as it is in all "serious" drama everywhere, through the presentation of absorbing characters involved in actions with implications which are recognisable as more or less generally significant for that society. But it will also be done as elsewhere, not so much through the selection and treatment of specific issues and themes, but by means of something which is inherent in the medium of theatrical performance itself - the exploration and disclosure in organised theatre of the forms and structures of everyday theatricality (Crow, 2004, p. 13).

Kirby (1975: p. 129) refers to Webster in "On Political Theatre":

> "[T]heatre is political if it is concerned with the state or takes sides in politics. This allows us to define 'political theatre' in a way that distinguishes it from other kinds of theatre: it is a performance that is intentionally engaged in or consciously takes sides in politics. Although intentionality is a subjective state, there is no problem in using it as a defining factor. Communication is, of course, imperfect. An artist may not achieve all of his or her specific, subtle, and half-conscious goals, but his or her intention is not likely to be misunderstood. If a theatre piece is intended to be political and that intention is not perceived, there is no reason to categorise it as 'political theatre'. More directly stated: if a presentation does not attempt to be political, it is not political."

In South Africa, the seventies and eighties saw productions like *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* and *The Island* by Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona, Mbongeni Ngema's *Sarafina,* and Maishe Maponya's *Hungry Earth,* to mention but a few. These productions were referred to as protest theatre because their content was political. The works did not attempt to be

political, they were political. It is important also to note the violence in the work, whether structural or physical.

Violence did not stop with apartheid. The new South Africa is also plagued by violence. We see violence on our television screens; we read about it in the newspapers; we listen to it on the radio. The Marikana Massacre was shown repeatedly on our television screens. The #FEESMUSTFALL protests, which were also marred by sparks of violence, were witnessed by all on our television screens.

I agree with Nevitt (2013, p. 4), when she says violence often seems to be everywhere. It is difficult not to be constantly aware of acts of violence in the world, while a sense of threat from possible violence, large-scale or individual, is something most people have lived with from a fairly early age. Violence, as a subject, is also enormous. We cannot talk of 'violence' for any length of time without needing to apply categories, and there are many different directions from which the subject can be viewed (Nevitt, 2013, p. 4). We can classify violence as physical, verbal, psychological, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual. We can categorise it by scale: from a fight between two people to a battle in war.

Scheper-Hughes (1999, p. 10), when dealing with the anthropology of violence, refers to Bourdieu (1977) and states that:

> "[B]ourdieu finds aggression, domination, and violence in the least likely places-in the architecture of the home, in the tense exchange of gifts, in the systems of kinship classification, in all various uses of culture. Violence, Bourdeiu suggests, is everywhere in social practice. It is "misrecognised" because its familiarity renders it invisible."

In South Africa, I responded to the Marikana Massacre through a musical production titled *MARIKANA: The Musical.* The musical was based on the book *We Are Going to Kill Each Other Today* written by five journalist who were on the scene. Most people who watched the production wept and commented that the impact of seeing the violence on stage is more immersive than viewing the actual massacre on television.

In asking questions about violence on stage and screen, Levitt (2013, p. 2) concludes by saying that,

"The images of violence performed in the context of the play may have a very real effect on its audience that lingers long after both audience and actors have left the theatre. On the other hand, one of the most common responses among witnesses to the 9/11 attack on World Trade Centre in New York, was that it was like a movie." The impact of violence on stage is aptly described by Appleton's 2012 review of my production, *Silent Voice*. He wrote:

"Of all the emotions that theatre can evoke, real fear is not often one of them. Until now that is. In *Silent Voice* writer and director, Aubrey Sekhabi, has created a production that will make your heart just about stop. Set up as a South African thriller, following four gangsters making their getaway after a botched robbery, *Silent Voice* has its audience whistling in appreciation just as often as gripping the edge of their seats. Through the use of creative staging, unique and evocative devices to maintain suspense, and masterful manipulation of tempo, *Silent Voice* is already a grand feat of pure theatrical engineering. Add to this a gripping, unnerving and unpredictable plot, and it is overwhelming."

He concluded the review by saying:

"The sheer content of what is portrayed on stage is another aspect of *Silent Voice*. It does not shy away from the realities it is dealing with, does not apologise for the upsetting issues it brings to the fore. Be prepared, as a South African, to be struck dumb and, at times, utterly sickened by what is being shown - very effectively - on stage. But in *Silent Voice*, provocation is countered by moments of tenderness, shame is buffered by mirth, and morality dances with pathos in an intoxicating mix that is the true realisation of a thriller brought to life on stage. *Silent Voice* is an absolute shock to the senses. It is current and boldly appropriate in today's socio-political climate. It raises important questions about the roots of a culture of violence and disillusionment, but aside from all that, it's top class theatre and it will give you a bloody good fright" (Appleton 2012).

1.8 Research methodology

Research methodology is a way of solving a research problem systematically. It may be understood as the science of studying how research is undertaken scientifically. In it we study

the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his or her research problem, along with the logic behind them.

The research in this dissertation took the form of an autobiographical case study of *Freedom* with specific reference to Urgent Theatre.

In explaining case studies (Meyer, 2001, p. 330) cites Hartley (1994), Barton (1990), Gummesson (1988), and Thomas (1995):

> "[C]ase studies are tailor-made for exploring new processes or behaviour, or ones that are little understood (Hartley 1994). Hence, the approach is particularly useful for responding to *how* and *why* questions about a contemporary set of events (Leonard-Barton, 1990). Moreover, researchers have argued that certain types of information can be difficult or even impossible to tackle by means other than qualitative approaches such as the case study (Sykes 1990:). Gummesson (1988:76) argues that an important advantage of case-study research is the opportunity it presents for an holistic view of the process: "The detailed observations entailed in the case study method enable us to study many different aspects, examine them in relation to each other, view the process within its total environment and also use the researchers' capacity for 'verstehen'."

I have focussed on short anecdotal references to pivotal occurrences in my life that I consider influential to my life perspective and ultimately how I have depicted the occurrences in my work. They reflect utterances from acquaintances, critics, and casts. These anecdotes and short references represent a version of myself and the environment I grew up in. I have not made anything up. Stanley (1992, p. 242) suggests autobiography shows that the 'self' is a fabrication, not necessarily a lie, but certainly a highly complex truth: a fictive truth reliant on cultural conventions concerning what a life consists of and how its story can be told. Ngwenya (1996, p. 5) writes that it is important to remember that when written autobiographers write their stories, they are essentially interpreting their past lives and offering 'readings' of their past selves which will reflect deliberate distortions, omissions, and emphasise certain facts and events. This retrospective creative process is guided by the principle of selectivity, based on the writer's purpose with his or her story and his or her circumstances at the time of writing.

Barthes (1975) cited in Stanley (1993, p. 48) and referred to in Haynes (2006, p. 414) distinguishes between the 'self who writes', the 'self who was', and the 'self who is'. For the

‘self who is’ time moves on outside the autobiographical text, so the ‘self who writes’ becomes a part of the ‘self who was’ - a part of the past and its multiple memories and understandings that form the ‘self who is’. Moreover, the ‘self who was’ is a reconstruction by the ‘self who writes’, in a new project, of the ‘self who is’. In such a way, my autobiographical accounts express my experiences and values as a narrator, while I am also constructing, formulating, and re-making those experiences and values. Autobiography, therefore, constitutes an active and reflexive form of inquiry into identity and the self (Haynes, 2006, p. 414-415).

1.9 Research design

Research design can be considered as the structure of research, it is the “glue” that holds all of the elements in a research project together; in short it is a plan of the proposed research work (Akhtar, 2016, p. 68).

As this study is autobiographical and focuses on case study, I have used a qualitative research approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 3) characterise the interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry by explaining that:

> “[Q]ualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible ... They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. ... This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.”

McMillan and Schumacher in Astalin (2013, p. 118) agree and further define qualitative research as, “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories.” This definition implies that data and meaning emerge “organically” from the research context qualitative research worked out under a combination of observations, interviews, and document reviews. It reflects the importance of looking at variables in their natural setting. In the process of qualitative research interaction between variables is important (Astalin, 2013, p. 118).

True to its design, Gay, Mills, and Airasian's (2009) connection between research and researcher in autobiographical research, positions the researcher as the instrument of research and the sole participant (Walker, 2017, p. 1900).

1.10 Data collection

There are a variety of methods of data collection in qualitative research, including observations, textual or visual analysis (e.g. from books or videos), and interviews (individual or group) (Gill et al, 2008, p. 291). I have collected data from the text of *Freedom*, my life narratives, essays, books, scholars' accounts of my work, and from press reviews. This is analysed in the context of political and social violence which I regard as the building blocks of Urgent Theatre.

1.11 Referencing technique

I have acknowledged all my sources using the Harvard referencing method. I have also provided the biographical information of all data and sources used.

1.12 Ethics

My research has not involved the voices of other people. It is a case study of my own original musical production of *Freedom*, a musical production that has been staged in both 2018 and 2019. I therefore relied on my own voice for this study, and I have drawn on published reviews and interviews about the completed work. This notwithstanding, I observed ethical considerations while conducting the research. David and Resnik (2011, p. 2) state that:

> "[T]here are several reasons why it is important to adhere to ethical norms in research. First, norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error. For example, prohibition against fabricating, falsifying, or misrepresenting research data promote the truth and avoid error. Secondly, since research often involves a great deal of cooperation and coordination among many different people in different disciplines and institutions, ethical standards promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect and fairness."

If there is new interest in the ethics of life writing today, however, it is not so much a function of its goods as a function of its perceived abuses and transgressions (Eakin, 2004, p. 7). The autobiographer might embellish and/or, omit certain facts in order to enrich his or her story.

Ethics thus becomes necessary to protect other people who have interacted with the autobiographer from any harm.

In the preface of his book, *Ethics and Life Writing*, Couser (2004) asks some valid questions regarding life writing: "Where does the right to express and represent oneself begin to infringe on another's right to privacy? How shall the desires of the self be weighed against the demands of the other, concern for aesthetics with concerns for ethics?" Because we live our lives in relation to others, our privacies are largely shared, making it difficult to demarcate the boundary where one life leaves off and another begins (Eakin, 2004, p. 8). This is so true of theatre which is a communal engagement. I therefore sought consent from my creative team and the two lead actors in the production. I have further protected the identities of other performers whose true stories have been told in my productions. I treat their stories with the outmost respect, truth, and dignity.

I took into consideration the volatile and traumatic nature of the subjects addressed in my productions; the heightened violence; and the aesthetic I engage. Given that the nature of my work is violent and visceral, I am aware of the ethical questions that arise. I addressed these theatre-making, directorial, and aesthetic choices in the research. I have given careful thought to the ethics of the safety of the performer, and shown how I 'de-role' the performers to address the trauma and psychological effects which they might suffer through the violent nature of the work.

1.13 Limitations of the study

A criticism levelled at particular forms of autobiographical social research is their potential for romanticising the self or of self-indulgence. Although distinctions can be made between social research and autobiographical practice, their intertextuality should also be recognised. The self is inexplicably linked to the processes of social research. This should be recognised and understood. As Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009, p. 114) put it: "True to its design, and connection between research and researcher, autobiographical research positions the researcher as the instrument of research and the sole participant."

The criticism of autobiography as a limitation aside, there has been very little written about my work. The study will rely on memory and recollection for data collection. I am also aware of

ethical behaviour in the construction of this research. According to McMillan and Schumer (2014) ethics generally concerns beliefs about what is right or wrong from moral perspectives. I have not made anything up. Ngwenya (1996, p. 5) writes that:

> "[I]t is important to remember that when autobiographers write their stories, they are essentially interpreting their past lives and offering 'readings' of their past selves which will reflect deliberate distortions, omissions and emphases of certain facts and events. This retrospective creative process is guided by the principle of selectivity based on the writer's purpose of his/her story and his/her circumstances at the time of writing."

1.14 Chapter outline

Chapter One: "Overview of The Study", focuses on the background, aims, rationale, theoretical framework, literature review, ethics, and research methodologies.

Chapter Two: "Literature Review," explores literature on political theatre and violence in South Africa and more specifically in theatre. I address Urgent Theatre as theatre of the politics of the day and of violence, both political and social. I review political theatre during apartheid, and focus briefly on theatre during the first decade of democracy whilst I examine socio-political violence in post-apartheid South Africa and set the foundation for the next chapter where I propose Urgent Theatre.

Chapter Three: "Towards Urgent Theatre," I revisit my works, in particular, *Marikana: The Musical, Kwanele, Silent Voice,* and *Nkonyeni High,* which I have come to realise have, in the main, been a response to the politics of the day and to violence. This realisation has pushed me to term the theatre that I do Urgent Theatre. I show that that the processes, the practice, and the aesthetics of the work I create are born of current situations and require immediate action. In this chapter I argue for Urgent Theatre as a form of theatre in South Africa, citing my works both pre- and post the musical production of *Freedom* which I believe is the embodiment of the works I have made happen.

Chapter Four: "The Making of *Freedom*," is the case study of the making of the original musical production of *Freedom*. When remounting *Freedom* in 2019, I wrote in my director's and playwright's notes that:

> "I am excited to be working on *Freedom* again. *Freedom* comes full circle because it borrows so much from my previous works. In it you will find echoes of *Nkonyeni High*, *On My Birthday*, *Silent Voice*, and *MARIKANA: The Musical*. Artistically it is the culmination of everything that I have done. It touches on abuse, a strong element in *On My Birthday;* on police brutality which you find in *MARIKANA: The Musical* and *Mantolo: The Tenth Step*; on violence in *Nkonyeni High* which dealt with violence in schools, and in *Silent Voice* which addressed violence and crime. All these themes are interwoven into this one musical called *Freedom*. I wanted to take all these themes and put them in a production without the audiences experiencing the work as 'all over the place'"

In this chapter I map the influences, approaches, artistic and creative decisions, and choices and ethical considerations of the making of *Freedom*. I focus on *Freedom* from the time the idea was conceived, to the creation of the music, the script writing, design briefings, casting, characters, choreography, rehearsals, and finally the performance.

Chapter Five: "Critical Reflections," reflects critically on *Freedom*. It explores artistic and creative decisions; how I arrived at certain of these decisions and choices to meet the ideas and concepts of Urgent Theatre reflected by *Freedom*. I map out the influences, approaches, artistic and creative decisions and choices and find meaning in its processes and aesthetics, and regularly identify and explore my own thoughts, feelings, and experiences. I then come to a decision as to how they fit in with the ideas, concepts, and theories of which| I am already aware, and open up to others what I have been discussing and sharing.

Chapter Six: "Dialogue with Urgent Theatre," shows how *Freedom* is an embodiment of Urgent Theatre through its politics and violence - both purely political and social.

Chapter Seven: This chapter will conclude my study and make recommendations.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there is an integrated balance with the critical reflection shaped by autobiographical study, and the case study of *Freedom* that required me to examine all aspects

of this production. I have created an all-round perspective of the work that I do. By doing so, I have made clear what I mean by the term, ‘Urgent Theatre’.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Political theatre comes from a long way back in time. Sophocles' *Antigone* can bear testimony to that. Sophocles' *Antigone* questions prevailing ideas on authority and civil obedience, not to mention gender, with a female protagonist who goes against the edict of the king to do what she believes is right (Fergusson, 1974, p. 44-46). Theatre is considered political if it presents or constructs a political issue or comments on what is already perceived as a political issue. Defined in this way, political theatre initiates a dialogue with the audience about politics within a national or cultural system shared by both the creators of the theatre production and the audience (Kritzer in Ogunc, 2019, p. 173). Patterson (2003, p. 3) defines political theatre as a form of theatre that not only depicts social interaction and political events, but implies the possibility of radical change along socialist lines: the removal of injustice and autocracy and their replacement by the fairer distribution of wealth and more democratic systems. In relation to political theatre in South Africa, Kavanagh (2016, p. 213) asserts that:

> "In a sense any play that depicted with any realism what was happening in apartheid South Africa could be called political. Apartheid was a political condition. The social issues that emerge from the plots of the earlier plays all have political connotations. They are in the main a direct product of apartheid-created social upheaval, segregation and discrimination. But for a play to be classified as a political play, I believe it needs to be more than this. It needs either to portray political events or its contents must express explicitly political ideas and/or meanings or it should be intended to bring about a political outcome."

Political theatre in South Africa happened under the apartheid regime. The birth of apartheid came with laws that were aimed at suppressing any form of resistance by the majority of South Africans. According to Welsh (2009, p. 52), in the 46 years of National Party (NP) rule (1948-1994) apartheid went through three overlapping and closely delimited phases: (1) from 1948 to 1959 it focused on entrenching NP power and extending discrimination; (2) from 1959 to 1966, a supposedly more 'positive' phase termed 'separate development', was introduced in the hope of convincing an increasingly hostile world that grooming 'homelands' (Bantustans) for self-government was analogous to the decolonisation process occurring elsewhere in

Africa; and (3) from 1966 onwards, when apartheid began to erode at an ever-increasing pace and the previous relative solidarity of Afrikaner nationalism started to break down.

I came into the theatre scene in the mid-eighties, when the cracks in apartheid were clearly visible. This was the time when theatre practitioners in South Africa were confronting the apartheid government with their radical and militant productions. The eighties were a turbulent time filled with mass and school boycotts, stay-aways and consumer boycotts, police brutality, detentions without trial, police violence, and the state of emergency. I witnessed theatre that addressed these issues confronting the majority of South Africans. But, political theatre in South Africa did not start in the 80s. The 70s, inspired by black consciousness, laid the foundation for theatre that explicitly challenged the apartheid regime - challenges that resulted in the banning of theatre companies, scripts, and practitioners.

This chapter reviews the role of theatre in the South African political landscape during NP rule and the first decade of democracy. I focus on notable works produced from the 1950s to 2004 and review their contribution whilst examining post-apartheid social violence.

The chapter further reviews political literature on the role of theatre in the socio-political landscape of South Africa during 46 years of NP rule (1948-1994) and the first decade of democracy and will attempt to map a historical trajectory of theatre in South Africa that responded to the socio-political and economic conditions of the time.

2.2 Apartheid Rising

Most people are familiar with the meaning of apartheid, whether through television images, newspaper reports, or general reading - they have at least some understanding of this unique system of racial discrimination and the economic exploitation which it embodied. Apartheid is conventionally regarded as having been introduced following the electoral victory of the Nationalist Party under Dr Malan in 1948. Although there are segregation policies before 1948, it true that under the new NP government, "there were shifts of emphasis and changes of approach in the whole sphere of 'native policy' (Maylam, 1990, p. 69).

In significant respects, the linchpin of the apartheid system was the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950 which, in principle, sought to classify every South African according to 'race'

(Welsh, 2009, p. 54). The Group Areas Act was passed in 1950 and made it a criminal offence for people of colour to own or occupy property in areas set aside for exclusive 'European' (meaning white) residence (James, 1992, p. 41). According to Welsh (2009, p. 57) two laws enacted in the first phase of apartheid deserve mention. First, the Bantu Building Workers Act of 1951 permitted Africans to perform skilled building work in the African townships (at lower wages than their white counterparts), but prohibited them from doing so outside of their African areas, Second, and more far-reaching in its scope, was the introduction of 'job reservation' in terms of an amendment to the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956. This empowered the Minister of Labour to reserve particular categories of work for specific racial categories.

In 1952, the then Prime Minister, Verwoerd, tightened up the existing pass law system drastically. This horrendous act was relaxed only to allow blacks to stay in the city for three days. If they were to remain in the city for longer than three days, blacks had to satisfy the following conditions: (1) they had to have lived in the urban area continuously since birth; or (2) must have worked continuously for one employer in the urban area for a period of not less than ten years, or have lawfully resided continuously in the area for a period of not less than fifteen years or (3), had to be the wife, unmarried daughter, or son under the age of eighteen of any black mentioned in (1) or (2) or (4), in the case of any black not fulfilling the first three conditions, must have been granted permission to remain in the urban area by the officer appointed to manage the labour bureau (Ogura, 1996, p. 412).

2.3 Theatre during the first decade of apartheid

While drama in African languages was relegated to the mission-run school system, Europhone drama, written in English, continued to occupy and consolidate its hegemonic position in the urban centres of South Africa such as Johannesburg, and in the university system (Seda & Sirayi, 2015, p. 2006). Coplan (2008, p. 265) notes:

> "Within the urban community, the schools continued to provide performance training. Comic sketches, scenes from English plays, and dramatized African folktales were featured at school concerts and area festivals. Khabi Mngoma and Ezekiel Mphahlele's efforts to catch the attention of the general African public with this kind of material met with little success. By the time police harassment forced their syndicate of African

> Artist to disband in 1956 there was no black-run theatrical organisation left in Johannesburg."

The silencing of the African was administered and monitored through laws which restricted peoples' movements and actions. Anyone not obeying the laws could be arrested and or banned, and their works impounded and banned. The 1950s saw the genesis of collaborative works between black and white artists. Among plays produced during this period is Athol Fugard's *No-Good Friday.* Fugard arrived in Sophiatown, Johannesburg, in 1958. There he became associated with a group of black artists which included Lewis Nkosi, Bloke Modisane, and saxophonist-actor Zakes Mokae. Together on 30 August 1958, they performed what was essentially Fugard's full length play - *No-Good Friday* - at the Bantu Men's Social Centre with Fugard directing and Sheila Fugard serving as manager of their African Theatre Workshop Company (Wertheim, 2000, p. 2). Although I have worked predominantly with black amateur or professional actors, my work has been imprinted by the legacy of creative collaborations between artists. A trait that I largely attribute to Fugard's rebellion against laws of segregation and separate development. Although Fugard experimented his ideas with the actors and then went off to translate them into a script, I on the other hand, write short scenes and then test their practical application with the actors and then go back to develop the text further.

The play was produced during a "period in which the racist divisions of society was being ever more ruthless" (Walder, 1993, p. ix). *No-Good Friday* was inspired by the lives of black people in Sophiatown and created in "increasingly close partnership with black amateur actors - there's only one white role, and that is a small one, in the first play." (Walder, 1993, p. 412). To produce a play with a racially mixed cast was a daring move in 1958; and when *No-Good Friday* had a one-night performance in Johannesburg's Brooke Theatre, a white audience venue, Lewis Nkosi played the role of Father Higgins, which Fugard had until then had played (Wertheim, 2000, p. 2). This was due to the segregation laws which were in place. Beginning in 1964, the separate amenities and community development provisions of the Group Areas legislation outlawed multiracial performances and companies required permits to perform in or attend shows in white areas and for whites to do the same in the townships (Coplan, 2016, p. 270). This created serious barriers of interaction and cooperation between black and white.

The collaboration between Fugard and black actors gave both parties, the director /author and the actors, a stage on which to learn from one another. A coalescence of cultures and backgrounds may be seen to imbue workshop theatre with a peculiar richness. Its hybrid nature, its combination of a range of techniques and traditions, and its harnessing of the multiple voices which comprise our society, may pave the way for the emergence of an inclusive national culture (Holloway, 1993, p. 2). This was totally against the apartheid wishes and purpose. According to Crow in Davis and Fuchs (1996, p. 14):

> "One of the effects, as well as the purposes of the apartheid system was to prevent the full realization of that reciprocal recognition which is the basis of civilized society, and through which every individual acquires the sense of identity and self-worth that Fanon called 'the certainty of oneself'. By its very nature that system denied, in the name of 'separate development', the common humanity which must be the basis of open-ended potential for expressiveness."

The story of *No-Good Friday* centres on Willy, who is about to receive his BA degree through correspondence, but realises that it has all been a pipe dream - his BA degree is not going to help him to change the situation he finds himself in, in Sophiatown, a place ruled by gangsters. Shark, a gang boss, extorts a protection fee from residents every Friday. Matters get out of hand when Tobias, a country boy, is brought by Father Higgins to stay with Willy so that he can work in Johannesburg. One Friday night, Shark arrives to collect his money and Tobias naively refuses to pay the protection fee - he doesn't understand why he should pay it. Shark orders one of his gang members, Harry, to kill Tobias. Harry obliges and kills Tobias in front of all those gathered. No one stands up for Tobias. Willie is dumbstruck and he stands on stage bearing tacit witness to Tobias's murder, acquiescing in it by his silence.

It was during my first year at Wits that I performed in *No-Good Friday*. There were only six students in our first year class, and I remember most of us wanting to play Shark, the gangster. This is what the paly meant to us; it was a gangster play. The gangster roles were glamorised and sensationalised. *No-Good Friday* dealt with an individual's stand against the gangsterism and extortion practised in the locations (Coplan, 2008, p. 267). This premise meant that *No-Good Friday* was dismissed as playing no role in the struggle against apartheid. It was rather seen as a play that showed the 'bad side' of the black people. *No-Good Friday* is a play bedevilled by a problem that has haunted the reception of Fugard's work throughout his career

(Wertheim 2000, p. 2). Mda in Banham et al (1992, p. 2) has the same attitude towards Fugard's work:

> "The oppressed suffer in silence, and are not involved in any struggle against oppression. Instead they are involved in a struggle to accommodate oppression and survive it, not confront it. They are endowed with endless reservoirs of stoic endurance. The spirit of defiance that exists in the South Africa that we all know is non-existent in these works. The oppressed let oppression happen to them, and all they do is moan and complain about it, and devise ways to live with it."

When I performed in *No-Good Friday*, I was coming from an environment where theatre was a cultural weapon, and in *No-Good Friday* I found nothing that was mobilising the masses to act against apartheid. *No-Good Friday* avoided larger political, economic, and racial issues, but it authentically reflected black urban experience (Coplan, 2008, p. 267) In Fugard's defence, Wertheim (2000, p. 2-3) asserts that:

> "When recent literary theorists complain that Fugard's plays like *No-Good Friday*, have not been radical enough, they fail to acknowledge that an artist may be forced to sacrifice political correctness for larger political ends. Had Fugard's plays been acerbic as these theorists would have them, they would likely not have been produced or made effective appeal to their audiences. White writers like Fugard and novelist Allan Paton are nowadays rejected for their moderation by post-apartheid critics, but one must remember that it was their moderation that drew world attention to the outrages of apartheid."
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> .

Despite all its shortcomings, the success of No-*Good Friday* attracted the support of the Union of South African Artists (USAA), and convinced Bernard, author Harry Bloom, and others that the staging of a major black production, *King Kong*, was artistically feasible.

King Kong by Todd Mtshikiza, Pat Williams, and Harry Bloom tells the story of a black South African heavyweight boxer and his life which degenerated into drunkenness, gang violence, murder, and eventually suicide (Van Heerden, 2003, p. 142). Furthermore, Van Heerden (ibid) states that in *King Kong,* "social comment on the conditions under which many black South

Africans lived in apartheid South Africa was clear". Kerr (1995, p. 216) has a different view, stating that, "the story projected an unfavourable image of African urban life".

Although the production was well received in South Africa and regarded as one of the productions that showed the possibilities of black and white working together, this narrative which was widely appreciated by local press, was dismissed when the play went on tour to London. One London *Daily Mail* critic who enjoyed the show, scathingly wrote:

> "[O]ne's enthusiasm might be more unbounded had not the entire show been so over-exuberantly oversold in advance—particularly by the Establishment. One now realises why our betters could afford to oversell it. Politically, *King Kong* is about as dynamic as a bag of laundry. Everything, including the gangsterism and the social misery, has been agreeably prettied. The only political lesson we learn is that the Africans are human beings [*sic*] and, no doubt, to some this will be a most disturbing revelation. But South Africa House can keep calm. We are told nothing about Johannesburg life that is likely to rouse us to anger. We are just being entertained by a slick, American type song and dance musical" (Fleming, 2009, pp. 206-207).

Regardless of its intent, the play lacked any significant critique of the South African government and thus by default it depicted the apartheid nation in a positive or, at worst, neutral light, which only some in the press appreciated (Fleming, 2009, p. 208). However, *King Kong* had a significant impact on future theatre, "for music would become an integral part of most black South African plays" (Barrios, 2008, p. 41).

Music and drama were to become the cornerstone of my work. Using a strong dramatic narrative learned from Athol Fugard's *No Good Friday* and music and dance learned from works like *King Kong,* later from Gibson Kente, my early works substituted, for their perceived lack of political intent, a strong depiction of apartheid in its true brutal nature.

By the end of the fifties the NP had all the formal structures of the apartheid regime in place, having turned the informal, but thoroughly effective, use of the British colonial society into a vast set of complicated and unbending laws which would eventually prescribe and proscribe every facet of political, economic, social, and cultural life.

2.4 Separate Development

The heavy-handed legislative machinery mainly reflected the racist ideology of the Boer political hegemony. The English component in the South African ruling white classes tended to project a liberal approach to race relations; but in fact the economic control of black entertainment by the white liberal establishment was probably more effective than racist legislation in stunting a critical black theatre (Kerr, 1995, p. 216).

The musicals that followed shortly after *King Kong* did not in any way address the plight of Africans under the apartheid rule. They were an explosive display of African tradition by white producers (Coplan, 2016, p. 276). Horn (1980, p. 14) agrees and states that:

> "The spectacular musicals with which the popular mind abroad associates black South African theatre *(Ipi-Tombi, uMabatha, Mboni, Meropa)* have been produced by whites primarily for export. Besides offering a vehicle for semi- nudity and Westernised versions of traditional dances, these plays praise the simple rustic life, emphasise the cultural differences among the black population, and by implication are propaganda for the government's homelands policy, by means of which all black city-dwellers are eventually to be involuntarily transported to the most arid and undeveloped rural areas of the Republic".

Following the success of *King Kong* in South Africa, Ben Masinga produced his own musical in Zulu, *Back in Your Own Backyard,* for Soweto audiences only, and Union Artists declined to help him (Coplan, 2008, p. 268). *King Kong* proved to black theatre producers that black musicals can be commercially viable even when their target audiences are black.

Gibson Kente, a former social worker, was considered the father of township theatre. Having worked as a talent scout for Gallo Record Company, he was exposed to urban popular music and was aware of the financial requirements for a successful business venture in the arts. His exposure to music, coupled with his cultural influences of Xhosa traditional music and Christian hymns, gave him an added advantage in the musical theatre space. Inspired by *King Kong*, Kente joined USSA in order to gain experience in staging musicals.

The script of *King Kong*, clearly Kente's prototype, was written by a white writer, Harry Bloom. But a script by a white writer was not going to be acceptable to Kente. He would not have not believed that a white writer could know enough about the black experience to write an authentic script, and in any event the whole point of Kente's venture was to strike out on his own (Kavanagh, 2016, p. 93). He then wrote his first play, *Manana the Jazz Prophet*, featuring Letta Mbulu. The plot was a straightforward melodrama about the efforts of an evangelist African minister to mobilize the energies of delinquent township youth for religious and community services by bringing in jazz and other forms of popular music (Coplan, 2016, p. 269). *Manana The Jazz Prophet* was not an outstanding success, but his second work, *Sikalo,* was not only a commercial hit, but changed the course of black South African theatre (Kerr, 1995, p. 217).

On 21 March 1960, sixty-nine Africans were gunned down by the police in Sharpeville as they protested against the pass laws. The shooting of Sharpeville provoked national turmoil and crisis. Outraged protest came in from across the globe, including one from the American State Department. For the first time the UN Security Council intervened in South African Affairs, blaming the government for the shooting and urging it to initiate measures to bring about racial equality (Mandela, 1994, p. 225). Sharpeville was a seminal event that struck at the heart of apartheid (Welsh, 2009, p. 73).

It is interesting to note that even with this tragic event that shook South Africa and the world, Kente did not engage this content in his next play, *Sikalo*. Instead, *Sikalo* continued in the melodramatic nature of Kente's style with song and dance, and stereotypes.

The central situation of *Sikalo* is that of a young man, Sikalo, who is framed for the murder of Baduza, owner of a fish and chip shop. The incriminating evidence is that the murderers - a local gang called 'die Bafana' meaning 'the Boys' - throttled Baduza using Sikalo's scarf. When Baduza's body is discovered by Sikalo's parents, Mbatane and Madlamini, they find the scarf and it is Sikalo's father who, on the basis of this evidence, incriminates his son. Sikalo, is subsequently assisted to escape from jail, and together his girlfriend, Tando, finds new evidence which clears him and exposes the true murderers (Kavanagh, 2016, p. 192).

In plays like *Sikalo, Lifa,* and *Zwi,* Kente has repeated a proven formula of simple sentimental plot and stock characters, strung together with energetic dance and lyrical song (Horn, 1980,

p. 14). Kavanagh in Kerr (1995, p. 217) agrees and gives a useful synopsis of the ingredients of *Sikalo*:

> "The formula is a simple township tale, featuring the agreeable caricatured stock types of townships. There's the shebeen queen, the tsotsis, the brutal but ridiculous policeman, priests who take bribes and preach nonsense, the traditional Zulu boy with pierced earlobes and comical broken English, plus Zionists, the dancing girls and a host of other types to swell the scene."

Mothobi Mutloatse, in the now-banned *Weekend World* (1973) added his voice in criticising this entertaining but unsubstantial approach:

> "When you've seen one township play, you've seen them all: shebeens [illegal bars], Blackjacks [black policemen], funerals, Casanovas, street-walkers, adultery and so on. Nothing at all about basic human relationships on anything like an intimate level.' And nothing at all, of course, about Bantu Education, the Group Areas Act, pass laws, job reservation, land tenure, or the franchise" (Horn, 1980, p. 14).

In an interview with Naidoo (1997, p. 248), Mda takes a harsher and more unforgiving stance against *Sikalo*:

> "Naidoo: Do you recall the early plays that you wrote while you were a pupil at school?
>
> Mda: Oh yes, I remember all of them. When it comes to the writing of the plays I know exactly who and what influenced them. It was Gibson Kente. I was in High School at Lesotho. I used to read lots of plays. I read Wole Soyinka, Joe Orton, Harold Pinter and a number of other playwrights. But without really thinking of writing my own plays. Then one day I saw a Gibson Kente play called *Sikalo.* which was being performed in Maseru. At that stage I vaguely remembered watching a performance of the very first play by Kente called *Manana the Jazz Prophet,* a few years earlier, and it did not have any impact on me. When I saw *Sikalo,* I was still at high school and I was quite fascinated by the fact that it was quite a terrible play.
>
> Naidoo: Terrible in terms of its dramatic structure?

> Mda: Yes, I thought it was a bad play. I enjoyed the music and the dance and so on. But even then, although I was still in High School. I thought that it was a truly awful play. I felt that I could write something better. So that is how Kente influenced me. He was so terrible that I thought I could do something better" (Naidoo, 1997, p. 248).

But even with this harsh criticism, *Sikalo* was a huge success with the township audiences. To this day, *Sikalo i*s recognised as a milestone by the African theatrical community, by whom the show's political shortcomings are less remembered than its artistic dynamism and social authenticity (Coplan, 2016, p. 269).

With apartheid tightening its noose, and political organisations banned and leaders jailed in the 1960s, one question I ask is where were the political playwrights? How come they failed to respond to the mood of the times, especially in the sixties when there was so much to protest about? Commenting that Africans were also displaced from places like Sophiatown, Lady Selbourne, District Six, and many other parts of South Africa, the Surplus Project estimated in 1983 that three-and-half million people, some 10 percent of the entire population, has been subjected to forced removals. I got my answer when I read *Sophiatown*, another play created in the 1980s by a multicultural company called Junction Avenue. Jakes who plays the journalist, a character inspired by Can Themba, sums it nicely in his closing monologue of the play. He says:

> "I don't want to die like Can Themba, of alcohol poisoning, in a country that is not your own, I don't want the streets of New York to take me, as they did Nat Nakasa. The streets of New York broke his bones, but South Africa broke his spirit. Exile - an interminable death. It eats out the very centre of your heart. Arthur Maimane, Todd Matshikiza, Bloke Modisane, Lewis Nkosi, Hugh Masekela, Dollar Brand, Merriam Makeba, Jonas Gwangwa - all our best and brightest driven out by this Triomf." (Purkey, 1986, p. 74)

The void that was left by the departure into exile by some of the creative greats of South Africa, was filled by the works of Gibson Kente who was inspired by King Kong. Kente's musical productions, although criticized for stereotypical characters and over exaggerated performances nevertheless provided a blue print for the musical framing of my original musical productions. The music of *Sikalo* and *How Long* remain with me to date. From Gibson Kente

I also learned that one can do theatre by observing poverty and social ills in one's community and that theatre can be entertaining through the painting of recognisable characters and situations. Kente also affirmed to me that as a black theatre maker, I can draw from popular music and dance of the community represented. Having witnessed Kente's performance style, I knew that I needed my actors to tone down a hundred notches from what he did so that they are real and present organic situations in a believable manner.

2.5 Workshop and Political Theatre

In the early 1970s, a great deal of oppositional theatre was produced. It was performed in urban areas allotted to non-whites; this theatre was "markedly more political", was inspired by black people's lives, and often played by a black cast (Graver & Kruger, 1989, p. 273).

The 1970s saw a theatre that agitated for political change in South Africa "with unsurpassed confrontational zeal" (Magalasi, 2002, p. 25). *Survival,* staged by Workshop '71 is one such work.

2.5.1 Survival and Workshop 71

Workshop 71 was a company formed by black and white practitioners who devised work in collaboration. The act of collaboration was in itself a defiance of apartheid given the Group Areas Act provisions that were in place. But workshop theatre did not start with Workshop 71. According to Holloway (1993, p. 2).

> "If one excludes the poorly documented improvisational efforts of Esau Mthethwa's Lucky Stars during the late-1920s, recent workshop theatre may be regarded as having its first stirrings in the collaboration of Nat Nakasa, Lewis Nkosi and Athol Fugard in the genesis of No-Good Friday (1958). Although ultimately Fugard was solely responsible for the final script, this early exploration of township life and gangsterism was derived from the improvisation and testing of scenes by actors and playwright. Partial collaborative involvement was superseded by Fugard's initially reluctant association with the Serpent Players in Port Elizabeth, which gave rise to The Coat (1967) and, more significantly, to Sizwe Bansi is Dead (1972) and The Island (1973)."

Workshop 71 was "founded under the leadership of Robert Kavanagh, in Johannesburg in March 1971 as an institute of Race Relations Project to promote interracial contact" (Holloway, 1993, p. 2). According to Mthoba and Ntinga (Barrios, 2008, p. 40), the aim of this group was to experiment by examining existing theatre and evolving new theatre methods and techniques. It aimed to create original theatre that depended on artistic co-operation and contact, and to examine what happened to Western and African Theatre when they came together (Mthoba & Ntinga in Barrios, 2008, p. 40). *Survival* was the second production by the Workshop 71. *Survi*val (1976), which was commissioned by the People's Space Theatre in Cape Town, is Workshop 71's more direct attack on the policies of the South African government (Holloway, 1993, p. 3).

Survival is about four characters who find themselves in prison for crimes they committed because of racial laws. Two of the characters are in prison for murder. Slaksa Mphahlele is in prison for killing other black people who did not agree with the strike organised for workers at their workplace against the employers. Another character, Themba, reports how Habakkuk Ngwenya's mother slept with pass officers for a favour. She later picks up a brutal lover who constantly beats her mother. The son kills the lover to protect his mother. This lands him in prison for murder (Magalasi, 2002, p. 29). Although the murder by Habakkuk is not political, the conditions outside prison are as bad as inside because of the oppressive laws that exists.

The purpose of the play is to explore the theme of imprisonment (Holloway, 1993, p. 3). The cruelty of the apartheid system is articulated in Workshop's 71 *Survival*. One of the songs in survival articulates that if prison is bad, wait until you are out of prison. The song is sung when one of the four characters, Dan, is released from prison. Sadly they wave farewell as Dan moves slowly towards the cell door. Then suddenly he leaps from rostrum and launches into song "The outside Prison, Prison outside Blues". The others leap from the rostrum and join him in a lively song and dance routine (*Survival*, p. 146).

> "Song: I'm free, I'm out, happy, no doubt
> Back in jail I had a dream
> My prayin', day-in, day-out theme.
> I'd walk the streets, no bars around
> Hands in pockets, feet on the ground

Out! and on the up
No bugs to bite, no fights for grub
Gents, come celebrate-what? My big day!
My dream, come true-hip hip (then anti-climax) hooray
Cos then I goggled and what was there
My true dream was a true nightmare
I've got the outside prison, prison outside blues
Take a good squiz, there just ain't nothing to choose
Between the inside prison, prison outside blues

You're blue in jail or out
Inside is bad until you're out
You got nothing to gain and nothing to loose
With the outside prison, prison outside blues."

The song shows that even after you have been released from prison, you are still imprisoned. Black South Africans were imprisoned in the land of their birth. Habakkuk Ngwenya killed his mother's boyfriend who was a policeman working for an oppressive system. Even though Habakkuk is a murderer, the apartheid conditions are the same, whether you are inside prison or out of it. Outside prison life was difficult for Habakkuk and his mother and inside prison life was also difficult. *Survival* had fully conscious characters and used tuneful township music and tragi-comedy to get across the message that South Africa was a prison (Coplan, 2016, p. 276).

Edward: Edward Nkosi - Murderer.

Slaksa: Slaksa Mphahlele - Striker

Vusi: Vusi Mabandla - Murderer

Leroi: Leroi Williams - Agitator

All [Together]: Criminals.

Leroi: Against a system not of our making.

Vusi: Under laws not of our framing

All [together]: We refuse to accept responsibility for our crimes. We refuse to go on living their lie.

Leroi: We have decided to…

All [Together]… Resist" (Survival, p. 167).

The prisoners go on a hunger strike, singing "azophela azophela malanga" (the days will end). This act of defiance, a call to action, sets *Survival* apart from its predecessors. The final speech of the play by Themba is yet another moment of defiance and of encouragement.

Themba: And that's another kind of survival. A people survive by grimly holding on. But at the same time they achieve what their oppressors cannot help envying them for. The strength lies with the people, who carry with them in their lives the justification for the struggle - the victory that is…
All[together]: SURVIVAL (*Survival*, p. 170).

The characters in Survival are not about to let go; they will not be crushed by the system and remain victims; they are prepared to take action and hold on until the freedom day.

2.5.2 Sizwe Bansi is dead

Although not as confrontational as *Survival*, *Sizwe Bansi is dead* written by Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona three years before *Survival*, also depicts the brutality of apartheid and its pass laws. The text, which does not address apartheid overtly, uses various techniques to express aversion and proffer solutions to the policy of racial segregation (Solanke, 2015, pp. 33-45). Eke and Obika (2018, p. 8) state:

"Pass laws (the 'Pass Laws' Act of 1952) required all black South Africans over 16 to carry a pass book called a 'Dompas'. Similar to a passport, it contained more

> detailed information on the individual, including fingerprint, photograph, details of employment, government authorization to be in a particular area of the country, qualification to work and a reference letter from one's employer elaborating on one's performance and general behaviour. Should a worker displease his employer, and he in turn decline to endorse the 'Dompas', this would jeopardize the worker's right to stay in that particular area, thus allowing whites total power over blacks in general: Forgetting to carry a 'Dompas', misplacing it, or have it stolen resulted in arrest and expulsion to a Bantustan."

Sizwe Bansi is Dead deals with how the pass laws eroded the identity of black people and reduced them to a number in the passbook, a number which they had to memorise. Sizwe had to adopt the identity of a dead man, Robert Zwelinzima, and in so doing Sizwe Bansi dies - killed by the system which makes it impossible for him to get a job because he has no passbook. Adopting a dead man's identity shows the lengths to which a black man had to go to be able to work, in this case Sizwe needed to get a job in King Williams Town and as a result he had to forgo his true identity. If Sizwe had not assumed the identity of Robert Zwelinzima, he would be condemned to suffer the gruelling process of getting a pass and a permit to work in King Williams Town. But Sizwe is reluctant to lose his identity, especially his name.

> MAN: I don't want to lose my name, Buntu.
>
> BUNTU: You mean you don't want to lose your bloody passbook! You love it hey!
>
> MAN: I cannot lose my name (*Sizwe Bansi*, 1993, p. 184).

Later in the play Buntu says to MAN:

> "BUNTU: When the white man looked at you at the Labour Bureau what did he see? A man with dignity or a bloody passbook with an N.I. number? Isn't that a ghost? When the white man sees you walk down the street and calls out, 'Hey, John! Come here'...to you Sizwe Bansi ... isn't that a ghost? Or when his little child calls you 'Boy'...you a man, circumcised, with a wife and four children...isn't that a ghost? Stop fooling yourself. All I'm saying is be a real ghost, if that is what they want, what they've turned us into. Spook them into hell, man! [Original ellipses] (Sizwe Bansi, 1993, p. 185)."

Evidently, an NI number is more powerful than black peoples' humanity; recognition can turn them into phantoms. While reminding Sizwe of his phantom-like status, Buntu's aim is to liberate Sizwe from his dilemma and provide succour. Buntu reiterates that Sizwe is already bodiless and incorporeal, through Sizwe's non-existence to the white officer at the Labour Bureau (Jayathilake, 2018, p. 7), who "takes the book, looks at it—doesn't look at [Sizwe]!" (Fugard, 1993, p. 172). Jayathilake (2018, p. 7) recalls Fanon's conceptualisation of the black people in the hands of Western colonisation as an object. "This object man, without means of existing, [...] is broken in the very depth of his substance. The desire to live, to continue, becomes more and more indecisive, more and more phantom-like (Fanon, 1967 [1964], p. 35).

Wertheim states that the play asks the audience whether naked Sizwe can be "redressed and re-dressed" (2000, p. 87). In this vein, Buntu is a "comically magical micturition" (Wertheim, 2000, p. 87), as he gives life to the dead by finding clothing for Sizwe. As Wertheim explains "the sad reality however, is that Sizwe's exchange of identity can only be a stopgap measure because he will be caught out by the authorities if he gets into trouble and his finger prints are checked" (2000, p. 87).

> Buntu: … You talk to the white man, you see, and ask him to write a letter saying he's got a job for you. You take that letter from the white man and go back to King Williams Town, where you show it to the Native Commissioner there. The native commissioner in King William's Town reads that letter from the white man in Port Elizabeth who is ready to give you the job. He then writes back the letter to the native commissioner in Port Elizabeth. So you come back here with the two letters. Then the Native Commissioner in Port Elizabeth reads the letter from the Native Commissioner in King William's Town together with the first letter from a white man who is prepared to give you a job, and he says when he reads the letter: Ah yes, this man Sizwe Bansi can get a job. So the Native Commissioner in Port Elizabeth writes a letter which you take with the letters from the Native Commissioner in King William's Town and the white man in Port Elizabeth, to the Senior Officer at the Labour Bureau, who reads all the letters. Then he will put the right stamp in your book and give you another letter from himself which together with the letters from the white man and the two Native Affairs Commissioners, you take to the Administration Office here in New Brighton and make an application for Residence Permit, so that you don't fall victim of raids again. Simple. (*Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, 1993, p. 173).

With this letter, Man will still need to go through a bureaucratic labyrinth before being excluded from 'raids' (Solanke, 2015, pp. 33-45). The process of getting a job is nothing short of discouraging. Sizwe, poor, jobless, would require enough money to see the process through. And without the right stamp, he will be endorsed and returned to his homeland. Influx control, a negatively skewed policy of repatriation which limited and excluded blacks from lucrative economic environments and cities, used a system of raids to flush out and return 'offenders' to their original dead-ends (Solanke, 2015, pp. 33-45).

The play sprouts from, and is linked to, protest and struggle theatre (Solanke, 2015, pp. 33—45). Eventually, Sizwe adopts the identity of Robert Zwelinzima, leading to the death of Sizwe Bansi. Brink (1993, p. 438) captures this succinctly:

> "Worthy to mention that Sizwe Bansi is dead is a play about how to survive, resist and achieve a self-recognition in a world in which the blacks are treated as 'others'. And one of the ways to survive is through reincarnation and resuscitation not through rituals of the ancestors, but, through ways that suit the circumstances of apartheid. The act of switching identities between Sizwe and Robert is in fact an act of surrogation; a process of conjuring the dead to give energy and reassert the power of the living. Thus, Robert is resurrected when he was remembered as a brother, a member of the family and the one who will remain alive again and again."

I came across *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *Survival* whilst I was a student at the University of the Witwatersrand. Apart from their collaborative nature between black and white creatives, these works were to have a major impact in my later works, especially Roadhouse and Mika. The acapella approach of *Survival* with its Blues, African American spirituals and South African melodies were to be a major aspect of Roadhouse. *Sizwe Bansi is dead* inspired the creation of *Mika,* a two man play set in a shack, more like Buntu's backroom in *Sizwe Bansi is dead,* and dealt with displacement, poverty and survival. This production taught me to explore a relationship between two people without the grandeur of big crowds and sets. *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* also confirmed what I had noticed when I watched *Woza Albert,* that theatre can be used to tell the political struggles of black people in South Africa. These ideas, encapsulated in these works stayed with me and I have transposed and applied them in my work to provide theatre that is entertaining, engaging whilst dealing with socio-political challenges in South Africa. I am not the only one who was inspired by *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. Even Mbongeni Ngema and

Gibson Kente, changed their approach to include political content after watching *Sizwe Bansi is Dead.*

2.5.3 Too Late and How Long

Gibson Kente's work does not follow the workshop theatre making processes. He is the sole writer, choreographer, musical director and director of his plays. But even so, he could not resist the political content of the 1970's. Kente had previously written musical productions with no political aims started to turn his hand to political content. According to Coplan (2008, p. 271) Kente was convinced by the production of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* to bring more explicit political themes into his plays. According to Coplan (2008, p. 271):

> "There, audiences were no longer satisfied with a simple representation of their experience; they demanded an exposure of the political and economic system that produced their condition and a suggestion of what they were to do about it. In response, Kente produced a series of epic political melodramas between 1974 and 1976. *How Long, I believe* and *Too Late* which squarely placed the blame for the suffering and squalor of the townships on apartheid, while compassionately theorizing the resilience, vitality, and essential humanity of their people.

According to Kerr (1995, p. 220), Kente's 1974 play, *How Long*, retained many typical township musical ingredients, but there were clear political overtones to some of the situations. The story, involving a poor man, Thwala, trying to put his son, Africa, through school, had a politically explosive theme at a time when education was becoming a burning issue in Soweto. The very title *How Long*, came to have a political significance, and the title song of the same name was extremely popular.

I remember how in 1985 our theatre group went to take part in a TV show, 'Lapologa' and the dance number we had prepared used the first track "Overture" from *How Long*. The show was broadcast on Fridays and rehearsals conducted on Thursdays. During the rehearsals, when the music started playing, it was abruptly stopped and there was a bit of a commotion in the studio. After a while, we were told that we could not use the song because the album had been banned. A few songs were played for us to choose from, including WHAM's 'I am your man'. Eventually we compromised with Conri Ziqubu's *Mellow Yellow*, largely because it had an

African beat! Clearly Kente had done something right - he had shaken the system sufficiently to move them to ban the *How Long* music album and outlaw the filming of the movie of *How Long*. The disruption of our performance because of its usage of Kente's banned material, fueled a rebellious streak in my writing, hence my first production Save the People was a direct attack on the unjust system of apartheid as represented by a policeman who shot a young student in our township. On hindsight, he influenced the trajectory of my political messaging during that period.

Schneider and Nawa (2019, p. 40) state that during the 1970s as the apartheid regime tightened its control, Kente increasingly integrated political criticism of the conditions in South Africa in his moralistic evaluation of societal phenomena. His production of Too *Late* (1975) openly opposed the political system of apartheid. The story of *Too Late* is best summed up by Kavanagh (2016, p. 225):

> "Saduva, who lives in the Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo Province), loses his parents and comes to live with his maternal aunt, Madinto, in Soweto. Madinto who runs a shebeen, has a crippled daughter, Ntanana. Saduva meets Totozi, Ntanana's friend, and they fall in love.
>
> Troubles begin to multiply as Saduva struggles to get the necessary stamp in his pass or reference book permitting him to seek work in Johannesburg - though he is aided by a priest, Mfundisi. An overzealous and vengeful policeman, Pelepele, not only hounds Saduva over his pass but arrests Madinto for selling liquor illicitly.
>
> With Madinto in prison, Saduva and Ntanana are destitute. Then Saduva himself is arrested and imprisoned for a pass offence. Ntanana is murdered by Pelepele as she tries to prevent the arrest. Saduva emerges embittered from prison and in one version of the play almost kills Pelepele. He is prevented by Offside, the local gossip, a lay about and friend of Saduva's. At the end, Saduva, Madinto and Totozi are reunited."

The radical content of *Too Late* emerged in scenes such as where the officer demands pass books. When Madinto asks how she can be expected to look after her crippled daughter if they are sent back to the homeland, the officer exclaims, "God almighty! Did I make the damn laws?" Even the agent of the regime appears to be locked in an oppressive but scarcely

changeable system (Kerr, 1995, p. 220). Kavanagh (2016, p. 213) has a different view of the politics of *Too Late* and *How Long*:

> "Solberg refers to *How Long, I Believe* and *Too Late* as Kente's political plays. I do not believe the first of these, *How Long*, was any more a political play than *Sikalo, Lifa* and *Zwi* - though many people at the time saw it and still see it as such."

Drawing from the title song,

> *How long must we suffer this way, Oh, Lord?*
>
> *How long all this misery each day, Oh Lord?*
>
> *How long the tears, Lord*
>
> *How long the fears?*
>
> *Tell me Lord How Long?*

Kavanagh, argues that if such a message qualifies a play as political, one might as well say that a slave song like "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" is a political song. Kavanagh did not see these productions as political theatre, given that their plots did not, in the main, deal directly with the political situations but instead touched on them as part and parcel of black lives with no attempt to fight against or challenge the apartheid system.

On the surface, *How Long* was not a revolutionary play, just as *Too Late* was not. The play's explicit or stated message is hardly a revolutionary one - for the obvious reason that Kente was not a revolutionary. However Kavanagh in Barrios (2008, p. 41) still praised *How Long achievement is*:

> "The black man heroically struggling against adversity… This time it is not township conditions as in *Sikalo* [a previous play by Kente] but the white man is to blame. And the ray of hope at the end of the tunnel is education. Mshengu considered that the

> spectator could see in this play a man suffering but struggling at the same time. This vision would tell the spectator that education is the key to freedom."

Kente's theatre did not call people to action, instead it relied on God for intervention. Maybe this is because of his background. Born in the Xhosa area of Eastern Cape, Kente's early cultural influences were Christian hymns and Xhosa traditional music (Kerr, 1995, p. 217). Schneider and Nawa (2019, p. 40) agree and assert that Kente's theatre can be termed melodramatic in the sense that in the stories depicted, the only way out of a crisis and the social dilemma facing the black township as a result of the system - which he represented in a realistic manner - were solutions that were heavily influenced by Christian morality. Kente's work can be referred to as what Ndebele terms 'a spectacle'.

> "We can now summarize the characteristics of the spectacular in this context. The spectacular documents; it indicts implicitly; it is demonstrative, preferring exteriority to interiority; it keeps the larger issues of society in our minds, obliterating the details; it provokes identification through recognition and feeling rather than through observation and analytical thought. It calls for emotion rather than conviction; it establishes a vast sense of presence without offering intimate knowledge; it confirms without necessarily offering a challenge. It is literature of the powerless identifying the key factor responsible for their powerlessness" (Ndebele, 1991, p. 41).

2.5.4 Black Consciousness

Between 1968 and 1972 there was very little political activity among Africans. The apartheid regime felt they had averted disruption through their bannings and incarcerations. But warning signs of what Welsh (2009:143) refers to as 'explosive discontent' were building amongst urban Africans. Two factors were making their presence felt: the growth of labour militancy; and the rediscovery and elaboration of a radical stand of black political thought and its underpinning by an organisational network. Both were to have momentous consequences (Welsh, 2009, p. 143).

The formation of the Black Conscious Movement in the early 70s was a wakeup call for Africans and galvanised and conscientised Africans to become conscious of self and to fight

for their position in the place of their birth. Steve Biko became the preeminent figure in the Black Consciousness Movement.

> "Black Consciousness is an attitude of mind and a way of life, the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time. Its essence is the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression-the blackness of their skin--and to operate as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It is based on a self-examination which has ultimately led them to believe that by seeking to run away from themselves and emulate the white man, they are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black. The philosophy of Black Consciousness therefore expresses group pride and the determination of the blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self. Freedom is the ability to define oneself with one's possibilities held back not by the power of other people over one but only be one's relationship to God and to natural surroundings. On his own, therefore, the Black Man wishes to explore his surroundings and test his possibilities - in other words to make his freedom real by whatever means he deems fit. At the heart of this kind of thinking is the realisation by blacks that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressed is the mind of the oppressed. If one is free at heart, no man made chains can bind one to servitude: But if one's mind is so manipulated and controlled by the oppressor as to make the oppressed believe that he is a liability to the white man, then there will be nothing the oppressed can do to scare his power masters. Hence thinking along lines of Black Consciousness makes the black man see himself as a being complete in himself. It makes him less dependent and freer to express his manhood. At the end of it all he cannot tolerate attempts by anybody to dwarf the significance of his manhood." (Biko, 1978, p. 14.)

Armed with the ideology of Black Consciousness, practitioners in the 70s sharpened their pens and authored works which would reassert black pride, determination, and dignity. During the 1970s, there were three main workshop theatre groups totally aligned with the Black Consciousness cause: the TECON (the Theatre Council Of Natal); the PET (People Experimental Theatre); and the MDALI (the Music, Dance, Art and Literature Institute) (Barrios, 2008, p. 42). Mthuli Shezi scripted a typical Black Consciousness play called *Shanti* presented by the PET.

Shanti, set partly in a guerrilla camp, looked at an interracial relationship between a black boy, Thabo, and an Indian girl. The affair runs into problems because of apartheid laws and Thabo's political activism (Kerr, 1995, p. 222). *Shanti* is designed to present events and ideas as a platform for discussion or lecture-demonstration. Furthermore, Shezi's language is constructed from short slogans and sentences in the service of a message about the organic identity of all black people (Boon & Plastow, 1998, p. 64). Steadman (1990, p.15) agrees and writes that:

> "*[S]hanti* might as well be subject to charges of the same class and ideological disjunction as those exhibited by the plays of Dlhomo and Nkosi, in that the governing consciousness of the play is one of an educated sector of the black bourgeoisie, but differs from earlier plays in that it was conceived in performance terms as a dynamic representation of black consciousness principles in presentational didactic form, unconcerned with literary finesse, but rather with slogans of political resistance underpinned by theatrical performance, it communicated simply, directly and dynamically."

In effect, Steadman points out that the political nature of *Shanti* was most apparent in performance. What you did not get in the written text would be strongly highlighted in performance. Throughout the action of the play the reader is aware of the text as merely a scenario for theatrical performance (Boon & Plastow, 1998, p. 64). The didactic nature of *Shanti* is captured by the following lines directed at the audience. The lines assert the pride of the black man.

> "Yes, I am Black and Inferior
> To no man. Why must I call what I am being called then?
> Coloured, Cape coloured, Malay, 'The Other Coloured'.
> I am Black like my mother
> Black like the sufferers.
> Black like the continent."(Boon & Plastow, 1998, p. 64.)

Magalasi (2002, p. 25) comments:

> "[I]t was in the 70s when theatre was done with unsurpassed confrontational zeal, attracting iron-fist repercussions from the regime in power. A number of practitioners had been tried, or threatened to be tried for treason or literally killed, like Mthuli Shezi for doing plays critical of the white regime's apartheid policy".

The members of The TECON, which was founded by Strini Moodley and Saths Cooper in 1969 suffered detention under the Terrorism Act. Saths Cooper, Strini Moodley and other members of THE TECON, including Cooper's wife Vino and brother Revabalan, were also detained. Eventually Cooper, Strini, and others were sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. Other productions like *Survival, How Long,* and *Give us This day* were also banned. (Coplan, 2008, p. 276) states:

> "[W]orkshop '71's *Survival*, on the other hand, had fully conscious characters and used tuneful township music, dance and tragicomedy to get across the message that South Africa was a prison. Similarly, Reverend Mr. Maqina's remarkable, frequently banned *Give Us This Day* (1974) passionately condemned apartheid in pure township musical styles, revealing its potential for the transformation of mass political consciousness. Ironically, *Survival* was allowed to tour abroad because it had not developed a mass black audience, while the far more moderate Gibson Kente play *How Long* did command such a following and so got its author jailed for putting it on film in 1976. When *Survival* finally began to tour successfully in the townships in 1978, it was promptly banned."

The banning of plays and detention of creative practitioners is a confirmation of the impact theatre had in the fight against the apartheid regime and its policies. One group which provided a link between Black Consciousness theatre of the 1970s and Theatre of Emergency, was the Soyikwa African Theatre Company (Kerr,1995, p. 232). The company was established in 1976 by Matsemela Manaka.

The 1976 Soweto uprising introduced another phase in theatre. Most of the theatre groups that had openly aligned with Black Consciousness were banned in 1977 together with the BCM. Matsemela Manaka and Maishe Maponya belong to the theatre that began the new phase of Black Theatre right after the banning of previous theatre groups. In Barrios (2008, p. 43)

Matsemela Manaka explains the implications of Black Consciousness in the development of African art:

> "In South Africa the Black Consciousness movement appears to have played a major role in the conceptual development of African Art. African artists were made to relate more and more to the socio-political situation with a certain degree of political awareness… Black consciousness artists were 'preoccupied with the advancement of the movement like the serialists who were preoccupied with their relationship with communism'. Such art movements are often determined by political events and movements. The decline of political movements often threatens the advancement of artists".

In 1979 Soyikwa produced *Egoli*, "an expose of the lives of mine workers". *Egoli* gained notoriety in 1979 when the text, published by Ravan Press, was banned, even though, in the following year, the play was performed at the Erlangen Festival in Germany.

Besides 1970's Black Consciousness Theatre and its sloganeering, I was inspired by the selfless nature of the creatives of the time. They understood the implications of the work and what might happen to them if they produced work that was against the status quo. They were not afraid to be banned, detained and even sentenced to jail. This no retreat no surrender attitude for the right cause, enabled me to create works like *Marikana The Musical* and *Freedom*. The artists of the seventies knew that their works might be the death of their careers but they continued to create such works. When I created the two musicals mentioned, I was aware of the implications it might have on employment and on my career. I was putting the spotlight on what would rather be left unsaid; that 44 miners lost their lives at the hands of the South African Police. Again with *Freedom*, the students were harassed, terrorised, teargassed and detained by the South African Police. I remembered what the likes of The PET, The TECON, The MDALI and Workshop 71 sacrificed during their days, I therefore could not be silent whilst witnessing injustice. It is their bravery and selflessness that propelled me to create those works.

2.5.5 Theatre during the State of Emergency

The 80s were characterized by police brutality, detentions, mass mobilizations, damage to property, and arson. When violence becomes unnecessary, excessive, and unreasonable, it can

be termed ‘brutality’. Brutality is often accompanied by disrespect for human dignity and the absence of moderation, reticence, mercy, or consideration for others (Gove, 1986, p. 19). During the mid-eighties there was extreme use of force and extreme resistance from students against whom the force was directed. Violence was the order of the day. The apartheid regime was hell-bent on maintaining the status quo, and the students were simply tired of living and studying under inhumane conditions. According to Berkowitz (1993), violence can be regarded as an extreme form of aggression, “a deliberate attempt to do serious physical injury” (Van Eeden et al, 1996, p. 3).

Schramm and Shuda also refer to psychological violence where serious damage is inflicted even though physical force is not used. A further distinction can be made between structural violence, as enforcement of policies by the authority in power, and reactionary violence by those who do not subscribe to this authority (Van Eeden et al, 1996, p. 3).

The apartheid government did not restrict itself to banning political material, but also resorted to torture and detention without trial. In 1977 Steve Biko, one of the leaders of the Black Consciousness Movement, was tortured and killed. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission established in 1995 provided graphic evidence of some of the methods used. It reported 5,002 instances of torture, most commonly beating, including over 2,000 cases of being forced into painful postures, electric shocks, suffocation, or mental torture (TRC Report, 1998, vol 3, p. 7). The use of violence by the apartheid regime was not a new phenomenon. According to Hamber (1998, p. 2-3):

> “The root cause of political violence in South Africa has to be located within the social matrix and the long history of oppression, poverty and exploitation in the country. Central to this was the fact that, from 1948, the apartheid government denied the majority of South Africans access to central political authority and entrenched racially-based social inequality. The state used vertical institutional violence to maintain this inequality, racial superiority and social control. In terms of overt political violence the state repressed those opposed to it through "legalised" detentions, convictions and bannings, and reacted violently to any resistance to its authority. State-sanctioned assassinations and harassment were common, often orchestrated directly through official government bodies. In the face of ongoing repression, and as all legal and

peaceful channels of protest were blocked, the African National Congress (ANC) and other liberation organisations resorted to the 'armed struggle' (African National Congress 1996; Orkin 1992). This reactive violence, coupled with continued repressive violence by the state, resulted in an exponential growth of political violence over the next three decades, culminating in the intensified political violence of the 1980s."

2.5.6 Aesthetics vs political rhetoric

As early as the 1980s, theatre in South Africa was beginning to respond with the same intensity that the apartheid regime used to display its tyranny. Post-1976, theatre seemed to shift from what could tentatively be termed a *theatre of anger*, directly after the first violent confrontations, to something more akin to a *theatre of reflection* by the later part of the eighties. The point is that, directly preceding and following the 1976 trauma, theatre became highly abrasive, propagandistic, and confrontational in style, with the major works of the period clearly displaying a far greater commitment to political commentary than to aesthetic considerations (Roberts, 2016, p. 16). I disagree with this assertion. When one looks at works like *Asinamali! Woza Albert!* etc, one finds aesthetics not only rooted in African culture and South African theatre, but also informed by western traditions of Grotowski, Stanislavsky, and Peter Brook. The style of *Woza Albert!*, Asinamali*!* and other works of a similar nature were influenced by Grotowski's Poor Theatre. In Uno (1995, p.18) Peter Brook observes:

> "What I found profoundly right and extraordinary about *Asinamali!* was that this horrifying situation was being presented pitilessly, through a joi de virve. The events were not softened by it, but heightened to the last degree because they were presented, not through sentimentality, but through vitality…. It reached a point at which the group was behaving like one person with five heads. There was a perfect interrelation at tremendous speed. If one hand went out to the right, it was caught by a foot which was going to the left or a mouth making a sound."

Woza Albert! is another good example of aesthetic considerations in some of the major works of the 1980s. In the opening sequence of *Woza Albert!*, the performance aesthetics blow you away. The actors become a set of musical instruments, executing the opening number with distinction. The stage direction reads:

> "The actors enter and take their positions quickly, simply. Mbongeni sits on the tea chests at the point they meet in the middle. Percy squats between his legs. As they create their totem, the house lights dim to blackout.
>
> On the first note of their music, overhead lights come on, sculpting them. They become an instrument jazz band, using only their bodies and their mouths - double bass, saxophone, flute, drums, bongos, trumpet etc. (*Woza Albert*, p. 3)."

Although there was a clear feeling, endorsed by the organisations involved in the struggle, and even directly stated by a number of speakers and writers (notably, for example, by Steve Biko), that it was necessary in such times, to provisionally forget the aesthetic and other aims of literature, because as a writer you had a moral obligation to join the fight against the current evil and to help to conscientise and mobilise the people. It cannot be generally accepted, that there was no aesthetic considerations in those works.

Indeed there was total commitment in the theatre of the eighties to using theatre as a weapon against oppression. Roberts (2016, p.16) agrees, stating that the practitioners' practice was informed and guided by the imperatives of addressing the accelerating socio-political tensions. From 1976 onwards their early works synthesised life as it was lived and experienced in South Africa, with the mobilising of theatre, according to the liberation principle that "culture is a weapon". And, as Mda (Duggan, 1983, p. 2) puts it: "Any person who stands behind a pen (a brush, camera, or saxophone for that matter) must be just as effective as any person who stands behind a gun in the service of progress." South Africa was like a war zone and it was important for the playwrights to respond in equal measure through their writings. Political violence in the 1980s was rife. Van Eeden (1996, p. 4) explains political violence as follows:

> "Political violence refers to an attack on existing political and stablished structures, through which it maintains and secure power. The struggle in South Africa has been aimed at the discriminatory legislation, structures and practices of apartheid. Since the 1976 students' uprisings the black youth has been prominently involved in this conflict and violence.

2.5.7 School protests and state of emergency

When African schools re-opened in January 1984 it was abundantly clear that many of the demands made by scholars in previous years were still on their agenda (Bennet & Quin, 1988, p. 8). Boycotts in support of educational demands resulted in the closure of six secondary schools in Atteridgeville/Saulsville near Pretoria in May (Bot, 1985, p. 6). The Atteridgeville/Saulsville (Pretoria) boycotts were the first boycotts to affect the African education. In Cradock in the Eastern Cape, initial boycotts in support of the reinstatement of a teacher at one school spread rapidly to seven schools. The teacher to be transferred was Mathew Goniwe who was scheduled to be transferred from Cradock to Graaff-Reinet. It was in the course of these boycotts that the first two recorded fatalities in political violence in the recent cycle of revolt occurred. The first, Emma Sathekge (15), was killed by police on school premises in Atteridgeville (13/2/84); while the second, Sebenzile Jacobs (17), was stabbed to death in Cradock's Ilingelihle township (15/4/84) (Bennet & Quin, 1988, p. 8). The underlying causes of the boycotts at African schools remained unresolved when they re-opened in 1985. In Soshanguve, we went to classes but there were disruptions from time to time. A student would throw a stone on top of the school roof, and we would all run out of our classes and simply not go back.

In an effort to deal with this unstable climate, the government declared a select state of emergency in 36 magisterial districts (all in the Cape and PWV Regions) on 21 July 1985. The state of emergency was characterised by police violence, harassment, incarcerations, and detention without trial. You could not bury your own without the soldiers and the police watching you. The presence of the police often led to teargas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition discharged at the masses who responded with stones and petrol bombs. This led to fatalities and injuries. Other deaths were caused by covert state operations to counter the unrest through, inter alia, the assassination of political opponents by means of hit squads, the arming of surrogates such as hostel dwellers and squatter settlement strongmen/warlords, or the disappearance of activists as well as the murder in detention of a number of detainees (Minaar, Liebenberg & Schutte, 1994, p. 14).

The 1985 state of emergency did not quench the fires. The strikes and mass consumer boycotts escalated leading to the ultimate shutting down of schools - South Africa was fully ungovernable. On 12 June 1976, four days before the ten-year anniversary of the 1976

uprisings, President PW Botha declared a National State of Emergency. The security authorities were again quick to implement their wide-ranging powers under the Public Safety Act. Common measures used included further restrictions on unrest, funerals, indoor and outdoor meetings, and the movement of the people (Bennett & Quin, 1988, p. 14). However, even with all these restrictions, the dramatists were not deterred. Mbongeni Ngema, Percy Mtwa, Barney Simon, and the Junction Avenue Company created works which addressed the evils of apartheid. Ngema's *Sarafina!* is one such work.

2.5.8 Sarafina!

Sarafina! is set in Soweto during the mid to the late eighties, at the height of the State of Emergency. In *Sarafina!* (1986), the 'plot' is developed around the defiant and indomitable spirit of township school children subject to the curbs and constraints of State of Emergency regulations (Robert, 2016, p. 25). Ngema's approach to the politics of the day was influenced by his predecessors in the 70s and his background as a musician. Uno (1994, pp. 24-25) wrote that:

> "[I]n 1977, a fertile year of discovery for Ngema, he saw Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona's *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead.* Ngema had been familiar only with the type of domestic dramas with music that are performed in the township theatre. He was stunned by the simplicity and directness of *Sizwe Banzi's* political message. He also noted that the play lacked both music and dance. Ngema's eventual fusion of political theatre and South African popular music would latter account for a tremendous mass appeal of his brand of political theatre - best exemplified in *Sarafina!*, where he and co-composer Hugh Masekela used Mbaqanga, the townships, to celebrate the spirit of resistance of the children of South Africa."

Sarafina! is the story of a young black South African woman struggling for freedom during apartheid South Africa. Her desire to fight against the apartheid system is fuelled by the government's decree that Afrikaans be used as a medium of instruction in African schools. The following segment from the play highlights the students' disregard for Afrikaans as the students pleaded with Sarafina to tell Mistress of their dissatisfaction with the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

"Thandekile: Ah! Please talk to Mistress. We don't want to do mathematics in Afrikaans.
Siboniso: Zulu In Afrikaans!
Thandekile: History in Afrikaans!
Lindiwe: English in Afrikaans!
Students: Awusikhuleumele no thisha. (Please talk to the teacher.)
Thamsanqa: Actually, we just don't want to learn Afrikaans." (*Sarafina*, p. 41.)

In **Scene 5**, Sarafina tells the Mistress that she doesn't want to meet the white boy, the son of the white man where her mother works. The son had told her that they are doing history at school and that they are also doing plays. They will be doing *Romeo and Juliet* and he would like Sarafina to play Juliet opposite his Romeo. Sarafina's response to this proposal emphasised the need to decolonise education. Her rejection of Afrikaans and western forms of education is clear.

> "Sarafina: 'Mistress, I said, No, no, no, no, not Shakespeare. We write our own plays at school.' I tell him: 'This year maybe we'll do a play about the school children of Soweto.' I also tell him about the Sharpeville massacre, where more than sixty people were shot in the back, running, running away from the gun. I say to him, 'Your fathers killed our fathers because our fathers did not have guns'. [General chaos] You know I tell the truth. I tell him that this school is a parliament of black students. I tell him that in 1976, black students rejected the language of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in all subjects. Rich, fat, white people didn't care. They were sitting on top of the Table Mountain in Cape Town drinking wine and speaking Afrikaans. [General murmurs.]. One Morning our student leader, Tsietsi Mashinini woke up in Soweto and said 'Ayi man! What language is this? Huh? Huh? Away with Afrikaans!'. " (*Sarafina*, pp. 50-51.)

Sarafiana's monologue wants to remind us of the atrocities of apartheid. When she says "we write our play" as opposed to performing Shakespeare, she is reclaiming the black person's history and stories; that we should tell our own stories, stories that are made of tragedies perpetrated by apartheid. She recalls the Sharpeville massacre in order to remind us that the atrocities did not only start in 1976 but stretch back to the 60s.

Whilst reflecting on the past, Ngema brings us to the realities of the eighties by vividly painting the story of Victoria Mxenge. The brutal killing of Victoria Mxenge, human rights lawyer and executive member of the United Democratic Front, is depicted viciously through storytelling.

> "SARAFINA 'That afternoon I opened the gate for her, when she came back from the court. She parked the car. You know I was at the doorstep when four men jumped over the fence. I heard one man say … [Pause, mimics the police.] 'What did you say in the court?' The next thing I heard was the shot [SARAFINA backs up towards the fence.] A-ahah, I went towards the house and saw two men carrying axes. One carrying a bush knife and one carrying a gun. [She crosses DS towards the STUDENTS.] I ran back inside and called her children, 'Mbasa! Nomhle! Wozani! Nangu umama efa!' And suddenly there were screams… [The BAND makes a door knocking sound.] the banging on the door, the sound of the axes and the bush knife. When we got to the doorstep, there was nobody, but just mama Victoria… lying there! She was still alive… we rushed her to hospital. When we got her to the hospital, fifteen minutes later…[She crosses slowly DL.]… Mama, Mama, Mama, Mama, Mam …" (Ngema 2005: p.83).
>
> According to the *TRC Final Report* (1998, Vol 3, p. 232) it was submitted that:
>
> "At the time of her death, Ms Victoria Mxenge was an executive member of the United Democratic Front. To date there have been no prosecution in connection with her killing. The Commission received submissions from two independent sources. Both a former Security Branch operative, Mr Bongani Malinga, as Mxenge's assassin. [name deleted] shot her five times in the chest but she never fell; whereupon I followed her with an axe and chopped her next to her dining room door."

This visceral depiction of Victoria Mxenge's murder shows a commitment from Ngema not only to reflect on the past, but to engage with the brutal present and conscientise his audiences to take action against the inhumane system of apartheid.

2.5.9 Asinamali!

Another production of Mbongeni Ngema that responds to the situation of the 1980s is *Asinamali!* - Zulu for *we have no Money*. *Asinamali!* is Mbongeni Ngema's first work as a

sole writer and director. The play was based on the 1983 Lamontville rent strike. During the strike an activist, Msizi Dube, was killed. After a Soweto opening and Market Theatre run beginning 20 May 1985, *Asinamali!* toured the townships. In 1986, during the tour of *Asinamali!* in Durban Hammarsdale, Ngema survived death when members of the Inkatha Freedom Party - angered by the play's political content - attacked and killed the play's local promoter, taking him for Ngema.

The 1980s, consequently, saw the continuation of radical theatre - theatre concerned with and committed to the struggle for liberation. Kerr refers to this theatre as Theatre of Emergency. Kerr would have chosen 'Emergency' as this theatre was happening at the height of the country's State of Emergency.

> "What was particularly disturbing to the authorities was *Asinamali's* topicality, and the way it referred to real people and incidents through direct appeal to the audience. For example, one character referred to in the play, Bekani, was the name of a real youth worker who had assisted in the early days of the production. A pick pocketer, Bro' Tony, was the name of a real pick pocketer known in the townships." (Kerr, 1995, p. 233.)

Asinimali! was not the first work to use real names and real incidents. In fact John Kani and Winston Ntshona use their real names in *The Island*, as do John Ledwaba and Hamilton in *eGoli*, and Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa in *Woza Albert.* This was some sort of affirmation. Through their names they were establishing their identities as real people, black people, in a country where identities were wiped out by the policies of oppression. The use of real incidents and the real names of people involved, was an effort to conscientise the audiences and bring the reality of the black man's situation to the fore.

Asinamali! was militant, confrontational, and dealt with current political issues. In one scene Bhoyi, one of the prisoners, points to a white audience member and asks, essentially, what is wrong with this country? What is it? You, stand up. Bhoyi interrogates the audience member forcing him to answer. "What is it? Talk! You think I am playing games with you? Sit down my friend. You've got to look for it. It's deep in your heart." Leaving the audience member no time to respond, Bhoyi calls out the Zulu struggle chant: 'Niyabesaba na" [Are you afraid of them? (Meaning the whites)]?" To which his fellow cast members respond: "Hayi asibesabi

siyabafuna" [No we are not afraid of them]. The confrontation with the white audience members was a confirmation that whites are complicit in apartheid and as a result, it was important to hear from a white person what the problem with this country is. It had to be said in public as opposed to round dinner tables.

During the 1980s, the impetus to forge productive allegiances, hybrid collaborations, and oppositional platforms, operating in direct antithesis to the state and its apparatus, united a small fraternity of individuals from different backgrounds and geographically disparate parts of the country (Roberts, 2016, p. 19). The primary importance of workshop theatre derives from its ability to harness people who are different in colour, class, economic, and educational backgrounds in a unified creative enterprise which attempts to transcend the barriers of a divided society (Holloway, 1993, p. 10-11). Works such as *Woza Albert* and Sophiatown came out of such collaborations. Even before the eighties, works like *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, *The Island, Survival* and many others from 1970s were created through collaboration.

2.6 Theatre in a democracy

On 2 February 1990 then President, FW de Klerk, stood before parliament to make the traditional opening speech he did something no other South African head of state has ever done: he truly began to dismantle the apartheid system and lay the groundwork for a democratic South Africa. It was this speech that saw the lifting of the ban on the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, the South African Communist Party, and 31 other illegal organisations; the freeing of political prisoners incarcerated for non-violent activities; the suspension of capital punishment; and the lifting of various restrictions imposed under the state of emergency (Mandela, 1994, p. 546).

In 1994, after rigorous negotiations with the NP government, the first non-racial elections were held which ushered in a new dawn - 'the rainbow nation'. The question on the lips of critics and scholars alike was what would happen to South African theatre without apartheid?

After many years of protest theatre, South African theatre had now to grapple with post-apartheid change. Now that there was a new political dispensation, did this mean that politics would no longer form part of the South African theatre narrative? Fugard confessed to a

journalist that, “after the democratic transition, I had a sense that I had outlived my time and had become redundant, because I was a voice that plugged into the energy and the conflicts of the old South Africa”.

Contrary to Fugard, Crow (2004) states that that like all the other artists, South African theatre practitioners get their material from society. Their theatre is informed by the dominant discourse in society. In addition, those who are influential enough may even inform the discourse in the society in a symbiotic relationship. It was now time for South African theatre to reinvent itself and respond to the rhythm of the times

2.7 The first decade of democracy

“Talented playwright/director Aubrey Sekhabi, the 1998 winner of the standard bank young artist award for Drama and Artistic Director for the North West Arts Drama Company, was clearly emerging from what he called our theatre’s ‘laboratory phase’ with its focus on workshopping, and was exploring the discipline of play writing in its conventional form.” (Van Heerden, 2008, p. 157.) By ‘laboratory phase’ I was referring to the state of uncertainty among theatre makers. With apartheid gone - officially at least - the theatre-makers were experimenting with different themes, unlike the theatre of the 70s and 80s where theatre was a cultural weapon against status quo. This is reflected in most of the works that emerged in the first decade of democracy which had varied themes as playmakers grappled with our new found democracy.

2.8 Truth and Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 1996 by the Government of National Unity. The South African TRC was set up to deal with human rights violations under apartheid during the years 1960-1996 (Wilson, 2001, p. 1). The Commission heard ‘the truth’ from the victims who suffered and lost loved ones, and also from perpetrators who committed the acts of brutal torture and murder. These hearings conducted on stages in front of live and television audiences, and broadcast throughout the country were an extraordinary example of the theatricalisation of traumatic memory on a national scale (Cole in Conteh-Morgan & Oliniyan, 2004, p. 230).

2.8.1 Ubu and the Truth Commission

Ubu and the Truth Commission, a collaborative work by Jane Taylor, William Kentridge, and Handspring Puppets, is one such play that dealt with the atrocities committed under apartheid. "Our play sought to engage with testimonies being generated, in order to explore the theatricality of the events, and to archive the stories being generated through performance" (Taylor in Middeke et al, 2015, p. 46.). The story focusses on Ma Ubu and Pa Ubu. Ma Ubu suspects that her husband is cheating on her as he is out almost every night and comes back smelling of what she suspects is his mistress. What she does not know is that in fact Pa Ubu is a murderer working the apartheid regime. What she is smelling on him is not the odour of a mistress, but the blood of his innocent victims and the dynamite used to blow up property and destroy evidence. The testimonies at the TRC were given by perpetrators seeking for amnesty and by the victims of apartheid and their families. *Ubu and The Truth Commission* drew from these testimonies a story to tell through a combination of several art forms.

> "More than a play, it combines several art forms to bring its message across in a remarkably visual form. It also uses choreography, animation and documentary to provide an even more vivid perspective on the dark years of apartheid. Words, confessions and Truth and Reconciliation hearings spring into violent life both on screen and stage with puppets adding subtext." (Nierop, 2016.)

In the *Stage Door Review*, Hoile (2014), regards the play as a monument to reconciliation. It is a nudge never to forget the cruelty, the total lack of humanity, and the disregard for human life, with the reminder of why the emphasis on reconciliation and forgiveness should be a constant reminder in our national conversations (De Beer 2016).

2.8.2 The Story I am About To Tell

Another project to emerge from the TRC is *The Story I am About to Tell* conceived by Bobby Rodwell, written by the cast with Lesego Rampolokeng. *The Story I am About to Tell* presented the audiences with all-too-real witnesses reciting the unspeakable cruelties they had personally endured. The three witnesses, Catherine Mlangeni, Thandi Shezi, and Duma Khumalo, belong to the Khulumani Support Group for survivors of gross human rights violations most of whom testified at the TRC (Marlin-Curiel, 2011, p. 77). The three non-actors interacting with actors,

appeared in their roles as themselves, and told their life stories in the fictionalised context of a taxi journey.

Duma Khumalo was wrongfully convicted of a high-profile murder in 1984 - one of the 'Sharpeville Six'. Sentenced to death, he spent four years on death row before his execution was stayed, mere hours before his scheduled execution (Graham, 2009, p. 1). Thandi Shezi joined the ANC-aligned Soweto Youth Congress (SOYCO) in 1983. In 1984 Shezi was recruited into Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK) and was a special operative and combatant in the underground struggle (Letlaka, 2015, p. 108). On the day of her arrest, she was brutally beaten in front of her family, and whilst in detention, was tortured, electrocuted, and raped by the police. Catherine Mlangeni is the mother of Bheki Mlangeni, who was killed by a Walkman bomb intended for Dirk Coetzee.

2.8.3 Amajuba - Like Doves We Rise

Some other notable works to emerge in the first decade of democracy inspired by the TRC, include Yale Farber's *Amajuba- Like Doves We Rise* and John Kani's *Nothing But the Truth*. I commissioned this piece in my capacity as Artistic Director of the North West Arts Drama Company. It was a workshopped production presented with the actors from the North West Drama Company. The production was based on the real stories of the actors a formula for which Farber came to be known. The actors share their stories and relive their memories of youth in the South African townships during the harsh days of apartheid.

> "Tormenting memories dissolve into soaring music, and pain is salved by a collective embrace… a heartfelt, powerfully performed theatre piece ….Using just the basic resources of the stage - words and music, light and darkness, stillness and movement- the five actors and authors of 'Amajuba' sift through the past, searching to transcend its wounds by taming the ghost of history" (Isherwood 2006). The play ends with the message that none of the characters can move on until they have looked back - perhaps the lost generation has found itself (Taggart 2005).

2.8.4. Nothing but the Truth

John Kani is known for his collaboration with Athol Fugard and Winston Ntshona in their 1974, Tony Award winning, *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* and *The Island.* These two South African plays remain classics and are, from time to time, revisited by directors both new and old. I, too, had an opportunity to direct *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* with its original cast of Kani and Ntshona. In 2002 Kani wrote his seminal work, *Nothing but The Truth.* The play is set in 2000, and opens with Sipho Makhaya, the assistant chief librarian in Port Elizabeth, and his daughter Ntando, a teacher and an interpreter at the TRC amnesty hearings. Sipho's brother, Themba Makhaya whom he has not seen for many years, has died in England, and Sipho and Ntando nervously await the arrival of his daughter, Mandisa Mackay, who is travelling to South Africa. Cleverly foregrounding the TRC, the play reveals the hidden stories of a family affected by the political struggle which led to Themba's exile. Mandisa's arrival as an outsider acts as catalyst for father and daughter, uncle and niece, cousin and cousin, to share their stories of deceit, animosity, and betrayal (Homann, 2016, p. 324).

> "Whether you watch it as a story of family conflict or as political theatre, this is a reverting piece of theatre that intricately weaves the personal together with the political to bring both of them to a far deeper and more profound level. Thando's passionate defence of her desire to please her father and go along with his wishes conflicts with her wish to have the same independence that Mandisa has, just as the need for the truth and reconciliation, without going back to the violent retribution of the past, conflicts with a desire for revenge on those that perpetrated acts of violence on close family and friends." (Fisher, 2007.)

2.8.5 Violence and Theatre

Few people in South Africa have not been touched by some form of violence or aggression. Some are still suffering the effects of post-traumatic disorder as a result of such violence. Violence has also had a marked impact on the South African economy, including productivity, investment, and quality of life. In addition, violence can hamper political stability and democratic consolidation in South Africa (Muthien in Bornman et al, 1998, p. vi).

The prevalence of interpersonal and small-group violence has been largely overlooked while South Africans and the international community have focused on large-scale social and political conflict and change in South Africa.

Violent xenophobia has become a regular feature of South African life. Every day animosity spills over into violence against individual migrants, refugees and their economic enterprises. The more sensational of these incidents find their way into the media and officialdom, but most remain invisible and unmarked (Crush, 2014, p. 6).

Since the April 1994 elections there has been a notable increase in the flow of ‘illegals’ into South Africa, accompanied by an escalation in public xenophobia (fear, hatred, or distrust of strangers or foreigners). This xenophobia has been expressed in a number of ways. Even though some economic migrants are legally in South Africa, resentment has arisen towards them because “they take away our jobs” (Minaar, Pretorius, Wentzel). In October 1994 there were serious tensions in Imizamo Yethu squatter camp and also in Houtbay in the Cape. These tensions erupted into violence when the Xhosas accused the Ovambos of stealing and taking their jobs, and worse, of agreeing to salaries far lower than South Africans were being paid. The foreigners would accept as little as R30 in the face of a going-rate of R60.

In December 1994 and January 1995 armed gangs of comrades, claiming to be members of the ANC, SACP, and SANCO in the township of Alexander near Sandton, carried out a concentrated campaign of intimidation and terror to rid the township of illegal immigrants. They specifically targeted Shangaan speakers, Zimbabweans and other residents with 'dark complexions’, throwing them and their possessions out of their homes or flats onto the street. Some of those targeted had their homes torched and their possessions looted (Minaar et al, p.39).

As early as 1995, xenophobia was suggested in a small, satirical play, *Hold Up The Sun*, written and directed by Julian Seleke Mokoto of Abangani Community Arts in Soweto and performed at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, and at the Windybrow Theatre. It focused on illegal African immigrants working as street hawkers in Johannesburg and competing with locals (Van Heerden, 2008, p. 111).

The relentless attacks on foreign nationals reached their peak in 2008. The attacks could no longer be attributed to a lawless mob of thugs - they were becoming pandemic. Crush and Ramachandran (2014, p. 6) agree and state:

> "[T]he large-scale xenophobic violence that swept South Africa in May 2008 could not so easily be written off as the actions of isolated individuals, however. Mobs of South Africans with makeshift weapons rampaged through residential areas in a number of different cities for over a week. They targeted the properties and businesses of migrants and refugees in their communities causing widespread destruction. Individuals and whole families were attacked and in one particularly shocking incident, a Mozambican man was burned alive. The victims fled their communities en masse and took refuge in tent camps. An estimated 100,000 men, women and children were displaced, 30,000 residential properties were destroyed, over 600 people were seriously injured and over 60 were murdered. While the police did not directly participate in the looting and killing, critics have charged that they were largely indifferent to the mayhem. One commentator argues that 'the relationship between policing practices and the mob violence was, from the start, a close, if mercurial, one'."

In his thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Drama and Theatre Studies) Van Heerden (2013, p. 112) refers to Zakes Mda's comments on Xoli Norman's *Hallelujah* regarding the trend in black theatre productions critically dealing with black against black hatred and violence, black on black clashes, and xenophobia:

> "[I]t [Hallelujah is variously an angry and celebratory play. Its anger is directed at black people who are full of self-hate, manifested through the way they rape and kill each other, and the way they mistreat other black people from foreign countries. Black peoples' merciless self-examination and self-criticism caused such a stir when this play was performed at the Market Theatre. A minority of black opinion leaders objected to it, claiming that it was 'exposing' blacks to those white compatriots who are of racist orientation and who would seize at the message to reinforce their racist agenda. The majority's view of the play was very positive. Hence it performed to full houses throughout its six weeks season and received rave reviews, especially in all the media that are run by blacks and are targeted primarily at black consumers."

It is a fact that there are foreigners in South Africa who are that not from our continent. It is, therefore, sad to find that when dealing with foreign nationals, black South Africans focus in the main on Africans - this is indeed the self-hate addressed in Norman's *Hallelujah*.

It is important to note that the state has also unleashed its might against foreign nationals in operations such as 'Operation Fiela' which relied on the state apparatus to rid the city centers of foreign nationals. Neocosmos, (2016, p.139) captures this violence succinctly:

> "[T]he xenophobic violence meted out on a regular basis to those considered foreigners or outsiders constitutes part of the same problem. The recent attempts by the state to address xenophobic violence through organised state violence (so-called '*operation fiela*') is again an indication of the same political subjectivity. The state itself is the first to justify violence as legitimate, particularly as internal or external putative 'enemies' are frequently blamed for chaos and de-stabilisation. State discourse shows evident signs of paranoia as factions grapple for access to power. This is most evident at the level of local, municipal and regional state politics where the direct mobilisation of popular support is necessary for access to power and where patronage relations are prevalent."

2.8.6 Sexual Violence

Jewkes and Abrahams (2002:1231) refer to the South African Law Commission's 1999 definition of rape. In terms of common law, rape is committed by a man having intentional and unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent. According to Stanton in Jewkes and Abrahams (2002, p. 1232):

> "[I]n 1996 there were 44,222 cases of completed rape, which is equivalent to 210 incidents per 100,000 women (CIAC, 2000). Many women will only try to report to the police incidents which fall within popular notions of 'rape' because of fear of not being believed (Stanton, 1993). These fears are confirmed by police assertions that many women lie about raped." (Stanton 1993.)

In 1995 I wrote and directed *Nkonyeni High*, a musical production which looked at violence in South African schools. During an English lesson, students were requested to choose a word and to tell their story around that. Lovey chose fear and told a story why she chose fear.

LOVEY: I was thirteen, alone in my room and he walked in, my uncle. He was aggressive and he attacked me. I knew nothing at all. He approached, took off his shirt. I tried to run but I tripped and hit the headboard. He undone his trousers. [She struggles to speak and eventually breaks the pencil that she has been holding. She then lets it all out.] He broke my virginity. Since then, I've never been in bed with any other man. Today I have a child whose father is my uncle. Sir, it has been happening for years now. I'm afraid to go to the police because he is the only person who takes me to school, who buys my daughter clothes. That's my life, it is filled with fear." (*Nkonyeni High*, 1995, p. 55.)

Home is the most dangerous place in the world for a South African woman or child. Most of the violence against women and children is committed in family homes and by those known to the victims. In 1999 there were 180 rapes a day in South Africa; in 2003 there was a rape every 26 seconds (Coetzee, 2005, p. 170). Lovey's story depicts the young women who are sometimes raped by their close family members and cannot even report the case because of poverty. For Lovey, it was better to remain silent while her uncle kept supporting her.

Lara Foot's first original play, *Tshepang* (2003), tackled an even more controversial subject: 'twenty thousand child rapes in South Africa per year'. The play did not directly represent Baby Tshepang (Hope), the child so named by the media, who rushed to the village of Louisvale where she had been abused by her mother's partner in 2001, but the spare one-act drama narrated and re-enacted mostly by a single speaker, Simon, depicted the village people whose lives had been wasted by poverty, hopelessness, and drink (Kruger, 2016, p. 196). In her *Daily Maverick* review of the restaging of the play *Tshepang*, Stones (2018) writes:

> "This bold drama by Lara Foot hasn't gone away, because neither has the issue. At least 20,000 baby rapes are reported every year, plus those of toddlers, children and women. We are living in a cesspit, yet Foot has waded in and managed to create a play that is compelling and compassionate as well as brutally honest. It is work that wakes you with a start at 4am as your brain rehashes it".

As we grapple with different themes and approaches to the theatre in the new dispensation, it became clear to me that we do not need to only tell fictional stories inspired by real life events, instead, we can actually tell stories of real people and that sometimes this people will tell the stories of the atrocities of apartheid in their own voices, or their stories of survival and

triumphs. This insight led to my four works which I created after a long absence from the creation of new work. These new works, which I solely directed, and wrote in collaboration with different writers were based on real life and historical events.

Mantolo - The Tenth Step (2008), *Kalushi* (2010), *The Rivonia Trial* (2010), were born out of real stories of people and historical, political events that grabbed our country during apartheid years. Using African story telling methods and dramatic narratives these stories were brought to life, and immortalized the owners of the story in the cannon of South African plays, reminding us of where we have come from before we enjoyed the freedom we attained in 1994.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have mapped an historical trajectory of theatre in South Africa that responded to the socio-political and economic conditions of the times. In the following chapter I attempt to place myself in the historical context of theatre in South Africa, and seek to assert an identity for theatre that I have come to call Urgent Theatre.

CHAPTER 3: TOWARDS URGENT THEATRE

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to define Urgent Theatre as a form of theatre that concerns itself with the politics of the day and with violence - both political and social. I will make references to my work and map the influences, approaches, artistic and creative decisions and choices that have shaped my work as a playwright and director. Following on Chapter Two, I here attempt to place myself in the historical context of theatre of South Africa and seek to assert an identity for the theatre I call 'Urgent Theatre'.

3.2 Autobiographic Lens

I was born in Mabopane on 26 June 1969. My mother, Joyce Francina Sekhabi, tells me it was a bitter cold and cloudy morning. I think that explains why I am so comfortable in the cold and rain. I spent the first five years of my life at 1739 Mabopane A, my grandmother's house, Shalati Shisana. We lived with my grandmother, my mother, my two aunts Mamogolo Maria and Mamogolo Yvonne, and Mamogolo Maria's daughters, Jane, Poppy, Maureen and Doreen and my own sibling, Sakky. The houses were two-roomed; one room made of bricks and the other made of asbestos and a string of rooms made of corrugated iron and wood. Most of the residents of Mabopane were forcibly removed from Wallmansthal, Lady Selbourne, and Boekenhoutkloof and other farms near Pretoria. Mabopane, which consisted of Blocks A, B, C, D and E was proclaimed a black only resettlement by the then Transvaal administration. The forced removals of people from Wallmansthal and Lady Selbourne can be classified as what Schramm and Shuda (1991) refer to as 'psychological violence' where serious damage is inflicted even though physical force is not used. Furthermore, a further distinction can be made between structural violence as the enforcement of policies by the authority in power, and reactionary violence by those who do not subscribe to this authority (Van Eeden et al, 1996, p3).

In 1975, my mother married Daniel Kau Sekhabi and we went to live in Mabopane 1275 Block C. Unlike in Block A, the toilets were not the long drop (pit toilets), they could flush - it was exciting. The houses had four rooms and were built of bricks and not asbestos. At the time of moving to block C, I was already registered at a nearby primary school in Block A, Moropa Primary School. This meant I had to walk twelve kilometers a day to and from school. Luckily,

my sister Doreen came to stay with us so we could walk to school together. My little brother, Sakky, was three years old at the time so when we went to school, he stayed behind with the neighbours. On weekends, my sister would sometimes stay in Boekenhout and I would have to take care of my brother. One Saturday, I was tasked to take care of my brother whilst my parents went to work. During the day, a friend of mine from house number 1278 visited and we started experimenting with smoking. We extracted the cotton wool material that is used to stuff mattresses and rolled it in pieces of newspaper to smoke. Whilst we were busy with this, my small brother was doing the same without us noticing; he burnt his lips and cried himself to sleep. In the afternoon my mother got back from work and was happy that I could take care of the house. She had brought us fish and chips and after she had served the meal, she went to wake my brother. The burns had got worse and he had blisters on his lips. I got the hiding of a lifetime and never even got a chance to enjoy my fish and chips. From that day on, I lost the privilege of being responsible for the house by myself.

Towards the end of 1975, my parents started having marital problems which eventually led to their divorce. During that time, my dad took us to live at his parent's home in Ga-Rankuwa. I later realised that he had actually kidnapped us he came in the middle of the night and whisked my brother and me away in his employment vehicle without my mother's consent. What I thought was a weekend outing translated into a year of separation from my mother. For the whole of 1976 we stayed with my paternal grandmother in Zone 16 Ga-Rankuwa.

Ga-Rankuwa was established in late 1961 to accommodate people who had been forcibly removed from Lady Selbourne, Bantule, Newclare, Marabastad, Rama, Eastwood, and other neighboring farms. Ga-Rankuwa is situated about 32 km from the City Centre of Pretoria and 22 km from Lady Selbourne. The area was named after a Bakgatla headman, Rankuwa Boikhutso. Rankuwa means 'we are accepted' the prefix 'Ga' was added by the community to signify 'we are not accepted' (Kgari-Masondo, 2013, p. 25).

I missed my mother and on three occasions I attempted to escape but I could not abandon my younger brother. No matter how thorough my planning had been, I could not escape because Sakky was always nowhere to be found he would either be playing in the bush directly opposite our house or would be in the house and would not come out no matter what trick I pulled. The one time when I was sure we would escape, was when my uncle came to visit, driving a station wagon. I had planned to sneak into the back and lie there - again Sakky failed to come to the party. I eventually gave up.

I also remember military vehicles laden with soldiers passing our home some time in 1976. The streets were very quiet that day and no one explained to me what was happening. Later that year I was taken to stay with my aunt. She and her husband used to fight a lot. My aunt was very stubborn and they would fight through the night till her husband would eventually kick her out. We got used to the fighting; it became part of our routine.

In 1977 my parents' divorce was finalised and my mother was granted custody of us kids. We went to stay with my mother at her home in Mabopane Block A, commonly referred to as Boekenhout, where I had been born. Interestingly, the mid-wife who delivered me, Sister Kola, is the grandmother to Kholofelo Kola, who later became a good friend and a great actor and with whom I worked in more than ten productions.

3.3 Violence in my Township

Knife fights were common in Mabopane and we often saw someone running down the street soaked in blood, or a group of guys running past baying for blood to avenge some or other perceived transgression. As kids we would follow the fights, despite our parents' warnings; our parents were only happy when they saw us on a soccer field. My grandmother, Shalati, would wake us every Sunday morning to go to church the Swiss Mission. I found church-going difficult: firstly, I was ashamed of attending a Xitsonga church because I am a Motswana; and secondly, I would far rather have been at the soccer grounds where the lowest division (for which I played) held matches in the mornings as preparation for the big A-team match at 3pm. I started waking up early in the morning and running to the soccer grounds to play for the lower division of the Highlanders. I always wanted to be recognised as a Motswana that's who I am - attending a Swiss Mission was doing little for my identity.

3.4 Relocation to Soshanguve

In December 1977 Bophuthatswana became the second of South Africa's ten so-called 'homelands' to accept independence (Cowley & Lemon, 1986, p. 252). "Bophuthatswana is geographically fragmented, consisting of seven units spread across three of South Africa's provinces. Their combined area of 44, 109 km^2 is similar to that of Belgium. An overall population density of 39.5 per km^2 in 1983 conceals the sharp contrast between the more urbanized eastern districts and the more remote, arid western districts. The former includes

Moretele 1 and Odi 1, part of which are within commuting distance of Pretoria" (Cowley & Lemon, 1986, p. 252). The ethnic state idea is poorly realised in practice. Only 42 per cent of the Batswana population lived in Bophuthatswana in 1980, whilst at least one-third of the de facto population were non-Tswana. The fact that my grandmother was non-Tswana, meant that at the beginning of 1978 we had to leave Boekenhout and relocate to Soshanguve. Somehow, my grandmother, managed to keep her house.

Even though the history of human habitation today in the area known as Soshanguve can be traced back 200,000 years, the creation of the township with its name, as it is known today, dates from only 1972. The township owes the name 'Soshanguve' to the mix of ethnic groupings that the apartheid government forcibly relocated to this area in 1972. These included the Sotho, Shangaan, Nguni, and Venda, hence 'So' for Sotho, 'Sha' for Shangaan, 'Ngu' for Nguni, and 'Ve' for Venda (Nkemngu 2008:2).

So there we went, and stayed in the Zulu (a subsection of the Nguni ethnic groups) until we were later relocated to the Shangaan section in block G. In Soshanguve, I continued with my primary schooling at Boepathutse Combined School. One of my major assets has always been my memory. I can memorize just about anything, no matter how long, in the shortest possible time. Whilst in primary school, we were given a poem called '*Ge re ya Fora'* (*'Going to France')* in translation and to this day I remember most of it. The opening lines went like this:

"Ge reya Fora

Ngwana ngwanaka

Tse le dibonago matsatsing a lehono ke dinyane

Tse di bonwego ke rona maphaswa

Go dibolela ke gokwa mpa mokgora"

The poem was given to children in standards two, three, four and five. They gave us a week to memorize it and we were expected to have it ready for Friday Fridays were reserved for poetry recitals. Our North Sotho teacher, Mr Sethosa, called Fridays 'Labohlano la matlhoko' meaning 'Friday of pain'. On Friday he would find a reason to give you a hiding. On the particular Friday in question, I was the only pupil who knew the poem from beginning to end and Mr Sethosa trooped me from class to class recite the poem. Using a wooden blackboard

duster, he would hit the students who could not recite the poem on their finger-tips - it was excruciatingly painful. And as he hit them, he would say: “Nkani yena a e tseba lena le sa e tsebe” (why is it that he knows the poem and you don’t?). Because there we so many students to be punished, Mr Sethosa decided to ground the lot, and I was left alone on the school grounds for the lunch break, with neither packed lunch nor money and had to wait and wander the school fields, hungry - how I longed for that lunch break to end!

3.5 Violence everywhere

In our early days in Soshanguve, a young man called Lance (not his real name) killed a guy called Sipho (not his real name). They were gambling and fought over five cents and Lance stabbed and killed Lucas (not his real name). I did not personally witness the fight but I knew Moss as he stayed at the back of the house opposite our home. It was scary to hear that the young man we saw every day had killed someone. He was arrested and sentenced to jail. On his return he carried the badge of a murderer and no one was willing to mess with him or even look him in the eye.

The house next door to ours was a shebeen, so fights would erupt any time and loud music would blare all the time. But what stayed with me till today is the image of a mother who virtually every weekend and ironically usually on a Sunday would, clad only in her underwear, be chased down the streets by her husband. She would try and reach any house where she could find shelter and I would be sitting on the front stoep of our home watching all this. At school, there was a beautiful schoolteacher, Ms. Dikobe (not her real name). We were used to her bruised face no matter how hard she tried to hide it. Rumor had it that she was beaten by her jealous husband. In later years I became friends and worked with Phillip Thindisa, Ms. Dikobe’s neighbor. He told of the fights in the Dikobe’s household, and how our teacher would seek shelter at his home.

In my early high school years at Lethabong High, we were shocked to learn that one of our fellow students, Gabriel Mabena (not his real name), had stabbed and killed his brother. I just didn’t understand why he would kill his brother in a dispute over Kaiser Chiefs and Orlando Pirates. Gabriel didn’t do time in jail, apparently his parents asked for leniency. He returned to school but he was always the boy who had killed his brother, who was very stubborn, and

always in fights. Later in my early university days, another young man, Lolo (not his real name) killed his sister over a piece of meat. He spent four years in jail.

I suppose the eenvironment that I grew up in accounts for the violent nature of my work. Having witnessed violence so often in my township, I am almost compelled to highlight it in my works as it remains a recurring social ill that has ravaged families, individuals and communities. I have often modelled violent scenes in my plays on real violent events that I have witnessed, told about or read about.

3.6 Towards Urgent Theatre

I have practised theatre at a community level with Chiro Youth Club. Chiro was an organization for the Roman Catholic Church youth. Anyone could join regardless of denomination. I was one of those young people. My first director was Jacob Mamosebo whose work was influenced by Gibson Kente. While working with Mamosebo, I met the likes of Kholofelo Kola who exposed me to Gibson Kente's music and continually told stories of Kente's plays which he had seen. I just fell in love with Kente. At university I encountered different theatre makers like Brecht and had to study Grotowski fully and understand his principles. Boal I met after graduation. From Kente, I learned the importance of music and dance in a play. With Brecht I learned the importance of allowing the audience the space to reflect and hopefully act on their take of the work. Although this was not natural for the audiences I was creating work for, it was a good lesson learned. With Grotowski I learned that artists should use their bodies and voices to tell a story and that they could take the audiences to different places without using big sets, costumes and recorded music. Boal taught me to engage the audiences and how to give them space to be part of the action. With Boal's teachings, I was able to adapt the ideas and make the actors literally invade the audience spaces. My theatre has undoubtedly been influenced by all these theatre makers. With them for my inspiration, I seek to define the theatre that I make and to give it an identity.

The Theatre of Gibson Kente

When Kente came to the theatre, his predecessors had already experimented with theatre that included song and dance and performances in the theatre presented in the township halls. Kente was by no means alone in his field. There was a growing groundswell of theatre productions

during the period, particularly before the Soweto Uprising in 1976. Kente's Productions was by far the largest player and Kente himself the most outstanding theatre entrepreneur of his time (Kavanagh, 2016, p. 97). I suppose that is what earned Kente the title 'Father of Township Theatre'. He did not earn this title purely for his entrepreneurial skills, but because the theatre he made combined, song, dance, and township lingo which was distinctive and gave the audiences a glimpses of themselves. The fascination with Kente's performances - along with their narrative elements and simple sets, heightened acting, music, and dancing - was that they held audiences in rapt suspension or disbelief, akin to the trances induced by ritual. All this appealed to the values of the community (Kavanagh, 2016, P. 97).

Kavanagh in Ndebele (1995, p. 88) refers to Kavanagh (1981) where he notes:

> "None of Kente's earliest plays raised social and political issues. Instead the plots exploited what is called 'human interest'. Kente created characters and set them in situations which either amused or moved audiences to pity or terror. His music was the principal instrument used for developing the emotional potential of those situations. If the play had any message at all it was 'every cloud has a silver lining' or 'that's life.' "

Although Kente's dramatic content changed during the 1970s and he started addressing political issues in his works, this was merely temporary. Soon after *How Long*, *Too Late*, and *I Believe*, Kente reverted to his traditional content of township folk in poverty stricken situations looking up to God for relief. But even with this content, Kente remained popular among the township audiences who patronised his works. For young people like me, it was not only inspiring to see his work, but also an honour to watch a production of one of the most revered theatre-makers in our country.

I do not have an intimate knowledge of Kente's older plays, save for the music from *Sikalo*, *How Long* and other productions from the 1980s. The music of *Sikalo* and *How Long* have left an indelible mark on my memory. The combination of jazz, mbaqanga, Christian hymns from Western religion, and African Apostolic and Zionist churches, remain a reference point for my musical work.

In 1988 I went to Wits University, where I was introduced to Bertolt Brecht and his Epic Theatre. I had already heard about Jerzy Grotowski and his Poor Theatre and I learned about

Stanislavski and the Actor Prepares. I encountered Augusto Boal only later, once I had already graduated.

After graduation I got together with some friends. I formed a company and lived with the artists. Taking a page from Kent's book, we targeted our advertising at community halls and tertiary institutions in which we also performed.

3.6.1 Brecht and Epic Theatre

One of the special elements of Epic Theatre is the so-called 'A-effect' (Alienation effect). Briefly it describes a technique which gives to the human events which are being presented, the stamp of the conspicuous, of something requiring an explanation, something not obvious, not simply natural. The aim of the A-effect is to make the spectator an active critic of society (Cole et al, 1970, p. 240). Subiotto (1982) elaborates: "The emphasis is on the spectator and the final effect of the play is to 'leave him productively disposed after the spectacle is over'" (Duggan in Banham et al, 1999, p. 3-4). Because the spectator has, perforce, a wider view of events than the protagonist, he or she is able to assess the evidence presented and to adopt an attitude in line with its significance. If thus roused, it is hoped that the spectator will not only be stimulated to change his or her own thinking, but also be encouraged to intervene (Duggan 1995, p. 4).

Brecht's methodology is easier said than done especially for a township audience. These are the audiences who grew up on the African story telling of call and response. There already, you have an audience used to being involved in the story. I agree with Kavanagh (2016, p. 87) when he states:

> "… Brecht's intention in stressing the narrative elements was quite different from that which motivates African narrative performance. Brecht was attempting to create a thinking theatre. He wanted an audience that did not get carried away by the story but constantly evaluated the paradoxes and ironies his scene presented them with. Though an African, like a Brechtian narrative performance, makes no effort to hide the fact that it is story telling or a play, it nevertheless seeks to move and involve the audience."

Although I want my audiences to think, I also know that the black audience, who constitute the majority of the consumers of my work, are generally active participants when watching a play or music performance on stage. They respond with shock, disgust, or excitement depending on the situations presented on stage. This is not to say that they do not think, but they live in the production and immediately side (vociferously so) with either the protagonist or the villain. Its political orientation aside, I was not immediately tempted to use Epic Theatre's A-Effect as a means of expression.

3.6.2 Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed

Boal wants the spectator to assume the role of the actor and invade the character and the stage. Boal wants the spectator to occupy his own space and offer solutions. By taking possession of the stage, the 'Spect-Actor' is consciously performing a responsible act. The stage is a representation of reality; a fiction. But the Spect-Actor is not fictional; he or she exists in a dual reality, both within and outside of the scene. By taking possession of the stage in the fiction of the theatre he or she acts not purely in the fiction, but also in his or her social reality. By transforming the fiction, he or she is transformed into him- or herself (Boal, 1979, p. xxi)

A scene in *Asinamali!* would fit Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed where Spect-Actor exists both in the scene and outside of it. Maybe to a great extent, the Asinamali Spect-Actor took it a bit far when the play was performing in Clement. According to Kerr (1995, p. 233):

> "The most dramatic of all was the scene in which characters suspected that there was a police informant in the audience; the actors broke out of role and went into the hall looking for him. In the atmosphere of suspicion and fear in the mid-1980s, this touched a raw nerve in township audiences. During a performance in Clement, a real informant in the audience, sent to spy on the play, became frightened and tried to escape. In an act of rage, disturbing for its blurring of art and life, some of the audience chased the informant outside the hall and killed him."

Whilst the Spect-Actors in *Asinamali!* took it far beyond and instead of occupying the stage and the character, they responded in *their own space*, and chased and killed another audience member. The approach by Ngema opened up possibilities of audience involvement in my

works. I used direct engagement with audiences when I wrote and directed *Roadhouse.* At that stage, I had not seen *Asinamali!* or read Boal, and I thought I was being original only to realise, when I watched *Asinamali!* later in life, that mine was not an original idea. Seeing the audience engagement in *Asinamali!* made me realize that I could allow the actor to take possession of the Spect-Actor's space that is the auditorium. I applied the method again, this time with greater clarity, when I remounted *Silent Voice* in 2014. In *Silent Voice*, the actors hold the audience hostage and engage the Spect-Actor from his or her comfort zone of the auditorium. The effect of this approach in *Silent Voice* is described in the *Cape Times* (2014) by Du Toit when she wrote that:

> "Aubrey Sekhabi's *Silent Voice* wastes no time in launching an aggressive assault on its viewer's senses. Taking place in near darkness, the opening scene is one of confused running, heavy breathing, chaotic shouting, rapid gunshots, industrial sparks flying and the burning smell of an angle grinder hanging in the air. Caught in the middle of what appears to be a botched cash-in transit heist, a strange sensation starts settling in your stomach. Confronted by four gun-wielding, balaclava clad men running towards you when the lights eventually switched on, you suddenly realize what that feeling is: Fear."

Whilst Du Toit (2014) recognised the impact of the work, she felt disappointed by the handling of the hostage scene in the production, and had this to say of the scene:

> "While one can appreciate the directors commitment to authenticity, as well as programme notes and other signs outside the theatre warning of its violent content, it is crucial to approach this kind of immersive theatrical experiences with great responsibility- especially considering the (very likely) possibility that at some point there will be audience members in attendance who have been victims of actual similar situations in the past. During that mentioned hostage scene's unfolding as part of last week's opening night-involving the cast walking among audiences and threateningly shouting instruction at us while waving guns around - I noticed a woman across the aisle from me crying and visibly upset in a way that suggested a kind of trauma much deeper than simply feeling uncomfortable with that moment. When one of the performers therefore none the less stopped and towered over her for several sentences of dialogue longer, it left me disappointed. Surely if someone is cowering, hiding her

face behind the programme and sobbing uncontrollably, you don't then continue to press a gun, albeit a prop, against the forehead and aggressively bark orders at her".



Silent Voice. Photographer: Sanmari Marais.

In *Silent Voice,* the actor could have pulled back, I was sitting a few chairs from that of the audience member in discussion. I saw the scene, it was a traumatic experience for the Spec-Actor. I kept on looking to Tshallo Chokwe who played Charlie X, and had stood in for Presley Choeneyagae who was on tour with *Rhetorical,* written by Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom and myself, directed by Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom. Chokwe's experience pulled us through and gave us a big bite of terror. But in this instance, I knew he should have pulled back. Some audience members would leave during or immediately after the hostage scene. I spoke to Tshallo about being a little sensitive when doing the scene, but without losing his edge or the scene's impact. In a way, I managed to bring violence right to the door step of the audiences, which was one of the aims of Silent Voice. What I also learned from *Silent Voice* and most of

my work, especially my most recent piece, *Kwanele,* was that during the show a number of women walk out and leave in tears. I remember discussing with our HR Manager whether we in fact should seek out professional help for our audiences at all our performances. Many of our audience members need to engage with trauma councillors or speak to someone who can listen after they have experienced works like *Kwanele* or *Silent Voice*. Whilst for some audiences, *Kwanele* was a relief and a healing process, for others it raised deep-seated and long suppressed emotions.

3.6.3 Grotowski's Poor Theatre

Grotowski's Poor Theatre influenced most South African theatre makers during the 70s and 80s. Barrios (2008, p. 59) asks two questions - Did South African theatre artists adopt Grotowski's method of poor theatre (bare stage, emphasis on the actors' skills) because they did not receive financial support from government? Conversely, did they adopt Grotowski's method because it reflected the African oral tradition in which gesture, song, and movement are indispensable skills in a performer? I am inclined to say both characteristic elements of oral tradition and the lack of financial support have been influential in South African theatre making. Using Grotowski's theatre method and approach, it was easy to make works that could travel without massive sets and props and used the body of the artists as instruments to compensate for the lack of what Grotowski terms 'plastic elements'. For Grotowski, theatre can exist without costumes and sets, without music to accompany the plot, without lighting effects and without the text. But theatre cannot exist without an actor and an audience - "At least one spectator is needed to make it a performance." (Grotowski, 1968, p. 32.)

Before I saw *Woza Albert!, Asinamali!, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island,* and *eGoli,* I had seen only Gibson Kente's play *Bad Times*. Gibson Kente used big sets made of corrugated iron and cardboard. I remember the actors running around trying to get a tree to put on stage for the performance. I had also heard the music of *How Long* and *Sikalo*. Although *How Long* was asking a question of how long we must suffer as black people, the message did not inspire me to write political plays. The music and dance, however, have stayed within me to today. *Woza Albert!* and *Asinamali!* struck my political nerve.

From *Woza Albert!*, I came to learn that theatre does not need big sets. You need the actor and you need the audience. This approach to theatre was inspired by the Polish director, Jerzy Grotowski.

> "We abandoned make up, fake noses, pillow stuffed bellies - everything that the actor puts on in the dressing room before performance. We found that it was consummately theatrical from the actor to transform from type to type, character to character, silhouette to silhouette, while the audience watched, in a poor manner, using only his body and craft…. By his controlled use of gesture the actor transforms the floor into a sea, a table into a confessional, a piece of iron into an animate partner, etc. Elimination of music (live or recorded) not produced by the actors enables the performance itself to become music through orchestration of voices and changing objects We know that the text, per se, is not theatre, that it becomes theatre only through the actors use of it - that is to say, thanks to intonations, to associations of sounds, to the musicality of the language." (Grotowski, 1968, p. 20-21.)

True to Grotowski's method, Woza *Albert's* strength lay with the actors. The use of their bodies and their voices reflected this influence. Barrios (2008, p. 170) observes that:

> "All the musical sounds, as well as other sounds of trains, sirens or helicopters are created by the two actors themselves. Lighting equally occupies an essential function in that it transforms the stage into different places, time of the day and mood. In the twenty-one scenes that the play is composed of, the two actors switch roles continuously, enacting all sorts of different characters—men, women, young and old people or White characters— and, at times, they create invisible characters to whom they speak. This structure creates a fast pace, moving from one scene or place to another without interruption—from a street with vendors, to a brickyard, a cell in Robben Island, a barbershop, or a train."

Having witnessed Gibson Kente's *Bad Times*, I had always regarded theatre as a conversation between two or more characters, but in the case of *Woza Albert!*, it was only two actors but they told their story through multiple role-playing - I was impressed. An actor could actually speak directly to the audience as if telling a story. The theatrical language used in black South African plays comprises dance and/or movement, music, and poetry, elements that are rooted

in traditional South African oral literature; i.e., storytelling and poetry (Barrios, 2008, p. 151). In a scene in *Woza Albert!* (1983, p. 26) Mbongeni speaks directly to the audience:

> "Mbongeni: [Joyous siren] Ja, madoda, hundreds of thousand will gather at the Regina Mundi Church in the heart of Soweto. And people will sing and dance. There will be bread for all. And wine for all. Our people will be left in peace, because there will be too many of us and the whole world will be watching. And people will go back to their beds. [He joins in the song for a few phrases.] These will be days of joy. Auntie Dudu will find chicken legs in her rubbish bins, and whole cabbages. And amadoda - our men - will be offered work at the pass office. The barber will be surrounded by white tiles. The young meat seller will wear a nice uniform and go to school and we will go to Morena for our blessings.

[Song subsides. Percy lies on boxes as a sleeping woman. Lights dim.]

> Mbongeni: And then the government will begin to take courage again. The police and the army will assemble from all parts of the country… And one night, police dogs will move in as they have done before. There will be shouts at night and banging on the door…" (Woza *Albert!*, 1983, p. 26).

The theatrical languages of mime, song, music, lighting, and bare stage are a symbolic expression of survival for black South Africans under apartheid. Their survival depended on their own personal means, for they were deprived of financial resources and adequate living conditions, as reflected in their '*Poor Theatre'* - to use Grotowski's terms. The emphasis and foundation of the theatrical communication rest on the actor's skills to transform the stage into a rich combination of elements that create a large variety of places, characters, and situations (Barrios, 2008, p. 171).

In 1985 our cultural group 'Phatha-Phatha', was placed fifth in the Shell Road Competition. In 1986, as part of the prize we were offered a chance to attend a week-long workshop at the University of Witwatersrand. This included viewing films and attending a play. We were taken to the Market Theatre to see *Woza Albert!* This was a career-changing moment. *Woza Albert* was amazing. It featured Louis Seboko and Sello Maake ka Ncube, who by then was only known as Sello Maake.

At the time I was unaware that *Woza Albert!* had been created by Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema, and Barney Simon who was at the time, the artistic director of the Market Theatre. None of that mattered, what was amazing was how incredibly Sello Maake ka Ncube and Louis Seboko told the story. Their performance effortlessly displayed high energy, with sweat dripping from their faces. They kept me gasping, and screaming, and cheering.

The show starts with the two guys on a box miming musical instruments. I discovered later that it was Hugh Masekela's *Stimela.* They are outside the pass office in Albert Street looking for work from potential white employers. They transform from one character to the next, move from one place to the other. It was magic. This was only the second time I had watched professional theatre the first was Kente's *Bad Times*. Sello Maake ka Ncube and Louis Seboko were playing a wide variety of characters. One minute they were laborers, the next they were whites using only pink balls to indicate they were white. Sello played largely the 'black' roles; Louis specialized in 'white' roles.

When I saw *Woza Albert*, I had only acted in my own plays and in Jacob Mamosebo's productions, *Shall we overcome*, *Troubled Land* and *Where they Belong.* Under Mamosebo's tutelage, I learned about drama, singing, dance, and poetry. His directorial style was more gigantic, more expressive, and exaggerated. He was influenced by Gibson Kente. Seeing *Woza Albert* showed a different style, no big sets and only two people who spoke like normal people. You did not need a white person on stage to tell his or her story. You could transform using minimal props. You did not need machine guns to show you were a soldier or a policeman, you could create the illusion of a gun through mime and gesture and the sound of a machinegun with your voice.

Inspired by the *Woza Albert!* style, I directed Victor Moagi's *The Kingdom (*1987*).* The plot centered around a young man who had to convince his struggling father to allow him to join Umkhonto we Sizwe while the old man wanted him to focus on his education. Stylistically the play had elements from *Woza Albert* e.g. black people wearing pink noses to denote white policemen. We also opened the show like *Woza Albert*, the only difference being that there were six of us not only two actors. I remember when we performed the play in 1987 at MEDUNSA. One of the actors, Mmuso Sehloho, was playing the father who had lost his job and was being supported by his son. In one scene, one of the actors missed his cue, Mmuso

Sehloho decided to exit the stage. When he arrived backstage, I told him to go back on stage and he asked, 'to do what?' I replied 'betha aka, betha aka' (fire the AK47), at which he returned making AK47 sounds - gagagagagagaga - the rest of us then joined him and in mime pulled hand grenade pins and threw them in the direction of audience. This was followed by huge applause from the audiences. Performing a play that told MK stories was dangerous given that the ANC was banned and regarded as a terrorist organization. Police informers were everywhere, no one know who was listening or watching but we did not care. Our profile as cultural activists grew. We were no longer gumboot and dustbin dancers, we were artists with a political conscience, instant cultural revolutionaries, and we were invited to perform plays and poetry at rallies and political events.

Another experience I took from *Woza Albert* was the spirit of defiance and protest. I remember being extremely satisfied when Zulu Boy slammed his hand on the box and stood up against baas Kom. A black man standing up to a white man! That was the first for me. It was inspiring and refreshing. I clapped and screamed with joy and satisfaction. I marveled at Zulu Boy using his knobkierie (stick) to defeat thirty white policeman and landing them in hospital whilst he managed to escape. He was my hero. The escape of Morena from prison was another moment I cherished, and finally the raising of the dead, it was hugely satisfying to see Verwoerd left behind to rot in his grave. The feeling called back my childhood reaction when Big John Tate defeated Kallie Knoetze on 2 June 1979. John Tate was an American heavyweight boxer and he was black, whilst Kallie was a South African heavyweight. The fact that Kallie was a South African who deserved my support, was unimportant he was white and Tate was black; just like me. Ndebele (1991, p. 40) affirms this feeling when he writes that:

> "We are familiar with how in the days when South Africa still participated in the world soccer, international teams visited the country for games. We are familiar with the spectacle of how African fans cheered the visiting team against the white South African side. It happened in rugby too. It seems, if all black South Africans could read this 'protest literature', they would naturally take sides much to their aesthetic delight."

Indeed, I took sides with Zuluboy. In apartheid South Africa, I always looked for a hero. Someone who could stand up against the white people, and Zulu Boy gave me that satisfaction. *Woza Albert!* was my introduction to Protest Theatre. It confirmed that we could use theatre as a weapon to fight the unjust apartheid system. This was clear from our rendition of poetry

after watching *Woza Albert!* We became more direct. I adapted Stokely Carmichael's speech at the Free Huey Rally of 17 February 1968.

> "Tonight we have to talk about several things. We're here to celebrate brother Huey P. Newton's birthday. We're not here to celebrate it as Huey Newton the individual, but as Huey Newton part and parcel of black people wherever we are on the world today! …. If you do not think he's capable of wiping us out, check out the white race: wherever they have gone, they have ruled, conquered, murdered, and plagued. Whether they are the majority or the minority, they always rule!… He went to Africa. Our ancestors said, 'Dig, this is our way of life, we beat drums, we enjoy ourselves, we have gold, we make diamonds and stuff for our women', he took the gold, he made us slaves, and today he RUNS Africa! Africa!... We are talking about a certain type of superiority complex that exists in the White Man wherever he is.".

After delivering my poem, one of our members would rise from the audiences and start a song from the auditorium of St Charlse Lwanga Church Hall. The song was chosen because of its reference to Luthuli who had just arisen in *Woza Albert!* Stanley Khoza led the song.

Ngubani o zo thati lizwe (Who will rule this land)

We madoda

Umfo ka Tambo (It is Tambo)

O wa shiwa uMfo ka Luthuli (We left behind Luthuli)

Nge Mihla Yakhe (In his days)

OuTambo U li Themba (Tambo is our hope)

So Mlandela (We will follow him)

When he was about to speak, we would hum the song. His choice of poetry was the manifesto of Umkhonto we Sizwe published on 16 December 1961.

> "Comrades and compatriots on behalf of the African National Congress, we declare this year as the year of the cadre. There comes a time when a nation is only left with two options. Whether to submit or fight. We shall not submit. We have no choice but to fight back. By all means in our power. In defence of our people, our future and our freedom. We will use the language that the enemy understand the most."

And all of us would go 'Grrrrrrrrrrrrrr!' and then Stanley would say"

> "That's the barrel of the AK47."

I adapted the speech to suite the South African context. When Stokely Carmichael spoke to black people of America, I would refer to black people of South Africa. When he said he went to Africa (referring to the white man), I'd say he came to South Africa, and when he said today, he rules Africa, I'd say today he rules South Africa. We performed for black audiences and they would cheer and clap when I said" "We are talking about a certain type of superiority complex that exists in the White Man wherever he is."

On addressing the aesthetics of reading protest literature, Ndebele (1991, p. 41) writes that "The aesthetics of reading this literature for a black reader, is the aesthetic of recognition, understanding, historical documentation, and indictment." Just like the aesthetics of reading protest literature, when watching a protest artistic work, the audiences understand the South African socio-political situation, they recognise characters, incidents, speakers and the history behind their suffering. This is why the audiences would scream and cheer when they heard the manifesto being performed on stage, or when the saw us mime and heard us reproduce sounds of an AK47, they all knew that this is was a weapon meant to liberate us.

3.7 Urgent Theatre in the Making

In 1993 I wrote and directed *Roadhouse.* The show was originally created for a company called Dream World Tours. Dream World would arrange tours for individuals and we would provide entertainment. The production premiered at the Link festival in July 1993. In 1994 the play premiered at the Civic Theatre Johannesburg to critical acclaim. Van Heerden (2011, p. 182) refers to anonymous reviewer in the *Sunday Times*:

> "An uncredited Sunday Times reviewer described the production as 'a cut above the usual standard of work being produced by independent workshop companies focusing on black talent,'"

And contextualised the project by adding:

> "The political changes we've just been through in the country are going to have strong implications for the arts. The special niche that has been created by shows like *Roadhouse*, offering mainly white audiences a window of mainly black experiences is not going to be there for much longer as communal barriers dissolve. We need a transitional theatre as much as we need a transitional government, and *Roadhouse*, good as it is, is going to have to make way for more complex works."

I had just graduated and formed a company with my friends from Phatha-Phatha and fellow graduates from Wits. We went to stay in Mabopane where I was born. My grandmother Shalati, had given me her house, so I hosted the artists and we lived there. These were difficult times; we had no sponsorship and there were not even funding bodies like the National Arts Council. We had to survive on the product we produced. I spent most of my time creating work. One thing that really helped was that my cast and I lived in the same house. We could rehearse at any time of the day and I knew who I was writing for and was able to write to the actors' strong points. The process of creation was closely allied to workshopping I'd write; present in the morning; direct where the piece was going and request a particular style for a song; supply the lyrics; and then the guys would start composing the music. Kholofelo Kola, Hamilton Dlamini, and Phillip Mofomme played a huge role in music composition.

Again because of lack of funds, we could not afford props, costumes, and furniture, so I resorted to adopting the Poor-Theatre method. The actors will use their bodies and voices, and since we were aiming for a musical, they would also serve as a band using our voices to create sounds of guitars, horns, and drums. Unlike in *Woza Albert* where the application of this technique was used only in the opening scene, in *Roadhouse* it was used in almost every scene and song that needed instrumental backing. The use of harmonies and voice musical instrumentation was inspired by a combination of *Woza Albert* and the acapella music style of *Survival* and *Asinamali!*. With *Roadhouse* I was beginning to apply all my university learnings and experiences.

Roadhouse was a fun play, and a play that could be performed anywhere. All we needed was a table - and every venue in which we performed had a table! Six serving trays were our only props, and the cast of six served as backing band - playing drums, saxophone, and lead and bass guitar to provide the music. *Roadhouse* was Poor Theatre in presentation but also the theatre of the poor as we worked without pay and sometimes without food.

While working on *Roadhouse*, I was clear that the days of protest theatre were almost spent. I also knew that theatre was in a laboratory stage, experimenting with different styles, forms, and content. As a young playwright, I was trying to find my voice and establish an identity for my work.

Roadhouse was followed by *Mika*, which was a story of two brothers, Frank and Charlie, who had to re-connect after Charlie had murdered Frank's girlfriend and framed Frank for the murder. Frank served time in jail, and on his return Charlie visits him for a reunion. Mika dealt with violence and poverty; it also dealt with the relocation of people into new spaces and ghettoes as townships started sprawling into illegal settlements, and eventually RDP houses.

Mika was followed by *Nkonyeni High* which looked at violence in the schools and corruption by a school principal. In *Nkonyeni High*, I reverted to Gibson Kente's style of drama, song, and dance, but with no over exaggerated acting. The majority of the cast were graduates from different institutions of higher learning, and most were working towards avoiding the Gibson Kente style, which they viewed as caricature. Nevertheless, *Nkonyeni High* was strongly influenced by Kente and was well received in the North West Province and in Pretoria where it was performed at the State Theatre.

The North West Arts Council provided me with an opportunity to create work. I was running a company of full-time artists. Mafikeng was a small town so I spent a lot of time with the artists. When I wrote the works, I knew who I was writing for, and we all discussed what the play would be both during and outside of rehearsals. We would discuss characters, I'd get to know more about the artists, their strengths and weakness and how, in rehearsals, I could draw from that. This made it easy to create new work.

When *On My Birthday* was conceived, Kholofelo Kola was proposing to produce a play about a couple where the wife was cheating with a garbage collector. I remembered a story I had been told by a very close friend who was living with his aunt who was abused by her husband.

Sometimes, he recounted, the husband would fill a bathtub with water and try to drown his wife. This led me to ask Kola, what if a couple is involved in an abusive relationship because the man is cheating with the woman's friend. I then declared "that's it, yeah, that's it, I think there's a play there". Although Kola was not pleased with the outcome, I felt that *On My Birthday* was the play I had to write. I started writing the play and developing other characters. The drowning scene where Richard submerges Lebo in the kitchen sink, is a direct take from the scene my friend told me about, only I did it in the kitchen sink.

On My Birthday focussed on a married couple, Lebo and Richard, and their violent domestic situation. The play was presented realistically with sets and props. This time there was no music, no dancing. It was a dramatic piece that exposed violence in our homes. Whilst the play cemented my place in the mainstream theatre of South Africa, it received mixed reviews from different critics. Van Heerden (2011, p. 183) refers to a review of Daniels (1996):

> "I find *On My Birthday*, purportedly a serious study of domestic violence and wife abuse, a clumsily structured melodrama that is not always logically motivated. All the dynamics are wrong…. I looked in vain for some intelligent, illuminating appraisal of the problem in the text."

Furthermore, Van Heerden (2011, p. 183) refers Sandile Mamela of *City Press* who was excited by the production. Mamela (1996) wrote:

> "*On my Birthday*, which is an eloquent cry against the abuse of women, draws wild applause from emotionally-aroused audiences… compelling, chilling and emotionally charged… *On my Birthday* is an extraordinary tale of the cycle of violence and abusive relationships and speaks of the self-hatred and unspeakable degradation that many men, especially black, have sunk into."

Anita Gates was also appreciative of the work, and did not dismiss it as rubbish as the white South African journalist had. Instead, he gave an overall review that showed the pros and cons of the work. But generally, Gates's review was comforting. Gates (1997) wrote:

> "*On my Birthday* couldn't be a more typical domestic-violence drama. The only a-typical thing, at least to a largely American audience at the Lincoln Center Festival '97, is that the couple Lebo (Kgomotso Ntulwana) and Richard (John Nhlanhla Lata), black South Africans who live in the township of Soshanguve…. In this one act play,

> part of 'Woza Africa: After Apartheid' program, Aubrey Sekhabi, a 28-year playwright tries to mention every social issue afflicting his country, which sometimes doesn't seem to come naturally. But raising the issues makes this a worthy project. *On My Birthday*, skilfully directed by Mr Sekhabi, continues through Sunday at the LaGuardia Theatre."

Despite the mixed reviews of the play, *On My Birthday* has always been a hit with the audiences. It has performed to full houses in some of the main venues in South Africa and like most of my plays, it enjoys a lot of repeat audiences. The significance of *On My Birthday* to me as a playwright and director is that I was beginning to find my voice. I was committing to deal with violence in our communities, in our homes. I was looking at those stories of violence in our homes that were not told by our predecessors as they had the huge responsibility of making theatre that pushed for political emancipation. My directorial approach was becoming more visceral. The fight scenes were brutal and raw and included Richard drowning Lebo in the sink. The images also carried the same rawness. A good example is when Richard has just beaten and raped Lebo. The next morning when she wakes in pain, she tries to cook only to find that Richard has hidden the knives for fear of retaliation given that on the night of the beating she had pulled a knife from the sink to protect herself. Lebo, on discovering that the knives are missing, starts to peel the potatoes and onions with her fingers and dismembers a full chicken with her bare hands. These violent acts were starting to define my work. Adrianne Sichel (1996) of the *Star Newspaper* even dubbed me the 'Township Tarantino' I was finding my voice. That is why when *Not With Gun* followed a year later, I was able further to explore violence in our homes, using the style of *On my Birthday*.

After eight years with the North West Arts Council, I was appointed Artistic Director of the South African State Theatre (SAST) in 2002. This was a different assignment. It came at the time when former Performing Arts Council were grappling with the notion of receiving houses versus production houses. The former Performing Arts Councils were now going to be receiving houses in order to allow for access, especially for the previously disadvantaged. This was worrisome for me because I would not have the freedom to create as much work as I had at the North West Arts Council. But, I managed to express my concerns with our Board and luckily, the Board that appointed me contained a number of theatre people who understood the significance of the playwright in an institution like the SAST. I was assured that I would be able to create work and also produce other people's work. The importance of producing work

in an institution like the SAST is that through your own programming, you are able to create an identity for the theatre which might otherwise just as well be a City Hall requiring no Artistic Director.

It turns out I was not the only one worried about my career as a playwright and director. Prior to Sekhabi's State Theatre ascendency, veteran critic Adrienne Sichel and others in the South African theatre community wondered whether my new dispensation "would put an end to [the Playwright] career as a creative artist (Cima, 2012, p. 191). Sichel was not the only one concerned about my career as a playwright. Mannie Manim (Market Theatre the co-founder, former Director of the Baxter Theatre, and current Artistic Director of the Fugard Theatre in Cape Town) lamented this fact in our 2006 interview "[Sekhabi's] a damn good playwright. He's written good plays and…I can't remember when last he wrote a play. That's a terrible thing." (Cima 2012, p. 191.)

Indeed their concerns were not baseless. In the first six years of my appointment, I wrote no new productions. There are two main reasons for this. First, I had focused heavily on providing as much access to the theatre as possible. I had always to be there for dramaturgical purposes, to set up different units of the organisation, and to develop new audiences', particularly black audiences who had traditionally been excluded from the SAST. Second, my daughter was still very young and I was not comfortable with creating violent works which she could not access. That being said, the six years were a dry spell for my writing career.

Although I was absent from the theatre scene as a playwright, I kept my writing alive and created two television series, *Hillside* and *Blood Money*. *Hillside* is a 52 episode medical drama and was filmed for SABC2; whilst *Blood Money,* which dealt with a heist gone wrong, was only commissioned for the script. I was also heavily involved in the adaptation of a British series, *Keeping Up Appearances,* into a South African series entitled *Mponeng.*

In 2008, things were settling down at the SAST and I decided to re-write *Silent Voice* and remake it with a new cast. *Silent Voice* was followed by *Mantolo: The Tenth Step* which focussed on the life and times of Sibusiso Mantolo Masuku who was sentenced to hang but had his sentence commuted to life imprisonment. Mantolo was told minutes before his hanging that his sentence had been commuted. *Mantolo* led to the creation of two new works: *Kalushi: The Story of Solomon Mahlangu* (2010), and *Rivonia Trial* (2010). These works celebrated anti-apartheid heroes. Cima, 2012, p. 192) wrote:

> "To the pantheon of anti-apartheid heroes, Aubrey Sekhabi's Mantolo - The Tenth Step (2009) and Kalushi: The Story of Solomon Mahlangu (2010) added Sibusiso Sanele Masuku (nicknamed Mantolo) and Solomon Mahlangu. In the case of Mantolo, Sekhabi continued the process of the TRC; he offered struggle veteran Sibusiso Masuku a chance to tell his incredible story for the first time. His Rivonia Trial (also 2010), written in collaboration with Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom, mytholized early struggle leaders such as Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Joe Slovo and others…Sekhabi inserted forgotten heroes into the litany of resistance."

The style of *Mantolo* leaned more towards Poor Theatre. I used song, dance, and story- telling to advance the plot. Most of the songs were struggle songs of the eighties. They belonged to the era that I understood and it was nostalgic to work on the production. Mantolo survived death on the gallows. I felt that the gallows were an important aspect of his life and I wanted to show the hanging as realistically as possible. When I briefed the designer, I specifically told him that I would like to show the hangings and that he must devise some means to have this happen realistically. Together with the set designer, we agreed on preparing a mock of the gallows using a raised platform, two metres high, with a trapdoor, and a noose that hung around the actors' necks. This was done to present the scene realistically, but of course for safety reasons the rope was attached to a harness which the actors wore. The scene left the audiences gasping with fear. I wanted the audiences to feel the reality of what happened to those who were hanged under the brutal tyranny of apartheid.

In *Kalushi* I adopted an audio-visual technique to show how the TRC proceedings took place when Solomon Mahlagu's mother, perpetrators, and witnesses gave evidence. I had set up three cameras and they would record the proceedings as the play unfolded. It was very effective and brought back the memories of the TRC. The play was also laden with Ndebele ritual and traditional song and dance. And for the second time in my plays, white people played white people. There were no longer the pink balls of *Woza Albert* to denote whiteness, the play was presented as realistically as possible, and the brutality of the police had even more significance. I was now beginning to reflect on South African stories without the obstacles presented by the apartheid laws where black and white people could not work together or perform in certain areas together.

I extended the *Kalushi* casting approach when I worked on *Rivonia Trial*. I consider *Rivonia Trial* the most significant South African drama post-apartheid and a true South African theatre

production. The true story of the Rivonia trialists was made up of South Africans, regardless of colour or creed. The casting was a true reflection of South Africa. *Rivonia Trial* was a court drama with storytelling to advance the plot. The soundscape was provided live by a band of six members.

The show had a cast of some eighty members and started outside the theatre with a large group of extras waiting outside for the court case to start. The SAST front of house members were dressed in apartheid police uniform and harassed black audience members as the came to watch the show. All the offices and the walls leading up to the performance area were painted like Robben Island cells with burglar doors resembling cells. When you entered the theatre you found a courtroom and at the end of the show, the actors were to be seen in their cells in the corridors leading you out of the theatre. I employed all these techniques to give the audience a total experience of the Rivonia Trial, and it worked. *Rivona Trial* went on to win three Naledi theatre awards - best South Africa script (Aubrey Sekhabi, Paul Grootboom, and Mandla Dube); Best Director (Aubrey Sekhabi); and Best Actor (Sello Maake Ka Ncube).

Silent Voice, Mantolo*: The Tenth Step*, Kalushi*: The Story of Solomon Mahlangu* (2010), and *Rivonia Trial* (2010) announced unequivocally my return in the theatre space. This time, I was aware of the sort of work I wanted to do. I resuscitated the spirit of the 70s and 80s in my story telling. I wanted to deal with current socio-political events and use all the methods and techniques that I had learned to come up with an identity for my story telling which is inspired by my predecessors and the mood of the times. This was the beginning of an urgent journey towards Urgent Theatre.

3.7.1 Marikana: The Musical

Sometime in early 2013, I received an SMS from Mr Lucas Ledwaba, one of the authors of the book '*We are Going to Kill Each Other Today: The Story of Marikana'*, written by Felix Dlangamandla, Thanduxolo Jika, Lucas Ledwaba, Sebabatso Mosamo, Athandiwe Saba, and Leon Sadiki as a musical. In the SMS Mr. Ledwaba asked me to adapt the book they had just written about the Marikana Massacre. At the time, I was not aware of the book and he offered to get me a copy. The moment I opened the book, I could not put it down.

> "On Thursday 16 August 2012, members of a combined police task force shot dead 30 mine workers who had gone on strike at Lonmin Platinum Mine at Marikana in the

> Northwest Province. More than 70 miners were wounded. Four of those died in hospital bringing the death toll to 34.
>
> The workers, most of them rock drill operators, one of the toughest jobs on the mines, had gone on strike in support of a demand for a minimum monthly wage of R 12500, which was far more than they were being paid at the time. It was the latest episode in the wave of unrests in the platinum mining industry during which workers rejected their recognized union, The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), and went on strike on their own. Some were affiliated to a rival union, the Association of Mine Workers and Construction Union (AMCU), which had not yet been recognized by mine management.
>
> During the day, up to 3000 men gathered on a granite koppie in the area, armed with weapons traditionally carried in the remote rural areas from which most of them have come to work in the mines. The strike has become increasingly violent; while shrouded in some confusion, it gradually emerged that strikers had killed two policemen, two mine security guards, and other several mineworkers over the previous few days. Displaying an almost military discipline, the strikers moved around in armed formations, and sometimes sat in eerie silence. Sensing that something out of the ordinary was happening, locals and foreign journalists began to converge on the koppie.
>
> The shooting took place in the course of a police operation aimed at dispersing and disarming the strikers. One incident, partly filmed by television crews, and showing images of workers carrying sticks, spears, and pangas being cut down in a hail of automatic rifle fire, soon flashed into the homes of South Africans and other television viewers around the world" (De Villiers, 2013. p. 1).

I read the book until I finished it the next day. I called Lucas Ledwaba the moment I finished reading the book and told him that I would adapt the book into a musical as per his SMS request. At the time, I was working on a new piece entitled *Whistle Blower* which had already been accepted on the main programme at the National Arts Festival in Makhanda. Upon reading the book, I immediately e-mailed the Artistic Director of the National Arts Festival, Ismail Mahomed, requesting him to allow me to change from *Whistle Blower* to *MARIKANA-The Musical.*



Marikana The Musical. Photographer: Sanmari Marais

I prefer to know who I am writing for. Upon deciding that I was doing *Marikana,* I met up the same day with Meshack Mavuso at the theatre, he was coming to watch a performance of a play he was showcasing. We were in the queue into the auditorium and as we spoke, I felt here is 'Mr Green'. Mr Green is Mqcineni Noki, the man whose picture was seen throughout the country wearing a green blanket during the Marikana Massacre. I asked him if he would be interested in doing a story of Marikana. At first he wasn't sure, given his public declaration as a member of the African National Congress. He said, "Eish, o blatla ke lwe le ma comrade" ("You want me to fight with the comrades") but agreed to think about it. A week later he agreed to do it. When I started writing, I already knew who would play Mr Green and I had already decided that Aubrey Pooe was to be Nyoka. Aubrey had impressed me in *A Coloured Museum* at the Market Theatre and I had told him I'd like to work with him. This was the time.

The one important thing that made me want to tackle this work was its blow-by-blow account of what happened at Marikana which led to the fateful moment when 44 lives were lost. This was a 'warts-and-all' account of who did what, it told the facts without taking sides. It was a

story I would like to share. In my adaptation, I stayed faithful to the book simply because this sensitive work had to be captured as such. And with the amount of research and reporting already done on the source material, I could not have asked for more.

The images seen on the screens sent shock waves across the country. This was reminiscent of the Sharpeville shooting of 1960, only this time the shootings happened under the watchful eye of a democratic government chosen by the majority of the people in South Africa. It was clear that this matter was not going to be laid to rest. This was a big test for the new democracy; how was the government going to respond to this tragedy? As usual, the government established a commission of enquiry into the tragic incident.

Felix Dlangamandla, Thanduxolo Jika, Lucas Ledwaba, Sebabatso Mosamo, Athandiwe Saba, and Leon Sadiki were among the many journalists on the scene when the shootings happened and they also visited Marikana after the tragic incident. These journalists made sure they not only visited the scene of the massacre, but went so far as to visit the families of the deceased miners in Lesotho, Swaziland, and the Eastern Cape. Their experiences led to the writing of the book *We Are Going To Kill Each Other Today-The Marikana Story*. The book appeared in 2013 whilst the commission of inquiry was still ongoing.

The Marikana incident was worrying. I was more worried because at Marikana we indeed killed each other - police against people and the people against people. This was a wound we inflicted on one another as black people and we needed to nurse the wound in order to heal and hope that nothing similar would ever again take place. More than anything it was an opportunity for healing. For those who couldn't shed a tear as they watched the images of the massacre on television, this was the time of self-reflection, a time not to hide your feelings.

In my directors note (Marikana, 2014) I wrote:

> "Sceptics have asked, 'Why a musical?', and by this question they argue that it would be distasteful for such a tragic story to be told in the upbeat form that a stage musical implies. My answer is a simple one. During the Marikana strike, the miners expressed their frustrations, miseries and poverty through song. Most of the songs they sang were initiation songs which had been turned into songs that carried their stories. That is the first point, that music was inherent to their protest action. But also, importantly,

> the musical format in theatre cannot be restricted to the saccharine idea of upbeat storytelling; there are examples of quite successful musicals that tell sombre and more serious stories (for example Brecht's major works, and locally, the works of Gibson Kente). In such serious musicals, music is either used for irony or contrast, or merely to make an emotion more immediate and at a different level to normal dialogue build-ups. That is the second point. The last point in my reasoning was to treat the material as large as I perceived the real incident to be. I wanted to create an epic spectacle, which I see as the best aesthetic with which to honour the dead and brave of that day. We cannot be so myopic as to restrict the telling of such an incident through one prescriptive theatrical style that treats the whole story as if it were one long, depressing, extended funeral.

South Africans continue to blame the ruling party for the incident. There is a general feeling that brutal force should not have been used. This tragedy brought back memories of Sharpeville and the Soweto June 16 riots, only this time the brutality was perpetrated by the government we had put into power. It just felt as if things had not changed. Because I was adapting a book written by people who actually witnessed the tragedy, it was difficult to deviate from their vision and introduce my own feelings and the sentiment of the nation. I was looking for that spot in the play, and as I was creating the musical I found that the opening of the play could serve as a direct articulation of the real situation of miners and the political circumstances in which they find themselves. The struggle of miners was laid bare in Matsemela Manaka's *Egoli* and now, once again, but under a new dispensation, miners continued to face the same struggle of working under dangerous conditions for meagre pay. Nothing had really changed.

When people from rural areas go to work in the mines they do so hoping that they will return to their rural homes with good money to support their families and send their children to school for the education they lack. Young miners follow in the footsteps of their fathers and uncles, bearing the same hopes and dreams of a better life. Some dream of returning home and starting their own families. But that isn't the case for many of them. They return to very old homes and find their families in much the same conditions of poverty they had left behind. Some of them come back sick with pulmonary tuberculosis and die in poverty and squalor. The situation of the miners remains unchanged; they are still exploited labour. The unacceptable socio-political challenges faced by the miners erupted before our eyes on our television screens in

2012. I could not acquiesce by silence and not tell this story. I had to find a place to express their dreams and realities.

3.7.2 Aesthetics of Marikana

The opening song in *Marikana*, sung in unison to depict a united voice, not only says nothing has changed, but also refers to the level of poverty and disease that the miners find themselves in after many years of working on the mines:

> "All the way from our villages
> To dig up the riches from the mother land
> For the benefit of foreign scavengers
> It's just like yesterday
> Being the honey pot for the west
> This past refuses to die."

The lines *"It's just like yesterday"* and "*This past refuses to die"* clearly articulate the fact that things have not changed, not even under the new dispensation. The conditions of the miners remain the same - they still bring their relatives to the mines and when they fall ill, infected with silicosis, they are sent home to die.

> "I wanna get out of this pit hole
> Give my children a future I never had
> Not follow my father's foot soles
> Break down this cycle, this brutal cycle
> This past truly must die
>
> Our brethren toil in vain
> The children of this land are empty handed
> We remain at the bottom of the barrel
> In conditions of disease and squalor
> This past refuses to die
>
> He drilled the mighty African rock
> In the choking dust, under the blazing earth

Sucked all the grime
Unable to breath, they sent him home
To weigh down his wife, weigh down his kids
And so we all go down again

Sizabalazela e lilizwe
La bo khokho wethu
Sizabalazela e lilizwe
Labo khokho wethu
(We are fighting for our land
The land of our forefathers)" (Marikana, 2014, p. 6)

This song set the scene for the musical play that deals with the massacre that led to the death of 44 people as miners went on strike for better wages. The song also ties in with the original struggle song 'Sizabalazela e lizwe' "we are fighting for the land". This is the land rich in minerals and yet the people who work the land and dig the minerals are left in poverty and squalor; worse, they are killed by the system they have put to power.

I used a reporter to advance the story. He would stand prompt side or centre, and report the facts to help us with geography and time lines. I also felt that the reporter would become monotonous and cardboard. Knowing the strengths of the cast, the reporter switched from reporting verbatim and started reporting through song, using isicathamiya. This meant the reporter could express his thoughts and feelings about the situation

When I think of people like Mongezeleli Ntenetya who was responsible for supporting a family of thirteen; Babalo Mthsazi with five siblings to support; and Nkosiyabo Xalabile and his younger brother Mandlenkosi who were sole breadwinners for their families in the village of Maganyele near Eliotdale in the Eastern Cape, all of them gunned down on that fateful day, I realize that the past refuses to die. A past that reflects the continuous exploitation of the miners, the continuous harassment and murder of the people baying for a better life, at the hands of police.

The strike for the workers was a necessary means to better their lives. They wanted R12 500 a month. Looking at their responsibilities back home and the hazardous nature of their work, I understood their demands. Their bosses' salaries remain high, whilst they, the people who risk their lives to dig the minerals out of the earth, remain in poverty and squalor. The song is a cry to end this vicious cycle. It is a culmination of stories of miners whose dreams have been continuously dashed by the system and who are denied a better life in the land of their birth.



Marikana The Musical. Photographer: Sanmari Marais

3.7.3 Storytelling

The last scene before the finale was done in true South African storytelling style. The widows told their stories directly to the audience. Through their stories, we could understand their plight. We also learned about what the loss meant. It is clear that the responsibility the miners have is beyond measure. The men went to the mines in the hope of improving the lives of their children and families, instead they came home in coffins. Not only did the women lose their husbands, children, and fathers, but there is no hope of survival without breadwinners.

"SINOVUYO: He was the sole breadwinner for 14 of us. Me our four children, eight brothers and sisters and his mother. I am lost without him, I do not know what we will do. I used to speak to him every night even if it was for a minute. Even during the strike, we spoke, he said that the phones were not allowed so we spoke very little. He told me things were bad, but I didn't imagine that he meant that it could even kill him. I am so lost without him, I do not know how we will pay for the education of his brothers and sisters. He started working at LONMINA when he was twenty two, in order to take care of us. Now, he is gone." (Marikana, 2014, p. 41).



At work: Aubrey Sekhabi



Marikana The Musical. Photographer: Sanmari Marais

Most of the songs were taken and created from the original book and the words spoken by the miners, the police, and the people who were involved in the strike from both the inside and outside. A good example is the story of Andile Yawa who had fallen ill and asked the mines for permission for his youngest son, Cebisile, to replace him. In fact, while I was writing the scene which features this song, I had one more scene planned. However, after writing the song drawn from Andile Yawa's words, I knew the play was over.

Ndivumeleni Kwelixesha
Ndilileli u nyana wami
Ngoba ndiyazi Kulendawo
Amadoda awakhali
(Please allow me to weep for my son
Because I know here in these parts
Men don't cry.)

Afela ngaphakathi
Amododa afela ngaphakathi
Afela nga phakathi
Amadoda awakhali
(They die inside, men die inside.)

Wayengunyana wami
Ndamthathela ubusha bakhe
Ndamthumela emgodini
Ukuba ayondisebenzela
(He was my boy
I took away his youth
Sent him to the mines
To go and work for me.)

Andi funi nokuthetha ngaye
Ngoba asoze abuye
Ndamthumela emgodini
Ukuba ayongi sebenzela

(I don't want to talk about my him
That won't bring him back
I sent him there
To replace me.) (Marikana, 2014, p. 41)

In the opening scene of the play the miners emerged from underground. I used the stage lifts to bring them to the fore. To strengthen the song and the moment, we had it in the opening of the musical play, and as Andile sang the song, the stage lifts were lowered into the pits of Drama theatre. With this action I wanted to show that after all, nothing has changed as the miners must still go deep into the belly of the earth to perform the very same duties, for the same meagre salaries, despite the loss of their friends, colleagues and relatives.

The dances were not celebratory, they were an expression of anger, of pain. I requested the choreographer to keep the movements tight and small. I did not want an extravagant choreography but rather dance that expressed the emotions and feelings of the miners.

When staging the killing scene, I originally had actors running into the auditorium to seek shelter and the police shooting them off site. This was received with laughter by some members of the audiences. Even if it was laughter of discomfort as some would imagine, it was still disturbing. The laughter grew even louder when the police, after shooting a miner, shouted "Ke tlago thuba tlhogo" (I will crack your skull). These were the actual words shouted by one police officer after shooting some miners who were hiding away from the koppie. When the policemen shouted these words, the audiences laughed and it lost all meaning. I ended up cutting the scene, after which the shooting scene was more effective and the massacre plunged the audiences into deep silence.

3.7.4 Ethical Considerations

Although I did not use real names for the productions, the characters depicted were real. The leading characters included Sizwe, who was a direct take of Mcgineni 'Mambush' Noki (played by Meshack Mavuso) and easily identified by the actor's costume, a green blanket which Mambush was known to have worn during the protest. Another was Nyoka (played by Aubrey Pooe) who was the a direct take of Major-General William Mpembe, as well as The Commissioner (played by Siyasanga Papu) who was a direct take of Lieutenant-General Zukiswa Mbobo. These, and many other characters, were direct uptakes of the people involved in the Marikana strike. I opted to use different names because the commission of inquiry was still ongoing and some of them had not yet testified at the time of making *Marikana: The Musical.*

Marikana: The Musical provided clarity on the type of theatre I was engaging in. It was urgent; it dealt with current socio-political issues. The fact that the massacre was executed by the government of the people by the people did not entitle me, as a theatre practitioner, to look the other way, I had to act and risk everything. The ruling party handled Marikana in a way that left all of us disappointed. There was no sense of accountability or remorse. It was as if the ruling party had not suffered the same fate at the hands of the oppressor. The ruling party had assumed the role of the oppressor. Marikana became a hot potato. The arts in South Africa are funded by government and now how could I, especially as an employee of a government institution, produce a play that could put my funders in a bad light. But that is the nature of Urgent Theatre.

3.8 Kwanele - The Urgent Response

Kwanele was written after *Freedom* and is a typical example of what I term Urgent Theatre. The production was commissioned by the Department of Arts and Culture to participate in the Luanda Biennale - Pan-African Forum, to promote a culture of peace in Africa. The Biennale was based on four pillars: the Forum of Ideas; the Youth Forum; the Women's Forum; and the Festival of Cultures.

> The Forum of Ideas is a platform for reflection on the future of Africa focusing on the sharing of good practices and crisis-prevention solutions. The Youth Forum is a privileged space for reflection and exchanges for African youth from the continent and the Diasporas, and a platform for young people who envisage giving a voice to the youth, and mobilising them to operationalise a culture of peace on the African continent. The Women's Forum provides an opportunity to highlight the role of women as peace agents for Africa, and to aid in sharing the best practices in the reduction of girls' and women's vulnerability to violence. (Pan African Forum For Culture of Peace, 2019)

Finally, the Festival of Cultures, which is where we fit in:

> ...is a real platform for the exchange and promotion of African artistic and cultural expression. It provides a forum for twelve African countries and African Diasporas to promote African values of peace and non-violence. The festival of cultures is a space of exchange between artistic and cultural expressions that contribute to the promotion of African values which promote peace and non-violence, at which each country can present a cultural and artistic manifestation (Pan African Forum For Culture of Peace, 2019).

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Whilst I was busy preparing to showcase South African dance, storytelling, and music, the attacks on foreign nationals hit the streets of Pretoria. At the time, the details were sketchy and no one knew what was happening. As news trickled in, we learned that the riots had been fuelled by the death of a taxi driver. That same week Uyinene Mrwetyana, a nineteen-year-old University of Cape Town student, was tortured, raped and murdered on 24 August 2019 in the suburb of Claremont, Cape Town. Her body was dumped in the township of Lingelethu West

in Khayelitsha. Mrwetyana's murder highlighted the broader national problem of gender- based violence and homicide in South Africa. At that point, I knew that we could not just go to Luanda and present Malopo of Bapedi, Mokgibo of Basotho, iNdlamu of the Zulus and Setapo of Batswana only. There were urgent matters that needed to be told and highlighted. In talking about peace, I decided to use violence, physical violence, emotional violence, and sexual violence as the canvas on which to address peace. Whilst the artistic offering was political, the social aspects took centre stage.

One of the main songs in *Kwanele* is 'Mr Post Man', written by my collaborator Kabelo Togoe. The song basically took the story of Uyinene and translated it into a song. The song was immediate and emotional. It left the audiences in pain.

"It's early in the morning, suns out birds are singing,
Peace in the streets, Africa is beautiful.
Been up since the crack of dawn loving life, oh I'm winning
As Mother Nature sings in her musical.

Mr post man Mr post man
Could u help me good sir?
Mr post man Mr post man
You seem like such a good soul.

Oh why don't u
Come back a little later young girl
I'll certainly do u one solid
Thank you Mr post man Mr post man
I knew that I could trust u"

Chorus

Buthi andiyindawa ndiyoyika
udadewathi kum
Buthi andiyindawo ndiyoyika
(Brother I am going nowhere

My sister said.
Brother I am going no where
I am afraid.)

Now it's 2 pm at noon and the sun is blazing
It's time to go back to the post office
How is it at 17 years old, life is so amazing,
I'm grateful for the day and tomorrow's promise.

Oh there he is, it's Mr post man, Mr post man, Mr post man
It's good to see you good sir
Mr post man, Mr post man
I won't be staying too long.

I don't think you
understand what's going on here little girl
I've got something else in store for you.
Why don't you
come a little closer little girl?
I locked the whole post office up for you

Mr post man, man handled the little girl.
Forced himself and had his way with her.
Mr post man knocked out poor little girl
Then he viciously preyed on her.
Little girl tried to give it all she got.
As she fought to get just one more shot,
But Mr post man was just way too strong
And he beat her until her life was gone."(Kwanele, 2019, p. 13)

The song was created from the information we read in the newspaper and heard on television as the story of Uyinene unfolded. I wanted the audience to recognise the story and reflect on the moment. Every time the song was sung, the female members of the audience would break down and cry, men would try to hold back their tears. The chorus is simple and easy to

remember. I wanted the song to remain with the audience. Urgent Theatre is not general, it is specific, it takes a specific incident with specific recognisable characters to allow the audience a point of reference. By portraying recognisable characters on stage in acceptable, realistic situations, the audience has the opportunity to compare their experiences with those portrayed in the play. In the realistic mode, we are able to see characters sufficiently like us to be able to consider their behaviour in terms of predictability (Patterson, 2003, p. 17)

3.8.1 Storytelling by victims

I also used real-life narratives of two actors in the play. One story was highly emotional and worse, the actor had to tell the story of her double rapes, one by her father and another by three guys every night. I chose this story simply because it had elements of Urgent Theatre. It was a story of gender-based violence with a strong emphasis on rape. Originally, the production was intended to celebrate South Africa's storytelling, song, and dance. During the first week of rehearsals, Uyinene was raped and murdered. One of the cast members Dikeledi (not her real name) was so moved by the incident, so traumatised, that she was unable to rehearse for the day. She would even jump with fear when you walked behind her in the corridor. I called her outside to find out what was troubling her. At first she was reluctant to explain, but I assured her that it would remain between us. At that point she couldn't say anything. I did not force her to speak but instead let her relax during the rehearsal. Later that evening she sent me a voice note. I was shocked, moved, angry and sad. When she came to work the following day, I called her outside to talk about her voice note. She did not want any of the cast members to know about it because she was not looking for pity. A day later I asked if she wanted to tell her story in the play. I told her that if she did, our play would have more meaning, but more importantly, we needed a voice that spoke of the unspeakable and abhorrent behaviour by men. She asked for time to think, but came back the next day and agreed to tell her story. We also agreed that we would change the names of the friends and relatives in the story to protect their identities. We did exactly that.

I rehearsed the story separately with her. When we rehearsed with the full cast, I asked her to skip the rape scenes. The cast kept wondering what we were hiding but I assured everyone that it would soon be revealed.

On the day we revealed the whole story, the cast could not continue with the rehearsal and finish the play. Both male and female cast members were in tears and I took a thirty-minute break in the rehearsal. This was a sea change for the cast and some female members started telling their horrific stories of rape. It was a very sad day in the rehearsal room and eventually I had to call the rehearsal off for the day.

The following day we presented the production for SAST management. During the presentation, all female members of staff were in tears and we had to usher some of them from the auditorium.

It was also difficult for Dikeledi to tell her story because it meant she had to re-live that moment over and over again. After every performance she was in tears and I had to spend time with her to calm her down. Right until our final performance, it remained a very tough story for her to tell. But with the support of the cast, we made it easy for her to go on that stage night after night. I was privileged to receive her permission to use the story in the play. Below is an extract from the original script of *Kwanele* (2019, p. 10-12).

This was traumatic but at the same time healing for the performer.

> DIKELEDI: I got a job at a Lesedi cultural village. I was so happy because they also provided accommodation. Finally I could leave home. Do something for myself, be someone. I started out as a dancer, a month later I was promoted and I became a tour guide. I really loved my job. The cultural village made me sane. I was safe. This one day, I was walking by the parking lot. I was on my way to my bungalow. Four guys were standing by their car, drinking. They greeted me, and because I was an employee at the arts village, I was cordial with them. They started making some moves on me and I told them to leave me alone. The one guy grabbed me and said 'Uyadelela'. As I tried to pull my hand off he tightened the grip and his other two friends helped him. There was this one guy who kept telling them to leave me alone. These guys dragged me into this bathroom, tore off my dress and threw it in the toilet. Half of my body was in the bathroom and the other half outside on the corridor. The one guy inside the bathroom held my hands, I kept on fighting but they were too strong. The other guy was by the door grabbed my legs and he started raping me. I could hear the fight between the other two guys on the corridor as one guy was trying to stop them and the

> third guy preventing him from interfering. They took turns on me and when they were done, they left me there, in the toilet. Mpho didn't do anything to me, instead he helped me out of the bathroom and he got transport to take me to the police station in Broodestroom. At the police station, I was told there was no rape kit and I should come back the following day. Mpho was my witness. We couldn't go to another police station because the driver of the car was also impatient. When I got home that night, I couldn't sleep. I scraped myself just to try and rid myself of them, the dirt, and the stench. We eventually opened a case which was postponed thrice and finally dismissed because of lack of evidence even with Mpho as a witness. Later that year, I saw the same guys at the village… That's when I knew it was time to quit the job that had brought me hope and so much happiness."

In light of gender-based and xenophobic violence that flourished during the making of *Kwanele,* I could not acquiesce in silence whilst the scourge of violence was happening before my eyes.

Kwanele, like *Marakina: The Musical,* incorporated African storytelling, song, and dance. As in *Marikana: The Musical,* the dances drew from African traditional dance but with a contemporary feel so as to reflect the rhythm and mood of the times.

With *Kwanele* I took a deliberate decision to make the work deceptive. When the show starts, you will be convinced that it is a celebration of song and dance. The songs are exciting and sung by a capable cast. In other instances we used existing music. Sibongile Kumalo enchanted us with her songs 'Little Girl' and 'Untold Story'. The songs were chosen to fit our theme, Mckenzi Matome manoeuvring between singing original Setswana, English, and Sesotho songs, Kabelo Togoe brought us to contemporary South African trap music with touches of traditional Mbaxanxa and soul, while Udu and an all-female acapella group held us firmly to acapella music confronting men and the government. All these songs, were met with claps and cheers from an enthusiastic audience spellbound by their excellence. The story starts to change when we tell the first narrative based on real life, and we then move on to a Setswana song which at first is sweet and playful coupled with Setswana dance. At this point the audience is convinced that they are in for a musical treat. And then I throw in the twist by introducing Dikeledi's story. This left audiences quite, stunned, and in tears. Invariably, the end of the monologue saw warm applause, appreciation and an outpouring of love for Dikeledi.

From producing *Kwanele* I realised that audiences at times want to be confronted by real life stories. They want to see how they and their society are reflected. It was interesting to see audiences wait to engage in conversation after the performance. Some would tell me their stories and some shared Dikeledi's experiences.

When I registered at Wits University, I had already written two plays, acted in seven plays, and performed on many stages in Pretoria and its surrounding townships. The University for me, was a place to try out the future, to create more new work and share my knowledge.

When I made *Roadhouse* and *Mika* I was searching for my voice, when I made *Nkonyeni High* and *On My Birthday*, I was finding my voice. *On My Birthday* was a revelation to me; it confirmed that the brutality of social violence in our communities had been left untold, and as a result gender based violence had somehow come to be regarded as a normal occurrence in our societies. I also knew that physical violence directed at women and children was a cancer waiting to spread. The stories I have told have all been inspired by true stories recounted by friends and colleagues. These real-life images manifested in my mind and I started to see and explore the potential progression of those stories in my head, and to gauge whether they were a subject of national and universal concern. When I tackled *Not with My Gun*, I had already established a good name for myself from creating *On My Birthday*. *Not with My Gun* also looked at violence and its fatal consequences.

Returning to the scene as a playwright after a long break, I found myself caught up in political theatre which was more reflective and a means to the preservation of the memory of political heroes. Although it was not something I planned for my career long-term, the work gave me a chance to reflect on my history and to deal with the violence of the 1980s. It was somehow healing and fulfilling to be able to reflect on the history of my lifetime.

These new political works constituted a sound platform on which to create. My directorial skills had improved, but I was aware of the need for a new challenge. As I ventured into the creation of new work, I no longer wanted to limit myself to reflective or memorialised work. I was obsessed by current socio-political events and using my craft to record events in what can in technical terms, be called ‘real time’. *Marikana: The Musical* was a springboard to the self-discovery of my craft, of the type of work I define as ‘Urgent Theatre’.

When I wrote *Marikana: The Musical,* the Farlam Commission has just been put in place. Depending on what the Commission would reveal, *Marikana: The Musical* was a huge risk. The reports could have found the production useless if there was no sense of truth in the production. From a creative point of view, the Urgent Theatre maker must always keep his or her finger on the pulse for new developments that can arise as the investigation progresses. But even with the Commission in session, there was a lot of violence in Marikana. The brutal force by the police left the nation and the world wondering what had gone wrong in South Africa.

With *Kwanele* the response *was immediate:* the same week that the xenophobic attacks happened and Uyinene was murdered and raped, I immediately focussed on those events to create the musical production of *Kwanele*. The wounds of the killing of Uyinene were still fresh in the minds of the people when we presented the work. The stories of rape and violence magnified the horror and called on our society to pause and address this scourge.

Marikana: The Musical, Kwanele, and *Silent Voice* draw their stories from actual events and with ethical consideration, protect the owners of the stories by not revealing their real names. Although the audiences may recognise the stories, when they are laid before them live on the stage, the audiences are permitted not see it as the problem they have read about, but as something that can happen to all of us.

The language used is drawn from those situations. In *Marikana: The Musical* the miners spoke fanakalo. In *Kwanele*, the artists told their real stories in the language that they would use when telling stories. The first story used a lot of 'tsotsitaal' as was to be expected from a young man growing up in the streets and dealing drugs. The second story also included contemporary slang drawn from young people of today. These elements are used to bring the work closer to the audiences so as to aid them in reflecting on the story and the real situations in their communities.

Whilst music and dance played a pivotal role, it was used to advance the story and express the emotions, dreams, and wishes of the characters. For the song 'Mr Post man', although based on actual events, I could only imagine the conversation between the victim and the perpetrator, that she trusted Mr Post man, as a civil servant and as an elder, to assist her. That is why she went into the post office. Unbeknown to her she was facing her death. The same applies to the

song ‘Panga’ in *Marikana: The Musical*, I could only imagine that the shop owner was excited to see so many customers buying pangas and wondering why they were not buying the other materials in the shop. This interpretation of events is then woven into the story or the song without taking anything away from the truth.

Conclusion

All of the plays to which I have referred, were written while in rehearsal. I would write some scenes at night and put them to practise in the morning with the actors. I will hear how the dialogue sounded, the rhythm, the tone, and the language. If the dialogue sounds contrived, it is easy to get it organic while working with the actors. After every rehearsal I would go home to fill in the empty spaces, change the beats and the rhythm if necessary. I would continue with this process until the lines and the story were believable. At times this process might continue right through to the final night of the performance.

In this chapter I have referred to my work and mapped the influences, approaches, artistic and creative decisions, and the choices that have shaped my work as a playwright and director. I have placed myself in the historical context of theatre of South Africa with the attempt to assert an identity for the theatre I call ‘Urgent Theatre’. In the following chapter I use *Freedom* as a case study to throw light on the aesthetics of, and the creative processes and choices involved in the musical original theatre production of *Freedom*.

CHAPTER 4: THE MAKING OF *FREEDOM*

4.1 Introduction

Freedom returned to the South African State Theatre in June 2019. When I prepared the Director's Note for the second season, I realised how much my previous works had influenced *Freedom.* In my Director's Note (2019) I wrote:

> "I am excited to be working on Freedom again. This new South African Musical forms part of our SAST mission to develop local musicals. Importantly for me, *Freedom* comes full circle because it borrows so much from my previous works. You find *Nkonyeni High, On My Birthday, Silent Voice, Marikana: The musical*. Artistically it is a culmination of everything that I have done. It touches on abuse, a strong element that was dealt with in *On My birthday*, there is *Marikana: The musical*, where there is focus on police brutality, *Nkonyeni High* which dealt with the challenges of students, the violence and crime of *Silent Voice*. All these themes are interwoven into this one musical. I wanted to take all these themes and put them in a production without making the audiences feel like the work is 'all over the place'".

Different writers and directors react differently to socio-political challenges. They respond as playwrights and sometimes as directors working in collaboration with artists and/or playwrights. It is my belief that when you are a playwright and director, you are in a better position to make work that is urgent. Being a playwright director enables you to create and make at the same time. As the playwright puts the ideas down, the director is implementing and feeding the writer with more ideas and vice versa. I have had the opportunity to write and direct my own work. One moment I am the playwright and the next the director. There is no time to distance myself from the work and interpret it, I am always in the work. Because of the urgency of my work, it is easy to miss some elements of the plot, or even to develop characters to the fullest. This is when you need the second eye of someone you trust to question your decisions and choices. You also need to listen to your peers, your creative team, as well as your actors. Just as in the creation of any other work, collaboration is imperative when making urgent work because it is an opportunity for the practitioner to critique the assumptions in which his or her beliefs and values have developed while making the work. I address this in Chapter Five when I reflect critically on *Freedom.*

Through an autobiographical lens, I share the influences of my theatre making processes and creative choices with the reader. These choices and influences will be reflected upon in Chapter Five, where I will use the autobiographic lens and three other lenses to reflect critically on the original musical production of Freedom.

4.2 The origins of Freedom

I once told Meshack Mavuso of my idea of making a project in commemoration of 16 June 1976. As the 40th commemoration of the riots approached, Mavuso told the then Deputy Minister in the Presidency about an idea I had regarding the 40th commemoration of the occasion. Fascinated by the concept, the Deputy Minister asked to see me. The idea was simple, I wanted to do a re-enactment of 16 June 1976 in the streets of Soweto with a thousand performers, using real hippos and police cars, and ending with the killing of Hector Peterson. The performance would be screened live on 'Morning Live', the South African Broadcasting Corporation news programme. In doing the project, my intention was to draw parallels with the current situation that was evolving in South Africa where university students were rejecting the fee increases proposed by the universities. With funds not coming through for the project, I eventually down-scaled and we presented one component of the project which included a drama and music competition for high school students on the commemoration of 16 June 1976. As I was preparing to engage a project that celebrated the young lions of 1976, the current challenges of students unable to pay for an education remained unresolved and the students called for free education. This was the beginning of the student movement '#FessMustFall'.

#Fees Must Fall is a student-led protest movement that began in mid-October 2015 under the auspices of the University of Witwatersrand's Students' Representative Council (SRC) of 2015 led by Shaeera Kalla, in response to an increase in fees at South African universities. On 2 October, Kalla attended her last council meeting as SRC president, she was accompanied by Nompendulo as an observer and president-in-waiting for the 2016 SRC. The protest started at the University of Witwatersrand and spread to the University of Cape Town and Rhodes University, before spreading rapidly to other universities across the country.

In 1987 I won a public speaking competition, and as part of the prize we were taken to Grahamstown to attend the Schools Festival. My classmates collected donations for my pocket money. My mother, who was working at Clicks at the time, threw me a farewell party. It was in Grahamstown, whilst I was attending a drama workshops at Rhodes University, that I first discovered dramatic arts as a possible field of study. This meant that I could now focus on drama as a career. I applied to Wits University and was given an opportunity to attend auditions. Macks Papo, who was at the time a student studying BA, lent me Athol Fugard's *People are Living There* for my audition preparations. I was accepted but was immediately faced with the challenge of getting a bursary. My mother raised some money for my studies but it was not enough. She then asked Mamogolo Maria to speak her boss, Stella, about my admission to Wits and of the problems I was facing. Stella put me in touch with Regina Seabrook who was at the time working with Mannie Manim. Mannie Manim was, with Barney Simons, co-founder of the Market Theatre. I went to the Market Theatre twice before I could meet Mannie. When I eventually met him, he said "What can I do for you, young man'? I replied that I needed a bursary. Mannie said "Aiyaya! We don't have the money. I am not promising you anything, but I will try." The following year when the university opened the bursary had not yet been finalised. The head of the drama school, Professor Ian Steadman, organized a bursary for me through the university. From then on, I was able to attend classes without fear of not paying my tuition and accommodation fees. Later that year, The Market Theatre approved my bursary which they paid until the end of my studies.

Working on *Freedom*, I knew and understood the financial challenges facing black students. I knew the difficulties of acquiring a bursary, and the challenges of poverty for black students. Many cannot even afford to buy food, let alone prescribed books. Based on my experience as a student, I fully understood the reality of their situation and this fuelled my commitment to the creation of *Freedom*.

I could not but sympathise with the realities facing the young students of 2015. Forty years since the 1976 riots which saw students lose their lives as they fought against an unjust system that wished to enforce Afrikaans as medium of instruction in black schools, we still found South African students unable to reap the fruits of the struggle of 1976. Student fees on the rise, meant that a large number of black students would be denied tertiary education and run a high risk of being forever on the periphery of economic action. This was a matter of serious

concern. What had happened to "the doors of learning and culture shall be opened to all"? Whilst I was happy to commemorate the youth of 1976, I felt it necessary to project the struggle of present-day students to remind us all that much remains to be done for the education of black students still suffering in the reality of post-apartheid South Africa.

First brief: I called Kabelo Bonafide Togoe and asked if he was prepared to write a song for me to use in the commemoration of the 1976 riots. Bonafide is a rapper, composer, songwriter, and singer. *Freedom* was his theatrical debut both as an actor and as musical director. I came across Bonafide's music when he left a demo compact disc of four songs with the personal assistant of the Chief Executives Officer at the SAST offices. On listening to the music, I was impressed by the composer's use of words and his combination of rap music with traditional African music. I asked Bonafide to write me a song about the youth of 1976, I emphasised that now that the youth of 2015were continuing where the youth of 76 had left off, he should write me a song to capture the past but focus on the present, on the challenges facing student's in 2015.

After a few days, I received the song, 'Phambili'. Excited, I called Bonafide and said: "You gonna have to sing it, who can sing it like that? I want to hear it as it sounds. You gonna have to act boy." Bonafide replied: "But I'm no actor!". I assured him of my help with his acting skills. Bonafide's response was no different to what Mckenzie Matome said when he wrote the first song for *Marikana: The Musical*. Mckenzie is a South African songwriter and singer who burst to fame when his group 'Rythmic Elements' produced a song called 2by2. When I heard the song, he had written for *Marikana: The Musical*, I told Mckenzie he would have to sing it. He too responded with: "I can't act". And I said the same thing that I said to Bonafide: "I will help you with the acting skills." Both ended up acting in *Freedom* and *Marikana* respectively.

Bonafide's song said everything I wanted to hear. It spun my head around. I listened to it for a whole night. When I am making new work I listen, watch, and tell the story over and over again. I know the lyrics of all my shows long before they are ready to be staged and the songs in my plays are long, I guess it's because of my love for Setswana music, especially music of a group from Botswana, 'Matsieng', who sing and sing, unfolding the story without repetition, much like Bob Dylan's 'Hurricane' or '*Joker Man*". And Matsieng, once they have been singing for seven minutes without repeating stories, will say: "Kea kgaola, kea lesa go tlogoa

gotwe ke bua thata" (I am stopping right here before I'm accused of talking too much). By then, however, they have already said a mouthful to me, 'Phambili' said a mouthful.

I played 'Phambili' over and over and over again, all the time seeing images of barricades, burnt cars, tyres, buses full of students, students marching, chanting, singing. A stark reminder of the student protests of the eighties. This is how the musical production of *Freedom* was born, with 'Phambili' ringing in my mind. I am not the type of writer and director who makes notes or carries a notebook in case a good idea pops up - I never forget a good idea, I had, until this study, never indulged in voice notes. What I do is to play an idea, concept, song, image over and over in my head, I sing it over and over again, I tell it over and over again, until I believe it. My mind eliminates chaff and leaves the good stuff. I don't forget plots or characters or stories because when I embark on a journey of play-making that is all that is in my mind and soul. I tell the story over and over until it makes sense in my mind and until I am confident that the plot is seamless.

There are two songs that I will present in full. 'Phambili' and 'Ndiyalila'. Phambili was the catalyst for the musical production of *Freedom* and exposes the emotions and feelings of the students, whilst 'Ndiyalila', which was rehearsed during the one-hour call for our first preview, sums up Phindile's journey. Both Phindile and Bonafide are protagonists in *Freedom*. The song 'Phambili' features in scene four of the musical.

"BONAFIDE:

Free education

Free our nation

We need information

We need education.

They said that I am free now

They say that we free now

Been fighting for years now

So, I don't believe them.

Been stuck in the system

Been trying to resist them

But they been persistent

We really don't need them yeah.

It's a revolution

We need a solution

The dreams that they are selling

Is all an illusion yeah.

So what's the conclusion?

We're forming a movement

We need better living

We need evolution yeah.

Verse

Free education

Free our nation

We need information

We need education (x2).

[LENZO and company are disruptive and sticking their heads out of bus windows and climbing on top of the moving bus. Phindile tells Bonafide who goes on top of the bus to admonish the misbehaving group. LENZO and company and PHINDILE go back in the bus. BONAFIDE remains on top of the bus. The students stick their heads out of the bus windows as they respond to BONAFIDE's rap part of the song.]

We see what you are doing

We no longer the victims.

Tell me who you are fooling

I know you trying to restrict them

You actually trying to trick them

Now I am just feeling conflicted.

'Cos all of the people who fought for our freedom

Is actually tryna ditch us.

Propaganda through our tv screens

Telling lies

Selling vicious dreams

We're doing well

We're doing fine

While all the time is being a lie.

Tell us the truth

You're losing the youth

And all our rebellious souls in the street is becoming the proof

Free education

Free our nation

We need information

We need education (x2).

Phambili Phambili nge mfundo (*Freedom*, 2018, pp. 217-218).

In the play the scene was set inside a bus that took the students to the Union Buildings. The bus which was built and set up on the stage wagon was ultimately burnt down, reminding us of the carnage that happened in real life when the students marched to the Union Buildings. The song reveals the frustrations of black students in a democracy...'that we had been lied to by the government when it came to power'. As prescribed in the Freedom Charter, they said the doors of learning and culture shall be opened. But it isn't the case as the majority of black students are still suffering. The students were taking the fight to the government. They were tired of unfulfilled promises and were not ready to let go, they wanted free education. The song called for action and a break with the status quo.

Second brief: I gave Bonafide a second brief. I asked him to write me a song about students who wished to attend classes and those who wanted a shut-down. This was after I had seen an altercation on the Wits campus on the news between some white students who felt that if you did not choose to be involved in the protest you should be left alone. Following is an excerpt from the song:

"Joina Joina Joina (x2)

Joina Joina Joina (x2)

Joina Joina Joina (x2)

Joina Joina Joina (x2)

Non-striking students standing outside their dormitories

We don't want no trouble

We don't wanna to stick to the system

We don't want no trouble oh no no

We just wanna bow to the master

The striking students led by LEADER, MICADO and THOKOZILE drag the non-striking students out of their rooms.

Ni sangene Nina, Nisabani Bo (You are mad)

Ni sangene Nina, Joina joina

Aniboni silwela impilo yethu (Can't you see we are fighting for your future)

Aniboni zwakala ka nenno

Aniboni si lwela impilo yethu

Aniboni zwakala Kanenno

Non striking students respond, led by LINDA

We don't want no fight

We just want to walk in peace

We have got exams to write

Stop all this fighting please" (Freedom 2018, pp. 213-214).

This is always the case during protests where protesters expect everyone to join in the struggle given that if the demands are met, everyone - protesting or non-protesting - will benefit. During this song, all students are rallied to join the march. The students who do not want to join are harassed to join. Only Bonafide could convince the leader of the non-striking students to join the march without violence.

Third brief: Then I sent him a picture of a child on a school desk under a tree and asked him to write a song that tells the child's story. With this brief, he wrote 'Umama'.

Umama aka sebenzi u baba aka sebenzi (My mother and father are unemployed)
So, does that leave me in the dark
Leave me in the dark
What am I to do in this situation?
What am I to do with these limitations?
I don't wanna be left in the dark be left in the dark (*Freedom*, 2018, pp. 231-232)

Fourth brief: I told him to watch television and follow the news on the student boycotts.

The 2015 strike ended when it was announced by the South African government that there would be no tuition increase for 2016. The protest in 2016 began when the South African Minister of Higher Education announced that there would be fee increases capped at eight per cent for 2017; however, each institution was given the freedom to decide the extent of their tuition increase.

The Minister's speech infuriated the students and they took to the streets. This act by the Minister of Higher Education was to be the climax of Freedom which led to Bonafide's death. Armed with these key incidents, I felt that I was on the right track but my challenge remained, what if the student demands were met - what would become of my play? I have been in this space before when I created *Marikana: The Musical*, and I did not want to be there again! I started searching for a fictional story that I could tell using the #FeesMustFall protests as a canvas for the story I was about to tell.

4.3 The Showcase

While I was creating *Freedom*, (see Appendix B) I constantly worried about what would happen if government were to legislate free education during the creative process. I felt it would make the play less important, but from previous experience I knew that with *Freedom* I needed a strong spine that could carry the story beyond #FeesMustFall but at the same time reflect the plight of the youth. After many days of telling the story I felt something was missing; the play was becoming more and more about the event rather than the people in the event. When I was working through the relationship between Flex and Phindile, it was just a relationship based on a girl who wanted to be associated with a rap star and was benefiting from it. But that was not strong enough, even when I told a story over and over again, as I always do, I could hear that the plot was unconvincing. One afternoon I was in my study - I never used to write during the day because my job as artistic director did not include writing plays for my employer - but working with Dr Sibongiseni Mkhize as CEO of the State Theatre, I was allowed time off to write. This afternoon I was in my study, chasing time and worried about the plot of the story, and worse, running out of time to get the story right before my presentation for youth month. I sat gazing at the laptop and asking what it was that this story needed. All the elements were in place. I was going to deal with violence, police violence, student violence, and gangster

violence. Suddenly it dawned on me: this violence is too global, how do I bring it home; close to the individuals? How do I make it personal? I spent many nights trying to get to the core of *Freedom;* it couldn't simply be about fees-must-fall dressed up in good music and dance. There had to be a deeper meaning and personal stories.

At the time of the boycotts, news came through of female students who had been raped by male students during the protests. This was it, I had found the spine for the show - gender-based violence. Our protagonist is being abused. At this point, the thought came that Flex is abusing Phindile, and I recalled one of my early productions, On *My Birthday* (1995), where Richard abuses Lebo. I got it, I got it! I immediately grabbed the phone and called Itumeleng Motsikoe and told him the story. This time the plot was convincing. I told Itumeleng that unlike *On my Birthday* where Lebo lies about her abusive relationship, Phindile won't lie, she will tell it to the world, she will expose him. I learned that when addressing stories on an urgent basis, the events alone cannot make the play, no matter how beautifully you can stage them, your play needs a heart, a story that can live forever and be a constant reminder. The characters must arouse pity, or fear, or excitement.

It was June 2017, we had only ten days to prepare a presentation on 30 of June as part of the SAST Youth Expression Festival. The script was thin and under-developed. I had a few ideas and quickly wrote a ten-page script. Most of songs had already been written and we relied on Bonafide to tell the story. My initial intention was to use a band of young musicians, but time was not on my side. I resorted to a band of experienced musicians whom I had used for *Marikana: The Musical*. The story was carried by Bonafide, Phindile, and Flex.

We presented the fifty-minute production outside on the fourth floor of the State Theatre with the band set up on the roof. The better part of the production took place outside and the violent scene between Phindile and Flex was performed inside a room. After that one performance, I was encouraged by audiences and members of staff to develop it into a full-length production.

This was difficult as 95 per cent of the artists in the production were not professional actors and I also knew that if I were to do it as a full on production, I did not want to leave anyone out. The thought of seeing youngsters at the stage door asking whether or not they were in the play gave me sleepless nights. I made up my mind that I would keep everyone. The other challenging thing was the budget. I called on the artists and told them that I intended keeping

all of them, and that meant that because of budget constraints, their wages would be low. Alternatively, I could cut the cast and pay better salaries, the choice was theirs. The cast decided to stay and share the meagre budget. This is when I started developing the characters of *Freedom* and fleshing out the story.

4.4 Characters

It is important the note that most of the characters' names were the real names of the artists. There were so many characters that I really could not keep coming up with new names. I resorted to using their real names. The fictional names in the play are Mmapula, Lenzo, Flex, and Phindile - even though in Phindile's case I used her real surname.



Freedom. Photographer**:** Sanmari Marais

The role of Phindile (played by Simphiwe Ndlovu in the first season, and Zimkitha Mcumbatha in the second season) was inspired by Mkhatshwa, but she is not Mkhatshwa. Unlike Mkhatshwa, who attended a Model C schools and both of whose parents were public servants, Phindile comes from rural KwaZulu Natal where she had to walk fifteen kilometres to school.

And unlike Mkhatshwa who was later jeered and booed by students as she called for an end to the strike, Phindile is revered by the students and remains resolute to take the fight to the government until free education is achieved. With her character, I wanted to demonstrate the strength of women. Her journey is so intense that you feel for her. She witnesses the murder of a Nigerian foreign national, Felix Abadu, and shortly after that she goes to her boyfriend, Flex's, house for comfort, only to be beaten and raped by him. Beaten, bruised, and raped she goes back to the university residence where she is assaulted by the security guards and, worse still, the university residence has been locked down. She goes to the police station to report the rape and assault, only to be arrested for incitement, damage to property, and the murder of Felix Abadu. She is released from prison and finds that her comrade in arms, Bonafide, has been killed. But in the face of all these challenges, Phindile refuses to give up her fight for free and decolonised education. She gathers her strength and goes out to Bonafide's funeral where she gives a gut-wrenching address about abuse and the need to continue the fight for free education.

Bonafide (played by Kabelo Togoe) is a fictional representation of a young man who has been raised by his grandmother and depends on her pension grant to survive. He is an anchor, persuasive, and a support for his fellow students. His militant, stern yet poetic approach to dealing with matters, makes him a charismatic leader for the students and he gains their confidence. This makes him a target and attracts the attention of the authorities who feel threatened. His efforts for equality are distorted and call his character into question. He is placed on a wanted list by the authorities. His weakness is love, and he is so in love with Phindile that when he is told that she has been raped, he loses faith and goes all out to fight the system, a fight which leads to his death. With Bonafide's killing by the police, I wanted to show the end of a dream. The dream of Freedom, where the police behave in the same manner as the brutal apartheid police. What has really changed? Bonafide's character is modeled on Mcebo Dlamini; he is articulate, fierce, and direct. This was done to bring the story closer to home. Of course, Dlamini is neither a poet nor a rapper, but his attitudes can be found in Bonafide.

His powers of persuasion come into play when he challenges Linda, who is against disruptions because he needs to finish school and support his family. Bonafide persuades him to join the march.

Flex is a superstar. He has an axe to grind with student movements because he regards university boycotts as pointless since they did not help him to finish his university studies. He had to drop out of university because he could not afford the fees, let alone food. His music career has given him a second chance, and through music he has amassed some wealth and enjoys the finer things in life. But even with the fame, Flex is insecure, jealous, and controlling. His use of drugs and alcohol tips his temper and leads to in violent behavior.

Linda is from Mount Fletcher and left behind two bedridden, silicosis infected, brothers. He is the type of person who has focus. When he is committed to a course, nothing will change his mind. He is one of the students who does not approve of the shutdown. He is persuaded by Bonafide to join the March. Ironically, when Bonafide is killed, he is the only person who fights alongside him. The following extract is an exchange between Linda and Bonafide. It takes place before theyn join the march, but also introduces the audience to Linda's background and character.

LINDA: BONA I want to write exams my bra. This is all I have. Without this I am fucked, totally fucked.

BONAFIDE: Linda! We need you man.

LINDA: BONA, listen to me. I wanna get the fuck out of here, get my degree and help my family. Without me they are dead.

BONAFIDE: You and I are the same man. I want it as much as you do. My mom doesn't work, my dad doesn't work. I used to rely on my granny's grant, and now she's dead. When she died, I also wanted to die, coz it felt like my education was dying too. But I am here, fighting, supporting, marching, and pushing. This is for all of us man. We need you. We need each other, there's more than forty million black people in this country, can you imagine what will happen if we stand together. Fuck, we can bring any business down, we can shut the whole system down. Come on brother, United we stand. [He extends his hand. Linda ponders and then eventually shakes his hand. He joins the protest] (Freedom, 2018, p. 216)

For Linda to join, I wanted to highlight the fact that people need to be persuaded and not forced to participate in something they do not understand. Whilst Linda's commitment is to finish his

degree and helping his family back home, the fact that Bonafide convinces him with words and not force, is good enough to make him join. He abandons the personal for the collective.

Thoko is an orphan from Mnabithi. She was raised by relatives. She is a victim of rape who did not report her case. The fact that she didn't report the rape has kept the rapist out of prison. Now the rapist, who is also a student leader at TUT, has raped other students. She feels that it is her responsibility to help Phindile and to persuade her to report the matter. With Thoko, I wanted to demonstrate that it is important to share your bad experiences and to report matters to the police, otherwise the scourge of rape and abuse will forever be with us. The more we can get rapists behind bars, the better it will be for our society.

Lenzo is a township thug who has chosen a life of alcohol, drugs, and violence. He runs a gang of criminals and they are all about chaos and destruction. Lenzo finds himself unemployed and uneducated and spends most of his time stealing, drinking, and smoking drugs. His character and intentions are articulated through this song:

LENZO:

A ke balebale felafela

Ke dula fela beke inwela nwela

Drinking larger under any weather

I am a rebel not a storyteller

I loot and loot and loot and loot otlo nketsang

Street smart aketlhoke skolo

A good start is to take and go

When you strike I'm just thinking about one thing

Causing havoc is my only goal

Stealing from shops I don't care about them

They taking our jobs I don't care about them

So I'mo stay stealing and robing till somebody come and take me from the bottom

I know the government wont

I know the president wont

Think I care about the law when there is no place at all where

It's safe I call home

I got nowhere to go

And there is nothing I own

It's sad to admit that the clothes that I am wearing right now

Are not even my own

So, I bring you all this pain I know (*Freedom*, 2018, pp. 221-222)

The character of Lenzo was created to show the challenges facing unemployed youth in South Africa. With nothing else to do, the youth find themselves trapped in violence, drugs, and causing havoc. They too feel that the government is doing nothing about their plight, and as a result they have to take things into their own hands if they are to survive. But violent actions only result in death or jail. Lenzo's story fits into the cliché the 'crime doesn't pay'.

Most of the characters in *Freedom* have one thing in common: they all come from poor backgrounds. However, unlike Lenzo and his gang, the student characters all cherish the ideal of free education because they believe that only education can help them break the cycle of poverty in their families.

4.5 Themes

Freedom focusses on various themes. I looked at gender-based violence as the overriding theme. Then there was xenophobic violence, political violence as meted by the South African Police service, free education, and poverty. These themes can be overwhelming in a single production, so it was important that I link the themes so that they did not give the impression of a thin plot which attempts to find gravitas by touching on everything that is a social and political challenge in South Africa.

A journalist from the *Star* newspaper, Masego Mpanyane (*Star* 22 May 2018) observed:

> "While the production is largely cantered around the themes of the fallist movements, it also touches on issues of xenophobia or, rather, the Afrobic spurts of violence that have plagued the country since 2008; increasing incidences of femicide and violence against women and children as well as the impact of transactional relationships… Some of the scenes tend to drag and whilst there's an almost seamless movement from social issue to social issue, it does get overwhelming. But perhaps the beauty is that it manages to showcase the complexities of everyday life."

I was glad to receive this review because it confirmed what I wanted to achieve. I did not want the play to be a series of short skits of incidents, I wanted it to link seamlessly as a single entity. And yes, with so many themes, it can be overwhelming, but when these themes are tackled properly, it makes for good theatre. The theme of gender-based violence was explored through the relationship between Flex and Phindile and through Thoko's story line; xenophobic violence was dealt with through the murder of a Nigerian national, Felix Abadu, while police violence, which recurs throughout the play, is addressed and its brutality is shown by Bonafide's murder at the hands of the police.

Finally, the issue of poverty is highlighted where students are sharing meal tickets. Some of them say that they have not eaten for a day or two. Having been a student myself, I know the challenges of food, especially when you do not have a place to stay. And accommodation is another pressing matter. Even today, 3 March 2020, students at Wits University and Tshwane University of Technology are on strike over accommodation.

With all these elements, the themes and the characters, I was ready to call my friend Itumeleng Motsikoe and tell him the story.

4.6 The Plot

Freedom follows the story of Phindile Ndlovu, a 24 year old Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) student, and a leader of the #Fees Must Fall student movement. Coming from a poor background in Umhlaba uyalingana, KwaZulu Natal, Phindile depends on her superstar rapper boyfriend, Flex, for her tuition and accommodation fees. One evening after a student meeting that took longer than she expected, she arrived late at Flex's concert, his final concert before leaving on a European tour. She waited for Flex as he posed for pictures with

his fans and then she followed him to his dressing room. He was bitterly disappointed that she did not see him perform. She had missed many of his concerts before and he does not appreciate that. Whilst in the dressing room, Phindile's revolutionary comrade, Bonafide, calls her which leaves Flex angry. He tells Phindile that Bonafide is starting to creep under his veins. Besides being a revolutionary friend, Bonafide loves Phindile but she is loyal to Flex because of what he offers her. In the dressing room the couple argue over Flex's music. Phindile feels that it should be more revolutionary so as to conscientise the people instead of his fun music that is only for twerking. This upsets Flex and he tells Phindile that it is his twerking music that pays for her fees. Flex, who is a university drop out, tells Phindile that the Revolution "ain't no real thing"; he left college for lack of fees and neither the student meetings nor the comrades did anything about his plight. Disappointed that Flex turned their conversation to material issues, Phindile does not hold back, she tells him to wake up to the suffering of her people. After a lengthy argument they make up and Flex promises to attend a student march with her.

Upon his return from the European tour, Flex joins Phindile on a march to the Union Buildings. She introduces him to Bonafide who is not a real fan of Flex and who also believes that Flex should sing some revolutionary songs, echoing what Phindile had said a while back. They proceed to the bus and head for the Union Buildings. At the Union Buildings a confrontation ensues between the students and police after the President has refused to address the students. Teargas and shots are fired. Students scatter. Phindile loses Flex as she is with Bonafide because the two of them feel it is their responsibility to calm the students down. They have been confronting an unruly group of boys - Lenzo's gang - without success. While this is happening, the bus that has brought the TUT students to the Union Buildings is set alight by Lenzo and his gang who are not students and who joined the protest with the aim of causing havoc. When Flex eventually catches up with Phindile, she tells him she cannot leave because she has to ensure that everyone is okay. Flex leaves in a huff leaving Phindile behind. Arriving at the bus which is now in flames, one of the students, Mmapula, who is also Phindile's friend, tells Phindile and other student leaders that she knows the people who set fire to the bus, and that they stay in Soshanguve extension four. Phindile says that they should go to extension four to find Lenzo and his gang and hold them to account.

In Extension 4, Lenzo and gang have gone on a looting spree, taking food from foreigners' shops. One of the Nigerian shop owners, Felix Abadu, confronts Lenzo and demands that he pay for the bread he has taken from Abadu's shop. By the time Phindile, Bonafide, and others

arrive on the scene, Lenzo is in direct confrontation with Abadu. Phindile and Bonafide try to intervene but Lenzo's gang is too strong and armed with knives and guns. Abadu is steadfast on getting his money. Bonafide offers to pay Abadu, but Lenzo grabs the money from Bonafide and starts to stab Abadu while his gang cheers and intimidates the community and anybody who may attempt to stop the stabbing. Abadu is left dead on the ground.

Having witnessed all this, Phindile goes to Flex's house where she finds Flex, high on cocaine and under the influence of alcohol. He accuses her of flirting with Bonafide and calls her a whore. As she tries to explain what happened, he pushes her against the wall and starts to beat her and rapes her. She leaves the house, bleeding, and raped. She arrives on campus only to find that the students have fought with the security because the canteen was closed and everyone has been locked out. Phindile can't even get to her room. One of her friends, Thoko (also a rape victim), advises her to go to the police to report the rape. On arrival at the station, the police ridicule her and arrest her for the chaos at the Union Buildings, the chaos on campus, and the murder of Felix Abadu.

With campus shut down and Phindile arrested, the Minister of Higher Education calls a meeting and tells the students that there will be an increase in study fees. Another confrontation with the police ensues and Bonafide is killed. This is followed by protest and more protest. The female students go to court to demand the release of Phindile. They state a naked protest that has the police intimidated. Phindile is eventually released. In jail she has had a chance to think deeply about her relationship with Flex, and has decided to leave him. Her resolution is short lived as the students tell her Bonafide has been killed by the police. She draws strength and gives a heart-wrenching speech at his funeral, urging students to fight until free and decolonised education has been achieved.

After a long silence, Itumeleng said, "Ke yona" (that's the one) Jahman, you've got it." I also knew that I now had a story to tell. I began with the process of writing. After writing a few pages, I called for auditions. The aim of the auditions was to find my cast and understand who I'd be writing for.

4.7 Casting

I find that when you do urgent work and with large casts, it is easy to select the chorus from different groups. The energies from those members are already connected and you concentrate on five group energies instead of 30 different individual energies. The group dynamics will always remain, but when you treat a group as one ball of energy, you are able to create with speed, one dynamic group. Also you are dealing with the strengths of five groups and a few individuals as opposed to dealing with strengths and weaknesses of 30 individuals. You simply do not have much time. In other places work of that magnitude takes months and sometimes years. But when it's urgent like *Marikana: The Musical, Kwanele,* and *Freedom,* your time is limited. Casting, writing, making, designing, music composition, all happen at the same time.

Initially, I had intended to stage a small production with about twelve actors. Upon calling for auditions, more than 200 youngsters pitched. I called the CEO of the SAST and told him that I could not take only twelve youngsters - I needed an allowance for 50 artists. It was clear that the rate of unemployment was on the rise, and although 50 would not make a huge dent, it would be a contribution towards giving young people an opportunity.

Athol Fugard, Gibson Kente, and Mbongeni Ngema, worked and trained amateur actors to produce some of their greatest works. *Freedom* wouldn't be the first production to do so and I was prepared to mentor anyone fortunate enough to make the cut.

I selected the SAST youth choir as a group. There were about fifteen of them, although they could not all act and dance, I felt that I could help them with that and as a group, they would be useful in the music component of the production. Some artists came as individuals while others, mostly dancers, came in pairs. I was fascinated by the stunts of the Pantsula dancers and I cast two groups of Pantsulas. They too, could not act or do any style of dancing except pantsula, but I felt that I could help them through our choreographer.

I chose the choreographer, Mdu Nhlapo, by accident. On the day of the auditions he was around and helping with the long queues. I asked him to look at the dancers and told him that I was looking for dancers who could do contemporary and pantsula dance. I also asked him to create short dance pieces which they could all do. I managed to select a sizeable group of dancers.

That same evening, after the auditions, I asked Mdu if he was interested in working with me as a choreographer. He agreed and the rest, as they say, is history.

I still could not find the male lead for *Freedom*. I had already decided that Simphiwe Ndlovu, who I had just worked with in *Sophiatown*, would be the female lead, but getting the male lead was a problem. I wanted someone who could act and sing and rap, and importantly, I needed someone who could sing the songs the same way that Bonafide had recorded them. This was no easy task, and from the auditions I could not come up with a single individual. At this point, the State Theatre's Education, Youth and Children's Theatre manager, Thabiso Qwabe, suggested that I try Siphelele 'P Dot O' Myende to play the lead. Pdot is a good actor and rapper, but his singing wasn't very strong at the time. One evening, during a dinner with Bonafide, I decided to convince him to take the lead and we cast Pdot as Phindile's boyfriend. In this scenario, Bonafide's role would be that of a poet, he would send messages through song and rap. This meant that he would have minimal dialogue and he would feel comfortable performing the songs he had composed. And Pdot, because of his strong rap and acting, would take the supporting role that required a lot of acting and a big fight scene which Bonafide felt he could not handle. Importantly, Pdot's relationship with Phindile was our main story and I needed a strong actor to carry us through. Originally, the actors were using their real names, but Pdot felt the role would confuse his followers and so the group decided to call him 'Flex'.

I needed a larger-than-life actor to play the role of Blade Ndzimande. I wanted an operatic voice and larger-than-life character so as to break away from the rap culture that is carried in the play through rap music. I did not want to stuff his belly with pillows but I wanted someone who had a big belly and whose voice could fill the auditorium. I did not care if had only one scene - I was after the look and what the style of music would do. Opera has always been regarded as high art, or the art of the bourgeoisie. I needed the Minister to live in that space - well fed and powerful. This image of was inspired by old photographs of our political leaders. Back in the day most of them looked thin and malnourished, but after 1994 elections we saw their weight increasing as they tasted the good life. I then remembered, Otto Maidi, an opera singer and great actor. I called him to join us and he was worried that part of the song had to be rapped and he felt he wasn't good at that. As I say to everyone who I need in my cast, I will help address their insecurities. Otto Maidi agreed to come on board and his performance was memorable. The rap section of his song goes like this:

"Don't tell me about poverty

Here's your eight percent.

Add it to all of your problems

No one gonna solve them

Not even me, not even all the politicians.

Those are your frenemies

Friends in the day

But laughing at you in the nighttime.

What do you know about the nice life?

We sacrificed to leave the nice life

So, we do what we want

We gonna do what we want" (*Freedom*: pp. 249-250).

This rap section of the song clearly depicted the power the Minister possessed and his lack of concern for the plight of the students. Hence the Minster and his team laughed during one press conference and indicated that he would form his own movement 'Students must fall'. When he said that, his staff and colleagues laughed as if the student struggle was nonsense. It was an insult to the students and their poverty. What I had considered a dire situation for the students was instead mocked and laughed at by the Minister - it was disturbing.

4.8 Set design

I have worked with Wilhelm Disbergen in eight of my productions. Generally, my first brief to the designer focuses on the main set piece. *Silent Voice* (2008) followed by *Mantolo - The Tenth Step* (2008), *Kalushi* (2010), *The Rivonia Trial* (2010), *On my Birthday* (2012), *Hungry* (2014), *Marikana: The Musical* (2014), and *Freedom* (2018).

In *Mantolo - The Tenth Step*, I wanted the guys to hang, so I wanted a set that could allow actors to hang as if in real life so as to show the horrors of capital punishment. In *Marikana*

The Musical I wanted a mountain that would resemble the Koppie (small hill) which saw miners gunned down, and in *Freedom*, I wanted a bus and a two-storey building for student accommodation. These elements that I highlight during the brief became the key elements of the design.

I met with the designer three times before the final brief. At our third meeting, he came to my house and we sat in the mini studio for the presentation. At the time, most of the music was already done, but the script was not yet final. I was with the musical director and choreographer. I played the music from the first song to the end and I spoke and explained the show over the music. Explaining how the big scenes would work and how I intend to use the bus and the dormitories. In his reflections on the *Freedom* design, Wilhelm (2020) said:

> "With a cast of performers and musicians of approximately 50, and a technical crew of almost as many members, *Freedom* required clarity and structure. This structure came from the script. Even though the scenes were still being fleshed out in rehearsal, the run of the musical scene-by-scene was set down. This skeletal structure allowed the creatives (director, choreographer, and designers) the opportunity to create the muscles of the musical around this frame. From this structure, the technical, mechanical, and logistical requirements of each scene could be determined and sequenced. With so many performers and crew, it was essential that the design and the scene limitations (if certain lifts were being set up for a scene following the current scene, it would require all action during the current scene to avoid or navigate around such a mechanical requirement) were understood early on. Such mechanical considerations also limited the ability to easily change scene sequences or alter cast placement or movement."



Freedom. Photographer: Sanmari Marais

I was worried about the safety of the artist which is why we had to have safety checks with the Health and Safety Manager of the SAST. During this workshop, we demonstrated to the artist how the lifts operated and emphasised discipline. Working with this machinery required discipline and focus. An artist must at all times know where they are designated to be so as to avoid fatal accidents.

Having worked with me for almost a decade, Wilhelm is accustomed to my work and how I create. Quick scenes changes and suggestive props and furniture. I do not want the sets, props and furniture to inhibit the dramatic narrative. The story must be told urgently, with fast pace and precision. With *Freedom*, I had the luxury of the machinery in the Opera Theatre, and when necessary, the machinery would be evacuated to allow artists to explore the empty space with their voices and bodies. In his reflection on my creative inputs Wilhelm (2020) wrote:

> "In this production, however, the director and playwright had the luxury of stage machinery and automation to facilitate quick scene changes. For *Freedom*, the

> production used all five stage lifts, the full stage revolve wagon, as well as trucks (platforms with wheels pushed on from the wings), 50 fly bars, and all the lighting bars the theatre had to offer. With a large compliment of backstage crew, large scale set-changes could be accomplished seamlessly. A full-size bus was loaded full of singing students and moved on the revolve wagon across the stage, eventually being set on fire in an act of unrest and protest. Three levels of student dormitories were inhabited by the 'students' and then evacuated, re-enacting and mimicking actual documented events".

I was also emphatic about the walls in Flex's house because of the scene where Flex assaults Phindile. I did not want a rowdy fight, I wanted to knock her face against the wall, and I wanted to do it twice. The first impact draws the audience in, and on the second impact blood splatters on the walls while the audience is engaged and affected. There is utter silence in the theatre when the fight takes place. It was therefore important that the walls were strong and did not wobble during the scene or the illusion would be lost.

What also emerged on the day of the designer's briefing, was the handling of Felix Abadu's death. As I was telling the story, when I came to the Felix scene, I decided to change the killing. Originally, Lenzo was going to shoot him, but as I told the story I connected the incident with Emmanuel Sithole who was stabbed to death, and much to Bonafide's and Mdu's surprise, who knew at the time that Felix was to be shot, I said he would be stabbed - they gasped with shock. I knew then that it was the right choice. The stabbing had a more dramatic effect than the shooting and what made the stabbing even more appealing, was that the choice was drawn from a real incident that filled the country with shock and disgust.

4.9 Choreography

The opening directions of the overture to *Freedom* clearly instructs how the dance should go. It reads as follows:

> "We hear footsteps coming from afar. A group of students emerge, singing, chanting, breathing, and slowly approaching. Some of them waving, raising clenched fists and some of them pretending as if they are carrying Ak47. They are wearing jeans, chinos,

> cargo pants, sneakers and T-shits printed FREEDOM. All of their faces are covered with black bandanas. They explode into dance, making their intentions clear. Then PHINDILE, BONAFIDE and THOKOZILE belt out Liwile Ilizwe" (*Freedom,* 2018, p. 3).

The Opera stage gave us the necessary depth. It is 80 metres deep, so before the cast could get down stage, you see them from a distance and it is breath-taking to see 50 young students approaching, it just reminds all of us of the true nature of South African protest.

The choreographer, Mdu Nhlapho, had the difficult task of creating dance spectacles with non - dancers. This meant mentoring and patience. I did not expect the dancers to be perfect, I wanted them to be real and represent the students in movement. I also reminded them of how they dance during their leisure, and that they needed to draw from themselves in order to be able to execute what was required of them by the choreographer. If you can dance at the party, I am sure you can give it a try on stage, and you have the choreographer to guide you. Mdu Nhlapo's experience of working with me in *Freedom* is captured bellow in his own words:

> "According to my experience, my interaction with the director of Freedom Mr Aubrey Sekhabi or rather creative synthesis is simply and always charged with pragmatism from the day he would invite me to his place. He would dish you up with the full plan of action of how he envisions the play and the aesthetics. He narrates the story furnished with pre-recorded provisional sound scape or score to give you the mood and atmosphere of the plot. From that studio interaction in his house, I would have grasped not only the narrative plot of the play but the visceral necessity in the embodiment of the characters, scene and physical aesthetic.
>
> After sharing and embodying the concept, we move to rehearsal space where Mr Sekhabi would give me adequate amount of time to work with the cast, imparting and drilling the concept to their bodies. Now with The Musical Freedom, my choreographic approach included a necessary teaching approach since I was dealing with most of the cast members at an elementary level, taking them through a high voltage play with confrontational content requiring explosive, physically charged embodied violence in the technical approach to choreographic expression. When the director arrives to marry all creative aspects generated in the rehearsal space in to a holistic vision, our

interaction would escalate from ordinary give and take to a trance like interaction giving us a creative rise to a mystical space with an automated creative synergy.

Since the work was about the revolting youth, a ferocious approach to choreography was a perfect representation of South Africa's township volatile, mobster and hooliganism culture together with carnages and brutality by the police against students. The township dance carried the character and magnetism of the Musical. This was a deliberate and essential choice to present the South African Musical with its bona fide dance aesthetic and identity devoid of the occident musical conventions" (Mdu Nhlapo: 2019).



Freedom. Photographer: Sanmari Marais

When I work with a choreographer, I give him or her the brief, and after they have created a dance piece, I come and direct it. I re-arrange it to suit the play. It no longer becomes dance for dance' sake, it advances the story. In the case of *Freedom*, the dance had to be explosive, dangerous, and violent, given the violent nature of the interaction between the students and the South African Police Service. At the same time the dance had to project a South African

contemporary dance culture, from pantsula to hip hop, and the dance had to be integrated to bring a unique voice of the play.

4.10 Costume Design

Since this was a story from young voices, I had envisioned costumes that could communicate a strong South African street and youth culture, but also be able to differentiate clearly the leading characters from the supporting roles and the chorus, the striking students from the non-striking students. I also emphasised the use of colours and camouflage costumes to highlight the activism of our protagonist.

To fulfil the brief, the designer Lesego Moripe employed the use of specific colours, current trends, prints, and accessories for each lead character as a vehicle to assist costume to be a contributing part of the storytelling through each character's style of dress.

In the story, our lead characters, Bonafide and Phindile, share a special connection and can always be identified by a military influence which we interpreted as an element signifying both their leadership and activist nature of defending the plight of the students. Individually, the character of Bonafide, although still very much young and casual, can be identified by some sort of a (higher ranking) military jacket integrated with the rest of his costume in all his appearances throughout the play.

Phindile, our leading lady, presented a challenge in that her storyline required that she be identifiable as herself individually, also as the girlfriend to her onstage rap star boyfriend, Flex, as well as the love interest to our leading man Bonafide. I remember we struggled with appropriate costumes for Phindile until the end of the first season. Mid-season I had to personally go to the stores to source some costumes for her. When the production made its second season, Lesego made this presentation to me.

> "I have selected Canary Yellow as the standard colour that would accompany the character of Phindile throughout the play. I have maintained a camouflage print and some military influence to her costume every time she is seen with Bonafide in the story, this is to emphasize their collective mission and positions in the 'fees must fall' movement, as well also to visually influence the audience to their underlining love

> connection. The third element to Phindile's look is the more sexy, pop culture, party girl style which she can always be seen in during her time with her Rap Star Boyfriend Flex. Specific to Phindile, both the military and rap culture influences for her costume are always accompanied by a Canary Yellow coloured item of clothing, consisting of a leather jacket, a doek, slacks and sleeveless sombre top" (Moripe 2019).

For the supporting role of Thokozile who has been a victim of rape, I wanted costumes that would not expose her physically so as to come across as just a bit lacking in youthful spirit, but still age appropriate In all her scenes, we dressed her in leopard print garments, which becomes a way to identify her whenever she was on stage. She wore leopard print combat boots and scarf, later a leopard print head-band and top tied around her waist, and finally, a leopard print coat and heels for the final scene at the funeral. In her defence of the leopard print which I felt was over used, the costume designer convinced me that: "The Leopard print introduces a significantly strong but very feminine energy to the overall look of the character." (Moripe, 2019).

The designer also included quite a bit of a traditional light-blue denim to Thokozile's look to maintain the look of a young student in this character's costume. We also sometimes included a maroon coloured item of clothing to Thokozile's attire, this incorporates the deep mood of the colour and adds a hint of heaviness to the feeling of the character.

Mmapula is the female character that I wanted to appear as sexy, even though somewhat plagued by her fair share of hardship in the story, I wanted the costumes to add a bit of playfulness to her look. We also took into consideration that Mmapula comes from a poor background and as such her costumes, although stylish and fashionable, could not be expensive. In her presentation on Mmapula's costumes, Lesego (2018) stated that:

> "I am going with a red and blue pleated pattern as Mmapula's signature, also for its commercial retail trend status at the time, and like the Leopard print, for its timelessness in Fashion. Mmapula will interchangeably wear a pleated Shirt, Skirt, Shorts, Slacks and Jacket/Cape to accompany the rest of her costume throughout the production. She is also always wearing a short item of clothing, always exposing her legs, except for in the Woman's March and Funeral scenes. Her style is not so trendy but is generally appealing because of the inclusion of a skimpy item to her wardrobe".

For most of the characters I decided to go with the commercial, in-season trends that were available and trending in retail stores at that time. The designer selected trendy, stylish garments for most of the cast, with each having a trend element specific to them. The look and feel of the costumes located the play in the period in which it was conceived.

4.11 Rehearsals

Playwrights fulfil an important role in social reconstruction by projecting social values which can influence the attitudes and behaviour of a people because they have the power to instil in the readers or audiences a direction of thought and reasoning, or even provoke or inform action. Through their treatment of society, playwrights shape socio-political reality and readers are drawn or exposed to certain issues. Because playwrights draw their stories from society, it is necessary to study their works to interpret their ideological positions.

As a director, I have my hand in every pot. I decide how the design should look, I decide how choreography should be executed, and the music played. I re-arrange the songs to fit the play, I move the dance pieces around so that they advance the story, and I eliminate all the unnecessary set and furniture pieces to allow the play to breathe without being overwhelmed by sets. As a director I am tasked with the responsibility of bringing the play to the audiences. As Antoine (1903, p. 89) puts it: "Without directing, without this respectful and precise science, this powerful and subtle art, many plays would not have come down to us, many comedies would not have been understood; many plays would not enjoy success." It is my duty as a director to interpret the work of the playwright and in this instance, that playwright is me. Antoine (1903, p. 89) continues:

> "To grasp clearly the author's idea in a manuscript, to explain it patiently and accurately to the hesitant actors, to see the play develop and take shape from minute to minute. To watch over the product to its slightest details, its large business, even its silences which are sometimes as eloquent as the written scripts. To place the bewildered or awkward supernumeraries where they belong and to train them, to bring together in one cast obscure actors and stars. To harmonise all these voices, all these gestures all these

various movements, all these dissimilar things-in order to achieve the right interpretation of the work entrusted to you."

Even though I knew how the story was going to unfold, the script was not yet written. I was able to explain to the cast how it would unfold. I explained that I wanted it fast-paced, I needed quick scene changes to allow the dramatic action to flow smoothly. Fast pace, quick dialogue, and action are common in my plays. The fact that I do not come to the first rehearsal with a complete script, means that my interaction and consultation with the entire value chain from point conception to point curtain call occurs in concurrence. As with every play that I have created in recent years, dialogue, choreography, song, and emotional emphasis can change with the shifting narrative in the environment. The speed at which news travels, that within a few hours it becomes history, is the speed or pace I translate into my work. Nothing is static, no frame lingers pedantically from scene to scene. My opportunity to seize power lasts for only 90 to 120 minutes with any given audience. I need and must drive my message home.

The first days of rehearsals are easy and fun because I use them for the cast to learn the songs and work on choreography, while I work on the script. Most of the songs in *Freedom* are sung by Bonafide and the play seemed to be turning into a Bonafide concert. One morning, I walked into the rehearsal room, the cast was working with the assistant director, trying to stage the first scene of the play. As they were singing the song, which is set in the main hall of Tshwane University of Technology, I felt that the scene was stale as the students were merely standing there singing the chorus whilst Bonafide sang the verses. This was problematic and I anticipated that if we did not fix it, the problem would stick for the rest of the script. I stopped the rehearsal and invited the cast to gather around the piano where the assistant musical director, Zakhele Mabena, was playing. I had worked with Zakhele Mabena before in *Marikana: The Musical*, and knew that he is good with harmonies and getting the best out of singers. On the piano, I started to break the song into sections. This made the song more dynamic and also helped to introduce some characters. I gave different singers different sections of the song.

.

STUDENTS:

Nkululeko (Freedom)

FHULO and NCAMISA:

Our people are dying we want our freedom

STUDENTS:

Nkululeko

THOKOZILE:

Our people are starving give us our freedom

STUDENTS:

Nkululeko

NCAMISA: We want freedom

Comrade CHAIR acknowledges the first speaker.

RIVONINGO:

We have been suffering for way too long

We're tired of always staying strong

When's our time to be free at last

COMRADE CHAIR acknowledges another speaker.

THOKOZILE:

We know way too much about the struggle

But not enough about the good life.

We need our time and we need it fast

Nkululeko

Nkululeko

Nkululeko

COMRADE CHAIR: Yes Thato.

THATO:

Our politicians robbing us of everything

You busy getting tenders

While people are getting nothing at all

Nothing at all

STUDENTS:

Its foul play foul play

I am telling you one day

One day we gonna rule

MMAPULA:

And show you how to lead our land

STUDENTS:

Nkululeko

Our people are dying we want our freedom

Nkululeko

Our people are starving give us our freedom

We want freedom oh oh oh oh (Freedom 2018: pp. 203-205)

From a solo song, I managed to create a six-part story. The confidence of the artists grew, they became comfortable in their voices. They started to see themselves as part of the cast because some could really show their vocal prowess. This move unlocked the style of *Freedom*. It is also important to note that the play is called *Freedom* and, ironically, the students sing that they want their freedom. We cannot say we have attained freedom when people are still suffering and the doors of learning and culture remain shut.

When working on the music, I would hear a song for the first time and love it. But then when I engaged with the work and thought deeply about the characters and what they should be

doing, I was able to look at the songs not only for their wonderful melodies and attractive lyrics, but for what they can do for the production and advance the story.

There are times when I have sent my composer back after he had spent days working on a song. I once sent him back after he had composed a two-verse song with 'O shebile monate' which really spoke of unity and was only sung by Phindile to her boyfriend, Flex. The impact of the song was weak and it did very little to advance the arguments. Their arguments were in the dialogue and I felt that we could use the song as a duet and they could have their fight and deal with their differences through song. One night when *Freedom* was already running, he told me how hurt he was when I told him to go re-do the song. I said it straight. I told him the song sounded like a soap ad. I loved some parts, but it needed work. It was like a rainbow nation, let's-get- together song and did nothing to advance the story or the argument between Flex and Phindile. The song also helped introduce the character of Flex and his negativity towards student boycotts. Using some of the words of the dialogue I had written, we rewrote the song and it served the play.

PHINDILE:

O shebile monate

Nna rea lwana

Rebatla kgololosego

O shebile monate

Nna realla

Reitlhokela Masego

FLEX:

The revolution ain't a real thing

I swear this fighting is for nothing

Ask me I've been through it

Ask me I've been doing things for the right course

But I never saw change

So, I’m counting on my change

Just to pull up in a range

PHINDILE:

Tsoga batho ba rona batshwere ke tlala (Wake up, our people are hungry)

Vuka

FLEX:

I don’t think you understand

This is real life

How you gonna save the whole world

If you can’t even come to my shows

I need me a shoddy who stays on her toes

'Cos that’s how it goes

I need you to support

I need you to know

That you are my everything

You are my girl

And that’s why I get you these diamonds and pearls

We live and we learn

I need you to learn that you can’t save the world

PHINDILE

Ignorance was never bliss

Suffering will carry on

If our people don’t persist oh no

You think the struggle don't exist

So, you leave and don't assist

While we're suffering and trying to hold on

Tsoga batho ba rona batshwere ke tlala

Vuka bantu bagithi ba phethwe yindlala (*Freedom* 2018: pp. 211-212)

Most of the cast of Freedom were inexperienced so I had to capitalise on their strengths. I remember Thokozile Ndimande. She was among the top six in Idols 2017, her strength was singing but she didn't have a single song in the play; she kept begging for a song. At the time the script was incomplete and her character very minor. She was a friend to Phindile with very little to say. As I tried to think more of her character as Phindile's friend I remembered that there was a song we once created with Bonafide about sexual abuse and human trafficking. We intended to propose the song to the UN for their campaign against human trafficking. The song, inspired the character of Thoko, and I then developed her character to that of a victim of rape. During the scene after Phindile's rape incident, she urges her to report the case. She then explain her story through song.

THOKOZILE: Phindi, don't be scared. I was scared. Had no one to turn to. Couldn't even go to the police station. I was gang raped.

PHINDILE is in shock and walks away, then Thoko tells her story through song

THOKOZILE:

I was sixteen years old

Alone and abandoned

Stripped of my home

Felt afraid and forgotten

Subjected to hostility

All my hope and my dignity

Have been taken away

Taken away

I was used and abused

Preparing do die

Captured in the belly of the beast

Of evil man preparing for a feast (Freedom 2018: pp. 235-236)

Thoko's story was intended to add a voice to the rape crisis facing not only universities but our society in general, and the fear of reporting rape because of victimization by the police. Her character demonstrated the deep-rooted challenges of rape and abuse in our society.

I spent a lot of time in and out of rehearsals with my artists, particularly my leads. Most of the special moments in the play emerged from these interactions outside of rehearsals. Through interacting with them I was able to understand them better, understand their strengths and weaknesses. They also get an opportunity to express their views easily without the pressure of peers who were watching them throughout the process.

4.12 Working on the fight scenes

Long before I choreograph a fight, I discuss the fight scenes with the people involved. For *Freedom,* I spent days talking to Phindile and Flex about their fight scene. Particularly in Phindile's case a lot of preparation was needed for the fight and the rape that would happen - her space was being invaded and I needed to be sure that she would be comfortable.

Because of the violence and the explosive energy needed in *Freedom*, the cast was taken through rigorous warm-up routines and exercises. This helped build their stamina and strength. Taking into consideration that there was a lot of running on that massive Opera stage, and that artists must run, dance, and sing at the same time, it was imperative that they kept fit. With these preparations done, I called Phindile and Flex on stage. I talked through the fight scene and made sure we were all on the same page. I emphasised the importance of no one coming to harm and that as artists we are able to do what the man in the street cannot do. We make it look real on stage as if it is happening in real life but with us, nobody gets hurt. After this lecture I slowly walked and talked through the fight scene. Slowly I escalated the pace, but before things become explosive, I would stop and start again. The perpetrator is instructed to

make only small gentle movements. To give the victim the last push. Then the victim is given the authority to control her body and slam anything they wish without hurting themselves. The slams and gasps are accompanied by gasps and screams from the victim. In order for the fight to be effective, it must not be all over the place, it must be specific, directed, and explosive and should happen when the audience least expects it. And I expected to get the same response from the audiences. After each violent scene, I expect the audiences to be silent; to reflect on what they have just seen. I have managed to achieve the quietness and the stillness of the audience after the beating and rape of Lebo in *On My Birthday*, the killing of Khala in *Not With my Gun*, and now with the beating and the rape of Phindile in *Freedom.*

The group fight scenes in *Freedom* were a challenge. Especially the final epic battle where Bonafide is killed. Given the impact of the fight between Flex and Phindile, it was important to make the final confrontation epic. In this battle, Linda was already on Bonafide's side and prepared to defend him knowing full well that the police were targeting him. So, I focused the fight using Bonafide and Linda as they led the charge and demanded answers from the Minister. Originally, I had planned for Bonafide to be shot by the police, but as I was staging the show an opportune moment presented itself during the confrontation between Bonafide and a police officer, where the officer beats him up and ultimately chokes him to death. The chocking had the desired effect and enabled me to have Bonafide utter his final words as he struggled to breathe.

> "BONAFIDE:
> So, here's my truth
> I know exactly how I feel about this
> I feel this system really has no justice
> Some of our freedom fighters chose to take the cheque
> Sitting in the boardroom with the master like let's discuss this,
> But guess what we the youth and we're so disgusted
> They think we blind but we see and your so untrusted
> But here's another truth some of you people in the streets screaming Zuma this and Zuma that are also well instructed,
> We have no faith in puppets" (Freedom, p. 250).



Freedom. Photographer: Sanmari Marais

It was important for Bonafide to say these words as he faced death. At this point it was clear that the government was not prepared to listen, and hence the proposed fee increase. At the time of writing the song, things were getting out of control with even our parliament becoming a circus. There was simply no hope and Bonafide was in that space; his crush was in jail, he was a wanted man, his education was disappearing before his eyes. This being among some of the last songs written, it was a culmination of the social injustice that was happening and if he died, he wanted the system to know that the situation would not change regardless of who is in charge, politicians are the same and only care about lining their pockets and those of their handlers or masters.

After all was said and done, I needed a song to end the story. We had a song; it was a great song; and the cast was singing it beautifully; and they loved it. But I felt that it did not work for the play, it failed to capture the narrative of the play. The song was broad and spoke to people suffering and seeking freedom. I wanted something personal, something that could finish or continue Phindile's journey. I had told Bonafide to create a new song, but he was

struggling. Before our first preview, I was in the auditorium talking to our producer, the artists had just finished their warmups, the band was still in the pit. Bonafide was downstage on the edge of the orchestra pit talking to the band members. We were going to do our preview with a song I didn't like, so I was very grumpy. As I was talking to the producer, I heard a few cords from the piano, I stopped and screamed, is that the new song? He said I want to try this, we have not done it. I said, I like the feel of it, please call Phindile, let her come and work with you. We are performing it tonight. Bonafide pointed out that she had neither heard nor learned it and that he had not even finished composing it. However, I liked what I was hearing. I said: "Call everyone, let's rehearse it, she will read the lyrics tonight, besides, she has just given a speech, so she can read the lyrics from the book from which she will just have read her speech. The stage manager called everyone on stage and we rehearsed the song during the one-hour call. That night, Phindile was crying throughout the song, it was a tough night but a great song. This is the full song.

PHINDILE:

Too many nights I've cried

My river drowns me still

The mountains seem too high

It's taken all my will

I reach inside for strength

I'm searching deep within

Got to find myself

But where do I begin

Ndiyalila/Ndiyalila (I am weeping)

I'm holding on but I surrender all

Ndiyalila

Ndiyalila/Ndiyalila

I’m holding on but all of my pretence is gone

Ndiyalila

I yearn to feel secure

Sometimes I’m not so brave

How long should I endure

Can’t wait until my grave

My heart still hears a song

It keeps my soul contained

So, I choose to carry on

I’ll fight through all this pain

Ndiyalila/Ndiyalila

I’m holding on but I surrender all

Ndiyalila

Ndiyalila/Ndiyalila

I’m holding on but all of my pretence is gone

Ndiyalila

I’m holding on, holding on

I won’t stop now

Carry on, carry on

I won’t stop now

I'm digging deep, digging deep

I can't stay down

I've got to rise,

I've got to rise through it all (Freedom 2018, pp. 254-256).

While this song is a sad note on which to end a musical play, it was appropriate given the state of affairs in the country for a black person. Black people still live in abject poverty and women and children continue to be raped and murdered. I wanted an introspective song where Phindile acknowledges her hardships which reflect the plight of all women in South Africa and the world. It represents women and is a direct message through her. Despite all her hardship, the song projects her willingness and drive to rise and continue the fight for free education and for women and social justice. The song expresses a triumph of the human spirit against adversity and concludes Phindile's journey whilst stating her resolve. What remains is the sadness because as the chorus states, she is still weeping because the battle is not won - the struggle continues.

I am not the one to provide solutions at the end of the play. I allow the audience to judge for themselves, to reflect on the work that has been laid bare on stage. This is characteristic of my work.

MPHO: (Excited and noisy) Where's the groom?

Before King can answer Betty greets him...

BETTY: (Cold and casual) Hi.

KING: (Hugging her with one hand) Hi, love...

MPHO: Where are the other guys?...

KING: They are in the kitchen...sit down, sit down.

They sit down. Betty sees that there is something wrong with King.

BETTY: King, what's wrong?...

King holds their hands and tries to speak... Tears roll down from his eyes. Lights fade out...Bob Marley's "Coming from the cold"/One love fades in... (Not with My Gun 1998, p. 47).

The above piece is the end of *Not with My Gun*. This scene happens after Jake has shot Khala by mistake in a tussle for a gun which Jake wanted to use to intimidate Kobus who had stolen their suits on the eve of his wedding.

In *Silent Voice*, after the thugs have escaped with bags of money from the heist, they are ambushed by the police and a shoot-out ensues. With nowhere to go and a wounded Charlie X asks his friend Charlie Y to shoot him.

> "Charlie X: Remember the story of Saul said to his armour bearer, Draw your sword and run me through, for these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me, but his amour bearer was terrified and would not do it so soul took his own sword and fell on it. I am not Saul Charlie, and you are not the stupid armour bearer…you are the baddest, toughest brother I have ever known… Mphumule (erase me). I am not gonna kill myself, I am not a coward, you got to do it, nxishe Charlie, nxishe, mara oska nthuba tlhogo."

Charlie Y puts the gun on Charlie X's chest. Just then he sees that he is surrounded by the police, he raises his hands in submission. Lights slowly fade out. (*Silent Voice* 2014, p. 45.) Even in *Marikana*, the old man asks to be allowed to weep for his son because he blames himself for sending his son to the mines. The song ends the show with the miners returning to the hole. *Freedom* is no different, in the end. With all the bravery that the students have displayed and the hardships that Phindile has conquered, the black child is still weeping.

My plays do not offer solutions instead the audiences are left to decide, to judge if they so wish and to reflect on what they have just experienced.

4.13 Working with the young actor

When I work with young black actors, and even with some professional untrained black actors, it is generally difficult to hear them when they speak. They tend to have squeaky voices and strain their throats. It is as if they feel that as they are acting, as actors they are called upon to exaggerate everything. The results are caricatures. Furthermore, acting in English makes things even worse. I find that young artists are able to translate their emotions fairly easily in their mother tongues; but when it comes to English, their intonations are completely wrong. This is an imitation of the theatre of Gibson Kente without taking into consideration why he followed that method. Kente did what he called the technique for a reason, he wanted the actors to be heard given the poor acoustics in community halls. Even today, performing in a community hall it is difficult to hear most of the dialogue. The style was further made famous by Mbongeni Ngema in *Sarafina*. Ngema, being a protégé of Kente, applied the technique for diction purposes especially for the international community. This style, however, remains caricature - like and renders characters unbelievable. I do not subscribe to that style of acting and most of the time I am confronted by artists who have been inspired by that performance style. I apply a very simple method to make the artists organic. Once I pick up the tendency, I call the artist to one side and start a conversation with them. I then ask them to tell me what the lines say without performing them. That is the moment you hear the artists as people, they sound real, organic. Then I say, that's how you must sound. From here on, the artists start to feel confident. That's is why the artists that have worked with me, or with the State Theatre can easily move from stage to television. They are organic.

Freedom also used multimedia to engage those stories that would take more time to resolve if they were to be presented through drama and song. The three-month lapse before the march to the Union Buildings and the arrest the Lenzo's gang, is presented through audio visuals projected on screens. The first video is presented as part of a news programme where the news-reader informs the public of the intended march and warns motorists and the public to be careful. The second video informs the audience about three things; Bonafide's murder by the police; Comrade Leader's arrest for allegedly raping three students; and Lenzo and his gang descending the flight of stairs to the holding cells. As they descend some members hide their faces and Lenzo shows the camera person and all who are watching the middle finger. This is a common feature in our television news where criminals will either hide their faces when

they go to court or scream some obscenities at whomever is watching. There is very little remorse from Lenzo and his gang, even though we know that their time is up.

With so many themes addressed in the play, the use of multimedia helped me wrap up the stories which would otherwise have demanded two additional scenes.



Freedom. Photographer: Sanmari Marais

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempt to detail my theatre-making journey and process in its entirety, from conceptualization to the end-product consumed on stage and felt well after the curtain call. I opined on how an idea is sparked in my brain, where usually my mind is immersed in the current occurrences of my environment. I ache with the need for power to become an elixir that can turn things around. My way to regain control is through images that form in my creative mind where I see roles for my leads, what they will be wearing, what mode of transport they will using, what inherent power they need.

The subject matter of my plays borders on the most delicate issues that affect communities in the hardest of ways; subjects that many may opt to leave unsaid as they disrupt the status quo.

I have shown that my staging, though robust, is in the main moderated by carefully constructed wording, phrasing, rhyming, and utterances. The writer in me always brings the director in me to rationality. The balance struck, ensures that the final product on stage is hard-hitting without lacking empathy for both the players and the audiences.



Freedom notes session: Aubrey Sekhabi.

CHAPTER 5: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON FREEDOM

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I reflect on my experiences and use a critical reflection approach to understand the significance of the original musical production of Freedom. This reflective chapter is written from my personal perspective as a playwright and Director. Using four complementary critical reflective lenses, I hope to make meaning out of my experience and try to understand how my assumptions are informed by knowledge as I analyse and interpret my experiences in order to work better or differently in the future.

5.2 Reflective practice and critical reflection

Part of the difficulty in pinning down exactly what reflective practice and critical reflection mean may be due to the fact that there has been a great deal of development of these concepts in widely varying fields, from the health and welfare professions to law, management, business and education, and from both research and practice traditions (Fook, 2015, p. 441). According to Finlay (2008, p. 2):

> "The term 'reflective practice' carries multiple meanings that range from the idea of professionals engaging in solitary introspection to that of engaging in critical dialogue with others. Practitioners may embrace it occasionally in formal, explicit ways or use it more fluidly in ongoing, tacit ways. For some, reflective practice simply refers to adopting a thinking approach to practice. Others see it as self-indulgent navel gazing. For others still, it involves carefully structured and crafted approaches towards being reflective about one's experiences in practice"

Mezirow (1990) in Hickson (2011:p. 833) contemplated reflective practice and identified that there was more to reflection than simply thinking about experiences, suggesting that critical reflection involves a critique of the assumption on which our beliefs and values have developed. Brookfield (1998: p. 197) agrees and argues that critical reflective is a process of inquiry involving practitioners in trying to discover and research the assumption that frames how they work. According to Brookfield (1998: p. 197), critical reflective practitioners constantly research these assumptions by seeing practice through four complementary lenses: the lens of their own autobiographies as learners of reflective practice, the lens of the learner's

eyes, the lens of a colleagues eye, and the lens of theoretical, philosophical, and research literature.

5.3 Critical Reflective Practice 1: Our Autobiography as a learner of practice

Analysing our autobiographies as learners has important implications for how we teach. Our experience as learners are felt at a visceral, emotional level and are much deeper than that of reason. The insights and meanings for practice that we draw from these deep experiences are likely to have long lasting experience (Brookfield, 1998, p. 198).

As a director, I have played an integral role in my work as a playwright. In some of my original work, the stage directions in the final written text have been influenced and are born out of my role as a director. When I am on the floor, working with the actor, I am able grasp the intentions of the playwright whom I was with last night and whom I carry with me today. I am able to change the lines, the rhythm of some words, to plot how I want my audiences to feel and in Antoine's (1903, p. 90) words "take into account the tastes and habits of the audience in just the right proportions, to omit anything that maybe needlessly dangerous, to cut anything that is too long, to eliminate errors of detail that are inevitable in any work that is done quickly".

I have seen those moments in the first season of Freedom. Whilst this is what you are presenting, at the time of the presentation, you can still miss the dragging scenes, and some errors which you may not discover because you've had your head buried in the production. It's only when you reflect on the work that you realize the things that could have been done better.

The benefit of a second season of a production allows the creator of the work to reflect critically in what was presented in the first season and provides an opportunity to improve the work. With the second season of *Freedom* I was able to look back and fix what I couldn't attend to due to time constraints and the urgent nature of creating the work. For *Freedom*, it was more a case of tightening some pieces that went on for long. The low hanging fruits in *Freedom* was particularly three of the songs, two of which were accompanied by dance.

First it was Liwile iLizwe which was an explosive song, but the length of the dance and the chorus took away the bite. Later I cut the song and the chorus into half and as a result, the

audiences were immediately drawn into our world through a concise piece of music, dance and rap.

Another song which went on for too long is Joina as we prepared for the march to the Union Buildings. There is an over stretched chorus of the song which were not advancing the story. At the time of making the song and directing the piece, I was concerned about the dangerous stunt which was to follow. So I needed the artists to position themselves properly so as to catch the actor who was thrown from three meters down from the dormitory. Whilst was safety compliant, it slowed down the play. In the next season I decided to cut the song into half, but this came at a huge price because during our first rehearsal in the theatre, the artists lost concentration and the actor who was thrown from the dormitory, accidentally fell badly and broke her leg. This was a terrible mistake and one which I regret. I ended up cutting the stunt which worked very well during the 32 performances of the first season. I ended up taking the stunt out of the production but kept the new length of the song.

The final song that needed editing is Thabatha, where Bonafide is angry and sad that Phindile has been raped and arrested and that he is on the wanted list. This was one of my favourite songs and because of that I overindulged in the song, allowing the song to be repeated. When editing the song it became more strong and direct. All these mistakes were poor judgement on my side and I am grateful for the time of reflection. I had the second bite during the second season and the play became more urgent and resolute.

When I continuously watched the video of *Freedom,* I realised there was a scene missing in *Freedom.* The time when Phindile is in prison is not captured in the play, not even by a song or storytelling. We do not get to see what happens to her when she is in jail. Instead she's just released because the students protest for her release. We miss the elements that keep her resolve and that is a major weakness in her journey and in the production.

I also paid very little attention to make up. After Phindile's assault and rape by her boyfriend, she travels from Flex's house in a Pretoria suburb to campus. Upon arrival at campus, blood is still oozing from her face, even when she goes to the police station, which is hours after the assault, she still has blood dripping. I should have paid more attention to this.

Being artistic director has given me one major advantage: as a playwright and director, I have had the opportunity to watch my work night after night, and give directorial notes and script

notes night after night. My process of creating a work comes to an end on the last day of the season and when the work is remounted, once again, I embark on the process of making it better.

5.4 Critical Reflective Lens 2: Our Leaners' Eyes

Brookfield's 1995 article is written to address educators and learners during reflective practice. For my study, I learners means performers whilst educators or teachers refers to the director or playwright.

Seeing ourselves through leaners' eyes constitutes one of the most consistently surprising elements in any teacher's preceptors, or staff developer's career. We discover that learners are interpreting our actions in the way we mean them. They are hearing what we wanted them to hear and seeing what we wanted them to see (Brookfield, 1998, p. 198). I will refer to three incidents that assisted me.

In September 2016 the female students of The University of Kwazulu Natal (UKZN) took to the streets to protest about sexual harassment on campus and in the streets. Mdutyana (2016), aptly titled his article. Fees Must Fall becomes Rape Must Fall. This article inspired the bare breast scene in *Freedom*. Staging this scene was a huge challenge. I had seen women protest with their bras on and standing firm against the police. When I wrote the scene, I wanted to take it to the extremes, I was convinced that for the scene to be more effective, the women had to do a naked scene. On the stage direction it was clear that the females had to do a naked scene. There were quiet murmurs of discontent from the artists. But I was to have none of that. I wanted to go to the extreme in highlighting the plight of girls and women. I didn't want to replicate what was on television. I remember before our second run through in the theatre, I went to their dressing rooms and asked them how they felt about doing the nude scene. It was an emotionally charged conversation and some were in tears. I also had tears welling up in my eyes. I was asking them to serve them to play and perform an act they were not comfortable with. I knew I was pushing the boundaries and in my head I was only thinking of the impact it would have on the audiences rather than then the impact it would have on the performers. I had also said to them that they don't have to do the scene in rehearsals but have to promise me they will do it in performance. In our conversation, they raised their concerns about being naked on

stage. Some of them told me that they have just given birth months earlier and they were not confident about their bodies. For some it was plainly embarrassing to show off your body glibly even if it was for dramatic impact. At the end of the conversations, there were those who wanted to do the scene and those who still felt uncomfortable. They requested to only take their tops off for the evening's rehearsal and asked me to see if it had the desired impact. The scene happens when Phindile is arrested and there's a confrontation with the police. The women arrive on stage chanting "Wa thintha umfazi wa thintha umbokodo" (You strike a woman you strike a rock). Towards the end of their chant and verbal confrontation, Mapula says:

MMAPULA: We will stand outside here. You can lock us all up. You can rape us like you always do.

[She starts to take off her clothes.]

MMAPULA: Is this what you want, this…To rape us?

THOKOZILE: MMAPULA: Wathintha u mfaziWhathinthu umbokodo. (If your strike on us; you are striking a rock)(Freedom 2018: p. 252)



Freedom. Photographer: Sanmari Marais

The rest of the girls start to take off their tops. I had understood that on the night they would only strip off their shirts, but then they took it a step further and took of their bras. However, I realised that it was unnecessary, since the scene was unmistakably powerful and didn't need them to completely undress. Dealing with my female cast members on this scene I learned to be flexible, to allow myself to experiment with things that I had not brought to the rehearsal room, to listen and sometimes to entertain people's fears and frustrations. Sometimes I can be so rigid in my thinking that nothing can change my mind until it is experimented with, and this time, without my experiment and upon reflecting, I managed to present an iconic scene of protest without stripping my cast completely naked.

As a director, I was in control, I decided everything that happened on stage and as I was firmly believing in my vision, nothing could change that, but, a conversation and giving away the power to the artists made a meaningful difference in the production. The scene was presented with absolute care and poignancy. Panyane(2018) of the Star newspaper attested to this in her review when she wrote "I was impressed at the nuanced approach given to campaigns such as Naked Protest and One in Three that aimed to highlight rape in tertiary institutions".

A similar example happened when we presented the second season of Freedom in 2019. In the first season, after the rape, Phindile rose from behind the couch where she was raped and walked across the stage naked. The role was played bravely by Simphiwe Ndlovu. This is after she has been beaten and kicked and knocked against the wall twice. The scene was extremely demanding and when we auditioned for the second season to replace her, a lot of artists were doubtful of doing the scene. When I eventually spoke to Zimkitha Kumbaca, who was cast for the role, she wanted to do the role so much but was very uncomfortable about the nude scene. When I thought hard about it, I realised that, it was not about nudity, but it was about the act of rape itself. I agreed to cast her and remove the nudity from the scene. The scene still carried the power of the original script.

Freedom was full and running with 50 artists on stage, timing was important. One mistake, and you could trip and fall; worse, you could bump your fellow actor at full speed and the consequences could be dire. Full concentration was required for the production especially from dancers. I wanted to present the danger and the fear of students in a visceral manner. We had a bad experience where the cast lost concentration. The scene is a confrontation between the striking and the non-striking students before the march at the Union Building. As the striking

students drag non striking students from the dormitories, they have to throw one of the students from the first floor. The brave girl who is thrown is a certain Fulufhelo Ratheko. She was doing it night after night. On this one occasion, during our preview, the cast couldn't catch her, and she fell and broke her leg. It was horrifying to see her bones sticking out. I eventually cut the scene. The injury took her out of the production for a month and she had to go through therapy for six months. Although the scene was spectacular, it was not the play, and even without it, without subjecting another youngster to the injuries, the play succeeded. I have learned that sometimes you have to learn to leave out the things you love for the success of the production and the well-being of the actors.

5.5 Critical Reflective Lens 3: Our colleagues' experience

Talking to colleagues about what we do unravels the shroud of silence in which our practice is wrapped. Participating in critical conversations with peers opens us up to their versions of events we have experienced. Our colleagues serve as critical mirrors reflecting back to us images of our actions that often take us by surprise (Brookfield, 1998, p. 200).

As the play unfolds, one can mistake Phindile's relationship with Bonafide as cheating on Flex, she actually isn't cheating on him. She remains loyal to him until the day he raped and assaulted her.

PHINDILE'S cell phone rings. She steps aside to answer the phone. BONAFIDE's eyes are on her.

PHINDILE: Hi baby. No look we're about to start with the meeting. Can I let you know when I leave? Okay. I love you.

MMAPULA: Who's that now?

PHINDILE: Flex

MMAPULA: Ag, Phindile. I thought you're through with this guy.

PHINDILE: Mmapula please, okay. He takes care of me. Look he pays for my res, I'm loyal to him.

MMAPULA: Phindile, you know you can do better than that(She tries to grab the phone from her). Could you get off your phone? For once.

PHINDILE: Let's just start with this meeting (Freedom, 2018, p. 201).

I Invited Lara Foot, a good friend of mine and the CEO and Artistic Director of the Baxter Theatre to my rehearsal of Freedom, a day before the final dress rehearsal. After the rehearsals we went to the hotel and spent three hours at the bar talking about the play.

Lara Foot and I have come a long way, we met at university when she was doing her third year and I featured in three of her student productions and after her graduation I featured in *Braait Laities* which she directed and *Rodney gets his Gun* and a workshopped production titled *Laduma*. Our relationship goes back thirty years and I can trust her with my work.

One of the major questions she asked me was the relationship between Bonafide and Phindile. She felt that Phindile could be misconstrued as a slut, a cheat because her relationship with Bonafide was not clear enough; it felt like they were having an affair. I told her they weren't and that I had tried to express it in the following dialogue. I had simply assumed that by making Phindile avoid Bonafide's approaches in a very subtle way, the audiences will get it. But I was wrong, the audiences who attended the rehearsals also felt that she was in love with both of them and in some way, it took away from Phindile's struggle because they saw her as a cheat. I thought I had addressed it in this particular fashion and I thought it was enough.

PHINDILE: Hey.

BONAFIDE: Hey.

PHINDILE: How are you?

BONAFIDE: I'm alive, how are you?

PHINDILE: Good, good.

BONAFIDE: We missed you last night

PHINDILE: I sent an apology

BONAFIDE: You coming tonight right?

PHINDILE: No I have other plans.

BONAFIDE: But I miss you out there…

PHINDILE: Bona, please let's not do this now (Freedom 2008: p. 200).

When she remains behind after the chaos at the Union Building, one could mistake it for her wanting to be with Bonafide, but it is not so. She is genuinely staying behind to sort out the students' problems. Her loyalty to Flex is strengthened when after the killing of Felix Abadu, Bonafide comes out clean and says:

BONAFIDE: Phindile?

[PHINDILE stops and walks back to BONAFIDE]

BONAFIDE: Come with me.

PHINDILE: Can we not do this now.

BONAFIDE: When PHINDILE?

THOKOZILE: BONA let's go.

BONAFIDE: THOKO wait.

BONAFIDE: When PHINDILE?

PHINDILE: Please Bona not now (Freedom 2018: p.228).

[She kisses him on the cheek and runs out.]

Lara felt that even with this scene, it was still not enough. After a long conversation and critical reflection on the work, I agreed with Lara when she suggested I add two lines, she said Phindile

must say "I can't" and then also include new lines that said, "You have to stop asking me that". The scene read as follows:

BONAFIDE: Phindile?

PHINDILE stops and walks back to BONAFIDE

BONAFIDE: Come with me.

PHINDILE: Look Bona, I can't. You know I can't.

BONAFIDE: Why?

PHINDILE: Can we not do this now.

BONAFIDE: When PHINDILE?

THOKOZILE: BONA let's go.

BONAFIDE: THOKO wait.

BONAFIDE: When PHINDILE?

PHINDILE: You need to stop asking me that, I can't (Freedom 2018: p. 228).

The new lines cleared Phindile from being considered a slut considering that, the scene was an opportune moment for Bonafide to tell Phindile that he loves her. Given her vulnerability at the time, it could have been easy for Phindile to go with Bonafide and this would have portrayed her as a bitch and she would have lost all the respect and empathy that she had earned from her friends and audiences alike. For Phindile to say, "You need to stop asking me that,"makes it clear that she has not been entertaining Bonafide's courting but remains good friends with him for the sake of their ideals of free education. This makes her honest, regardless of the conditions of her transactional relationship with Flex. Phindile is the first one to admit that her relationship with Flex is for convenience but yet she remains his girlfriend and doesn't entertain anybody else. This makes her strong in that sense that even if we know that she is in the relationship for survival she is still in it and remains loyal.

5.6 Critically Reflective Lens 4: Theoretical Literature

Theory can help us "name" our practice by illuminating the general elements of what we think are idiosyncratic experiences. It can provide, multiple perspectives on familiar situations. Studying theory can help us realize that what we thought were signs of failings as practitioners can actually be interpreted as the inevitable consequence of certain economic, social, and political processes (Brookfield, 1998, p. 200-2001).

When I look back at theatre that has been made in the eighties I could not help but single out *Asinamali!*, which was created a year after the Lamontville rent boycotts as an urgent response to social ills. Considering the conditions in which theatre was created during apartheid, it is understandable why this urgent response to political evils was not a perpetual effort but a once off attempt by Ngema.

The foundation of my approach towards story telling has been laid by those who came before me. What I did was to take these teachings and apply them in a way that pronounced my own voice and determined and defined my own processes guided by the current social, economic and political processes and circumstances.

Conclusion

Using Brookfield's Reflective Lenses, I was able to discover the assumptions that framed my work and as a result, have been able to improve on my work. But self-reflective practice is an ongoing process for a creative like myself, and through that process I can sharpen my craft and improve my interactions with the artists and my creative teams. In the following chapter, I will engage Urgent Theatre and attempt to place Freedom as an embodiment of Urgent Theatre.

CHAPTER 6: DIALOGUE WITH THE ORIGINAL MUSICAL PRODUCTION OF *FREEDOM*

6.1 Introduction

Van der Merwe confronts some critical questions about violence in South Africa. Has violence become a normal form of communication in South Africa? Has it become a normal form of interaction that is almost taken for granted? Have we in fact adopted a culture of violence? (Van der Merwe, 2013, p. 73). Molopyane (2013) in Van der Merwe (2013, p. 73) remarked that "South Africa has adopted violence as our 12th official language". His remark is not far-fetched given the extent of violence occurring in post-apartheid South Africa. Violence has become endemic in South Africa and needs immediate attention and intervention from the playwrights, painters, musicians and dancers.

In this chapter, I will attempt to demonstrate how the prevalence of political, interpersonal and small group violence is highlighted through song, music, dance and multimedia in the original musical production of *Freedom*. I will endeavour to show how *Freedom* is an embodiment of Urgent Theatre through its politics and violence - both purely political and social.

6.2 Poverty and Xenophobic Violence

Unequal distribution of power results in conspicuous differences in wealth and status, between the ruler and the ruled, which corresponds with racial and ethnic (cultural, language and/or religious) differences (Schutte & De Cock, 1998: p. 64). Furthermore Schutte & De Cock (1998: p. 64) state that

> "South Africa is a classic example where white people ruled and ensured their families and coming generations acquire wealth and higher status whilst black people were of low status and poor. Such superimpositions of different lines of separation necessarily leads to manifest competitive conflict and direct action. But direct action is brought about by frustrations of the people when they realize that their situation of poverty doesn't improve, they resort to violence because seemingly, in South Africa, violence seem to be the only means of communicating with the state".

With the high levels of unemployment and poverty, lack of resources, and poor service delivery, South Africa is prone to violence and civil disobedience. The level of poverty can be deduced from the government grants paid to the citizens. South Africa is effectively a welfare state. The core objective for the allocation of aid is most commonly poverty reduction (Dollar and Coullier, 1999: p. 37). But for aid to reduce poverty, it depends on the degree of poverty. It is estimated that the number of people on the SASA grant scheme will grow from 17.9 million to 18.6 million and that by 2020/22 the old age grant will reach 4 million beneficiaries. It is important to note that the old age and the veterans receive a grant of R1800 per month; the disabled and care dependency will receive R1 780, whilst foster carers will receive R1000 and child support comes to R425.

The recipients of these grants are predominantly African men and women, young and old. With some of the grants, they have to support themselves and their families. Bonafide comes from such a family. He is dependent on that same R 1800 that his grandmother receives. Since that is the only income at home, he has to pay for his tuition, accommodation, food, clothes and transport. At the same time, the grant must support his grandmother and his parents. With his grandmother dead, his determination and commitment to fight for free education is unwavering. He lost all hope, even in God, and the only thing that can free him from all this poverty and misery is education, which he knows he cannot afford.

Bonafide is no different from Linda, who comes from Mount Fletcher. He leaves behind his two brothers who are infected with silicosis, an occupational lung disease that affects mine workers. Although on opposite sides at first, they both have the same background of poverty. Linda's situation is dire. He comes from the Eastern Cape Ramafole village near Mount Fletcher. In his interview with the journalist after the altercation with the police at the Union Buildings, he tells the story:

LINDA: "… The police beat me up for nothing. I been a good boy, I followed the rules coz I wanted this education so bad. To help my two silicosis bed ridden brothers and their children. But what do I get for it? Mmm? A fractured arm and bruises all over my body. I am not running anymore. My two brothers got me here, paid with their lungs for me to be here. They told me, do your first year, get a bursary or something and take it from there. You

> make sure you finish your course and come take care of our children. Therefore, I choose to fight yet another f**king day!" (Freedom 2018: p. 230)

According to Ledwaba (2018: p. 53), this little village "perhaps best represents the extent of the devastation the occupational disease of former mine workers has wrought on rural communities of the Eastern Cape and elsewhere in Southern Africa". Poverty is lurking in this village. For Linda, education is the only hope to escape a life of squalor and poverty.

Mmapula too; she has nowhere to stay until Phindile brought her in to stay with her illegally. During her interview, after the killing of Felix Abadu and the closure of the school residence she shares her story with the journalist.

> MMAPULA: "I am Mmapula Kgotleng. I come from Kuruman. I am doing my second year. When I arrived from Kuruman, I stayed with my aunt extension four Soshanguve, Mane Peggy. She had moved in le Uncle Ray. It was a small RDP chandie, like a small situation. I basically slept in the kitchen, on the floor... He kicked us out. We spent that night at a filling station. My Aunt went back home and I spent the last three months sleeping everywhere. In toilets, gymnasium, and my permanent spot became a filling station. Last month PHINDILE brought me here to squad in her room. Now here I am, kicked out of res. Where do I go? Where do I sleep? I guess it's back to the filling station" (Freedom 2018: pp. 232-233).

The devastation of poverty is well reflected in Mmapula's story. Coming from Kuruman, she finds herself in Soshanguve where she sleeps on the floor and ultimately in toilets and garages. This plight of young black people in search of a better life is deeply felt by students who come from poor communities and families.

The theme of poverty is set up in the opening lines of *Freedom* by other students who depend on friends and the movement leaders for coupons and meal tickets. I remember as a student

we had to do the same. I stayed in a student accommodation and every morning and night I had to make sure that I gathered enough food to assist some of my friends who were not staying in residence. This is a long-standing challenge that remains unresolved and hence the students took to the streets.

VETIS:	Ek se Solomon. (Hey Solomon)
SOLOMON:	Ek se Vetis. (Hey Vetis.)
VETIS:	Dintshang? (What's up?)
SOLOMON:	Ah, ke gaowulile ntwana yam. (I'm hungry my guy.)
VETIS:	A ro bona Mmapula Jo maybe o tla re zama ka di meal tickets. (Let's go see Mmapula)
SOLOMON:	Eh MMAPULA, retswere ke tlala, kopa ore zame ka di meal ticket. (Mmapula, we are hungry, please help with the meal tickets.)
MMAPULA:	Lena gents I always give you meal tickets. I have run out. Le hona le nagana gore nna ke tloja jang? (You guys I always give you meal tickets. I have run out. What do you think I will eat?)
VETIS:	Mara ke wena o a eitsing flops ya rona. (You are the only one who understands our problem.) (Freedom 2018: p, 198)

Solomon and Veties are not the only ones that require help. Phindile confirms this when Veties and Solomon asks her for meal tickets.

PHINDILE:	I bought you food this morning. You guys are abusing us now.
SOLOMON:	We had to share with everyone.
PHINDILE:	No, you must remember it's not just you guy. We're also helping other students. (Freedom 2018: p, 198)

Even Phindile is in a transactional relationship. She is loyal to Flex because he pays for her tuition fees and accommodation. Coming from Umhlaba U ya Lingana in the rural flatlands of Kwazulu Natal where she had to walk fifteen kilometers on bare feet to school, she has tasted poverty and she will do anything to survive and get an education. Unfortunately, her transactional relationship ends with sexual violence. The relationship also gives Flex a sense of entitlement. He feels that because he is supporting Phindile, he can do as he pleases with her, including assault and rape her.

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These students highlight the levels of poverty that we find in our communities. With levels of unemployment at 29.1 % by the end of fourth quarter of 2019, there is very little hope for the youth. The youngsters who are not in school resort to violence. Lenzo, whilst his actions are inexcusable, is the prototype of unemployed and out-of-school youths who, with nothing to do, indulge in alcohol and drugs, which leads to violent action. Towards the end of his story, which he tells through song, he sings:

> They're taking our jobs I don't care about them
>
> So I'mo stay stealing and robing till somebody come and take me from the bottom
>
> I know the government wont
>
> I know the president wont
>
> Think I care about the law when there is no place at all where
>
> It's safe I call home
>
> I got nowhere to go
>
> And there is nothing I own
>
> It's sad to admit that the clothes that I am wearing right now
>
> Are not even my own
>
> So, I bring you all this pain I know (Freedom 2018: p. 223)



Freedom. Photographer: Sanmari Marais

Lenzo, like many other youths in South Africa has lost hope and resorts to violence and distraction. Often this violence is misdirected. The violence that is directed at government for poor service delivery often spills over to the foreign nationals who are accused by South Africans of stealing their jobs and blamed and ridiculed for bringing disease and crime to the country. These hostile attitudes held by South Africans towards foreign nationals translates into violence that is meted out to the foreign nationals.

Instead of denying xenophobia and always attributing it to criminal elements, we need to confront, expose and deal with it. The persistent manner in which xenophobic violence happens in South Africa is a cause for concern. It does not stop; it has a consistent tendency of happening repeatedly. For as long as there are foreign nationals in the country, the possibility of xenophobic violence is extremely high.

South Africans hold migrants responsible for crime, bringing disease, and stealing jobs, services and resources, and view them as being illegally in the country. Exactly the sentiments expressed by Lenzo before killing the Nigerian national, Felix Abadu.

> LENZO: Your false priests prowl our churches, you have brought nothing but thuggery, death, disease and destruction. Look at our streets. They stink because of you. You just fucking untidy from where you come from and you want our country to look like slums. Voetsek!(Freedom 2018: p225)

These general feelings always express themselves in violence, especially in the outskirts of urban areas where resources are limited, and service delivery is poor. The persistent pattern of violence requires urgent attention constantly, to remind us that xenophobic violence is happening at an alarming rate.

6.3 Political Violence in Freedom

The systematic violence of the abhorrent apartheid system relied heavily on brutal, physical violence and deadly force to subdue and silence the majority of the South Africans. It seems that the democratic South Africa is applying the same tactics when dealing with protests. In *Freedom*, there are three scenes of police confrontation.

The first scene happens at the Union Buildings when the students are told that the President of the country will not be addressing them regarding the agreement, he had reached with the vice chancellors. Like in the play, the real life event ended with a running battle between the students and the police. The police opened fire as students tried to storm the Union Buildings and some students were injured. This was reminiscent of 1986 where there was always a confrontation with the police during protest marches.

The second confrontation with the police happens after the Minister of Higher Education announces that the fees will increase by eight per cent. The minister, surrounded by his bodyguards and police, is boastful and shows no care but absolute power. He says to his panel, “If the students do not accept this, we will form our own movement. Students must fall.” In his

song, he is direct and uses no poetry to get his message across. He admonishes the students and tells them that their protest is going to come to an end.

Lendaba Yeni izophela (x2)

Ndiya nyusaimali yeskolo

Nyusa, nyusa Nzimande

Ndinayi nyusa (This issue is coming to an end, I am raising the tuition fee)

You're getting a price hike

We don't care if you all strike, yea

The government won't bite

We don't care if you all fight, yea

Hundred thou, take a hundred thou

Take a hundred though make a million

And that's what it costs for civilians

To get an education but we don't care

We're laughing at you while you're in the streets

A couple of us own the industry

So, it don't even matter if you are holding up arms

Strike on, strike on, I guarantee it won't make no difference

We do what we want coz we got all the power

And you can do nothing the city is ours

You can complain all you want and be sour

Imo just ask if my president needs a new shower (Freedom 2018: p. 249)

Essentially the minister is saying “I don’t care. We are your friends by day but we laugh at you at night. In essence, vote for us, make us your leaders, run the streets with us and when you go to your homes, we will gather again to see how we screw you tomorrow.” When he says, “what do you know about the nice life?”, it is a reflection on the character of minister and some of the leaders in high positions, some of whom have served time in jail because of their political activities, as if a political contribution is a currency for corruption, entitlement, ignorance and abuse of power.

Following this attitude and behavior of the minister, the students are up in arms. They have been suffering for way too long. They have expressed this suffering in the first scene of the play and now they are going to act. They will not accept the fee increase. Bonafide, accompanied by Linda, leads the students in a riot. This was to be the beginning of the end for Bonafide.

STUDENTS:
He Ho He He Ho He

BONAFIDE:
Oh Asiy'bhayi!! Asiy'bhayi Lendaba
Asiy'bhayi Asiy'bayi Lendaba
(We don’t buy tour story)

BONAFIDE: (Charging the police)
What's going on in our country
Campaigns giving birth to destruction
You’re taking up "arms for corruption"
But where's our freedom?
They say just forget about the past now
We’re told to get over it
But how will we move on
When most of our people our suffering!
We want equal opportunities
Give our people some security

We've been fighting for equality
We're done!! No more white supremacy (Freedom 2018: pp. 250-251))

At this stage Bonafide is defeated. But he will have his say before his last breath. He has lost faith and hope in the current political system. He is clear that as long as the system remains the same, nothing will ever change because whoever comes into power has to serve the financial masters who lifted him or her to power. That's is why Bonafide's last words are "We have no faith in puppets". They all serve particular masters and when they come to power, they have to satisfy their master before they can satisfy the masses of the people. Like puppets on strings, they are operated and have to dance to the tune of monopoly capital.

The third confrontation between the female students and the police is the bare breast protest by women, except this time, the police are disarmed when the women take off their clothes and confront them. When I critically reflect, I strongly feel I made a bad choice because the police did not assault or fire a rubber bullet at the protesters. Instead they walked away from the scene, almost embarrassed. I feel if I had chosen a violent confrontation the scene could have had more grit to it.

Freedom is persistent when faced with police confrontation. It is the same persistent and consistent violence that the police mete out to the students and the citizens every time there is protest.

6.4 Music and political messaging

The music of *Freedom i*s new age and plays an important role in driving the story. The *Freedom* sound-track is a fusion of rap music which is a sub-genre of hip hop music and the South African apartheid era sound which could be classified as protest or South African jazz and traditional hymns. The soundscape is bass heavy using a synthesized bass called 808 bass and has gritty synth-brass sound thus creating tension. The music is layered with South African harmonies which creates the feeling of the past times with a modern beat to bring the contrast.

The composition of "liwile ilizwe", the overture of the musical, was one of the first ideas I generated for the musical. The composer started with a simple melody which became the thread

of the piece. The song set the standard for other songs to come. The orchestration followed my vision of having a group of students marching and chanting from the back of the stage, something big and grand. Bonafide took that brief literally and recorded the stomping of gumboots and embedded them into the sound scape. These can be heard in the original recording of the song score. The staccato strings, a gong to send shivers up one's spine, thunderous timpani rolls and the extended suspense of the music progression and build-up of the instrumentation set the grand tone of the musical. The music builds up to an exciting high and suddenly "bang!" the gong hits and there is relative silence. The music goes from thunderous to relatively quiet and what was a harmoniously orchestrated spectacle becomes an unpleasant dip into a dark political stance by the students that "the nation has fallen and our people have perished" "liwile ilizwe, baphelile abantu". Bonafide made a comment on the composition of the song. In his words he said that:

> "As the composer of the work I needed those words to be sung with a wailing tone and agony, for 'the perishing the nation' was not a pleasantry and certainly nothing to joyously sing about. The idea that the 'nation had fallen' stemmed from my view of a consistently eroding political and social system whose decadence began with the subjugation of the black majority by white minority in 1948 until the early 1990s. The inequalities of that subjugation in my view was further being perpetuated by the countries current leaders in not addressing and implementing solutions to combat the economic crises in South Africa. The private sector in South Africa currently controls over 80 percent of the economy and it is needless to say that the majority of these companies are white owned and are advantaged by the former apartheid system" (Bonafide 2019).

BONAFIDE:

White monopoly capital be capitalizing on you all

Stuck in a villainous system protected by treacherous laws

Forced in a corner and made to defy

And withstand all the odds

Stripped of our power relying

On nothing but mercy from God.

But I need my pride back

It's a fact all the pain and the scars don't try to hide that

I am a mess and I am broken I am trying so hard

To fight back

Talking rainbow nation when I am trying to fire back

Braaaat…braaatt…braaat

How do you like that?

Do you know my people might just wanna strike back?

If we get our confidence

You might not like that

Power to my people one day you'll recite that

Sheading blood and tears to one day get our stripes back (Freedom 2018: pp. 196-197).

The black majority constitutes the middle working class but more than 50 per cent of black youth are unemployed. That leaves education as the only hope for many black youngsters in South Africa. However they cannot afford to pay tuition fees. This then became the ticking time bomb that saw the "fees must fall" riots come to life.

6.5 Sexual Violence in Freedom

Some cases of rape go unreported in South Africa for fear of not being believed by the police or relatives. Sometimes it is because the victims are afraid of the stigma of being sexually abused. Sexual violence as such is the fastest growing crime in the world and the one that is least likely to result in conviction. In New York, crime dropped by about ten per cent in 2002, except for rape, which increased by 5,6 per cent. In Britain, just over five per cent of rape cases are effectively prosecuted; in South Africa, the figure is one per cent (Coetzee 2005: p.169).

In 1995, the Human Rights Watch report on domestic violence and rape, dubbed South Africa the “rape capital of the world” and, citing a figure which had been quoted for some years by NGOs, asserted that there were 35 rapes for every one reported to the police (Jewkes & Abrahams 2002: p. 1232).

One thing about the language of Urgent Theatre is directness. There is no poetry. We call a spade a spade. Rape is not sexual assault; it is rape. The victims do not use flowery language. Phindile would not say “I was deflowered” or "he forced himself into me”. She will say “I was raped”. Thokozile says it when she shares her experience with Phindile. She tells her straight, “I was gang raped; it was five of them”. Phindile magnifies the veracity of rape when she calls out the many names of the women and children that have been raped and killed by men. She calls out their names and how they died.

In describing the details of the victims of rape and femicide, Phindile refers to herself as those victims. She sees herself as them and every woman should see themselves as such because they are all at risk of rape and abuse at the hands of their fathers, brothers, neighbors, teachers and employers. Although she sees herself as those women, she is still herself and she cannot lead their lives. Instead, she encourages women to speak up and exposes this repugnant and abhorrent behavior. In telling their stories, she is direct and simple.

PHINDILE: Phambili nge chimurenga Phambili! Phambili Nge Hondo phambili. I have lost a friend, a brother, a comrade, a pillar of strength. They took him away from me. All this to make me a nothing. To make me no one. But I am something, I am someone. I am Lindiwe Cibi, shot and killed by my boyfriend, I am Karabo Mokoena killed and drenched in pool acid before being necklaced and set alight, I am Francis Rasuge, killed and made to disappear for eight years, my remains found naked and bound with a duct tape under two concrete slabs, I am Will Anene Booysen, gang raped and disemboweled, my body dumped in a construction side with my intestines next to me, I am River Steenkamp, shot and killed with hollow point bullets as I hid scared behind the bathroom door, I am Lekita Moore, Sizakhele Nkosi Malobane, Lerato Moloi… I am Tsholofelo

Aphane 19 years old, Lerato Ndinisa 18 years old, Lindiwe Mbonani 17 years old, the three of us were found dead bound and half naked in C5 Mamelodi, metres away from a children's playground… I am all of those young girls, those women whose names never made it to the newspapers and our TV screens, I am that little girl who cannot walk freely night and day afraid of my brother…I am Baby Tshepang. I am my sister's healer and I choose not to be silent and I urge you to speak up…But I am also Mapula from Kuruman, sleeping in the streets, in the toilets, at the service station just so to get an education … I am Thokozile from Mnambithi, an orphan, raised by relatives, education is my only hope, I am Raisibe from Zibidiela, I sleep with any man who can buy sanitary pads for my heavy flow. I am LINDA from Mount Fletcher, I am leaving behind my two bed ridden silicosis infected brothers in the mud house just to get an education and make a difference in my family, I am MICADO, the first of Baloyi to have an education, I am BONAFIDE, raised by my grandmother and left alone to fend for myself when she departed to the other world. I am Phindile Ndlovu, all the way from Umhlaba Uya Lingana, where I wait for the first cock to crow before making fire on the ground just so I can cook for my two little brothers, I am the one who walks for 15 kilometers to school, I am the one who fell in-love for convenience, just so as to get something to eat and a place to stay. And now I know it was not worth it. I am the one spat on by the police and ridiculed for reporting rape. But I stuck to the truth. 'Coz the truth shall set you free. We call on the university to re-instate Mildred Nkwashu, Hector Singuni and Precious Rapetsoa who were expelled for fighting for free education. We call on all universities to reinstate expelled students and the courts to set them free. We call on the government to think deep, to think hard about free education. We will not rest until it is realised in our lifetime. I am Phindile Ndlovu and I am here for my people (Freedom 2018: pp. 253-256)

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter places *Freedom* at the heart of Urgent Theatre. Urgent Theatre concerns itself with unacceptable current social and political challenges that manifest themselves in political and social violence. The original music of Freedom addresses the recurring occurrences of poverty, sexual violence, xenophobic and political violence in our society. These themes are amalgamated in one production, making *Freedom*, through its processes and practice and its aesthetics, the embodiment of Urgent Theatre, and Urgent Theatre a form of South African theatre.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

7.1 Conclusion

It has taken me a number of years and at least fifteen productions to arrive at what I call Urgent Theatre. Through practice, learning and experience, I found my own voice. In this study, I have articulated the influences of my theatre making processes and creative choices, and by so doing I have provided knowledge on the aesthetics of my works and in particular, the aesthetics and processes of the original musical theatre production of Freedom.

When talking about his Poor Theatre, Grotowski admits that there are influences that have shaped his work and methods.

> "I do not claim that everything we do is entirely new. We are bound, consciously or unconsciously, to be influenced by the traditions, science and art, even by the superstitions and presentiments peculiar to the civilisation which has moulded us, just as we breathe the air of the particular continent which has given us life. All these influence our undertaking, though sometimes we may deny it. Even when we arrive at certain theoretic formulas and compare our ideas with those of our predecessors which I have already mentioned, we are forced to resort to certain retrospective corrections which themselves enable us to see more clearly the possibilities opened up before us" (Grotowski 1968: p24).

The path to Urgent Theatre has been laid by those who came before me. Gibson Kente's theatre gave me the song and the dance. Black Consciousness Theatre and theatre of the 1980's gave me the will to tell the stories of my people's suffering in an unjust system and to use theatre as a weapon. The teaching that I received at university and through experience have shaped my story telling and the techniques that I apply. Urgent Theatre is made up of workshop theatre, a tradition that has been practiced since the 1950's when Athol Fugard worked with Lewis Nkosi, Zakes Mokae and others on *No Good Friday*. This tradition was brought back to life again by Workshop 71, Junction Avenue and Ngema, Mtwa and Simon when they made *Woza Albert*. These traditions make Urgent Theatre a way of making theatre that is based on a historical trajectory which I have mapped in this study. Drawing from my predecessors, Urgent Theatre, using theatre as a weapon, tackles those stories as they happen.

Urgent Theatre is not afforded the luxury of time. One cannot wait for the writer to spend months writing and researching the work. Urgent Theatre happens when the events are still fresh in our hearts and minds. Text and action happen simultaneously. It seeks to reflect, to heal, and to encourage dialogue. It calls for action. The events as they unfold, when the play is in rehearsal and performance are altered, examined and incorporated into the play. The play becomes a full text on the last day of the performance.

Because of the urgency of the stories I am telling, my work is fast paced, with quick dialogue and full of action. The fact that I do not come to the first rehearsal with a complete script means that my interaction and consultation with the entire value chain from point conception to point curtain call occurs in concurrence. As with every play that I have created in recent years, dialogue, choreography, song and emphasis on emotions can alter with the changing narrative in the environment. The speed at which news travel (within a few hours news becomes history) is the pace that I translate it into my work. Nothing is static; no frame lingers pedantically from scene to scene. My opportunity to seize power lasts for only 90 to 120 minutes with any given audience. I have to drive my message home.

Through Workshop Theatre, which brings people from different cultures and backgrounds together, artists have a viable platform to engage socio-political issues as they occur. When we look back at the last decade of political rule in the South Africa, and considering the corruption that rocked our country, I can only lament the lack of more stage productions that confronted the status quo and illuminated the scourge of corruption that defiled our country and brought down our economy. By engaging these matters urgently as they occur, theatre practitioners can inform the nation of the evils of corruption and stimulate dialogue. Unlike in the past, where the apartheid regime was hell-bent on silencing the artists through torture, detention and incarceration, we now have a government which has in its constitution freedom of expression and association as a basic right. It is, therefore, important that artists, without fear or favour, use this right to address matters that delay the progress of a nation.

I encourage practitioners to engage and challenge the status quo in order to put centre stage the socio-political ills of our society and call for action to fight against and unsettle the perpetrators in every way possible. We should learn from our predecessors to use theatre as a weapon for societal transformation regardless of our political affiliations. Artists who depend on the State for grants to make work, must and should not be afraid to be side-lined. Instead, they should

put the country first, and articulate in no uncertain terms the occurrences of political and social violence. Institutions of learning, cultural groups and theatre practitioners should adopt Urgent Theatre as a form of South African theatre that will enable practitioners to put matters of national significance on the table for our society to engage with those matters, and apply pressure on the state or any perpetrator of the evils that hinders the progress of this country and its people. Muthien (1998, p. iii) states:

> "Violence, from interpersonal violence within the family to large scale social and political violence, is a complex phenomenon arising from the multiple interaction of variety of factors. The task of preventing violence is thus not the sole responsibility of the criminal justice system. Initiatives for prevention should include all levels of government, civil society, communities and individuals".

For as long as there is police brutality, domestic violence, abuse of women and children, poverty and corruption, it is the responsibility of the individual theatre practitioner urgently to intervene and not acquiesce in silence but to expose, and call for action for these wrongs to be corrected or engaged. But Urgent Theatre is not all about doom and gloom. I do theatre that is entertaining, and exciting. I try to make it an experience. I like to take the audiences on an emotional rollercoaster. When you watch my work, you laugh, you cry, you smile, you frown, and you gasp with shock, with excitement. With fast paced action packed storytelling, accompanied by strong dramatic narrative, song, dance and spectacle there is never a dull moment. It is real, it is raw, immersive, visceral, and immediate! It is Urgent.



Freedom. Photographer: Sanmari Marais

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3 APPENDIX

3.1 A: *FREEDOM* SCRIPT

FREEDOM

Book: **Aubrey W. Sekhabi and Kabelo Togoe**

Music and Lyrics: **Kabelo Togoe and Aubrey W. Sekhabi**

Director:	Aubrey Sekhabi
Musical Director:	Kabelo Togoe
Ass Muscial Director:	Zakhele Mabena
Choreographer:	Mdu Nhlapo
Lighting & Set Designer:	Wilhelm Disbergen
Assistant Director:	Reabetswe Motlana
Costume Designer	Lesego Moripe
Stage Manager:	Joseph Mogale

Characters

PHINDILE:	Student leader (22yrs)
FLEX:	Hip hop superstar (27yrs)
BONAFIDE:	Student activist (23yrs)
LEADER:	The chairperson of SRC (27yrs)
CHAD:	White hip hop wanna be University of Pretoria student (24yrs)
MMAPULA:	Student activist (21yrs)
THOKOZILE:	Rape Victim (23yrs)
LENZO:	Township rascal (21yrs)
THABO, DON, LUCKY:	LENZO'S friend
MICADO:	Radical Student (22yrs)
NKULULEKO:	Poor student (21yrs)
LINDA:	Non striking student (23)
BLADE:	The Minister of Higher Education
STUDENT#1 /STUDENT#2:	The hungry student
MC:	The Master of Ceremonies
TV PRESENTER:	News anchor
SECURITY:	Campus security
FELIX ABADU:	The shop owner

POLICE1, POLICE2, POLICE3: Insensitive cops

STATION COMMISIONER:

OVERTURE

We hear footsteps coming from afar. A group of students emerge, singing, chanting, and slowly approaching. Some of them waving, raising clenched fists and some of them pretending as if they are carrying Ak47. They are wearing jeans, chinos, cargo pants, sneakers and T-shits printed FEEDOM. All of their faces are covered with black bandanas. They explode in to dance, making their intentions clear. Then PHINDILE, BONAFIDE and THOKOZILE belts out Liwile Ilizwe

BONAFIDE:

Liwile Ilizwe

Ba phelile abantu

Oh liwile elizwe

PHINDILE:

Baphelile abantu

THOKOZILE:

Nisiqedile,niqedile ngathi

BONAFIDE:

White monopoly capital, be capitalising on you all,

Stuck in a villainous system, protected by treacherous laws.

Forced in a corner and made to defy

And withstand all the odds,

Stripped of our power relying

On nothing but mercy from God.

But I need my pride back,

It's a fact, all the pain and the scars, don't try to hide that.

I am a mess and I am broken I am trying so hard

To fight back

Talking rainbow nation when I am trying to fire back.

Braaaat…braaatt…braaat

How do you like that?

Do you know my people might just wanna to strike back

If we get our confidence,

You might not like that.

Power to my people! One day you'll recite that,

Sheading blood and tears, to one day get our stripes back.

Liwile Ilizwe

Ba phelile abantu

STUDENTS:

Liwile e lizwe aah aaah aaah

Liwile e lizwe aaah aaaah aaah

BONDAFIDE, PHINDILE, THOKOZILE:

Oh liwile elizwe

Baphelile abantu

nisiqedile,niqedile ngathi

Liwile e lizwe aah aaah aaah

Liwile e lizwe aaah aaaah aaah

The students raise clenched fists and.....

Blackout.

Scene 1

Students start to fill the empty chairs in the campus hall. Leadership is on stage already. The space is filled with excitement and energy. THOKOZILE, MMAPULA arrive. More students arrive, notably, NKULULEKO, LINDA and MICADO.

VETIS: **Ekse Solomon. (Hey Solomon)**

SOLOMON: **Ekse Vetis. (Hey Vetis.)**

VETIS: **Dintsang? (What's up)**

SOLOMON: **Ah, ke gaolekilel ntwana yam. (I'm hungry my guy.)**

VETIS: **Aro bona Mmapula jo. (Let's go see Mmapula)**

SOLOMON: **Eh MMAPULA, retswere ke tlala, kopa ore zame ka di meal ticket. (Mmapula, we are hungry, please help with the meal tickets.)**

MMAPULA: **Lena gents, I always give you meal tickets. I have ran out. Le hona le nagana gore nna ke tloja jang? (You guys I always give you meal tickets. I have ran out. What do you think I will eat?)**

CHILIES: **Mara ke wena o a eitsing flops ya rona. (You are the only one who understands our problem.)**

MMAPULA: **Phindile and Bonafide told me gore they gave you this morning.**

SOLOMON: **That was for breakfast.**

THOKOZILE: **Come on guy's really?**

MMAPULA: **You know what. It's for the last time, otherwise ke tlo swa ke tlala. (You know what. It's for the last time, otherwise I am going to starve to death.)**

SOLOMON: **Nxono ono di feleletsa, tlabe di spane. (Just finish them, they won't be of use anymore.)**

MMAPULA: **What do you mean by that?**

SOLOMON: **Rae qhopha campus today. (Today is shut down.)**

MMAPULA: **What nonsense is this Thoko. Is this even true?**

THOKOZILE: **It's a sentiment. Fort Hare is on campus lock down, Cape Penisnsula, Stellenbosch, le Wits. Go rough. We'll just have to wait and hear what the leadership has to say. Let's join the other comrades.**

A group of students come in chanting. MICADO among them. MMAPULA and

THOKOZILE join in. Other students join in the chanting

LINDA: **Eh he, bafethu. This is getting rough, I need to go and study. Ke ya vaya. (Hey guys. This is getting rough, I need to go and study I am leaving.)**

SOLOMON: **Go and study for what baba? Today is shut down.**

LINDA: **What?**

SOLOMON: **Ey rae bopa campus today. (We're shutting down campus today.)**

LINDA: **What!? Where do you get that mandate? Actually, you know what…I am staying here, to oppose that move e ya lona. And mind you it is not just me, there's a lot of us here.**

SOLOMON: **Eh entilik Vetis, tswanetse remo tlatse mfana o vandag. Re tlo tla la. (You know what Vetis, we must prove to him today. We'll be in numbers.)**

LINDA calls out to few students. They gather around and start to caucus.

MICADO: **Phansi nge mamagement phansi! (Away with management away.)**

STUDENTS: **Phansi. (Away)**

MICADO: **Phansi nge 6% phansi! (Away with 6% away.)**

STUDENTS: **Phansi. (Away)**

MICADO: **Phambili with no fee increase phambili! (Forward with no fee increase forward.)**

STUDENTS: **Phambili. (Forward)**

MICADO: **Scrap all student debt now!**

The chanting continues. BONAFIDE walks in.

STUDENTS: **Now!**

MICADO: **Phansi with the fat cats phansi! (Away with the fat cats away.)**

STUDENTS: **Phansi. (Away)**

PHINDILE: **Hey.**

BONAFIDE: **Hey.**

PHINDILE: **How are you?**

BONAFIDE: **I'm alive, how are you?**

PHINDILE: **Good, good.**

BONAFIDE: **We missed you last night**

PHINDILE: **I sent an apology**

BONAFIDE: **You coming tonight right?**

PHINDILE: **No I have other plans.**

BONAFIDE: **But I miss you out there…**

PHINDILE: **Bona, please let's not do this now.**

SOLOMON approaches them.

SOLOMON: **Ekse BONA! Bona jo we are hungry.**

BONAFIDE: **Ey guys we can't deal with that now. We'll deal with that after the meeting.**

PHINDILE: **I bought you food this morning. You guys are abusing us now.**

SOLOMON: **We had to share with everyone.**

PHINDILE: **No, you must remember it's not just you guy. We're also helping other students.**

SOLOMON: **Latshwana kaofela, bo Mmapula, le comrade leaders wa snaai, la tshwana man. Le meeting wa vandag o ka se fele grand. (You are all the same, all of you, just like your lousy Comrade Leader. You are all the same. Even this meeting today, won't end well.)**

BONAFIDE: **SOLOMON you are out of order.**

SOLOMON: **You'll see.**

MMAPULA: **En then, bare ba batla eng? (And then, what do they want?)**

BONAFIDE: **They want meal tickets.**

MMAPULA: **How are you doing?**

BONAFIDE: **I am alive how are you?**

MMAPULA: **I'm well, thank you.**

PHINDILE'S cell phone rings. She steps aside to answer the phone. BONAFIDE's eyes are on her.

PHINDILE: **Hi baby. No look we're about to start with the meeting. Can I let you know when I leave? Okay. I love you.**

MMAPULA: **Who's that now?**

PHINDILE: **Flex**

MMAPULA: **Ag, Phindile. I thought you're through with this guy**

PHINDILE: **Mmapula please, okay. He takes care of me. Look he pays for my res, I'm loyal to him.**

MMAPULA: **Phindile, you know you can do better than that.** (She tries to grab the phone from her) **Could you get off your phone? For once.**

PHINDILE: **Let's just start with this meeting.**

The chanting soars. THOKOZILE is in the middle of the circle. LEADER comes to join her. She is irritated and leaves the circle and walks to BONAFIDE. Meanwhile, PHINDILE goes to join the students who are chanting.

The students sing and chant and clap. COMRADE LEADER walks to the stage. PHINDILE joins her

LEADER: **Phambili nge hondo (Forward with the struggle)**

STUDENTS: **Phambili nge chimurenga (Forward with freedom)**

LEADER: **Phambili nge hondo (Forward with the struggle)**

STUDENTS: **Phambili nge chimurenga (Forward with freedom)**

LEADER: **Phambili nge hondo (Forward with the struggle)**

STUDENTS: **Phambili nge chimurenga (Forward with freedom)**

PHINDILE: **Receive my revolutionary greetings in that manner. Comrade THOKOZILE please lead us in a prayer.**

They sing a short song.

Nobody wants to see us together

Let me tell you a story about my life

My mother was a kitchen girl

May papa was a garden boy

That's why I am a communist

They hum the song as THOKOZILE leads them in a prayer

THOKOZILE: **Dear God, guide us, lead us, and protect us, be with us on our journey, and anoint us with the Holy Spirit so that our fight for free education is realized. Help the black child in the street. Be with the South African child. We ask this in the name of the father, the son and the Holy Spirit we say…**

STUDENTS: (Respond with in a resounding and melodic tune) **AMEN**

PHINDILE's cell-phone vibrates.

PHINDILE: **Comrades, our demands remain the same. We want free quality education now. We want all student debts to be cancelled. Free registration for poor students and the missing middle. These police and securities must vacate our campuses now.**

AMOHELANG: **Hulle moet votsek. (They must f**k off.)**

PHINDILE: **We know they victimise us, they try to make us spies, but we say no. No student must be victimised for being part of the protest. This victimisation must stop. We call on the university to re-instate Mildred Nkwashu, Hector Singuni and Precious Rapetsoa who were expelled for fighting for free education. We want these universities to shut down until our government legislates a free and decolonised education. The University managements and the Vice chancellors should work with us, march with us, they must show solidarity and help government implement free decolonised education. Our parents and our brothers and sisters who toil every day for this country must join us, we want COSATU to join in this struggle. Stop insourcing bouncers and outsourcing cleaners. Our parents can't live in perpetual limbo, not knowing whether they got a job or not. This must stop. We need shuttles for those that stay away from school, we need free sanitary pads, 10GB for students who live off campus. We need free quality education now! Phambili nge mfundo Phambili!!!!!**

MICADO: **Heh force, and if they can't comply rashe vala shekolo che. (Hey force, and if they don't comply, we're shutting this campus down)**

Some students clap and ululate.

LINDA: **Eh Micado, we can't be talking about shutting down. We are too deep into the year, we can't even think of not writing right now. And mind you it's not just me. There's a whole lot of us here, man.**

AMO: **Voetsek wena, you're a sell out! (Get out of here, you're a sell out)**

STUDENTS howl at him.

LINDA: **Okay, okay, okay! Let's put this thing to a vote. Who wants a shut down?**

Everyone except LINDA and a few students.

SOLOMON: **You lose. Get out…**

STUDENTS start throwing papers and bottles at LINDA and company. They leave the hall.

PHINDILE: **Comrades. We are not shutting down, not yet. We continue to fight but we are not shutting down. So please let's continue with the meeting.**

Just then PHINDILE'S cell phone rings.

LEADER: **Comrades, I understand that we all want to speak so lets bring it to the floor. I will take five speakers this side and five this side.**

PHINDILE: **Baby I am coming. Yes I'll be there I promise. Baby the meeting has just started, I have to go.**

The students start a song.

STUDENTS: **Nkululeko**

FHULO and NCAMISA:

Our people are dying we want our freedom

STUDENTS:

Nkululeko

THOKOZILE:

Our people are starving give us our freedom

STUDENTS:

Nkululeko

NCAMISA: **We want freedom**

Comrade CHAIR acknowledges the first speaker.

RIVONINGO:

We have been suffering for way too long

We're tired of always staying strong

When's our time to free at last?

COMRADE CHAIR acknowledges another speaker.

THOKOZILE:

We know way too much about the struggle,

But not enough about the good life.

We need our time and we need it fast!

Nkululeko!

Nkululeko!

Nkululeko!

COMRADE CHAIR: Yes Thato.

THATO:

Our politicians, robbing us of everything,

You busy getting tenders

While people are getting nothing at all,

Nothing at all.

STUDENTS:

Its foul play, foul play,

I am telling you one day

One day we gonna rule!

MMAPULA: And show you how to lead our land

STUDENTS:

Nnkuleleko!

Our people are dying we want our freedom.

Nkululeko!

Our people are starving give us our freedom.

We want freedom oh oh oh oh.

LEADER: Let's give Comrade BONAFIDE a chance. His hand has been up since the meeting started.

BONAFIDE:

My people have been stuck inside a ruthless cycle,

This is a real thing.

Your people are progressing while we staying idle,

Left without a thing.

Made to feel inferior,

We are holding up pretenses,

But they damage our interiors

The damages are serious.

We trying to fight the system but the system is

Imperial.

We want no more war,

We want to break these walls of seperation.

STUDENTS:

We want freedom freedom!

We want freedom freedom!

PHINDILE'S cell-phone rings again.

PHINDILE: Okay baby, we're are done with the meeting. I'm on my way, just relax.

The song turns into a chant we want Freedom… We want better education…The students demonstrate with dance moves of stamping and banging on the chairs, making their intentions clear.

Black out

Scene 2

FLEX, a twenty seven year old famous rapper is in a dressing room. He's on a phone call with Phindile.

FLEX: I am about to go on stage. Where are you baby? Why are you doing this to me Phindile?

The audiences start to flock in the auditorium for the farewell concert of FLEX.

FEMALE FANS: **Oh my god Flex, hi! Flex!! Re kopek snap (Oh my god Flex, hi! Flex!! Can we please get a picture Flex!)**

LENZO, a twenty one year old thug and three of his friends, Thabo (19), TLHOGS (20) and Lucky (19) make their way into the club.

Outside FLEX's dressing room people are lining up to get a glimpse of him. CHAD is among the people. The bouncers come and push everyone out. CHAD is resisting and wants to see FLEX. THE BOUNCERS are dragging CHAD out kicking. FLEX comes out of the dressing room.

CHAD: **Eyo FLEX! Flex! Hey wait, let me go!**

FLEX: **Haai man, what's happening? What's going on here?**

BOUNCER: **This white boy is trying to cause trouble.**

FLEX: **Is that so lil hommie?**

CHAD: **I am not causing any trouble. Just wanna see you and shake your hand, my g.**

FLEX: **Okay just let him go.**

The BOUNCERS let go of CHAD. He fixes his clothes and smiles.

FLEX: **Li hommie why you causing me so many problems? What's up with you?**

CHAD: **Fam I am honoured to be talking to you. I just need one sec of your time to play you my jams**

FLEX: **Not right now. If you stick around, I got you.**

CHAD: **Thank you fam, thank you king, I appreciate it. Please talk to him!**

FLEX: **k'dala ndiktjela the same thing. Please stop pushing and shoving my people around. Let this man through. (I've been telling you the same thing. Please stop pushing and shoving my people around. Let this man through)**

CHAD walks out. Followed by BOUNCERS who are now handling him with care. FLEX opens a can of an energy drink and starts to warm up.

MC: **Yho Shoshanguve what's up? My boy FLEX is in the house tonight. Our hommie is here to bless us with a special performance, there is no place like home. Let's give him some love. Let me hear you say FLEX.**

The audiences sing along

CROWD: **FLEX, FLEX, FLEX!**

MC: **Say: FLEX, FLEX, FLEX!**

CROWD **FLEX, FLEX, FLEX!**

MC: **Are you ready for FLEX? Let's welcome on stage, one of our own…. Give it up for FLEX!!!**

It's ShowTime. Sexy dancers and backing singers take on the stage. Accompanied by a string Quartet.

Chorus

We on the way
When I pull up with my squad u won't forget it
All my nigguss out here living getting lit
Allyou nigguhs wavey, we wavey,
Tonight we give no fuxxx about behaving
Its gonna be a.....

Turn up yangempela (x8)

Verse 1

FLEX: **I haven't kicked raps in a minute / I Been steady working, spicing all these other nigguhs tracks for a minute / I bet these nigguhs thought that Bonafidebilli couldn't rap for a minute / would slack for a minute / lose shape, drop form nigguh lack for a minute / but I'm back and I'm in it / got a passion for winning / bouta let it rip on nigguhs click clack for a minute ay/ I'm a problem just waiting to happen / all your favourite rappers il smack em / rappers thought they were safe but I'm pacman/ now I'm eating your ghost like a snack man / snack attack em / look what's happening / I'm a savage disguised as a trap man / up and grinding I cannot relax man / I aynt stopping till I get a plaque man / plaque on plaque on plaques / I need me these racks / I just got me signed so I aynt een looking back / all you rappers been warm for minute / but now that I'm in the rap game all you nigguhs getting warned cause I'm livid / and I need me the dividends / iv been hungry I feed on your ignorance / what's the difference? / you been sounding the same for couple years , all your fans have been hoping u switch it up , / add some spice in it / or ask me for help cause you know that I'm nice widdit / and I'm putting a price on it / your cookies are crumbling, I'm fetching the cake cause I need me a slice in it /**

FLEX: **It's a turnup yangempela**

I'm off the leash and you can tell

My bars is veeshe I'm in a cell

The class in session ring tha bell

Woz' uzoz' bonela

s'blome Nabo jezabel

Bega dala sibatsela ukuth' the bars is hot as hell yea

All this heat that I'm cooking is getting serious

And All these bars that I am spitting is from experience

and all these rappers I am killing is to experiment

cause adding all these lames in the game still ain't equivalent

to all the days that we spanning

trust better days are still coming

it's a money maze money getting chased

and we sure as hell getting something

You been playing sleeping on the training ground

I've been praying leaving never staying down

This aynt hocus pocus

I be staying focused

Cause the last thing would be straying now

For all that sweat that I break you'll see the traces

I'll always stack up the fee no matter what the case is

You see the vision for me is to be paid in faces

The game was missing a G I'm here to fill the spaces

Verse 2

Chorus

We on the way

When I pull up with my squad u won't forget it

All my nigguss out here living getting lit

All you nigguhs wavey we wavey

Tonight we give no fuxxx about behaving

Its gonna be a

Turn up yangempela (x8)

LENZO and friends are being dragged out of the venue. LENZO is the stubborn one but the security is stronger. As they are dragged out they bump into Phindile but pay no attention to her, neither does she pay attention to them. On stage CHAD gets a photo moment with FLEX. He wants to use the opportunity to pitch his album

CHAD: **FLEX, hey FLEX. Have you forgotten about me?**

FLEX: **Nah lil hommie. Let me pay the bills. I got you.**

Just then some girl comes. She wants a photo. FLEX attends to her. PHINDILE approaches.

FLEX: **Ey, what's up babe?**

She goes to hug him. He gives her a cold hug. She steps aside and watches him take photos with his fans. CHAD goes to PHINDILE.

CHAD: **So you also want a picture?**

PHINDILE: **No, I've got plenty.**

CHAD: **What do you mean?**

PHINDILE: **He's my man.**

CHAD: **He's your man. Wow. Lucky girl.**

PHINDILE: **No lucky boy.** (Pointing at FLEX)

CHAD: **He's so humble. I got mad respect for him.**

PHINDILE: **Yea he's humble. Maybe I am lucky to have this nigga in my life.**

CHAD: **I'm CHAD by the way.**

PHINDILE: **PHINDILE.**

CHAD: **Nice to meet you.**

PHINDILE: **Nice to meet you.**

He shakes her hand. FLEX sees PHINDILE chatting to CHAD. He leaves the photo moment and walks to PHINDILE and CHAD.

FLEX: **I see you met the lil' hommie?**

PHINDILE: **Hey baby!**

They hug and kiss.

FLEX: (To CHAD) **Hey yo. Let me chop it up with my shoddie. Will be with you in a bit.**

He heads to the dressing room. PHINDILE follows him.

PHINDILE: **How did it go?**

FLEX: **It was lit. It would have been so much more vicious if you were here.**

PHINDILE: **Baby, I'm so sorry about that, I really wanted to be here. Just got caught up in the meeting.**

FLEX: **Meetings take forever. They never end but they solve nothing**

PHINDILE: **Why you so pessimistic?**

FLEX: **I am just saying. There's gonna be another meeting and another meeting. And nothing is gonna change. But there was just this one performance. My last one before my European Tour.**

PHINDILE: **Look baby I'm sorry….**

PHINDILE'S phone rings.

FLEX: **Who's that?**

PHINDILE: **Sorry, baby. It's comrade Bonafide.**

FLEX: **Are you serious, Phindile? Phindile this is my time! It's not the time to talk politics, are you serious!?**

PHINDILE: **Okay BONA, can I just call you later. I have to go.**

FLEX: **Eish, this BONDAFIDE of yours is creeping in my nerves.**

PHINDILE: **The struggle continues, baby.**

FLEX: **Is it the struggle, or …**

PHINDILE: **Maybe you could help us. With your music.** (They go up the stairs) **Sing some revolutionary songs. Look, you were the one who always told me at some point you couldn't even afford a loaf of bread as a student. Well then get us some bread, nigga.**

FLEX: **Nuh. Don't think so… Maybe you forgot about how I didn't finish college because I couldn't pay my fees.**

PHINDILE: **Look baby, I know that…**

FLEX: **Nobody was there for me. You know how many meetings I attended? Over a thousand meetings. What did they solve? Nothing. I actually remember in my second year, that's when I realised all I actually have is myself. No mob, no squad. Just me. My struggle to get through university**.

The Videographer switches off the camera and leaves the room.

PHINDILE: **All I'm saying is, send a strong message out there. People will listen to you. They love you.**

FLEX: **My people love my music as it is.**

PHINDILE: **For twerking.**

FLEX: **Wow, shots fired!**

PHINDILE: **Just telling the truth. Your music is empty.**

FLEX: **Is that why you don't come and watch my show? Empty music! That empty music pays for your res. The pearls you got on, these heels, and these sun glasses that you keep switching up. That's twerking. My people love my music the way it is.**

PHINDILE:

O shebile monate,

Nna rea lwana.

Re batla kgololosego,

O shebile monate,

Nna real lwana.

Re itlhokela masego,

Tsoga batho ba rona batswhere ke tlala

Vuka!

FLEX: **The revolution aint a real thing.**

I swear this fighting is for nothing.

Ask me I've been through it,

Ask me I've been doing things for the right cause

But I never saw change.

So I'm counting on my change

Just to pull up in a range.

PHINDILE: **Tsoga, batho ba rona batshwere ke tlala.**

Vuka!

FLEX: **I don't think you understand,**

This is real life.

How you gonna save the whole world

If you can't even come to my shows?

I need me a shoddy who stays on her toes

Cause that's how it goes.

I need you to support,

I need you to know,

That you are my everything,

You are my girl,

And that's why I get you these diamonds and pearls.

We live and we learn.

I need you to learn that you can't save the world.

PHINDILE: **Ignorance was never bliss,**

Suffering will carry on

If our people don't persist, oh no.

You think the struggle don't exist

So, you leave and don't assist,

While we're suffering and trying to hold on.

Tsoga, batho ba rona batshwere ke tlala.

Vuka bantu bagithi, ba phethwe yindlala.

FLEX: **My music is empty to you, but it makes all my people smile.**

And you don't complain when I cough up the bill the entire time.

Your rents on me,

Your life style's been on me,

Your text books not for free

So it ain't low key

That I've been OG.

So what you trying to be?

PHINDILE: **I am my brother's keeper,**

I am my sister's healer,

I am the children's hero,

And I am here for my people..

FLEX: **You know what babe, me and you will never agree on anything. Because you're just so damn stubborn, Phindile. But I guess that's why I love you. I do love you. Tell me something. You gonna be staying over tonight?**

PHINDILE: **Well that depends. If you come with me to the march at the Union Buildings.**

FLEX: **Another meeting, Phindile. Come on!**

PHINDILE: **Baby, please. It's the big one. At the end of the semester.**

FLEX: **Alright, fine deal. But for now can we party, babe?**

PHINDILE: **We can party.**

They go down the stairs.

FLEX: **This meeting of yours better not take ten years. I'm only going there 'cause I support you. You know that right? Watch your step. Let's get out of here.**

Flex and Phindile get their things downstairs then head out.

CHAD: **Flex! I'm still here.**

FLEX: **Aaah lil hommie, this is not a good time. But you got your music with you?**

Chad gets a cd out of his bag.

FLEX: **Chad! Okay, if I like, imma put you on, okay. Stay up bro! Easy!**

FLEX looks at CHAD with a suspicious eye. They leave together, hugging and giggling.

NEWS REPORT: Today all students from across the country will march to the Union Buildings. The students are marching against the fees increase. The President of the Republic will be meeting with students and university leaders to come up with a solution for higher education.

Scene 3

Back at TUT, Students gather to prepare their plan. They start to force other students to join them. LINDA and her group of students are not prepared to go to the march. They are being forced out of their rooms.

Joina Joina Joina (x2)

Joina Joina Joina (x2)

Joina Joina Joina (x2)

Joina Joina Joina (x2)

Students standing outside their dormitories

We don't want no trouble,

We don't wanna to stick to the system,

We don't want no trouble. oh nono,

We just wanna bow to the master.

The striking students led by LEADER, MICADO and THOKOZILE drag the non-striking students out of their rooms.

Ni sangene Nina, Nisabani bo,

Ni sangene Nina, Joina joina.

Aniboni silwela impilo yethu,

Aniboni zwakala ka nenno,

Aniboni si lwela impilo yethu,

Aniboni zwakala kanenno.

Non-striking students respond, led by LINDA

We don't want no fight

We just want to work in peace.

We have got exams to write

Stop all this fighting please.

Hey, nina

Aniboni silwela impilo yethu,

Hey, aniboni zwakala ka neno.

Aniboni si lwela impilo yethu,

Aniboni zwakala ka nenno.

LINDA:

We don't want no disruption

We just wanna go to class.

This is all corruption,

Your violence will never last.

STUDENTS:

Ani bone Silwela implo yethu,

Ani bone zwakala kanenno.

Ani bne Si lwela impilo yethu

Ani bone zwakala kanenno.

They chase LINDA and company all over campus.

We don't want no trouble

We wanna to stick to the system

We don't want no trouble

We just wanna bow to the master

Ni sangene Nina, Nisabani Bo

Ni sangene Nina, Joina joina.

LINDA:

Why do you like challenging authority?

Why do you like neglecting your priorities?

We love this false sense of security.

So let us leave now.

Ani bone Si lwela implo yethu,

Ani bone zwakala kanenno.

Ani bone Si lwela impilo yethu

Ani bone zwakala kanenno.

LENZO and friends arrive at campus. They join in, pretending to be students. LINDA and company run to the second floor of their dormitories.

Don't, don't, don't try to rope us in.

We don't, don't, don't have no hope within.

We will follow what the masters say

We've got no choice.

MICADO, TONY and two other students confront LINDA and non-striking students. A fight erupts. MICADO, TONY and company throw FHULO from the second floor. They try and catch PHUMI. BONAFIDE arrives and starts to calm the students down. Meanwhile LENZO and company find a spot to smoke weed.

LINDA: BONA I want to write exams my bra. This is all I have. Without this I am fucked, totally fucked.

BONAFIDE: Linda! We need you man.

LINDA: BONA, listen to me. I wanna get the fuck out of here, get my degree and help my family. Without me they are dead.

BONAFIDE: Linda, you and me are the same. I want it as bad as you do. My mom doesn't work, my dad doesn't work. I used to rely on my grannies grant, and now she's dead. When she died, all my hope was gone. It felt like my education was dying too. But I'm still here, marching, fighting, supporting and pushing. This is for all of us man. Come on we need you. We need each other, there's more than forty million black people in this country, can you imagine what will happen if we stand together. We can bring any business down, we can bring any system down. Come on my brother, united we stand brother.

LINDA: Bona I don't know man.

BONAFIDE: Come on Linda, you've got to join. You're safe brother.

The walk down the stairs to join the rest of the students. The striking students applaud. Students start to walk toward the bus.

BONAFIDE: Ey Mmapula!

MMAPULA: Yes!

BONAFIDE: Where's PHINDILE?

MMAPULA: She didn't come back last night.

BONAFIDE: Really!

MMAPULA: FLEX has just returned from Europe.

BONAFIDE: Flex.

MMAPULA: Ag Bona. Don't be sad. She will come.

BONAFIDE: I am not sad. We have a job to do and time to keep. We are not gonna wait for her.

MMAPULA: Bona this is not the time to get jealous. Please, relax.

PHINDLE and FLEX come rushing.

PHINDILE: Hey Bona!

MMAPULA: See, I told you that she's coming.

PHINDILE: How are you?

BONAFIDE: I'm alive.

PHINDILE: Good. Bona, this is my man, FLEX and his friend Chad.

BONAFIDE: Hi Chad.

CHAD: Howzit.

FLEX: What's up bro.?

FLEX sticks out his hand.

BONAFIDE: Ey, turn up ya mampela. I know this hommie. You're vicious.

FLEX: Thanks, bro. I appreciate it.

BONAFIDE: But you need to try some revolutionary songs. It will go a long way.

PHINDILE: I tell him that all the time. He doesn't believe me.

FLEX: I'll be in the bus.

FLEX is not impressed. He gets into the bus with BONAFIDE and PHINDILE. Just then LENZO and his three friends come running. They sneak into the bus.

BONAFIDE: Do you know those comrades?

PHINDILE: I don't recognise them.

BONAFIDE: Well, we can't know everybody, can we? At least we got the numbers. Let's roll.

They get into the bus.

Scene 5

Everyone is settled in the bus. BOBBY starts a song as the bus begins to move. Bonafide takes over from the verse and leads the song.

BONAFIDE:

Free education,

Free our nation,

We need information,

We need education. (x2)

They said that I am free now,

They say that we free now,

Been fighting for years now,

So I don't believe them,

Been stuck in the system,

Been trying to resists them,

But they been persistent,

We really don't need them, yeah!

It's a revolution,

We need a solution,

The dreams that they are selling,

Is all an illusion, yeah!

So what's the conclusion?

We're forming a movement.

We need better living,

We need evolution, yeah!

Lenzo and company get on top of the bus and start to throw water bottles on the people below.. BONAFIDE and PHINDILE go up the bus to see what's going on..

BONAFIDE: **Hey guys, what's going on here? We said high discipline.**

LENZO: **But we are not doing anything.**

BONAFIDE: **Go back inside.**

LENZO: **Who will get us off?**

PHINDILE: **Us, we will leave you right here.**

LENZO: **But we also want free education.**

BONAFIDE: **If you don't want to get off this bus, go back inside.**

LENZO: **You know what, fuck you. Let's go bro.**

SOLOMON: **They must chill.**

Verse

Free education,

Free our nation,

We need information,

We need education. (x2

LENZO and company and PHINDILE go back in the bus. BONAFIDE remains on top of the bus. The students stick their heads out of the bus windows as they respond to BONAFIDES song.

We see what you doing,

We no longer the victims,

Tell me who you are fooling,

I know you trying to restrict them.

You actually trying to trick them,

Now I am just feeling conflicted,

'Cause all of the people who fought for our freedom,

Is actually tryna ditch us.

Propaganda through our TV screens,

Telling lies,

Selling vicious dreams,

We doing well.

We doing fine,

While all the time is being a lie

Tell us the truth,

You losing the youth,

And all our rebellious souls in the street is becoming the proof.

Free education,

Free our nation,

We need information,

We need education. (x2)

Phambili Phambili nge mfudo.

PHINDILE sees FLEX & CHAD and goes to receive them.

FLEX: **Yo! I have to teach you, baby come here. Dude please tell Phindile what your dad said when you told him you're trying to study music, my g.**

CHAD: **He says I will mingle with the blacks and the moffies. (Gays)**

PHINDILE: **That's so ancient.**

CHAD: **I know, I wonder when this free education will come around. So, I can finally study what I wanna study.**

PHINDILE: **What are you studying?**

CHAD: **Theology. And I hate it.**

PHINDILE: **We are fighting, we keep on fighting. It will happen in our life time.**

CHAD: **I know, that's why I'm here.**

Just then FLEX comes back.

MICADO: **Macomonisi, macomonisi! Honale bothata. The President won't be addressing us. (Comrades! Comrades! There's a problem. The President won't be addressing us.)**

AMO: **We want the President to address us.**

Gun shots. Students start to vandalize the premises. They turn dustbins upside down. The police fire teargas and stun grenades. Everyone runs in all different directions. The shop owners start closing their shops. The air is filled with smoke and all you can hear are the cries of students and sounds of police sirens.

BONAFIDE and PHINDILE approach the students who are vandalizing the city.

BONAFIDE: **I told you I don't recognize these guys.**

PHINDILE: **We need to talk to them. They are causing shit for us.**

BONAFIDE: **Let's go.**

They walk to LENZO and Company. The shop owners are closing their shops as students walk in to loot. BONAFIDE and PHINDILE approach LENZO who has just broken into a bottle store and has a bottle of Black Label beer.

BONAFIDE: **Hey guys, what's going on here, man.**

LENZO: **You see this? This is just a taste of what will happen if we don't get free education.**

PHINDILE: **Who are you guys? Are you even students?**

LENZO: **I am LENZO. Omang wena? (I am LENZO. Who are you?)**

PHINDILE: **I am PHINDILE. And this is not what we are about. We're here for the truth.**

LENZO: **Well this is my truth, this is my reality.**

BONAFIDE: **Are you even a student?**

LENZO GANG:

I am not a student.

Ngimoshakphela.

I am not a studen.t

Ngithi qaphela.

BONAFIDE/PHINDILE:

Nimoshelani? /lutho.

Kanti nfunani//lutho. x3

Nifuniskole?/lutho. x3

Simoshakphela.

LENZO:

Ha ke bona ntwa, kea jaivela.

Wena ga o ebona wa eswenkela.

Ha batho ba lwana kaithabela,

Kebatla go senya fela.

Ke skhothane sa ko Pietersburg,

Ke le qomela ka di ultra mel.

Eyang skolong nna keinwele black

Ke batla, go senya fela.

Striker, striker, striker, striker moo

Ke batlo kena ke tlo senya moo.

Madi aka atlo bela mo,

Kebatla go senya fela.

BONAFIDE holds PHINDILE by hand and they go to confront LENZO again

LENZO GANG:

I am not a student,

Ngimoshakphela.

I am not a student,

Ngithi qaphela.

PHINDILE and BONAFIDE:

Nimoshelani?/lutho,

Kanti nfunani//lutho x3.

Nifuniskole/lutho x3,

Simoshakphela.

LENZO:

A ke balebale fela fela,

Ke dula fela beke inwela nwela

Drinking larger under any weather.

I am a rebel not a story teller,

I loot and loot and loot and loot otlo nketsang.

Street smart aketlhoke skolo,

A good start is to take and go.

When you strike I'm just thinking about one thing;

Causing havoc is my only goal.

Stealing from shops, I don't care about them;

They taking our jobs, I don't care about them

So I'mo stay stealing and robing til' somebody come and take me from the bottom.

I know the government won't.

I know the president won't.

Think I care about the law when there is no place at all where

It's safe I call home,

I got nowhere to go,

And there is nothing I own.

It's sad to admit that the clothes that I am wearing right now

Are not even my own

So, I bring you all this pain I know.

Chaos erupts. The police chase the students. Lenzo and gang start to loot.

COMRADE: **Mmapula, Mmapula!**

LENZO: **Ma ishe! (Burn it down)**

THOKO: **Linda!! Linda!!**

Mmapula runs to the bus, which LENZO and company are burning down.

MMAPULA: **Hey, what is this? What are you doing? This is not even our bus? How are we going to go home?**

LENZO: **You can walk home!**

MMAPULA: **Are you stupid?**

LENZO: **Fotstek! (F**k off).**

FLEX: **Phindile! PHINDILE, I am calling you for the last time!**

BONAFIDE: **Hey dude, give her a break won't you?**

FLEX: **I was not talking to you. I will fuck you up right now**

PHINDILE: **Okay baby, just wait.**

FLEX: **Are you coming or not Phindile?**

BONAFIDE: **She can't. We got a mess to sort out here.**

FLEX: **Are you with him or with me?**

PHINDILE: **Baby, please understand.**

FLEX: **You know what? If you want to stay, you can stay. Chad let's get the fuck out of here, bro.**

PHINDILE: **I have to stay. Look, I'll come over.**

FLEX gives BONAFIDE one hard look. He walks off. He is really irritated and angry. The looting continues. BONAFIDE AND SOME STUDENTS WALK TO THE BUS. They find that it is in flames.

PHINDILE: **And how do we get home, now?**

BONAFIDE: **What sort of fools are we to burn our own bus? This is stupid, man.**

MMAPULA: **It's not us, it's Lenzo and those five boys.**

PHINDILE: **Do you know them?**

MMAPULA: **I know where they stay?**

BONAFIDE: **Where?**

MMAPULA: **Extension Four. I used to stay there before I came to squat in with you.**

PHINDILE: **Then let's go get them.**

BONAFIDE: **I flock with that.**

LEADER: **No… No… No… No.. Comrades. We are not turning ourselves into some vigilante group. No! We exercise high moral and discipline at all times.**

PHINDILE: **No! Not in times like this. We stamp out lack of discipline and no morals.**

LEADER: **So what you gonna do?**

PHINDILE: **We take them to the police.**

BONAFIDE: **Let's go get them.**

LEADER: **I'll stay here with MMAPULA and them so we can organize transport for the rest of the students.**

THOKOZILE: **She's the only one who knows where we are going.**

THOKOZILE takes MMAPULA along.

Fade to black.

Scene 6

Soshanguve Township, Extension four. There is chaos in the streets. People are looting from foreigners' shops. The have taken everything from rice, cool drinks, soap, mielie meal. LENZO GOES OUT RUNNING. He is carrying a loaf of bread. A NIGERIAN national and wife are right behind him

ABDADU: **Hey, what's is this now? You have to pay for that bread.**

LENZO: **I am not paying for shit. This is my country.**

ABADU: **But that is my bread. I work very hard to run my shop.**

LENZO: **Run your shop! What shop? Where have you ever seen a Nigerian sell bread? All you do is sell drugs and trafficking our women.**

NOMHLE: **Ahh! Enemy of progress.**

LENZO: **What? You think we don't know? This is just cover. You make money from drugs and prostitutes, not bread. So I take this bread. Let's see what you can do about it. Kwerekwere.**

I am not a foreigner//I am human,

I am not a foreigner//I am African,

Umuntu ngu muntu ngabantu,

Umuntu ngu muntu ngabantu.

ABADU: **Don't call me kwerekwere. (Don't call me a foreigner)**

LENZO: Pulls out a knife**. What will you do? O tla etsang? (What will you do? What will you do?)**

ABADU: **Just give me my money or my bread. I am tired of you people coming here. We work hard and all you wanna do is take and take and take.**

Verse

I dey walk, I dey talk, I dey sing like you.

I dey pray, I dey feel all de things you do.

Is it the colour of my skin or the darkness in my tone

That makes me unequal?

Is it the accent in my speech, or the language that I speak

That forfeits my freedom.

LENZO: **Your false priests prowl our churches, you have brought nothing but thuggery, death, disease and destruction. Look at our streets. They stink because of you. You just fucking untidy from where you come from and you want our country to look like slums. Voetsek!**

Just then BONAFIDE, PHINDILE and four other students arrive.

BONAFIDE: **What is going on here?**

ABADU: **This guy took bread from my store and he doesn't wanna pay for it.**

LENZO: **You guys are always following me. Leng phatang? (You guys are always following me. What do you want from me?)**

PHINDILE: **We want you to stop this nonsense.**

LENZO: **Why don't you stop your nonsense before you get hurt?**

BONAFIDE: **Give him his bread back and come with us.**

LENZO: (Pulls out a gun). **I will kill all of you. Don't mess with me. This doesn't concern you. This is a community matter, man. We are tired of these kwerekweres.**

ABADU: **Don't call me a kwerekwere.**

LENZO: **Shut up I am not taking to you. I am talking to these clever blacks.**

ABADU: **I am not scared of you.**

BONAFIDE: **Brother, how much is your bread?**

ABADU: **Ten rands.**

BONAFIDE searches his pocket and takes out a ten rand note. As he gives him the money LENZO grabs it.

LENZO: **Your problem is you are a kwerekwere. Just a fucking foreigner.**

ABADU:

Let me tell you a story about myself

I am (x4) human//oh let me tell you

A story about myself,

I too deserve Freedom.

So treat me like one of you,

I'm standing right in front of you,

Ready to make peace.

I am not a foreigner//I am human.

I am not a foreigner//I am African.

Umuntungumuntu ngabantu.

Umuntu ngu muntu ngabantu.

Too many of my brothers have been killed,

And my sisters' been abused

All because we are from foreign lands ohh.

Genocide mass murder,

All of this is true, and it's all from my brothers' hands.

Victims of black on/and black violence

And hatred amongst ourselves,

And why are we made to suffer in silence

Without no help oh?

Let me tell you a story about myself,

I am (x4) human//Oh let me tell you

A story about myself,

I too deserve Freedom.

LENZO fires three shots at the NIGERIAN. Everyone runs for cover. Police sirens can be heard from a distance. The NIGERIAN is dead.

BONAFIDE: **This is bad. This is fucked up! Let's get out of here. Let's get back to res.**

PHINDILE: **No, no, no! We have to wait for the police.**

MMAPULA: **We can't.**

PHINDILE: **We have to give evidence.**

MMAPULA: **There were hundreds of witnesses they will do that; let's get out of here.**

PHINDILE: **We can't leave him lying dead like that…**

BONAFIDE: **What do you wanna do? Raise him from the dead?**

MMAPULA: **Phindile! We are getting out of here, are you coming with us or not?**

PHINDILE: (Reluctant) **I cant.**

BONAFIDE: **Phindile?**

PHINDILE stops and walks back to BONAFIDE

BONAFIDE: **Come with me.**

PHINDILE: **Look Bona, I can't. You know I can't.**

BONAFIDE: **Why?**

PHINDILE: **Can we not do this now.**

BONAFIDE: **When PHINDILE?**

THOKOZILE: **BONA let's go.**

BONAFIDE: **THOKO wait.**

PHINDILE: **You need to stop asking me that, I can't.**

PHINDILE gives BONA a peck on the cheek.

PHINDILE: **I'm sorry.**

She kisses him on the cheek and walks away.

MMAPULA: **Bona… She loves you. I know it**

BONAFIDE: **It certainly doesn't feel like it.**

THOKOZILE: **Guys, the Lord is my shepherd.**

BONAFIDE is exasperated. We hear police sirens as they walk away.

Scene 7

PHINDILE arrives at FLEXE'S apartment. He is seated in the lounge, a big ice bucket in front of him and a glass of alcohol in hand.

PHINDILE: **Hi!**

FLEX: **Hi! Moroba so. Hi! You invite me to your gig, I come and then you desert me with this BONAFIDE guy, like that, really.**

PHINDILE: **That was our situation man, I had to do my part, that's why I intervened. I didn't mean to…**

FLEX: **You didn't mean what!?**

PHINDILE: **You saw what happened and what's worse those boys…**

FLEX: **And me, what about me?**

PHINDILE: **I am sorry if it came out like I was ignoring you, but it was not my intention.**

FLEX: **I SAW YOU.**

PHINDILE: **You saw what?**

FLEX: **You, flirting with him, flirting with BONAFIDE. You are fucking him, don't you?**

PHINDILE: **I don't know what you are talking about.**

FLEX: **Really? That's how you gonna dismiss it. You take me there and the next thing you can't leave with me. You take me for a fool, after everything I do for you. I go away for three months and this is what I come back to? Are you fucking with me?**

PHINDILE: **Baby listen to me…Please listen to me. I have just…I went with BONAFIDE to…**

FLEX: **BONAFIDE…BONAFIDE…What are you going to tell me that I have not seen with my own eyes? I saw it on the news, students left the Union Buildings long ago and you are fucking going around with this guy, being his whore. That's what it is, whoring. You are fucking bitch!**

PHINDILE: **You are drunk. I am leaving.**

FLEX: **You are not going anywhere.**

PHINDILE: **Watch me!**

As she walks away, he pulls her back. He splashes her with the beer that he has been drinking. He throws her to the ground. As she rises, he pulls her and throws her against the cupboards.

PHINDILE: **Stop, stop, you are hurting me. Baby you are hurting me. I just saw a man being…**

FLEX: **You fucking bitch. Where is BONAFIDE to help you?**

He is holding her by the neck as he runs to the tap to fill the sink (AKA homage to On My Birthday). He starts drowning her in the sink. She fights back but he is strong. He throws her against the wall. She almost collapses. She tries to get up.

FLEX: **Get up, get up.**

She wobbles up.

FLEX: **He fucked you, didn't he?**

PHINDILE: **No!**

FLEX: **Take off your clothes let me see…**

PHINDILE: **Please!**

FLEX: (Slaps her to the ground) **Take them off! Get up…Get up. Take 'em off.**

She takes off her blouse.

FLEX: **The pants!**

PHINDILE: **Please don't do this to me. I beg you baby don't do this to me.**

FLEX: **Take it off.**

PHINDILE: **No**

He throws her against the wall. She is still trying to get up. He goes to take off her pants. She fights back but he is too powerful. He takes off her panties. He rapes her. After a short while she rises, goes to the closet and starts to look for her clothes. She takes her old dress and covers herself. She walks out. Flex wakes up behind the couch. FLEX rises, almost in a stupor. He looks around and reaches for his phone. He dials.

FLEX: **Hey Chad, bro I fucked up, I fucked up so bad. I got into a fight with PHINDILE. I smacked her bro. But that's all I did, though. Nothing more hectic than that. Can you do me a favour? Can you please get a hold of her? I been trying to call her, but she's not answering her phone. Better yet, invite her to the awards tomorrow. Please bro, do anything I need this. Thanks, I appreciate it.**

He scratches his head. Lights out.

SCENE 8

Back at res. Students are being locked out. The security bangs the door as they order students out of the dormitories. The second door on the top floor is Comrade Leader's door. Inside they find a female student fighting for her life. Comrade Leader trying to force himself on her.

Meanwhile LINDA comes down the stairs. HE IS LIVID. The TV crew accost him.

TV PRESENTER: **Please tell us your name and what's happening here?**

LINDA: **My name is Linda, and I'm from Mount Fletcher. We arrived late from the Union Buildings because some hooligans decided to burn our bus. We got here, the canteen was closed. So, some students got agitated and started tearing the place apart. The police came with their dogs and guns and started to kick us out of here. That's how we find ourselves out here. But I am sick and tired of running. I have been running for the whole day. The police beat me up for nothing. I been a good girl, I followed the rules coz I wanted this education so bad, to help my two silicosis bed ridden brothers and their children. But what do I get for it? Mmm? A fractured arm and bruises all over my body. I am not running anymore. My two brothers got me here, paid with their lungs for me to be here. They told me, do your first year, get a bursary or something and take it from there. You make sure you finish your course and come take care of our children. Therefore, I choose to fight yet another f**king day!**

Just then BONAFIDE approaches. LINDA runs to him.

LINDA: **BONA, thank you man. From today I fight with you.**

BONAFIDE: **(**Preoccupied**) Good… Cool.**

The girl rushes out as she puts on her shirt. LEADER is escorted out of the room.

They shove Comrade Leader out and lock the room. THOKOZILE Tebogo runs from the room, covering herself. She goes to the room and takes her bags. She then goes to TEBOGO to ask what happened.

SECURITY: **Ozama go iyirang? Out! Out! (What are you trying to do?)**

LEADER: **You scared us.**

SECURITY: **Get out!**

MMAPULA and other students run up the stairs, they're blocked by the security.

SECURITY: **Where are you going?**

MMAPULA: **I need to get my bags!**

SECURITY: **Be quick!**

A room upstairs. MICADO is clinging to the bed. He doesn't want to leave the room**.**

MICADO: **Ntlogele wena man, don't touch me. (Leave me alone)**

The security lets him go.

MICADO: **You behave as if we are not fighting for your children too. You behave as if you can afford this very shit education that they are shoving down our throats. You are just like them, man. No in-fact you are their puppets. Ema pele, ema pele o sa ntshwara (Wait, wait don't touch me)…They use you to humiliate your own children, to torture, to beat up your own. And what do you get for it. Nothing. You know what they get, triple decker necks and five pounds bellies. That's what they get and you and your children and your children's children will always be at the bottom of the barrel. Leave me alone I can walk for myself**

BONDAFIDE **(Suppressing anger, slowly moves out).**

Intro

Ha ha umoya /(x4)

Chorus

Umama aka sebenzi //u baba aka sebenzi,

So, does that leave me in the dark // leave me in the dark.

What am I to do in this situation // what am I to do with these limitations?

I don't wana be left in the dark // be left in the dark .//

Verse 1

Mama used to work in the kitchens

And daddy used to sell for a living.

Taking us to school was the mission,

Working hard in all those conditions.

Mama brought us food,

And everything she'd do sharing us her views.

Her faith was never moved, hey

Ithemba Ithemba lam, ndiyo nyuka nalo,

I themba, ithemba lam, ndiyo nyuka nyuka nalo,

So pray on, pray on mama,

For the sun will one day shine.

So pray on, pray on mama,

'Cause everything gonna be alright .

THOKOZILE goes to MICADO. She whispers something in his ear. They go to BONAFGIDE who seems shocked. The three of them accost LEADER and pull him to the side.

TV PESENTER: **Tell us your name and where you come from? And where are you going to sleep tonight? When you are ready.**

MMAPULA: **I am Mmapula Kgotleng. I come from Kuruman. I am doing my second year. When I arrived from Kurman, I stayed with my aunt ko extension four Soshanguve, Mmane Peggy. She had moved in le Uncle Ray. It was a small RDP chandie, like a small situation. I basically slept in the kitchen, on the floor and most nights I'd hear some noises from the bedroom, some -out- of- this world, blow your mind, cloud nine kinda noises coming from the bedroom. And me, I just focused on my stats. I got used to their moaning and mumbling to a point where it became my muse, and stats, my number one subject. And then one night, my aunt had gone to Kuruman, she didn't tell me she was going. I came back late that evening, I thought**

she was in the bedroom. The bedroom door was locked. I heard some noises and giggling from the bedroom. But it wasn't 'mane Peggy'. Uncle Ray was shagging someone else. In my presence. Yhoo! I saw flames that night, I saw numbers flying around and not adding up. I went to school on a Saturday and Sunday just to be away from Uncle Ray. When I came back Sunday evening, Mmane Peggy was back. I said nothing to her. I could not even look her in the eye. That night I heard a different noise…it was bitch, cunt, and whore, sleep around, get out, get out, get out, take your fucking niece and get out my house type of noise.

THOKOZILE, MICADO, BONAFIDE and other students are talking to LEADER.
They push him around.

LEADER: **Guys you know me. I'd never do anything like that**

MMAPULA: **Wow! Who was sleeping around between the two? I felt like telling her the truth right there. But I kept my cool. He kicked us out. We spent that night at a filling station. My Aunt went back home and I spent the last three months sleeping everywhere. In toilets, the gymnasium, and my permanent spot became a filling station. Last month PHINDILE brought me here to squat in her room. Now here I am, kicked out of res. Where do I go? Where do I sleep? I guess its back to the filling station.**

Verse 2
It seems I gotta fend for myself
No job left for mama.
Papa can't do it all by himself
The only problem is
I got no, got no education.
I've had no, had no graduation,
I've been a slave of my frustrations.
But imo keep my faith 'cause
Ithemba lam, ndiyo nyuka nalo.
I themba, ithemba lam,
Ndiyo nyuka, nyuka nalo.

Chorus

Umama aka sebenzi, u baba aka sebenzi.
So does that leave me in the dark, leave me in the dark?
What am I to do in this situation?
What am I to do with these limitations?
I don't wana be left in the dark be left in the dark.

PHINDILE arrives. She goes up the stairs to her room.

PHINDILE: **I want my stuff in my room.**

SECURITY: **We have been instructed to keep everyone out.**

PHINDILE: **But I want my things in my room.**

SECURITY: **Once we open for you, we have to open for everyone else.**

PHINDILE: **I just want my stuff.**

SECURITY: **I'm sorry my sister, I can't help.**

PHINDILE: **Open for me.**

SECURITY: **Hey wena! Don't start trouble.**

PHINDILE: **Trouble. You think I'm starting trouble? You are the ones causing trouble. Where must all these people sleep?**

SECURITY: **I am just following my orders.**

PHINDILE: **Orders my foot, let me in.**

She pulls the SECURITY as he is about to leave.

PHINDILE: **Let me in.**

SECURITY: **Don't do that!**

She grabs his arm. The SECURITY responds with a hot slap and pushes PHINDILE down. Students witness this fiasco. THOKOZILE rushes to PHINDILE.

THOKOZILE: **Hey wena, malome. PHINDILE, what's going on?**

PHINDILE: **I just want my things and now he is assaulting me.**

SECURITY: **You started first.**

PHINDILE: **You are lying.**

THOKOZILE: **Phindi, who did this to you? Did they do this?**

PHINDILE: **It was FLEX. He beat me up and raped me.**

THOKOZILE: **What? Malome let her in. She just needs to take a shower, let her in malome! Micado! Micado!**

We are stuck in a maze.

All of my brothers is kicked out of res

With nowhere to stay,

What's the delay?

Give us this free education,

We tired of always complaining,

Who is to blame?

Call them out, call them out,

We need all our problems and

Issues to just go away.

Call them out,

We need our free education

I am talking to blade.

I aint done yet,

We gona come get

What's rightfully ours.

We count the seconds and hours

Where all these crooked politicians,

Always on a mission

To destroy our vision

Are finally out of their power.

STUDENTS start to hurl bottles at the security. Stun grenades are fired. The students vandalize the res. PHINDILE and THOKOZILE escape.

SCENE 9

PHINDILE and THOKOZILE walk towards the police station. Police drag some suspects into the station.

NCAMISA: **Tebza, Tebza! What must I do?**

TEBZA: **Call my mom.**

As they get closer, she turns back. THOKOZILE follows her.

THOKOZILE: **Let's go! You can do this Phindile… You can do this…**

PHINDILE: **I can't**

THOKOZILE: **Yes, you can. We have come this far. You can do this.**

PHINDILE: **What if they don't believe me?**

THOKOZILE: **They will believe you. Look at you. They can see you've been assaulted. You can stop this, we can stop this.**

PHINDILE: **I'm scared.**

THOKOZILE: **Phindi, don't be scared. I was scared. Had no one to turn too. Couldn't even go to the police station.**

PHINDILE is in shock and walks away.

THOKOZILE:

I was sixteen years old

Alone and abandoned,

Stripped of my home

Felt afraid and forgotten,

Subjected to hostility.

All my hope and my dignity

Have been taken away,

Taken away,

Taken away,

Taken away.

No mama to cry, run to,

No papa to run to,

Just those cruel evil men

Ready to take my innocence.

I was used and abused,

Preparing to die,

Captured in the belly of the beast

Of evil men preparing for a feast.

I was used and abused,

Preparing to die.

I was almost perfect

But now I'm numb and hopeless.

Dreams and hopes do not belong
In the shadow of the darkness,
There's no will to carry on
When pain is now redundant.

I've been strangled and tortured,
Raped and abused,
Afraid I'd be used for Babylon.

Naked on the floor,
Holding my breath,
Hoping to suffocate,
Surely this must end
Mercy on me.
My soul is gone.

Lying on the floor,
Praying for my death,
Hoping to suffocate,
Surely this must end.
Mercy on me
I've done no wrong.

I was used and abused
Preparing to die.
Captured in the belly of the beast
Of evil man preparing for a feast.
I was almost perfect
But now I'm numb and hopeless.

THOKOZILE: **It was five of them. Comrade Leader was among them. When I got to varsity, Comrade Leader was there. I prayed and prayed and GOD saved me. Only HE could save me. BUT I failed him, I didn't do the right thing, young as I was, I didn't do the right thing. And now… And now Comrade Leader has raped TEBOGO, Mpumi, MMAPULA has just survived because I kept a tight leash on her. Who's next? Don't be like me PHINDILE.**

PHINDILE ponders. She decides she is going in the police station.

PHINDILE: **Let's go in.**

KAGISO: **My man, can you please certify my papers. I've been here all day, please help me out.**

They enter the police station. All three officers are dealing with complainants. There are two more complainants in the charge office. One man in his thirtys and another female in her mid-twenties. THOKOZILE walks to the counter whilst PHINDILE stands at the back of the queue. Just then, PHINDILE's phone rings. THE OFFICER points THOKOZILE to the counter. The female complainant eveasdrops on PHINDILE's conversation**.**

THOKOZILE: **Can you please help us?**

POLICE OFFICER: Sisi, obone line mo? (Don't you see the line?)

PHINDILE: **Hi CHAD. I am not okay, thank you for asking. Your friend beat me up, he raped me. I am at the police station as we speak. No… no… don't come. I will be fine. Bye bye, thank you for caring.**

One complainant leaves the counter.

POLICE OFFICER: How can I certify your papers, without an original? Next!

The complainant from the waiting benches, limps to the counter. Just then the complainant at the end of the desk leaves the counter. The mid-twenties female complainant looks at PHINDILE and without a word, lets her get to the counter before her. PHINDILE and THOKOZILE walk to the counter.

POLICE OFFICER 3: **Sisi? Don't you see that person? Is she invincible?**

PHINDILE: **She said we can go before her.**

POLICE OFFICER 3: **Mama we, ore ke nnete? (Is it true?)**

She nods.

POLICE OFFICER 3: **Okay. How do I help you? What's your name?**

PHINDILE: **Phindile, Phindile Ndlovu. I am a student at TUT. I come to report a case. Rape and assault**.

He goes to open a file. And comes back with a photograph which he lifts up and shows to PHINDILE.

POLICE OFFICER 3: **Sisi, ase wena o? (Is this you?)**

PHINDILE: **That looks like me.**

The elderly man leaves the counter. The other policeman goes around the desk toward PHINDILE**.**

POLICE OFFICER 1: **You are under arrest for incitement, arson, damage to property and an accomplice to murder.**

PHINDILE: **What?**

POLICE OFFICER 1: **You and your friend BONAFIDE have rigged havoc in the whole of TSWANE today. You caused chaos at the Union Buildings, looted some shops and then went on to go kill a foreigner, FELIX ABADU? As if that's not enough, you burnt the school's residence and now you come here crying rape.**

THOKOZILE: **You can't do that. She was raped.**

PHINDILE: **I didn't do all the things you say I did. Yes, I was in all those places. Everyone will tell you that coz I was there. BONAFIDE and I confronted the looters. We confronted them right back to their homes in Extension four.**

THOKOZILE: **Please take our statement.**

POLICE OFFICER1: **Wena retlo go tshwara.**

PHINDILE: **Can I make my statement?**

POLLICE OFFICER 1: **After I arrest you.**

He cuffs her. PHINDILE turns to POLICE OFFICER 3. THOKOZILE tries to protest…

POLICE OFFICER 3: **I will lock you up for obstruction of justice.**

THOKOZILE: **Stay strong my friend. GOD will save you. I will get you a lawyer.**

PHINDILE: **Tell BONAFIDE what happened to me. Tell him everything.**

THOKOZILE leaves.

GINGER continues. During the song, POLICE OFFCIER 1 takes PHINDILE along. As they continue with the song, the STATION COMMISIONER arrives without the POLICE OFFICERS seeing him.

Go rofo mo lefatsheng lena,

Go rofo mo lefathseng lena.

Majita a tlao kokona

O sa nyake,

Majita a tla no etseya o sa nyake.

Ginger (x16)

Sergeant Mkhize,
Die girl wa balabala are bam o ginger.
Ahahahaha!

Sergeant Ncobo, die girl wa balabala
Nkare ba ginger.
Ahahahaha!

Rebontshe, rebonthse, rebotse rechaele
Chaela majita story.
Ahahaha!
Rebontshe, rebonthse, rechaele rebontshe
Chaela majita story.

O nore o nale auti
Kganthe o tshwere ke le ninja.
Ao ginger!

Anare o nale auti
Kganthe o tshwere ke le ninja.
Lamo ginger!

Ijoo ijoo ijoo ijoo ijoo
Panty oneside!
Ijoo ijoo ijoo ijoo ijoo
Plenty at one time!

Ginger, ginger, ginger,

Ginger, ginger.

Ke sorry ke story re tlotlele.

Ke story ke story retlotlele ginger.

Go rofo mo lefatsheng lena,

Go rofo mo lefathseng lena.

Majita a tlao kokona,

O sa nyake,

Majita a tla mo etseya o sa nyake.

STATION COMMISIONER: What nonsense is this? You think all this is funny. Our public refers to fools like you when they say we don't care. Is that a way to treat someone who comes here with a genuine concern? You are not fit to work here.

POLICE OFFICER 3: She is on the wanted list Mam. We have placed her under arrest.

STAION COMMANDER: You all go right now and write to me and tell me why I must not suspend you, effective immediate. In the meantime, let me do the work that you have been employed to do but cannot discharge because you simply do not belong in this police service. Dismissed.

The two POLCE OFFICERS leave with their tales between their legs.

STATION COMMISIONER: Get these things off her.

POLICE OFFICER 2 un-cuffs PHINDILE.

STATION COMMISIONER: I am sorry about that. You did the right thing. We'll help you. Come this way.

Scene 10

It's the awards performance, and Chad performs his song KOROBELA with a group of dancers coming in and out of the stage strutting their stuff. They sing and dance.

CHAD:

Yamshaya korobela, korobela,

Yamshaya ikorobela, korobela.

I been trying to get this money,

He bafana letha ingane.

Ziyakhala ingane zami.

They want my money in a duffel bag, bag, bag.

I've been getting mad arse in the trap,

I really want the rag, rag, rag.

Give all the cash, cash, cash.

Yam shaya

Ikorobela, korobela

Ya mthatthi.

Ikorobela korobela

Yamshaya.

Spy two nai mbuzi

Doctor Khumalo,

Playing in this game like am doctor KHUMALO.

Khumalo, thata Khumalo

Playing all these lames

Like I'm doctor Khumalo.

Ngiyabashaya shaya, shaya.

Even when I vai, vai, vai

Hommies wanna try, try, try.

But I just let it fly, fly, fly,

Iyhooo!

I just want a big crib in the hills,

I really wanna live big like this.

Iyhoooo.

Yam shaya

Ikorobela korobela!

Ya mthatthi

Ikorobela korobela.

Yam shaya,

Phindile, Thobile.

Bheka mina kuphela,

Bheka mina kuphela,

Bheka mina kuphela,

Jonga mina ndedwa.

I met the shoddy from Pitori

Ko jack budah Mamelodi.

She said the don you very naughty

But still she listen to my story,

She was wearing on a sporty.

I took this mummy to my posie

And on the way to my posie

I just ran into her topie ijooo.

Wangbamba, wanshaya, wang baxa iyhoo

True.

But girl I really wanna be with you

'Cause girl I really got to lie with you, aaah

TLHOGI.

Mara wena Don hao sharp

O nore tseale stock da rena.

Haa mara wa re vandalizer

Mara gaona flop

Se tsee stock

Mara e monna tlahagella kajacket moo.

Ya mshaya,

Ikorobela korobela ya mshaya.

Scene 11

The awards ceremony.

MC: **That was Chad performing his single Korobela, give it up for Chad! And the nominees for best album of the year are: 24 with "Biaz", Karabo with "Love me" and Flex featuring CHAD with Phindile. And the award goes to, FLEX featuring CHAD "Phindile".**

The crowd erupts. The song PHINDILE can be heard on the speakers as the screens show visuals of FLEX and CHAD. FLEX and CHAD walk to the stage. Separately. You can feel the tension between them.

FLEX: **AYOBA! Wow, fourth one for the night. The GODS are with us. I dedicate this award to my girlfriend PHINDILE, baby, I wish you were here. This is for you (To CHAD) Hey Dawg you want say something?**

CHAD: **No, I am clean…I am clean.**

FLEX: **Thank you SAMA, big thank you to all my fans. And most importantly to all you beautiful ladies out there. Let's take care of them guys. I love you all.**

Just then the police come rushing in. There is pandemonium.

POLICE: **Mr Mdluli, you under arrest for assault and rape.**

FLEX: **What? You have the wrong guy.**

POLICE: **You have the right to remain silent…**

FLEX: **Wait, wait, you got it all wrong. Leave me alone. CHAD call my lawyer, call my lawyer. I am goanna sue you.**

He wrestles with them…They drag him out.

Scene 12

CHAD leaves the award on stage. He rushes home. He gets home and starts packing his stuff. He breaks the awards, the platinum plaques they have achieved in three months.

CHAD:

I am told

I came on a boat

Waving my wand and swinging my coat.

I'm told I

Gave you a mirror and got me a goat,

Or gave you the mirror and told you to go

With nothing to show.

I am told I

Took all your land

Amassed all the riches and gave you my hand,

Mirror, mirror, cigarette

Mirror, mirror don't forget.

That will be

Ten cows, ten sheep, ten maids and ten slaves.

I am told I

Came to divide.

Here's a rock, a hard place,

I'll let you decide.

Before we could fight

You were damaged inside.

With all that in mind

I fired

Shot after shot after shot

And many died.

I am told I

Build me a kingdom

With all of your muscle

And developed a system to subdue your brother.

It's my money, my cattle, my land, my Africa and your poverty.

But wait!

Papa told me bliksem dai kaffer,

Mama told me love one another,

Papa said he hated their colour,

Mama told me they are all my brothers.

Papa would sing, uit die blou van onse hemel

Smile, and say we come from the majestic blue sky.

But mama would say those are all lies

Mama actually came from the gutter.

Many nights our bread wasn't buttered.

Thus, mama saved to give to the poor

Coz God will shine His life on the doer.

I therefore think like mama,

Feel like mama,

Live by her principles.

My heart beats like mamas

But from papa?

Release me!

Release me from the burden of this crooked past,

The sins of such a wicked man

And vices of his evil plans.

Release me from his hate coz I have none,

His mind, coz I have one,

His grip coz that's all done.

Forgive and forget.

Just get over it they say,

Here's what I say.

Never forget.

Never forget the blood-shed by those fallen heroes.

I too will never forget,

The older I get, that

My brother has been my holder

And I his shoulder.

Release me!

He goes down the stairs to where his father has hung the old South African flag. He burns it.

Lights out

Scene 13

BONAFIDE, COMRADE CHAIR, MMAPULA, MICADO, LINDA are gathered somewhere in the streets.

MICADO: **Amandla comrade (Power comrade)**

ALL: **Amandla (Power)**

MICADO: **If we can't be allowed in campus, then nobody should be allowed in. No staff, cleaners nobody. Let it be a total shutdown.**

MMAPULA: **I agree. What will they be doing there if we are not there? So we shut it down.**

Comrade Chair: **Let's mobilize our forces… Five o'clock tomorrow morning. Main campus gate. I will work with MMAPULA on the mobilization. NKULULEKO and MICADO work on security, BONAFIDE you will deliver the message, so get ready.**

MMAPULA: **You can do mobilisation, I will run with PR.**

Comrade Leader: **We will do better in pairs**

THOKOZILE hurries to where the students are meeting.

THOKOZILE: **PHINDILE has been arrested.**

BONAFIDE: **What? Where?**

THOKOZILE: **BONAFIDE you are next. They have your pictures.**

COMRADE LEADER: **We must get you to a safe place.**

BONAFIDE: **You can forget about that, I am not running away. What's the charge?**

THOKOZILE: **Incitement, arson, damage to property, public violence. Anything you can think of is in that charge sheet. They blame everything on you and her. There are others on the list but I couldn't find out who.**

BONAFIDE: **Where?**

THOKOZILE: **We went there to report a case. A rape case.** (She looks at Comrade Leader)

LEADER: **Let's not get carried away. Let us focus on planning BONAFIDE's exit.**

THOKOZILE slaps LEADER.

THOKOZILE: **Fuck you! (**She slaps him**) We are not over reacting. PHINDILE was raped. Ju…**

She wants to attack Leader but BONAFIDE holds her back.

BONAFIDE: **Raped!**

THOKOZILE: **She gave me your message.**

They walk to the side. LINDA and MICADO escort LEADER out.

BONAFIDE: **What she say?**

THOKOZILE: **It was FLEX, he did it.**

BONAFIDE: **Fuck! I knew…I knew this was coming.**

THOKOZILE: **I know. She is going to be fine. She is strong. God will protect her.**

BONAFIDE: **God! God!!**

BONAFIDE is enraged.

Ok, tell me 'bout this GOD!

I hear he can fly,

And heard that he died for me,

But that's rather odd

Coz my grannie died.

He was all the pride I need.

Looking into the sky,

Gazing at the stars,

Hoping there's a light to see.

Before my grannie died

Man, I prayed to God,

But she was gone despite my plea.

Although I am hurting deep inside

My faith is my only guide.

Mdali Ngiaykbabaza,

Mdali Ngiyak' dumisa baba,

Thanthi mpilo yami

I thabathe wena ngiya vhuma.

The students move away from the set of cars, crates, chairs and barrels that they were standing on and march downstage to sing "Siyaya ePitoli".

Scene 14

The long table is set for a press conference. BONAFIDE, Comrade Leader, MMAPULA, MICADO, LINDA and the rest of the students storm the auditorium singing and chanting. The minister and his staff of eight are ready to announce their recommendations. We hear the minister joke with his staff saying that if the students don't comply, they will form their own movement: Students must fall!

MINSTER NZIMANDE: **If the students don't accept this, we'll start our own movement. Students must fall.**

Intro/Chorus

Lendaba Yeni izophela (x2),

Ndiya nyusaimaly yeskolo,

Nyus, nyusa Nzimande,

Ndinay nyusa.

You getting a price hike,

We don't care if you all strike, yea!

The government won't bite,

We don't care if you all fight, yea!

Hundred tho, take a hundred tho,

Take a hundred though make a million.

And that's what it costs for civilians

To get an education. But we don't care,

We laughing at you while you're in the streets,

A couple of us own the industry.

So, it don't even matter if you are holding up arms

Strike on, strike on, I guarantee it won't make no difference.

We doing what we want coz we got all the power

And you can do nothing the city is ours.

You can complain all you want and be sour

Imo just ask if my president needs a new shower.

Don't tell me about poverty,

Here's your eight percent.

Add it to all of your problems

No one gonna solve them

Not even me, not even all the politicians.

Those are your frenemies,

Friends in the day

But laughing at you in the night-time.

What do you know about the nice life?

We sacrificed to live the nice life.

So, we do what we want,

We gonna do what we want.

Lendaba Yeni izophela (x2)

Ndiya nyusaimalyyeskolo,

Nyusa, nyusa Nzimande,

Ndinay nyusa.

The students start to grumble.

STUDENTS:

He Ho He He Ho He!

BODAFIDE:

Oh Asiy'bhayi! / Asiy'bhayi Lendaba.
Asiy'bhayi / Asiy'bayi Lendaba.

BONAFIDE:

What's going on in our country?
Campaigns giving birth to destruction,
You taking up "arms for corruption",
But where's our freedom?
They say just forget about the past now,
We're told to get over it.
But how will we move on
When most of our people are suffering!
We want equal opportunities,
Give our people some security,
We've been fighting for equality,
We're done!! no more white supremacy.

The police have now barricaded the students who have risen against the minister. BONAFIDE wants to get to the minister but the police block him. He starts to kick and punch. They try to arrest him but he retreats. LINDA intervenes and becomes the target. He fights with the police as students scatter. He is eventually brought down. They kick him and beat him. BONAFIDE sees this and rushes to protect. HE LIES ON TOP OF HIM. The police start to kick and beat up BONAFIDE. Linda crawls off. BONAFIDE IS dizzy and has blood all over his face and body. He staggers. The policeman grabs him by the neck and tightens the grip until he struggles to breathe as he says:

Verse 2

So, here's my truth
I know exactly how I feel about this,
I feel this system really has no justice.
Some of our freedom fighters chose to take the cheque.
Sitting in the boardroom with the master like let's discuss this
But guess what we the youth and we're so disgusted.
They think we blind but we see and you're so untrusted.
But here's another truth, some of you people in the streets screaming Zuma this and Zuma that are also well instructed.
We have no faith in puppets.

BNONAFIDE gasps and dies under the firm grip of the policeman. He drags him out.

Chorus
Oh Asiy'bhayi!! / Asiy'bhayi Lendaba
Asiy'bhayi / Asiy'bayi Lendaba

Scene 15

PHINDILE's bail hearing. The female students come through chanting.

FEMALE STUDENTS:

Wathinthu Mfazi, wa thinthu mbokodo.
Wathinthu Mfazi, wa thintha u mbokodo.

MMAPULA: **She has done nothing wrong. She is just a victim of rape and now they want her to rot in jail. Never. We will sleep here, we will go stand by the prison gates and sleep there if we have to.**

THOKOZILE: **We want the judge to give her free bail. We want free bail. They have been targeting her. They want to break her and weaken our resolve. They can't break her. She is a rock. We will continue to fight for free education for all. The person in the dock should be FLEX.**

MMAPULA: **We will stand outside here. You can lock us all up. You can rape us like you always do.**

She starts to take off her clothes.

MMAPULA: **Is this what you want, this…To rape us?**

THOKOZILE: MMAPULA:

Wathintha u mfazi,

Whathinthu umbokodo,

If your strike on us

You striking a rock.

The rest of the girls start to undress. Chanting wathinthu Mfazi, wathinthu Mbokodo. PHINDILE is released on bail.

PHINDILE:

All of these scars

I do not deserve

But I'been made to doubt all of my worth.

Why have I been a victim for so long?

I am breaking free and claiming my dignity.

Hai ngi khathele,

Ngiyazimela,

If I don't make this choice

Ungbulele.

Hai Ngi khathele.

I've got save myself from this misery.

THOKOZILE approaches PHINDILE.

PHINDILE: **I want to see BONAFIDE.**

Silence.

THOKOZILE: **BONAFIDE is dead.**

The lights go to black.

Scene 16

The students are at the graveside, BONAFIDE's funeral is in full swing.

PHINDILE: **Phambili nge chimurenga Phambili! Phambili Nge Hondo phambili. I have lost a friend, a brother, a comrade, a pillar of strength. They took him away from me. All this to make me a nothing. To make me no one. But I am something, I am someone. I am Lindiwe Chibi, shot and killed by my boyfriend. I am Karabo Mokoena killed and drenched in pool acid before being necklaced and set alight. I am Francis Rasuge, killed and made to disappear for eight years, my remains found naked and bound with a duct tape under two concrete slabs. I am Will Anene Booysen, gang raped and disemboweled, my body dumped in a construction site with my intestines next to me. I am River Steenkamp, shot and killed with hollow point bullets as I hid scared behind the bathroom door. I am Lekita Moore, Sizakhele Nkosi Malobane, Lerato Moloi… I am Tsholofelo Aphane 19 years old, Lerato Ndinisa 18 years old, Lindiwe Mbonani 17 years old. The three of us were found dead bound and half naked in C5 Mamelodi, metres away from a children's playground… I am all of those young girls, those women whose names never made it to the newspapers and our tv screens. I**

am that little girl who cannot walk freely night and day afraid of my brother…I am Baby Tshepang. I am my sister's healer and I choose not to be silent and I urge you to speak up…But I am also Mapula from Kuruman, sleeping in the streets, in the toilets, at the service station just so to get an education … I am Thokozile from Mnambithi, an orphan, raised by relatives, education is my only hope, I am Raisibe from Zibidiela, I sleep with any man who can buy sanitary pads for my heavy flow. I am LINDA from Mount Fletcher, I left behind my two bed ridden silicosis infected brothers in the mud house just to get an education and make a difference in my family. I am MICADO, the first of Baloyi to have an education. I am BONAFIDE, raised by my grandmother and left alone to fend for myself when she departed to the other world. I am Phindile Ndlovu, all the way from Umhlaba Uya Lingana, where I wait for the first cock to crow before making fire on the ground just so I can cook for my two little brothers. I am the one who walks for 15 kilometers to school. I am the one who fell in-love for convenience, just so as to get something to eat and a place to stay. And now I know it was not worth it. I am the one spat on by the police and ridiculed for reporting rape. But I stuck to the truth. Coz the truth shall set you free. We call on the university to re-instate Mildred Nkwashu, Hector Singuni and Precious Rapetsoa who were expelled for fighting for free education. We call on all universities to reinstate expelled students and the courts to set them free. We call on the government to think deep, to think hard about free education. We will not rest until it is realized in our lifetime. I am Phindile Ndlovu and I am here for my people.

PHINDILE starts a song.

PHINDILE:

Too many nights I've cried,

My river drowns me still.

The mountains seem too high,

It's taken all my will.

I reach inside for strength,

I'm searching deep within.

Gotta find myself

But where do I begin.

Ndiyalila/Ndiyalila

I’m holding on but I surrender all
Ndiyalila.

Ndiyalila/Ndiyalila
I’m holding on, but all of my pretence is gone
Ndiyalila

I yearn to feel secure
Sometimes I’m not so brave
How long should I endure
Can’t wait until my grave.

My heart still hears a song,
It keeps my soul contained,
So, I choose to carry on
I’ll fight through all this pain.
Ndiyalila/Ndiyalila.
I’m holding on but I surrender all
Ndiyalila.

Ndiyalila/Ndiyalila,
I’m holding on but all of my pretence is gone.
Ndiyalila.

I’m holding on, holding on
I won’t stop now.
Carry on, carry on
I won’t stop now.
I’m digging deep, digging deep
I can’t stay down.

I’ve got to rise,

I've got to rise through it all.

Chorus

Ndiyalila/Ndiyalila.

I'm holding on but all of my pretence is gone.

Ndiyalila.

THE END

B. **https://vimeo.com/379138821** **(Act One)**
Password: FREEDOMTHEMUSICAL_2019

C. **https://vimeo.com/385853773** **(Act Two)**
Password: FREEDOMTHEMUSICAL_2019