
Afro-surrealism in theatre making: An exploration of how Afro-Surrealism can influence the making of the South African play Ngilande (2019) written, directed and performed by Sizwe Hlophe.

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Thakazela: Revisiting, Remembering and Recalling

I am Nelson Sizwe and I walk with oHlophe, *Thumbeza kaMyeni*, *Ntombi zenda ngonyezi*, *Ezabafokazana zenda ngobumnyama*, *Sohlangana*, *Mlingo*, *Mashishwane*, *Zibini*, *Fanoyi*. These are the ancestral spirits I have inherited from my father, Lucas ‘*Juba*’. I also walk with *oZondi*, *Nondaba*, *Gagashe*, *Luqa*, *Nhlab’shile*, *Bhambatha kaMancinza wena owancinza isoka labuyela entombini*. These are the ancestral spirits I have inherited from my mother, Nancy Gloria ‘*Nomali*’.¹ As much as they carry my genetic make-up, they also carry my history. Through them I know that my lineage extends all the way to eSwatini. Their spirits watch over me and are my link to the Creator. They form the most important aspect of my understanding of the world. They form generational understandings my parents inherited and passed down to me. This has formed a crucial part of how I identify with the world. The clan names allow for a reciprocal engagement and performativity of fetching oneself and fetching others through the process of remembering and recalling to gather and exchange spiritually. We say *izithakazelo* to pay homage and respect to our ancestors who have passed but have allowed us respectability of historical and familial lineage as we live. We continue their legacy and the names in the present and through future generations to come. Even in death, the deceased place their faith in the living to lead them home. The deceased trust that the living will guide them to the rest of the family’s dead that watch over the family. The paper considers the cultural ritual practice of *ukuLanda* and seeks to theorise on the practice and its multi-layered nature through African cosmology.

UkuLanda is loosely defined as a ritual that involves the process of fetching or retrieving a deceased spirit from their site of passing to their space of resting. When not performed for those that have passed on, it not only denies them their place amongst those that have passed on before them, but it also denies a people their place in history and identification. One can consider the Trans-Atlantic slave trade (16th century to 19th century), which committed this act to a large population of the African continent. The people murdered and those that committed suicide in the middle passage lacked the adequate burial rights that their ancestors from their countries of origin, specifically those from African countries which practice this ritual, or ones similar to it, were afforded in order to lay them to rest respectably and in accordance to

¹ The above mentioned are my family clan names – as inherited both from my father’s side of the family and my mother’s side of the family. Clan names are important within the South African context, and the Zulu culture, because they provide social and historical identity and identification which is predominantly used in cultural and traditional ceremonies.

traditional and cultural practice(s). The deaths of these enslaved Africans also have relevance to Southern Africans because ancestral spirits exist in multiple categories depending on age, origin and relationship to the chosen individual (Mdlalose. 2009: 118 in Makanya, 2020: 7). To Southern Africans, the ancestral spirits of the Northern Africans would then be regarded as *umndawe* and ancestral spirits of the same bloodline as the healers would be regarded as *umnguni*. These will be discussed in the paper. Traditional healers work through these ancestral spirits (Makanya, 2020: 7). That is why the main character (Khosi) is a sangoma in the play. Afro-Surrealism as a performance theory is regarded as African-American². This factor brings me to question its reliability when applied to a South African context. This factor launches an inquiry into a South African theatre performance theory derived from its paradigm (African Cosmology).

In responding to this research question, the report seeks to be guided by, and investigate, the following research problems and objectives:

1. What is the practice Afro-Surrealism?
2. How does Afro-Surrealism practice influence the theatre making process of *Ngilande*?
3. How does the actor formulate his characters within Afro-Surrealism practice?
4. How are decisions made in the directing process of using Afro-Surrealism paradigm?
5. How is the use of theatre devises negotiated within an Afro-Surrealism perspective in theatre making?

Methodology

This research enquiry makes use of qualitative research methods. It uses primary and secondary data. Primary data can be found in the manner in which it has been theorized through the lived experience of *ukuLanda*. The script, performance and observed cultural practice of *ukuLanda* (to be elaborated on further in the writing later) are key elements serving as primary sources to the research. A primary source can be understood as “original data collected for a specific goal” (Hox and Boeije, 2005: 593). The secondary sources result from the Desktop research engaged with through scholarly journals, articles, books and websites. Secondary sources can be understood as, “data originally collected for a different purpose and reused for another research question” (Hox and Boeije, 2005: 593).

In addition, a Practice-Based research approach for this research report was utilised. This was done to illustrate that the practice and performance of *ukuLanda*, like Afro-Surrealism,

² The foundation of Afro-Surrealism can be found, “in African American literature by the likes of Henry Dumas and Ralph Ellison” (Forthun, 2021: 11).

attempts to retrieve and relocate the African's identity and identification with performance within an African paradigm. The intention was to develop an African aesthetic for theatre that expands the notions of performance beyond what has been learned at academic institutions (Eurocentric approaches). African performance practices are incorporated in the discussion to articulate their relevance to Afro-Surrealism.

There are two main forms of research that possess a research component in them (Candy, 2006: 3). Candy (2006: 3) adds that these forms of research are generally used interchangeably, which may contribute to confusion. These types of researches that Candy (2006: 3) mentions are Practice-Based research and Practice-Led research. Therefore, it is essential that a clear understanding of these forms of research is established before the commencement of this paper. Practice-Led research can be understood as research that is "concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice." (Candy, 2006: 3). According to Candy (2006: 3), the most important aspect of the research is to improve knowledge with regards to practice, or to improve knowledge within practice.

On the other hand, a detailed definition of Practice-Based research is:

an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. Claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes which may include artefacts such as images, music, designs, models, digital media or other outcomes such as performances and exhibitions. Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to those outcomes (Candy, 2006: 3).

After addressing these two definitions, it is reasonable to settle for a Practice-Based research approach. An original play's performance, creation and direction is investigated using Afro-Surrealism as a lens. This makes a Practice-Based approach compatible with this research. The play (it's script predominantly) forms an integral part of the research.

According to Bendrups and Downes (2011: 25), practice and performance as research have been accepted as a valid approach in academic spheres, even though artist-academics have a consistent argument about the need for written documentation or other forms of documentation for the creative process. Scrivener in Bendrups and Downes (2011: 25) argues that art cannot nor is it its prerogative to create new knowledge. Scrivener in Bendrups and Downes (2011: 26) continues to make the claim that the interpretation of artwork is subjective therefore, the likelihood of artworks functioning as shared knowledge is negligible. Scrivener in Bendrups and Downes (2011: 26) raises these points in his argument: a 'body of shared knowledge' uses justification as a means of authentication, most artworks are void of this particular feature and

justification needs to be communicated alongside claimed knowledge as a prerequisite to claims of new knowledge. Even though Scrivener has argued thoroughly against the idea of performance and practice as research, other practitioners hold opposing views. “While the claims present a significant point of view, there are a number of strategies and approaches that are put in place to reveal and record knowledge or insights born from such research.” (Bendrup and Downes, 2011: 26).

The data collection process of this research will be guided by Mackh’s (2013: 21-23) perspective on the arts research procedure. Mackh’s (2013: 21-23) claims that it can be subdivided into four sections to consider: Firstly, maintaining accurate records. This was accomplished by accurate references that contributed to the research. These came in the form of academic literature and the lived experience (me leading my nephew’s spirit to our family’s burial ground) The script portrays the development from an earlier draft, 20-minutes presentation and final product (consisting of two performances) and images and short videos accompanying the research. One video is a segment of the performance and the other videos are of pivotal decisions taken during the rehearsal process. These have been uploaded onto YouTube and linked within the paper. Secondly, Tracking progress was accomplished with a performance comparison of the twenty-minute presentation and the final performance. Thirdly, Ongoing evaluation (consists of five categories: plan, act, observe, reflect and revise). Planning involved setting out the intended objectives prior to the rehearsal session. Acting, execution of the intended goals for that particular rehearsal were conducted. Observing, intervals were taken to note accomplishments. Observation created a platform for critical engagement of progress during the session. Reflection determined the success of the previous task(s). Revision determined whether or not to proceed to the next task depending on the success of the previous ones. Ongoing evaluation extended beyond the rehearsal space for this production. A case in point, the discovery of the semi-circle formation in the final performance.

Regarding the fourth sub-division of the arts research procedure, which is stating my contribution to knowledge. This research aims to theorize African rituals such as *UkuLanda* as relevant performance theory through the analysis of Afro-surrealism.

Contextualization: Landa/Landa - The practice of Narrating and Retrieving

In 2017, when my nephew passed away in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal, I was given strict instructions by experienced elders on how to undertake my first performance of *ukuLanda*. Being my mother’s only son and eldest male figure in the family, the sacred duty of *ukuLanda*

fell on me. The instructions from the elders required me to connect with my nephew's spirit through the spoken word. This was to bring him to the awareness that I would lead him home. During this journey, I became a character playing a role in the drama of speaking to the departed. This journey began at the mortuary after the men that accompanied me had finished cleansing his body. They sang as they washed his body. I had to first present myself to my ancestors. The men stopped singing, and I called to each of my ancestors with *umLahlankosi*³ in hand. I proceeded to explain to them the nature of the activity about to be performed. Finally, I spoke directly to my nephew's spirit, explaining to him that we were going home. The men started singing. I started leading my nephew. I notified him when we exited the mortuary and entered the hearse. We left the men behind. Only the sound of the vehicle and rubber rolling on the tar enveloped my voice as I narrated the directions to him. We left everyone behind and went to the hospital, in which he took his final breath.

As I stood beside the hospital bed where he had slept, I explained to him that this is where his spirit separated from his physical form. Then we proceeded to a momentary stop at the house he lived in, in Port Shepstone, for the community to pay their respects. The men had gotten there before us and sang with the community. Once this was done, we commenced with our journey to our family burial grounds at home, in Empendle. I relayed every minuscule detail of the journey from each geographical location we entered to every river we crossed till we entered the round hut in Empendle. We entered to wailing and singing. He was placed at *umsamu* and I placed *umlahlankosi* on his coffin. With this ritual or with this act or through this journey, I had brought him home to his people. This event was only part of the inspiration for the piece.

The following year, 2018, I was deep in conversation with two of my Honours degree peers. In the confines of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's postgraduate quarters, We critically discussed a variety of Black related topics. Naturally, the conversation led to one of the most grotesque forms of antagonisms enacted by white people upon Black people, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. As a Black person that had just recently grasped the importance of African burial rites, it was only natural that I interrogated the fate of the countless souls out at sea. Souls that belongs to Black women, children and men that died in the middle passage. It was at this point that I decided that I wanted to recreate and re-imagine the events of the slave trade from an

³ According to Edwards et al. (2011: 136) *ukuLanda* is performed with the use of a twig called *ihlahla* from a tree called *umLahlankosi* (*Ziziphus mucronata*). Edwards et al. (2011: 136) continue to explain that this plant is used to guide the spirit and as a tool to communicate by speaking to it.

African perspective. I defaulted to using African cosmology as an approach because I was able to theorise and contextualise *ukuLanda* and its performance through it. However, this approach seemed to be limited to a lens customised for the Africans on the African continent. I then engaged with perspectives adopted by the African Diaspora and was introduced to Afro-Surrealism. I decided to incorporate it into this research because of its characteristics that closely resembled *ukuLanda*. These characteristics being the importance on placing the Black person central to his/her paradigm; and retrieving the person/soul/identity to relocate it to its rightful place. Another characteristic that made me settle with Afro-Surrealism was that historical context was regarded as important. This factor is also found in the practice of *ukuLanda* in the recitation of *izithakazelo*. My creative process then became a journey of retrieving from my experience of *ukuLanda*, history and Afro-Surrealist theory.

Literature Review: Ritual in Performance

African Cosmology

Ngilande (2019), a production written and performed by myself, engaged with the practice of remembering and applying the practice of *ukuLanda*. I first became introduced to the ritual when I had to fetch my nephew's spirit. *UkuLanda* as a ritual is an integral part of African cosmology. African cosmology is not a standalone concept, but it is an aspect of African Metaphysics. According to Makanya (2020: 1), African metaphysics is a comprehensive field that addresses numerous concepts such as causality, cosmology, methodological perspectives, education, development and so on. African Metaphysics can be defined as, "the African way of perceiving, interpreting and making meaning out of interactions, among beings, and reality in general" (Ozumba, 2004 as cited in Mawere, 2011: 17). *Ngilande* (2019) makes sense of its universe through holistically engaging with the supernatural and the physical environment. According to Mawere (2011: 41), at the forefront of the African cosmology is how the African is holistically interconnected with beings and forces. These can be explained with the hierarchical ordering which can be understood as follows:

Expressed anthropocentrically, God is the Originator and Sustainer of man; the Spirits explain the destiny of man; Man is the centre of this ontology; the Animals, Plants and natural phenomena and objects constitute the environment in which man lives, provide a means of existence and, if need be, man establishes a mystical relationship with them (Mbiti, 1996: 68).

Mawere (2011: 18) further reiterates that this has influenced the African perception of reality as a fusion of matter and spirit by either co-existing or existing as separate entities. Since

African cosmology is perceived relative to the human, it is incomprehensible to consider its categories as autonomous because, “it is believed that humans can control both the natural and supernatural worlds and thus become the centres around which natural and supernatural forces interact” (Forde, 1954, Petrus and Bogopa, 2007 as cited in Makanya, 2020: 2). This study explores the supernatural forces involved in African Cosmology. This paper and its concurrent theatre production draw on, and affirm, the forms and functions of Creator Beings, Spirits and Ancestral Spirits as understood by Africans such as amaZulu among who I grew up. Without *ukuLanda* a soul cannot be an ancestral spirit and cannot communicate directly to Creator beings on behalf of the living.

According to Makanya (2020: 2), Africans possess a multitude of Gods that can also be referred to as deities and divinities. Mawere (2011: 39) states that God is at the pinnacle of the hierarchy. Ngubane (1977) in Makanya (2020:3) claims that the creator beings live up above (*eZulwini*) in relation to the spirits of the deceased who are found down below (*Abaphansi*). This can be further understood as, “below God follows the ancestors, particularly national or clan ancestors then, family ancestors.” (Mawere, 2011: 39). Etim (2013: 13) shares the same notions by expressing that God is a transcendental pure spirit, because of this character only ancestral spirits and localised deities may assume the roles of intermediaries. The spirits of the deceased (Ancestral spirits) possess a lesser spiritual force in comparison to Spirits (localised deities) because they have never existed as humans (Makanya, 2020:3). According to Etim (2013: 13) Spirits are deities that are spiritual in nature but are localised vastly in accordance with the African’s existential importance such as thunder, fertility, agriculture and war. These Spirits can be considered “representatives of the complexes of the personal unconsciousness. In addition, ancestors in sacred animals, the symbolism of totems (animals, birds, snakes), and ancestors dwelling in sacred places (rivers, caves, mountains, sea, forests) are personifications of the complexes of the collective unconsciousness” (Mlisa, 2009 as cited in Makanya, 2020: 3). These spirits can be recognized as clan ancestors (Makanya, 2020: 3). These spirits bear relation to traditional healing and types of knowledge that can be accessed (Makanya, 2020: 3). In addition, the most efficient way to understand this feature is by studying the dreams healers have when they are being called to initiation (Makanya, 2020: 3).

In an interview with Makanya (2020: 3), Makhosi Dabula relays an account of an underwater dream she had when she was young. She states that in this recurring dream, she would see *inzunza* (mermaid-like being) that communicated with her in *isindawe*, a language only understood by those initiated in the tradition. When Makhosi Dabula notified her mother about this, her mother declared that her *gobela* studied under the ancestors under water. In this

instance the mermaid-like being, “presents itself as a manifestation of the type of wisdom, knowledge and tradition, she is chosen to access through initiation with a teacher that went through a similar initiation, through the water.” (Makanya, 2020:3). Water plays a pivotal role in the African cosmology. It can be regarded, “as the heart of both spiritual and physical life, the spirit world is regarded as the ultimate source of such life-sustaining powers.” (Bernard, 2003 and 2013 in Makanya, 2003:3). The call to initiation is not limited to dreams about water and *inzunza* but may appear as a leopard and mentor as in the case of Makhosi Nobengula. According to Makanya (2020: 4), these facets in Nobengula’s dream signified her mentor, a *sangoma*, that would help her in the initiation process and the leopard signified that her type of initiation would be that of a *sangoma*. Nobengula would use a practice particular to *izangoma*, that of the bone oracle or divination bones (Makhanya, 2020: 4). Divination bones can be best understood as:

made up of a few trinkets including the bones of animals such as goats, lions and leopards. The divination bones are much more than just a clinical instrument and as such are not only used as a medical tool, in keeping with the holistic orientation of the traditional healing model, “diagnostic bones may also be used to predict economic, social and political problems as well as giving an indication of how these problems can be overcome” (Sodi, 2009: 62) in (Makanya, 2020: 4).

According to Makanya (2020: 5), these spirits can be addressed using the Zulu term, *iThonga* (as overseer of the site in which it exists) and are different from ancestral spirits. According to Edwards (1985), Myers (1993) and Ngubane (1977) in Edwards et al. (2011: 132), “ancestors inhabit the realm of Spirit, which is recognized as beyond human categories of time and space.” Ancestral spirits are the spirits of the deceased family members or clan and they reside in a level lower than the spirits that have been discussed in this section so far (Ross, 2010: 45 in Makanya, 2020: 5). Edward et al. (2011: 136) explain that ancestral spirits are associated with angels and God (Mvelinqangi). In addition, Edward et al. (2011: 135) mention that ancestral spirits serve as intermediaries between God and humans because they have ventured further than the humans arriving closer to God. From the African perspective death is not regarded as an ending of life, rather it is considered to be a continuation (Makanya, 2020: 5). According to Etim (2013:13), Ancestral spirits earn the ability to interfere in the affairs of the living through being revered and good standing members of society when they were still alive. Edwards et al. (2011: 134) believe that ancestral spirits should not be offended because it may result in punishment. It is also important to note that ancestral spirits are not entities that punish only, but they offer guidance as well (Edward et al., 2011: 134). Ancestral spirits are able to play these roles because they “are part of us and people who happened to live with us on earth.

When we bury the dead, we are only burying the body, but not the spirit because the spirit continues to stay with us, and they stay at their special place called umsamu” (Mkhize, 2013 in Makanya, 2020: 6). *Umsamu* is a traditional African shrine (Mkhize, 2013 in Makanya, 2020: 6). It is also important to note that ancestral spirits exist in multiple categories depending on age, origin and relationship to the chosen individual (Mdlalose, 2009: 118 in Makanya, 2020: 7). In relevance to this paper, only the *Mnguni* and *Mndawe* are discussed. Traditional healers work through these ancestral spirits (Makanya, 2020: 7). The *Mnguni* are the ancestral spirits that belong to the same bloodline as the healer (Nkabinde, 2008 in Makanya, 2020: 7). *uMnguni* “is a collective ethnic name that encompasses the Xhosa, Zulu and Swati peoples. The “foreign” ancestors he identifies as umndzawe (Swati) or umndawe (in isiZulu)” (Thornton, 2015 in Makanya, 2020: 7). According to Makanya (2020: 8), *umndawe* are a result of the integration of people of the North into South Africa through marriage, trade or other social means. This portrays the diversity in African cosmology (Makanya, 2020: 8). Unlike the spirits and ancestral spirits (part of the supernatural, immaterial and spiritual worlds), humans and the environment occupy separate levels of the African cosmology hierarchy (Mbiti, 1991, Ngubane, 1977, Sundkler, 1961 and Chonco, 1972 in Makanya, 2020: 8).

Makanya (2020: 8) emphasises that African cosmology's environmental or ecological aspect is intricate and dynamic. Reason for this is that the environment can function independently and as a space for human occupation (Makanya, 2020: 8). According to Bernard (2003:149) in Makanya (2020: 8), nature (plants, forests, bodies of water and mountains) play a pivotal role in traditional healer training and practice. This point can be further understood by noting that:

aspects of the ecology such as the movements of the sun, moon and stars and elements like wind, lightening and water can also be seen as signs and communication to be interpreted as from the spiritual realm. In this way, the environment can act upon and is acted upon by humans because of the spiritual aspects of it. (Mokgobi, 2012 in Makanya, 2020: 9).

The environmental aspect of African cosmology is also characteristic of the importance of animals and plants (Etim, 2013: 15). Etim (2013: 15) emphasises that animals and plants possess spiritual dimensions but not all of them carry the same importance and reverence. Some animals and plants possess “extra-ordinary powers that can be manipulated to man’s advantage or disadvantage. Plants like *acanthusmontanus* - Leopard’s tongue, *Justiciaschimperi* - hunter’s weed, *amphianitica* – calmwood, alligator pepper, bitter kola, African pepper, and animals like the Owl, Crocodile, Python, etc are of this characterization.” (Etim, 2013: 15). *UmLahlankosi* – *Ziziphus mucronata* is part of this list of important plants. It is important to note that some

animals through sacrifice act as intermediaries between ancestral spirits and humans (Makanya, 2020: 9). According to Mawere (2011: 42), from an African context, the human being can be understood as yielding a dualistic conception. According to Ozumba, (2004) in Etim (2013: 14), the existence of the mortal body and immortal soul for humans is undeniable for an African perspective. Mawere (2011: 42) explains that the human is made up of the material/composite (body) and immaterial/ transcendent (spirit). The human being through Black Africa is similar but is described differently depending on society (Mawere, 2011: 43). Four characteristics of the human being emerge within the African cosmology. These aspects are the human as the physical body, soul, shadow and divine human. According to Makanya (2020: 10), the Spirit (*uMoya*) is the highest human faculty and it bears close relation to higher spiritual beings such as creator beings. According to Mawere (2011) in Makanya (2020: 10), this idea of the Spirit can be regarded in Jungian terms as the collective consciousness that reveals itself through dreams, visions and the like to drawing the human understanding to a pre-determined destiny. To further the investigation of the human Spirit, Makanya (2020: 10) examines it through its Zulu meaning (*uMoya*), which is directly translated as wind (can be found anywhere and originates from nature). This leads us to *uMphefumulo* (breath/soul). Its relationship to the Spirit (*uMoya*) can be understood as being, “similar in relation to the translucent, intangible qualities of wind; Umoya; breath belongs to an individual person and speaks to the individualised aspect of umoya.” (Makanya, 2020: 11). The soul is further categorised as the human mind and spiritual mind (Bowen, 1993 in Makanya, 2020: 11). In addition, Makanya (2020: 11) claims that this categorisation of the soul is beneficial to the understanding of how it can access both physical realm and spirit. The spiritual mind grants the human capabilities to understand the ancestral spirits, Spirits and creator beings. Makhosi Lebembe makes an interesting point regarding the Spirit in an interview with Makanya (2020: 11). He claims that, “the soul, no, the spirit does not die, the flesh dies and the spirit always remembers. And the spirit goes with the mind... So, our soul journeys forever and they always remember where they come from, what we did and all those things.” (Makanya, 2020: 11). This characteristic can be identified in the human mind. The human mind is the faculty of the soul that seeks to comprehend the spiritual in relation to the physical realm (Makanya, 2020: 12). According to Makanya (2020: 13), the human mind stays attached to the soul of the ancestral spirits to remember their descendants and take care of them. In addition, “it implies that as descendants we can take on the qualities and characteristics of our ancestral spirits who continue to live through us or have access to us in this realm.” (Makanya, 2020: 13). Makanya (2020: 14) claims that the soul is housed by the body (mineral organism) and the soul uses the body as a vehicle

to navigate through the physical realm. She adds that the body can be further understood by considering it as two layers (Physical body and Etheric body/Aura). In isiZulu they are regarded as *uMzimba* and *isiThunzi* (the Shadow) respectively (Makanya, 2020: 14). According to Bowen (1993) in Makanya (2020: 14), *isiThunzi* is a human faculty responsible for displaying life force or the person's energy. Mutwa (2003) in Makanya (2020: 14) explains that the etheric body is gradually developed from birth (not inherited) based on human experience and memory. He adds that this body is designed to withstand this world, and its spiritual connection to the physical body gives it the ability to see into the future through dreams because it is ahead of the physical body. Makanya (2020: 15) reiterates that the physical body is a point of convergence for the spirit and soul because of its ability to navigate the physical realm. Since the human is both matter and spirit, this makes the human existence as an intermediary between these two mentioned aspects (Makanya, 2020: 15). As a result, "The ancestral spirits need their descendants for them to continue to live on in the spiritual realm." (Makanya, 2020: 15). Ngubane (1977) in Makanya (2020: 15) explains this phenomenon through the concept of integrated and unintegrated ancestors by asserting that for, "the deceased to move from their shadow or *isthunzi* form to their soul form, a sacrifice needs to be performed by their living descendants. This sacrifice integrates them with the ancestors and brings them back home as *idlozi*" (Ngubane, 1977 in Makanya, 2020: 15-16). In Nguni culture the slaughtering of a beast is pivotal in the send-off process of the deceased and it is accompanied by the *ukuLanda* ritual. According to Edwards et al. (2011: 136), this sacred ritual is performed with *ihlahla* (twig) from *umhlankosi* (*Ziziphus Mucronata*) in situations where the deceased died away from their home. *iHlahla* from *umhlankosi* is used as a link for communication between the deceased and the living (Edwards et al., 2011: 136). The task of leading the deceased back home is performed by a close family member (usually an elderly person) who abides by this family tradition (Edwards et al., 2011: 136). *UkuLanda* "is regarded as respect for the completion of a process that links the living and the living dead" (Edwards et al., 2011: 136).

Africans believe in human's immortality and relation to higher spiritual beings. There are conditions to this immortality such as the need to transition from soul to spirit and the importance of being located amongst ancestral spirits at home. This makes *ukuLanda* paramount to the African paradigm. *UkuLanda* serves as a conduit between the living and the dead. In the performance of this ritual the gap between the material and immaterial is bridged. This creates the holistic experience of existence African cosmology is rooted in.

According to Anyanwu (1967) and Esin (1982) in Etim (2013: 12), African thought is scientific, logical and analytical because the African mind can view the relationships between

phenomena and analyse circumstances on the basis of cause and effect, and balance and conflict. The African paradigm is scientific, logical, and analytical to affirm this point because it understands the universe through “hierarchical modes and categories rather than in single, isolated individualistic phenomenon” (Anyanwu, 1967 and Esin, 1982 in Etim, 2013: 12). This makes *ukuLanda* suitable for the purposes of this research concerning African performance. This is because the performance of this ritual engages multiple hierarchical modes and categories in the African understanding of the universe. This approach is an integral aspect of the creative process because what was seen as the final performance was an amalgamation of activities. These activities being: Acting, directing, writing, dramaturgy, design, choreography and dance. These activities worked together to create a world for the audience to view, using African cosmology as a lens.

African cosmology forms the foundations of Afrocentric approaches as emphasized when Mazama (2003) expresses that the spiritual - the relationship between the spiritual and physical - and interconnectedness must be dominant in Afrocentric methods (Exkano, 2013: 72). Afrocentric methods form an integral part of Afro-Surrealism. Asante (1999: 84) claims that Afrocentricity theory is not exclusive to the African Diaspora because its roots can be found on the African continent, where its largest following is established. Afrocentricity can be defined as “a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis, and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history” (Asante, 2007: 16 as cited in Exkano, 2013: 66). This is a concept also shared by Afro-Surrealism. Afro-Surrealism in its modern form is viewed from a Black American paradigm as noted as follows, “Afrosurrealism is a genre of Black American writing wherein Black artists mobilize the aesthetic techniques about the particular experience of being Black in America, expressing the surreal conditions with which Black Americans have encountered within the United States’ special brand of systemic racism, which manifested in Jim Crow, the Ku Klux Klan, the American Neo-Nazi movement, the American Alt-Right, etc. etc.” (Spencer, 2016: 209). With this definition taken into consideration, a further investigation is made to link Afro-Surrealism to a local, South African, context for the relevance of this paper.

Afro-Surrealism

Afro-Surrealism is “a form of black speculative fiction that began in the 1920s, gained popularity in the 1960s, and has now entered a third wave – closely mirrors its aesthetic cousin Afro-Futurism in its incorporation of technology into various texts.” (Spencer, 2016: 209). According to Spencer (2016: 217-218), Afrofuturism and Afro-Surrealism depend on the

fantastic to better comprehend racial oppression but Afro-Surrealism attempts to merge the past with the present, while Afro-Futurism explores the importance of Black creators of futuristic technologies. Afro-Surrealism also approaches creating that is rooted in exploration from a Black lens. Francis (2013: 97) also enunciates that Afro-Surrealism places Blackness at the centre of surrealism and modernism as the manifestations of Black artists' modalities. For this research, Afro-Surrealism is best described by a document by D. Scott Miller outlining its principles. This document is known as the *Afrosurreal Manifesto: Black is the new black – a 21st century Manifesto* (Miller, 2013: 113). Within this Manifesto, Miller (2013: 115-117) structures these principles in ten points. Miller's (2013: 115-116) first point introduces the readers to key individuals that have contributed to the Afro-Surrealism movement. These mentioned individuals include Wifredo Lam, Jean-Micheal Basquiat, Roscoe Mitchell, Henry Dumas, Victor Lavelle, Darius James, Frantz Fanon, Jean Genet, Chester Himes, William S. Burroughs, Reed and Zora Neale Hurston (Miller, 2013: 115-116). As much as it is conventional, Hurston's Novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* uses conventions that transcend novel genres by incorporating folktale and oral tradition (Crabtree, 1985: 58). According to Crabtree (1985: 65), Hurston uses performance and folk culture to express courage, creativity in daily encounters with poverty, deprivation, catastrophe and imminent death. This can be deduced in the suggested meaning of the book's title which is, "men and women, confronting "dark" unknowns such as loss and death, create or recognize a force behind reality that makes sense out of it." (Crabtree, 1985: 65). This is in line with the second point of the manifesto which declares that, "Afrosurreal presupposes that beyond this visible world, there is an invisible world striving to manifest, and it is our job to uncover it." (Miller, 2013: 116). The author continues to illustrate within his second point that nature (inclusive of human nature) brings into being more surreal encounters than other processes (Miller, 2013: 116). Miller's (2013: 116) third point emphasizes that Afro-Surrealists look to the past from a contemporary paradigm to appropriate from it. He continues by pointing out that Afro-Surrealism may look at mental illness as an encounter with a divine entity and the legitimacy of magic is recognized. The fourth point of the manifesto declares that, "Afrosurrealists use excess as the only legitimate means of subversion, and hybridization as a form of disobedience." (Miller, 2013: 116). Within the fourth point Miller (2013: 116) further explains that the reason for the distortion of reality in Afro-Surrealism is to achieve emotional impact. The following point that is expressed by Miller (2013: 116) is that Afrosurrealists attempt to create an artistic aesthetic that expresses beauty, opulence and is whimsical. Miller (2013: 116) further emphasizes the impossibility of viewing an image objectively because the concept of

an objective image does not exist. In the sixth point the author states that, “Afrosurrealists are highly-paid short- term commodities (as opposed to poorly-paid long-term ones, a.k.a. slaves).” Miller (2013: 116) further describes within this point that the Afro-Surrealist existence is one that is not bound by social constructs, in effect the Afro-Surrealist may don multiple identities, identify with different names and can be ambiguous if they so choose. In the next point the author declares that, “The Afrosurrealist wears a mask while reading Leopold Senghor.” (Miller, 2013: 117). In the eighth point Miller (2013: 117) expresses that it is in the absurdity of a ‘post-racial’ existence that Afro-Surrealists strive to mine meaning. The ninth point maintains that whether it is in fashion or theatre, Afro-Surrealism brings to light the post-apocalyptic elements of contemporary existence in an eloquent but blunt manner (Miller, 2013: 117). The final point of the manifesto is, “Afrosurrealists create sensuous gods to hunt down beautiful collapsed icons.” (Miller, 2013: 117). As a further explanation, Afro-Surrealism has the following characteristics:

Afrosurrealism is about the present. There is no need for tomorrow’s- tongue speculation about the future. Concentration camps, bombed- out cities, famines, and enforced sterilization have already happened. To the Afro-surrealist, the Tasers are here. The Four Horsemen rode through too long ago to recall. What is the future? The future has been around so long it is now the past.

Afrosurrealists expose this from a “future- past” called RIGHT NOW (Miller, 2013:114).

Time is a key factor within Afro-Surrealism. Spencer (2016: 213-214) claims that to attain the relevance of history and an African notion of temporality, one that merges past, present, and future imaginings of events that are contemporary, Afro-Surreal narratives include cinematic storytelling devices into their narratives. He continues to say that historical traumas can be re-imagined using Afro-Surrealism cinematic qualities. The idea of using new media in drama was also advocated for by Dhlomo (Wenzel, 2005: 60). Afro-Surrealism possesses a variety of facets such as, “The dreamlike effects of surrealism such as abstraction, animation, parody, symbolism, incongruity, play of thought, direct manipulation (of the film image), and emphasis on the unconscious may seem out of this world, but in fact surrealism was profoundly connected to and illuminative of the mysteries, ambiguities, and strivings of actual political and lived reality.” (Francis, 2016: 47). Afro-Surrealism also places importance in the mystical and the metaphorical as follows:

Leopold Senghor, poet, first president of Senegal, and African surrealist, made this distinction: “European Surrealism is empirical. African Surrealism is mystical and metaphorical.” Jean-Paul Sartre said that the art of Senghor and the African surrealist (or Negritude) movement “is revolutionary because it is surrealist, but itself is surrealist because it is black.” Afro surrealism

sees that all “others” who create from their actual, lived experience are surrealist, per Frida Kahlo (Miller, 2013:114).

According to Spencer (2016: 213), Afro-Surrealism displays both reality and fantasy and, in effect, brings to light the absurdity of ‘real life’. Spencer (2016: 217-218) mentions that Afro-Surrealism relies on the fantastic for the comprehension of racial oppression.

A statement that encapsulates all the above information is that Afro-Surrealism “teeters on the edge of folklore, myth, fable, history and science, bridging all through humor, a dreamlike narrative, and an uncertain optimism about the future.” (Spencer, 2016: 210).

From a global context, Afro-Surrealism exists in the form of Black Surrealism. It “is a broader category than Miller’s Afrosurrealism, as it is surrealism used by Black artists *worldwide* to artistically express their lived experience in a world largely dominated by the powers of white supremacy (Jackson, 2019: 5-6). It is of importance to understand that Afro-Surrealism’s predecessor is Black Surrealism, mainly because Afro-Surrealism’s conceptualisation is derived from Black Surrealism. This is stipulated by the author when he says, “With the publication of *Negro*, the seeds of the American iteration of Black Surrealism – what would later become Miller’s Afro-Surrealism - had been planted.” (Jackson, 2019: 14). Jackson (2019: 16) also makes mention of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* published in New York in 1952 as a seminal text to *American Black Surrealism*, which would progress to be known as Miller’s Afrosurrealism. Jackson (2019: 82) mentions Miller’s reference to Suzanne Césaire’s creation of the Marvelous within the context of Black Surrealism as paramount to Miller’s idea of Afrosurrealism. Jeremy A. Jackson explains the Marvelous as, “powers and ideas that exist beyond our tangible reality, bringing the surrealist’s art into a realm that transcends simple “reality,” including things like dreams, religions, mythologies, and the supernatural.” (Jackson, 2019: 3). The Marvelous has created a platform for the Afro-Surrealist to be able to make the invisible visible. This has been achieved mostly by using myth. Myth in the context of Afro-Surrealism can be understood as, “shorthand for Baraka’s “entirely different world organically connected to this one.”” (Jackson, 2019: 8). In addition, Jackson (2019: 8) explains that the Mythical world functions differently to ours and it is for this reason that artistic production within myth permits for revelation. It permits for the exposure of invisible information, possibilities and the resistance against hegemonic power structures (Jackson, 2019: 8). Jackson (2019: 3) explains that the Marvelous allows the Afro-Surrealist to move away from realist structures to create a world that exposes racism. These factors demonstrate Black Surrealism’s impact on Afro-Surrealism. According to Jackson (2019: 6) Black Surrealism can be traced back to the 20th century with the Negritude movement. Senghor (1974: 269) lays claims that

he, alongside a small group of his peers launched the Negritude movement in the thirties. An explanation of the Negritude movement is as follows:

Négritude was a multifaceted movement focused on the opposition of global white hegemonic racism by way of art, politics, and philosophy in order to create a unified Black community that could stand up to the powers of imperialism and colonialism. The word Négritude was originally coined by Léopold Sédhar Senghor and Aimé Césaire in the literary journal *L'étudiant Noir*, and came to represent an embrace and celebration of Blackness – specifically in Francophone colonies such as Senegal and Martinique, where both poets would later become prominent statesmen (Jackson, 2019: 81-82).

According to Senghor (1974: 272), Negritude was developed in three stages: Firstly, the rejection of Eurocentric ideologies, then the discarding of prejudiced notions of approaching racism (antiracist racism) and finally the realisation that all classical civilisations found on the Mediterranean latitude have not only culturally but have also biologically appropriated from each other. This has led to the Negritude movement deeply embedding itself in Black people's values, whilst simultaneously keeping an open mind to other people's cultures (Senghor, 1974: 272). This is a crucial aspect to understand about Afro-Surrealism. Afro-Surrealism having been derived from a Negritude school of thought does not have malicious intentions towards western ideologies. Instead it directs its focus to pro Black concepts. Stephan Howe claims that, "the founding figures of *Negritude* emphasized African cultural and psychological distinctiveness but did not, on the whole, have a separatist political programme or even, necessarily, any political programme at all." (Howe, 1998: 24). According to Howe (1998:24), Negritude has developed into a major influence for Afrocentrism and theories that are related to it. This facet of Negritude also links Afrocentrism to Afro-Surrealism.

Molefi Kete Asante (scholar and author) raises a point that displays Afrocentrism's relation to Afro-Surrealism. Asante (1999: 84) claims that the theory of Afrocentricity is not exclusive to the African Diaspora because its roots can be found on the African continent, where its largest following is established. It can be defined as "a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis, and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history" (Asante, 2007: 16 as cited in Exkano, 2013: 66). The characteristics of Afrocentrism are as follows:

- (1) An intense interest in psychological location as determined by symbols, motifs, rituals and signs;
- (2) a commitment to finding the subject-place of Africans in any social, political, economic, or religious phenomenon with implications for questions of sex, gender, and class.

- (3) a defense of African cultural elements as historically valid in the context of art, music, and literature and a defense of pan-African connection based on broad responses to conditions, environments, and situations over time;
- (4) a celebration of “centerdness” and agency and a commitment to lexical refinement that eliminates pejoratives, including sexual and gender pejoratives, about Africans or other people; and
- (5) a powerful imperative from historical sources to revise the collective text of African people as one in constant and consistent search from liberation and Maat. (Asante, 1999: 4).

These characteristics as mentioned above can also be found in Afro-Surrealism. Afro-Surrealism strongly uses metaphors and symbolism. Afro-Surrealism places great importance on time (the future-past called the right now) and engaging the historical aspect of African lives. It embeds itself in the portrayal of African realities and struggles in the pursuit of liberation from oppression. Afro-Surrealism views from an African perspective. These are key aspects of Afrocentrism. These aspects of Afrocentrism are highlighted by Asante (1999: 81) when he concurs with a view made by Appiah in a philosophical journal. Appiah in Asante (1999: 81) notes that the Afrocentric movement can be regarded as a paradigm.

As much as Afro-Surrealism might be a concept that has matured in a Black American context; its roots can be found as close as Africa. This deduction can be made from the examination of multiple theories, paradigms and historical movements. African cosmology, Black Surrealism, the Negritude movement, Black theatre, Afrocentrism, and ritual can be seen to encompass the same values and principles of Afro-Surrealism. These values and principles campaign for the liberation from oppression. They place the African’s perspective of the world central. Afro-Surrealism speaks of the representation of African narratives by the use of multiple approaches such as metaphor, ritual, magic and fantasy which gives it its surreal characteristics. Scrutinised carefully, these approaches in African cosmology are elements of its reality. Therefore, what is considered as surreal to one, is the other’s actual lived experiences. For these reasons, Afro-Surrealism can exist in the context of a South African play.

UkuLanda as ritual seeks to liberate the soul of the deceased by taking them from the site of death and placing them home through a rigorous process of narration (family history and geography) and performance. This is similar to Afro-surrealism that seeks to retrieve African identity that has suffered social death through oppression. Afro-surrealism also does this through rigorously engaging with history (an approach it shares with Afrocentricity).

By considering the above, this study explores the supernatural forces involved in African Cosmology.

Theoretical application to Creative Process: *Ngilande* (2019)

This paper and its concurrent theatre production draw on, and affirm, the forms and functions of Creator Beings, Spirits and Ancestral Spirits as understood by Africans such as amaZulu among who I grew up. Without *ukuLanda* a soul cannot be an ancestral spirit and cannot communicate directly to Creator beings on behalf of the living. Khosi⁴, the main character of this play, experiences this predicament. He along with his people are robbed of their burial rites when they sacrifice their lives. For this reason, the [beginning of the play](#) has a double meaning. Firstly, to represent his spirit roaming the earth. Secondly, for him to fetch the other spirits roaming the earth. This brought the audience into his world, making the invisible visible. This is a concept that is understood as the Marvellous in Afro-Surrealism. According to Jackson (2019: 82), Suzanne Césaire's creation of the Marvellous within the context of Black Surrealism as paramount to Miller's idea of Afrosurrealism. Jeremy A. Jackson explains the Marvellous as, "powers and ideas that exist beyond our own tangible reality, bringing the surrealist's art into a realm that transcends simple "reality," including things like dreams, religions, mythologies, and the supernatural." (Jackson, 2019: 3). African drama originated in the form of Sympathetic Magic, a combination of religious or magical ritual, rhythmic dances and song that were believed to produce what they mimicked (Dhlomo, 1977: 3). The Marvellous has created a platform for the Afro-Surrealist to be able to make the invisible visible. This has been achieved mostly by using myth. Myth in the context of Afro-Surrealism can be understood as, "shorthand for Baraka's "entirely different world organically connected to this one."" (Jackson, 2019: 8). In addition, Jackson (2019: 8) explains that the Mythical world functions differently to ours and it is for this reason that artistic production within myth permits for revelation. It permits for the exposure of invisible information, possibilities and the resistance against hegemonic power structures (Jackson, 2019: 8). Jackson (2019: 3) explains that the Marvellous allows the Afro-Surrealist to move away from realist structures to create a world that exposes racism. Mystical and metaphorical representations in Afro-Surrealism are used to interrogate oppressive structures (Spencer, 2016: 217-218). According to Dhlomo (1977: 3), since Africans believed in the principle of Sympathetic Magic (that like produced like) they were extremely to imitate – to – dramatize whatever result they desired to accomplish, and their dramatic representations of battle, pain and other things, were vivid,

⁴ Derived from *Makhosi*. This term is used amongst traditional healers as a sign of respect and can be translated into meaning King (Nene, 2016: 1633). A further elaboration on this point is, "that every person who dies enters the world of the departed and automatically becomes a king (*makhosi*), since they have conquered the world of the living and now, they are in the world of kings '*amakhosi*'." (Nene, 2016: 1633).

artistic, realistic performances. Sympathetic Magic is a dramatic tool used to express the experience of the African life. Death and burial rites are common experiences in African life. The performance of a burial rite such as *ukuLanda* can be considered as Sympathetic Magic because of its evident combination of performance and religious or magical ritual intent. This warrants the use of ritual in the play *Ngilande* (2019). The use of ritual in theatre can also be found in the work of Ghanaian Playwright, Efua Sutherland. Anne V. Adams acknowledges Sutherland's focus on the "revis(it)ing of ritual" but also expresses that Sutherland's works' do not completely investigate local cultural traditions and their interactions with European cultural and political forms (da Silva, 2005: 258). *Ngilande* (2019) revisits a cultural tradition (*ukuLanda*) and revises its interaction with a European cultural and political form (the trans-Atlantic Slave trade and the western theatre space). In *Ngilande* (2019), *ukuLanda* is performed by a spirit leading the living. This is meaningful because firstly this role reversal establishes a new world that operates with different rules. Secondly, *ukuLanda* is performed by the living for the deceased. As a result, this exposes the social death⁵ that African people endure due to anti-Black antagonisms and subjugation. Lastly, *ukuLanda* as a performance device deconstructs traditionally western forms of engaging narrative and existence within space and time in theatre. African drama places importance on the mystical and metaphorical representations of Black lives. Within the context of this play and paper, the Marvellous and Sympathetic Magic allowed me to address the injustices of the slave trade as follows:

Khosi as a spirit had a red and black shawl (*ibhayi*) with a lion print wrapped around his waist over another shawl.⁶ According to Nene (2016: 1633), a traditional healer's attire is chosen by their ancestors and is a representation of rank/qualification amongst other traditional healers. In addition, Nene (2016: 1643) further explains that colours on *ibhayi* carry meaning. In the case of Khosi the red and black represents *umndiki*⁷ that is performed by the vocalist in the production. The lion on *ibhayi* carried significant spiritual connotations because ancestors in sacred animals, the symbolism of totems (animals, birds, snakes), and ancestors dwelling in sacred places (rivers, caves, mountains, sea, forests) are personifications of the complexes of the collective unconsciousness" (Mlisa, 2009 in Makanya, 2020: 3). As a performance device, the red and black *ibhayi* was crucial in the portrayal of different characters because of its pre-

⁵ "Social death bars the slave from access to narrative, at the level of temporality; but it also does so at the level of spatiality." (Wilderson III, 2015). According to Paterson (1985: 38) social death occurs when the individual is socially non-existent outside of their masters paradigm.

⁶ According to Dr Mnguni the black and red, lion *bhayi* is associated with the lion's strength and it is a representation of the Spirit, *idlozi* (Thenjiwe TV: 2021).

⁷ "Feminine ancestral spirit" (Nene, 2016: 1634). Dr Mnguni is in agreement with factor (Thenjiwe TV: 2021).

existing symbolic meanings. In performance, *iBhayi* was worn in manners that formulated the basis for the characters in the production as if chosen by the different spirits/characters. These spirits can be recognized as clan ancestors (Makanya, 2020: 3). These spirits bear relation to traditional healing and types of knowledge that can be accessed (Makanya, 2020: 3). These localised clan ancestors are referenced in the production's opening monologue as follows:

Narrator: Ngiyababona! Nababayeza, Ngiyababona! Ngibonisiwe, ngibonisiwe ngamaqaphelo okhokho. Vumani bo! Ngabona okuqale njengenkazimulo, kwavula inyathuko ebumnyameni kwazala izinkanyezi eziqhakazile emkhathini. Ngabona uMvelinqangi evela ohlangeni ukuqambeka kwamagama kwathola intokomalo esifubeni sikaNomkhubulwane. Vumani bo! Angiboniswa ngawenyama kodwa ngesiphiwo sethonga lami ngiya ngaqina ngezwa ukukikiza kwabantu bakithi bedlulisa imyalezo yabangasekho ngazizwa ngifudumaliswa intokomalo kaMama. Ngizwe intwasanhlobo enkangala, ukuphila kwagcwala amaphaphu ngithe ngizama ukuhogela imicabango yami yokuqala kwakhala ibhungane angiwatholanga amagama afanele. Vumani bo! Ngiye ngaqalaza okokugcina ngababona bemoyizela baqinisekisa ukuthi ukuphindela kwami emuva kuyoba ngokwamukelekile. Vumani bo! Isithwalambiza singinike umhlahlandlela sihleli ecembeni ngesizotha silalele ukuheleza komoya wasekuseni. Obabamkhulu ngibabona ngaphansi konyezi behuba ezintabeni nasemifuleni. Ngibabona becula emagqumeni agcwele izihlabathi, ngibezwa njengemlolozelo, ngibezwe njengenhlokomomo yomsindo wempophoma, ngibezwe laphe kuthule kuthe cwaka. Vumani bo! Ngiyababona impela ngiyababona. (*Ngilande*, 2019: 3).

Within this monologue Khosi shares knowledge systems his ancestors have bestowed upon him. He speaks of ancestral spirits in their various forms, in animals, mountains, waterfalls, stars and winds wailing over desert sands. Khosi speaks of them showing him the beginning of time, life and the Gods. Leeming (2005) and Wynter (2013) as cited in Makanya (2020: 2) explain that creation myths assist us in piecing together ideas of creator beings as the source of our origin. They had also shown him the end of life as he knew, the arrival of the coloniser. The monologue also contributed performance wise. With it, an engagement with the audience and getting them to partake in the performance was achieved. This was achieved by going to a few audience members and gesturing that they should blow air into the pouch with oracle bones. Punctuating the monologue with, '*Vumani bo!*', spurred the crowd to respond with '*Siyavuma!*' This act was a symbolic contract between the audience and performer. Their cooperating showed me that they consented to being taken on the journey of the play.

According to Design Indaba (2002) *Vumani bo! Siyavuma*, literally translates to "Do you agree?", "We agree" but the actual meaning is based on ancestral consultation and their blessing being provided. This engagement between audience and performer can be recognised

as the Law of Joint Performance. According to Ukala (2001: 34), the Law of Joint Performance is based on audience participation. Within this law the audience may sing along or pose questions to the performer or may even take over if a narrator fails at delivering (Ukala, 2001: 34). This monologue also served as a means to establish further the Law of Opening, which had already been in performance in the foyer. The ‘*Vumani-Siyavuma*’ exchange completed the introductory aspect of the production.

The Law of Opening is used as a method to begin a folktale performance in Black Africa and it has three functions (Ukala, 2001: 33). These functions are meant to arouse the audience; offer them the chance to encourage or stop the narrator; establish main characters and/or establish temporal and spatial settings of the story (Ukala, 2001: 33). When this law is transposed onto *ukuLanda*, the audience becomes the ancestral spirits and the spirit of the deceased. Calling out their clan names arouses the ancestral spirits. The success of the ritual is dependent on them. Finally, by stating why you have gathered them, establishes the main character (the deceased) and context for the type of ritual. Another law of relevance to this research is the Law of Creativity, Free Enactment and Responsibility. This law was important because it existed through every aspect of the play. By performing the script, the Creativity aspect which stipulates that the African narrator dramatically performs the memorised tale was engaged (Ukala, 2001: 36). According to Ukala (2001: 36) Free Enactment requires the narrator to break into role-playing and back into narrating at their own discretion. Playing the multiple characters including the narrator that were played in the production achieved this facet. The slave trade from African perspectives from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean was interrogated and responsibility of the portrayal in performance was taken. In the Responsibility aspect of this law, Ukala (2001: 38) believes the African narrator deals with complex material and is therefore accountable for the tales they create for performance. Ukala (2001: 33) adds that unlike the psychological actor, the African narrator accomplishes Free Enactment without hooking and loosing themselves in a character. This law applies to *ukuLanda* because the ritual requires the performer to narrate the journey to the deceased. Most of the journey is usually memorised. To account for every detail the performer needs to be vigilant enough to spot signs with names of rivers and locations. This is important because the performer carries the responsibility of ensuring the deceased is not left behind in the journey. Khosi moved between the audience focused on the branch but projecting his voice into the foyer’s space. He moved between the people to stop and kneel in unoccupied spaces and continued talking and explaining that he would lead them to their rightful spaces. At this point the audience had become the souls the ritual was performed for.

Khosi's path included seeking for audience/souls outside by the entrance of the foyer to find others to lead and when he returned and was about to lead the people, [An ancestral spirit, performed by Nolitha Radebe appeared from behind the curtains and captured everyone's attention with her voice](#) and disappeared back behind the curtains. Her vocals and melodies in the play mirrored those of the songs and wailing that accompanied *ukuLanda* for my nephew. According to Mutwa (1974: 78), African people believed that singing was the highest and holiest form of expression. Singing has been used in the preservation of African history because of the simplicity to recall a catchy and soul-stirring tune (Mutwa, 1974: 780). Similarly, singing in the production was used to invoke a variety of emotions in the audience members. The vocalist's voice was not limited to being directed to the performer but extended its reach to the overall performance. Khosi reacted to the spirit's first appearance as if she were a presence that is felt like the hairs standing on ends rippling down a back. The secondary reason for not overtly acknowledging her was that the male singers were not acknowledged during *ukuLanda* for my nephew. At this point, Khosi started interacting with the audience directly. He told them to follow him and they did but some audience members that were familiar with the ritual were startled. The reason for this was that the chosen method of leading them into the theatre (*ukuLanda*) is a ritual meant for the deceased, not to guide those who still exist in their physical forms. Some members verbalized their discomfort and anxiety. Others hid behind awkward laughs. This process made the audience confront what they experienced from two paradigms (western and Afrocentric). The western paradigm had created a particular order for engaging with theatre. This order being: foyer, front entrance, ushered to seat and patiently waiting in the auditorium for the production to start. By obliterating this order, the Black audience that understood theatre solely from a western paradigm began to consider the extents of their social deaths. Furthermore, those that understood the ritual (Afrocentric paradigm) began to question what aspect of them was dead for a ritual of this sort to be performed for them. With these two factors in play a concoction of emotions ensued. Audience and Khosi walked past the entrance Radebe had disappeared behind and walked through a green door that lead them down a flight of stairs. Like *ukuLanda*, this journey was narrated to the audience moment to moment without sparing any detail. They walked between the loading bay and Downstairs theatre backstage through a little door. Once through, Khosi led them through a narrow dimly lit passage that lingered with the scent of *impepho*⁸. They were underneath the Wits Main theatre auditorium.

⁸ *Helichrysum aureonitens* is made up of multiple slender and erect stems that grow to approximately 300 mm high from a creeping rootstock (SANBI, 2007). In addition, "the stems and leaves are pale grey because they are covered in white woolly hairs that grow flatly appressed to the surface. The leaves are narrowly oblong to

At this point, the western traditional theatre experience was already being challenged. This was achieved firstly, by starting the performance before the audience entered the theatre and secondly, by not entering the theatre through channels deemed normal (front entrance). In addition, the mere presence of the scent of *impepho* within a colonial structure further challenged the western traditional theatre space. The Wits theatre complex was officially opened in 1983 (Wits, n.d.), during apartheid South Africa. At this time the University of the Witwatersrand had enrolled 13877 white students and 583 Black students (Politicsweb, 2012), making it historically white during the apartheid regime. The apartheid regime was heavily supported by Christian denominations (Joebgen, 2016: 1). Similarly, Christianity was also a religion the majority of slaveholders identified with (Time, 2018). The reason these claims are of relevance is because Africans were made to reject their cultural and religious practices through manipulation into adopting western ideas and Christianity (Shange, 2021: 4). Christianity rejected the practice of burning *impepho* for the purpose of communicating with the ancestors (Shange, 2021: 1). Therefore, burning *impepho* in the production was the third device used to challenge a western traditional theatre space built on ideologies that rejected and oppressed African perspectives.

It can be assumed that majority of the audience had never been through this space, but they trusted Khosi to lead them as a spirit following the bearer of *umlahlankosi* would. At the end of the passage was a light the audience walked through to finally walk onto the stage. [They were met by Radebe's \(ancestral spirit\) voice](#) as she adjusted and set up *umsamu*⁹. The set design was adopted with the intention to disrupt the idea of the proscenium and the forth wall. The idea to bring the audience onto stage was inspired by my first attempt of the performance which was a twenty-minute presentation.

oblong-spathulate, with margins flat or a little revolute (rolled to the underside of the leaf). Each leaf has a tiny, hard, hairless tip.” (SANBI, 2007). According to Ntshangase (2012: 1) *Impepho* is a plant indigenous to Africa that is burnt when communicating with ancestors. Ntshangase (2012: 1) further explains that *impepho* is used by traditional healers when communicating with the deceased, various ceremonies, and traditional feasts.

⁹ *Umsamu* is an African traditional shrine (Mkhize, 2013 in Makanya, 2020: 6).



Figure 1 Wits Down-stairs Theatre, twenty-minutes presentation, Ngilande (2019)

The constant reminder of the fourth wall (western device) was disappointing. This was enough motivation to seek for methods to disrupt this device. It was not until I was in a taxi returning to my apartment, that I saw a performance opposite the Bree taxi rank, Johannesburg. Being stuck in traffic awarded me the privilege of seeing the semi-circular formation that was used in the performance. This method of engaging with audiences is common practice in KwaZulu-Natal with *Maskandi* (a popular genre of African traditional music) artists and gospel artists. Both of these genres are generally performed in isiZulu on these occasions. To achieve this formation, the performance venue had to change to the Wits Main Theatre.



Figure 2 Ngilande (2019): Wits Main Theatre, full production performance with Nolitha Inam Radebe (Vocalist) and Sizwe Hlophe



Figure 3 Ngilande (2019): Wits Main Theatre, full production technical run

Metal stanchions with a thick brown rope were utilized. One row of cushions was placed below it with a few chairs for the elderly. This was done to exterminate the idea of comfort because the captured people of Africa were not detained in comfortable conditions. The application of a stage design of this sort disrupts conventional theatre. The shrine was placed in the front to symbolise *umsamu*. My home, like many African homes, has this sacred area allocated for burning *impepho* and communing with the ancestors. In the production it was made of a black wooden block covered with a maroon velvet cloth. Petrified wood, a piece from a broken clay pot was used for *impepho*, a small grass basket, beads and miniature ceramic artefacts constituted the makeup of the shrine. The semi-circular formation offered intimacy since the viewers were in proximity. This was beneficial performance wise because it allowed for a means to gauge interest. Interest was lost due to performance, script or direction. These issues were either dealt with during the show by the quick evaluation of clarity (projection, pronunciation and enunciation) or evaluation of where action was directed. In situations where this was not possible, reassessment of the performance was conducted. Then sections of the

performance would either be changed or omitted if they did not work. The law of Joint Performance (Ukala, 2001: 34) was also used to gauge audience engagement by noting crowd participation. If they looked away, yawned or were not responsive, a loss of attention was evident (which was evident in some aspects of the twenty-minute presentation).

Once the audience was attentively positioned in a semi-circle, Radebe gave the white audience members white paper boats to place in one of the three aluminium basins with water. Their use in the production was to symbolise the oceans (trans-Atlantic trade routes) that carried captured African people, where most of them died. These water-filled basins were placed on the inner edges of the semi-circle. The boats were given to Black men if white people did not attend the show. This was a symbolic representation of the parties involved in the slave trade. A reimagining of the capacity of how Black men contributed was portrayed in the character of Zibonele. He was an ambitious traditional healer that sold the king he advised into slavery. Once the boats were floating on the water Radebe retrieved a pail of water and poured the water over the boats to sink them. The sunken paper boats then represented the unretrieved and unspoken for souls in the Atlantic Ocean. The symbolic nature of the production encapsulates principles of the Afro-surrealism Manifesto. In the Manifesto, Miller (2013: 116) explains that the distortion of reality in Afro-Surrealism is to achieve emotional impact. In addition he claims that Afro-Surrealists attempt to create an artistic aesthetic that expresses beauty, opulence and is whimsical. Miller (2013: 116) also emphasizes that it is impossible to view an image objectively because the concept of an objective image does not exist. The act of floating paper folded into boats on a surface level was playful. The underlying meaning attached to it was not. In this one action, meaning is challenged in a playful manner that distorts reality.

At the same time, still with the branch in hand, Khosi moved through the semi-circle and recited the names of his ancestors. Radebe then retrieved a grass pouch. Still invisible to Khosi, Radebe as Khosi's maternal ancestral spirit hung the pouch around his neck and for a moment blurring the line between reality and the supernatural, past and present. For a moment she became visible to him. This startled him but not enough to frighten him because when she disappeared again, he immediately started searching for her. Unable to find her, he opened the gift he had received from his ancestral spirit. His ancestral spirit suddenly released a guttural screech projected at the cyclorama. [His first vision appeared. A black and white sketch-like animation of ships coming towards the coastline played.](#) Khosi saw the vision, performed the opening monologue as [his ancestral spirit sang.](#) Once he was done, he approached *umsamu* in a deliberate but cautious manner to scatter the divining bones on the floor.



Figure 4 Ngilande (2019): Ceramic oracle/divining bones by Anda Dodo

His ancestral spirits voice became more prominent as he felt her presence more. He started clapping his hands in a six-count rhythm. He got up and engaged with the audience, suggesting with a gesture that they should partake in this rhythm. The Law of Joint Performance was further layered by the audiences' participatory clapping. As soon as the performance space resonated with rhythm, song and clapping, he embodied it. Starting of facing *umsamu*, he gradually moved his feet to the rhythm of the clapping. Slowly it started translating as a *Tswana* traditional dance. Without breaking this rhythm, he turned to face the audience as the dance took over his body and he engaged this movement. [The vocals of his ancestral spirit](#) soon took charge of his movements and they translated onto his body as a reimagined *Shembe* traditional dance. The confluence of the rhythmic communal clapping and enchanting vocals made his movements evolve. The merger of the two dance forms transformed into what could be interpreted as contemporary dance. This escalated into a trance-like frenzy as he spun around rapidly to fall in front of the divining bones. He landed on his knees and hands with a thud that silenced everything. He took a moment to read the divining bones and doubting his capabilities declined his duty to warn his people. Rolling back to stand and face his audience, He started narrating in detail the events of the night his village was attacked. He spoke about the unsettling silence that grew into chaos to how his people were murdered and kidnapped. He then re-

enacted how he questioned his God, Mvelinqangi. Makanya (2020: 3) expresses that the Creator beings are only invoked in critical circumstances (catastrophic disaster or extreme drought) because they do not involve themselves in daily matters concerning an individual's life and health. The assault on his village was an appropriate time to call on his God. The scene ended in an abrupt black-out. The lights came up and he emerged with his left hand holding the ends of *ibhayi* that draped over his right shoulder, extending across his back and emerging around his left latissimus dorsi. His posture had adopted an exaggerated slouch as if he was being pulled forward by his nose. His right hand became animated in front of his face. He had transformed into a new character, Zibonele. Zibonele was what would be considered *induna*, the king's (Ndabezitha's) right-hand man and advisor. Zibonele also has a moment with the Law of Joint Performance when he throws a childish tantrum demanding that the audience applaud him. This resulted in the audience laughing, ululating and applauding at this man's comical tantrum and desperate need for validation. Zibonele was an ambitious character that wanted fortune at the expense of his people. Zibonele claimed to be 'Supreme Gifted'. Within the context of the plays world he would be regarded as a leader of *izangoma* and shamans. He perpetuated the false image of the colonisers being purveyors of knowledge, gifts and wisdom. Underneath this ruse, he had been selling his people to the colonisers. He even sold Ndabezitha. Khosi encountered the same fate in his attempt to warn Ndabezitha. Khosi arrived in the middle of Zibonele's self-indulgent speech in the royal house. Not finding Ndabezitha, Khosi attempted to reason with Zibonele to the point of consulting with the ancestral spirits. The same guttural shriek was projected on to the cyclorama by Radebe. [A black and white animation of white men gathered in a conference discussing a diagram of Africa played](#). After Zibonele saw the vision, he panicked and banished Khosi but in actuality he was selling Khosi into slavery. Khosi was then apprehended and knocked out by a guard that was under the influence of Zibonele. Khosi and Zibonele's characters were distinguished by the manner in which *ibhayi* was draped around. To make the transitions seamless, leaping forward so that *ibhayi* would be caught in the wind momentarily was necessary. This created a transitional window period of manipulation for next character. Along with responding to an imagined guard, this contributed to the physicalised aesthetic of the piece.

When Khosi regained consciousness, he was in captivity being hauled with his people to the coastline. On this journey, which was narrated over [his ancestral spirit's poignant vocals](#), he described the conditions of his enslavement. He described how the enslaver assaulted them regularly and how defeated Ndabezitha had become. Khosi detailed his journey to the point where they were marshalled through a damp and dark room to be led through a door, the point

of no return. Towards the end of his narration he tied *ibhayi* to his ankles and crossed his wrists in front of himself. This was to represent being cuffed and shackled. The tension that hung in that moment was shattered by his ancestral spirit's shriek that spilled the [projection](#) onto the audience and cyclorama. Khosi stood in front of it and watched the land disappear into the horizon. All that was left to see was the ocean in every direction. Khosi then turned around to address Ndabezitha who was also captive on the ship. Khosi pleaded with him to lead his people out of this predicament. Still with *ibhayi* binding his ankles, he leaped anti-clockwise into a three-quarter turn, landed in a deep squat on a block that formed a piece of *umsamu*. He then uncurled into Ndabezitha's character as the ancestral spirit praised, "*Wena wezulu!*". Ndabezitha with chest out and head held up high, resonated the command to pick up arms and fight. He then chanted the war cry, "*Amandla!*" and the projection spilled onto the audience to the cyclorama as the audience responded instinctually, "*Awethu!*" [In black and white, the projection depicted a battle on the ship between the captured black people and the white enslavers](#). He repeated the war cry twice more and the audience responded in kind. Dismounting with a clockwise jumping full turn, he landed on the ground as Khosi. In support of Ndabezitha's war cry, Khosi chanted the war cry, "*Niyabasaba na?*", "*Hayi! Asibasabi siyabafuna!*" responded the audience on cue. He repeated his war cry as he struggled with the chains that bound him. His actions became more aggressive as the audience responded. [His ancestral spirit's voice became louder as she sang an upbeat melody to match the pending battle](#). Breaking free from his shackles, he draped *ibhayi* around his waist. He then spurred on the audience to clap a fast four-count rhythm. The audiences' responses to the war cry's and participating in the clapping revealed other instances for the Law of Joint Performance. Khosi then translated the rhythm and melody into *Indlamu*¹⁰, a traditional Zulu war dance. Screaming at his enemy and to his comrades, the dance evolved into contemporary dance but resembled a fighting sequence. Eventually out of breath Khosi addressed the audience as the narrator sharing their victory and the loss of Ndabezitha's life. Everything came to a standstill and he narrated how without a leader the people turned to him for guidance. Radebe playing a captive gave him his pouch with the divining bones. He opened it and presented it to the audience members to blow into it. He returned to *umsamu* cautiously spilled them onto the floor. He engaged with the audience with the exact sequence of events as the first time he used his divining bones. After landing on his knees and hands he asks the ancestors to show him the

¹⁰ Commonly associated with the Nguni(including Zulu, Swazi, and Ndebele or Xhosa) cultures and It is a derivative of the war dances of *amabutho* (warriors) (BAM, 2020).

way. His ancestral spirit casted a vision of the future and he was struck by a seizure as the images move by rapidly. [The projection that played was of a montage of historical images of Black people in oppression.](#) These images ranged from sketches of enslaved Black people, Apartheid and the Black Lives Matter movement. The images started of by flashing by gradually, then sped up frantically and eventually slowed. It was at the fastest point of the montage that Khosi fell into a seizure. The events leading up to this moment reveal important Afro-Surrealistic components. Specifically the blurring of boundaries between reality and the supernatural. Ritual becomes blurred when performed representationally in the conventional theatre space firstly. Then, further blurred when visions (usually seen by the healer only) are projected for an audience. This incorporation of cinematic devices in performance is common practice in Afro-Surrealism. An example of this can be found in the works of Kara Walker. She uses shadow puppetry that is filmed and projected onto a cyclorama or scrim to tell stories that reimagine historical traumas (Peabody, 2013:147). Her works include animations, abstracted segments of film, maps, and newspaper clippings (Peabody, 2013:151). This goes to show that “Contemporary Afro-Surreal narratives incorporate cinematic storytelling techniques into their narratives, first, as a means of making history relevant and, second, to suggest an African notion of temporality, one that merges past, present, and future imaginings of events.” (Spencer, 2016: 213-214). Spencer (2016: 211) also emphasizes that historical traumas can be re-imagined using Afro-Surrealism cinematic qualities. As in the case of Khosi’s premonitions that resulted in a sensory overload that induced a seizure.

When he regained consciousness and control of his body, he got up from the floor as the narrator. He told the audience that his home was gone and suggested that returning would make their battle futile and forgotten. Without a word he climbed onto the block and his ancestral spirit joined him. He looked at his peers (imagined) who had joined him on the edge of the ship. He looked at his ancestral spirit and they jumped into a blackout. When the lights slowly came up, he had a branch in his hand. He explained to the audience that the mass suicide was an act to preserve their spirits. This was so that the story of a united Black people defeating the coloniser remained to be later retrieved. This concept of large-scale sacrifice is also explored in Dhlomo’s *The Girl Who Kills to Save*:

In his play, Dhlomo recognizes the cattle killing (and the consequent devastation of the amaXhosa) as a catalyst that makes possible, and necessary, the construction of a broader national culture and a struggle for identity and rights on a national, rather than a tribal, scale: the amaXhosa, the amaZulu, and other peoples were "pacified" individually and could continue

their struggle against the depredations of colonial modernity only by joining together (Wenzel, 2005: 65).

Taking this information into consideration, a conceptual Black identity informed by unity was expressed by this production.

Khosi handed over the branch to an audience member and suggested that the other members pick up the branches in front of them. With his duty completed he turned to face [his ancestral spirit that sang to him](#). She called him with a gesture, turned around and walked away. She was leading him to finally join his ancestors. This type of ending can be likened to the Law of Closing. This law draws from the traditional African method of finalizing the performance of the tale being told (Ukala, 2001:39). In this final stage the narrator wraps up the tale with a final remark such as the moral of the story or may incorporate a song (Ukala, 2001:39). According to Mda (1977: xiii) these modes of African performance possess extremely developed dramatic elements that contribute to South African theatre. It is also important to note that, “African tribal dramatic representations were rather tragical than comical – which disproves the assertion that comedy overflows all African drama.” Dhlomo (1977: 4). The idea of African drama’s duty to the representation of Black lives is further expressed in Dhlomo (1977: 6) stating that attention should be awarded to African history and tradition. He proceeds to state that, “Drama is the reconstruction, recreation and reproduction of the great experiences of a people, and it helps them to live more abundantly.” (Dhlomo, 1977: 6). Dhlomo (1977: 6-7) emphasises that drama can be used as an important tool for education and it is the African dramatists duty to use it.

Conclusion

This research has explored how Afro-Surrealism influences the theatre making process of *Ngilande* (2019), a South African play. Throughout this research endeavour, Afro-Surrealism carried a lot of similarities to African centred ideologies and performance practices. The first concept that was of interest was the invisible made visible. Both Afro-Surrealism and African cosmology regard it as important. Afro-Surrealism uses it to expose and interrogate hidden truths, and for African cosmology it is truth. Afro-Surrealism creates the link for making the invisible visible through the Marvelous. The Marvelous explores power and ideas through methods that transcend reality by including dreams, religion, mythology and the supernatural in their works. For the African that sees the world through an African cosmological lens, the Marvelous is reality, as evident in rituals such as *ukuLanda*. It can even be contested that the African comprehends the universe around them through the Marvelous. African cosmology

encapsulates religion, mythology, the supernatural and dreams as extended platforms for spiritual engagements. Through dreams the invisible is made visible in the African cosmology paradigm. Truths are revealed such as duties that need to be fulfilled (callings) and glimpses into the future are revealed. Both Afro-Surrealism and African cosmology place a sense of duty to the uncovering of the invisible. In the case of the production, *Ngilande* (2019) was the symbolic manifestation of the *ukuLanda* ritual. It attempted to reclaim Black pride and identity that has been systematically killed by hegemonic power structures.

The Negritude movement which has influences in both Afrocentrism and Black Surrealism, was also regarded as the African Surrealist movement. This brings forth evidence that the Negritude movement is Afro-Surrealism's earliest stages. The African Surrealist movement was surrealist because it was Black. This point in Afro-Surrealism is perceived as, 'others' who create works from their lived experiences and therefore are regarded as surrealists. By deduction, this places the South African play *Ngilande* (2019) in the realm of surrealism, African Surrealism to be precise.

Afro-Surrealism was useful for this research because it allowed for the investigation and engagement of different African centred theories and performance practices. This provided the opportunity to draw from multiple creative and theoretical sources. As a result, work that was characteristic of an African aesthetic was formulated. In addition, African cosmology and African Theatre are capable of being standalone approaches to creating, especially when Dhlomo's idea of using new media is taken into account for the creative process. Afro-Surrealism also advocates for the use of multimedia. These mentioned points provide the necessary justification for the incorporation of projections in *Ngilande* (2019). African cosmology and African theatre offer structured frameworks for engaging with creation. The African cosmology hierarchical ordering provided a structure for conceptualising a world with different layers and African theatre offered the eight laws of the African folktale tradition of storytelling. By combining African Cosmology and African theatre a possible structure for creating theatre that produces an African aesthetic emerged. Afro-Surrealism did not provide for a possible structure, but it layered the work with the theoretical approaches that were necessary for the work. It offered considerations for symbolism as a means of engaging difficult concepts and allows people to introspect through that engagement. An example being the white paper boats being submerged in water by the audience on stage. These represented the drowned enslaved souls and slave traders (both Black and white) and the parties involved.

The invitation extended to the audience to be on stage worked for the performance because the audience seemed to participate on cue. This was not the case in the Downstairs theatre

performance. It seemed that greater effort was required to break the fourth wall to get an audience response. An example is when Khosi danced to induce a trance like state. He clapped his hands in a manner that suggested audience participation. Most members did not participate in the Downstairs theatre but in the new formation in the Wits Main Theatre they responded instantly. The law of Joint Performance was also used to gauge audience engagement by noting crowd participation. If they looked away, yawned or were unresponsive, interest in the performance was lost (which was evident in some aspects of the twenty-minute presentation). For the Wits Main Theatre, starting the play from outside and leading the audience into the space worked because the audience offered their complete attention and focus by the time the story was unveiled. The semi-circular formation offered intimacy since the viewers were in proximity. Performance-wise this was beneficial because audience interest was gaugeable. Interest was lost due to performance, script or direction. These issues were either dealt with during the show by the quick evaluation of clarity (projection, pronunciation and enunciation) or evaluation of where the action was directed. If this was not possible, I reassessed my performance and either changed or omitted aspects of the performance that did not work.

Given another opportunity to engage with this work and similar projects, a balance between African cosmology, African theatre and Afro-Surrealism would be pursued. In the Wits Main Theatre performance, more focus was on Afro-Surrealism (A note from my external examiner). This was probably caused by the transition from African cosmology to Afro-Surrealism. An excessive amount of time was invested in Afro-Surrealist theory. This affected rehearsal time and in turn affected the quality of the performance. It could have been better despite the positive response from the audience. It could have been more encompassing of the ideologies and relevant performance practices.

Afro-Surrealism offers the theatre-maker flexibility. Meaning that you should expect that the work is likely to transform drastically from what is initially imaged. The ability to filter out what does not contribute to the works intended goal should be present. That being said, a concise working plan should be in order, example a script and well-researched idea for the production is paramount to its success.

Using Afro-Surrealism as an approach to South African theatre has manifested the realisation that South African theatre can achieve the same results without Afro-Surrealism as an approach.

Glossary

- *Abaphansi...* Spirits the reside below the heavens.
- *Amabutho...* Warriors.
- *eZulwini...* up above where creator beings reside/ Heaven.
- *Gobela...* Person selected by ancestral spirits to guide an individual on their to becoming a sangoma.
- *Landa...* retrieve/narrate.
- *Hayi! asibasabi siyabafuna!...* No! We fear them not, We want them!
- *iBhayi...* Spiritually endowed shawl/sarong.
- *iDlozi...* Ancestral spirit.
- *iHlahla ...* Branch.
- *iMpepho...* Used to communicate with ancestors.
- *iNdlamu...* Zulu war dance.
- *iNzunza ...* Mermaid-like being.
- *isiNdawe...* An *umndawe/umndzawe* spiritual language.
- *isiThunzi ...* human faculty responsible for displaying life force or the energy of the person. The Shadow.
- *iThonga ...* A Spirit ranking above ancestral spirits.
- *iziThakazelo...* Clan names that provide social and historical identity and identification which is predominantly used in cultural and traditional ceremonies.
- *Maskandi...* Contemporary Zulu folk music.
- *Moya...* highest human faculty that bears close relation to higher spiritual beings such as creator beings. Wind.
- *Mphefumulo...* Breath. Soul
- *Mvelinqangi...* A Creator being. The first to appear/emerge. Devine Consciousness. The Most high.
- *Niyabasaba na?... Do you fear them?*
- *Mzimba ...* Physical body.
- *Sangoma/iZangoma (pl.)...* Spiritual/physical/mental/emotional healer.
- *Siyavuma!...* We agree/consent! based on ancestral consultation and their blessing being provided.
- *uMlahlankosi...* *Ziziphus Mucronata*. Use to lead the deceased's spirit to family burial grounds

- *uMndawe (isiZulu)/uMndzawe(isiSwati)*... Northern African ancestral spirits in relation to Southern Africans.
- *uMndiki*... Feminine ancestral spirit.
- *uMnguni*...Ancestral spirits belonging to same bloodline as healer. It is a collective ethnic name that encompasses the Xhosa, Zulu and Swati peoples (Southern African).
- *uMsamu*... African traditional shrine.
- *Vumani bo!*... Agree/consent! based on ancestral consultation and their blessing being provided.

Links to videos

- Performance Segment: <https://youtu.be/bmEvcKO8RSY>
- Projection 1/5: <https://youtu.be/jPHi7zCDl-0>
- Projection 2/5: https://youtu.be/7qra_0WGrFk
- Projection 3/5: <https://youtu.be/Jbs2xmHkTd4>
- Projection 4/5: <https://youtu.be/XTg6cPLehpk>
- Projection 5/5: <https://youtu.be/-4p0iGY42K0>
- Stage design rehearsal: <https://youtu.be/q1SdPTKJdBQ>
- Entrance rehearsal: <https://youtu.be/OLXHAPaEuwI>

Links to Vocals

- Dance section vocals: https://youtu.be/eDrE_e3gGMI
- 'Ngyababona': <https://youtu.be/MWYfpK0LI0c>
- Slavery: https://youtu.be/_cUofqHJqCc
- Dlozi Lami: <https://youtu.be/afAabymzhzU>

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