

“HE IS HOME!
THE JOURNEY
TO OUR
SALVATION
HAS BEGUN,
NEVER AGAIN
WILL THEY
CREEP INTO
OUR MIDST
VIA THE
WATER TO
LEAVE US
EMPTY AND
SHAMED.
THOKOZA
NDAWO!”

Maetla, B.

Ndawo; Nuances from the Ocean- An Adaptation

By Thapelo Tharaga

Adapted from Boipelo Maetla's Short Story
of the Same Name

The ocean holds memories of fear for (us), the sea trigger unspoken traumas in (us). This is not what they should be, the oceans are a portal between the living and the dead, the oceans command respect... until they had to carry foreign ships on their backs.

Water is synonymous with life: the birth and beginning of something new. Hence when one has a calling (to be a traditional healer) needs to go to the water for initiation and training so to come out a new person having learnt all the secrets nature has to provide.

I chose this short story because it speaks highly of the powers water has and my fascination with uku thwasa; the initiation one must go through to become a traditional healer. I come from a family of traditional healers, even though personally I might not have the gift, but the fascination comes from what exactly it means to possess such a gift and what will happen in the near future when there is no water (oceans/rivers) to perform these sacred practices.

Phephi Mkhulu
Thokoza khehla.

TIDEMARKS

Life comes to us in the same way the ocean approaches its shore. What is brought with it, and what is taken away again, often lies with forces larger than us.

So what remains after?

After a love, a loss or a fatal choice?

What remains?

The tidemark left behind is a constant reminder that separates the before from the after. The imprint remaining; an invisible scar or a deeply treasured memory.

Are we each other's tidemarks?

Which tidemarks have become our common history,

our common burden, our common book of memories?

Which tidemarks have shaped and marked us, to who we have become?

Tidemarks is a series of adaptations presented as part of the 4th year Theatre-making students program. Starting with a South African short story, the theatre-makers undergo a 5 week exploration in discovering how to shift the medium of the written word into the physical and visual theatrical space.

“The waters have kept us alive for as long as time had been merciful on us... but they no longer recognise the reflections of themselves when they look in the skies. They harbour the machines that come to subject our people to the final denouement of their lives. Our salvation will come from the waters nonetheless. Spirituality is our only avenue of solidarity. Ndawo. Makhosi.”

Maetla, B.

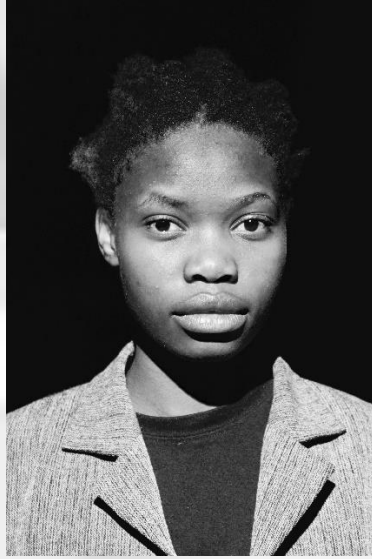
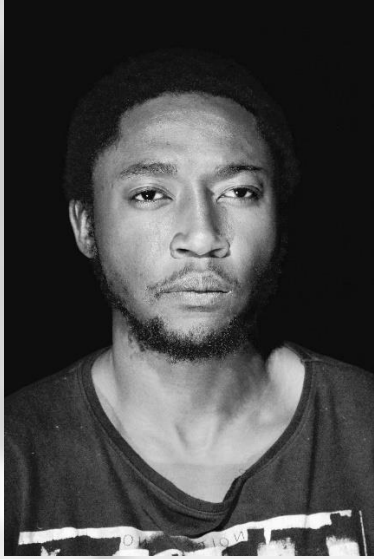


THAPELO THARAGA

is a Theatre & Performance (Theatre Making) graduate at UCT, currently pursuing his honours in Directing. A spoken word artist, founding member of the Tongue Twisters collective, a storyteller and a lover of all things art.

Thapelo has been involved in a few productions and performances such as *Wealth by Aristophanes* (2016): directed by mark Fleishman and Sanjin Muftic, devised and co-directed *PicnPay* (2015): at the Baxter Theatre which won the most innovative play in the UCT Res4Res festival, co-wrote and co-directed *A man died that night: people of the sky, an excerpt*(2016) by the Tongue Twisters collective at the Alexander Bar and Theatre for Play Things, *Vinger van God* (2016): adapted and directed by Emilie Badenhorst and *Do You Dream In Colour* by the Travelling Theatre Co. (2017/18). Thapelo's poetry has been published in the *Sol Plaatjie* international poetry anthology (2016) and he performed at the Inzync poetry slam as part of the *WoordFees* (2016) at Stellenbosch University, semi-finalist in the *Speak out loud* poetry competition (2016), king of the mic for the *Cuddle sessions* poetry Slam (Feb,2017) *Naked Word Poetry festiva l*(2017) where he came 2nd place and as part of the *Open Book Festival*, Thapelo was crowned in 3rd place for the *Cape Town Poetry Slam* at the *Fugard Theatre* (2017).

"Nothing is Impossible, even blind men can see in their dreams"- *Naked soul*



MTHUTHUZELI ZIMBA

also known as (Blaze the poet) is a writer, director and above all a spoken word artist who is passionate about performance art. He draws inspiration from his father who is a retired stage performer who performed for the legendary father of Township Theatre Gibson Kente.

He is part of two art collectives: The Tongue Twisters Collective and the Loose Cannons who are based in Johannesburg. He performed a role in the play "Crucible" by Arthur Miller directed by Alby Michaels (2014). He then took 3rd place in the DRAMA FOR LIFE POETRY COMPETITION in (2015). He took first place in all the 3 categories in the (VUT) slam poetry competition in 2015. He co-wrote a play called "A MAN DIED THAT DAY" produced by the tongue twister collective (2016).

He wrote and produced a play called "YEARS IN COUNTING" directed by Zolisa Nkonyana that participated in the Zabalaza Theatre Festival in 2017 at the Baxter Theatre Centre. The play received 3 Nominations for the festival: Best Script, Best supporting Actor and Best Actress. He was featured as a supporting actor in an international pilot film called (Order of the dragon) produced by Bounce Board production in 2016. He was part of the 2nd year adaptation of the play "Tragedy of king Christophe" by Aime Cesaire. He was also part of the 2nd year Nguni Bilingual final production called "Nguvu Ya Mbegu" Directed by Mandla Mbothwe. He is currently doing his final year In Theatre Making.

NASFA NCANYWA

is a 2nd Theatre and Performance (Theatre Making) student at the University of Cape Town. A storyteller in the following forms of art, Visual art, Designing, Theatre Making and Music. Nasfa is originally from Nyanga East, Cape Town and attended high school in Zonnebloem NEST where she studied Dramatic Arts. She was introduced in Performance Art by her brother Livie Ncanywa, performing at Walter Teka primary school and later joined Nyanga Arts Center in a group that was called Batsha in 2008. She has also participated in the Magnet Theatre Culture Gang project in collaboration with the International Theatre and literacy workshops. She was part of Ithembalabantu after school drama training under Siphenathi Mayekiso, New Born Theatre Company under the artistic director Mhlanguli George, Isihluzo Educational Theatre under late Jackson Vuka. Nasfa has performed in a production titled UMQONDO by Wendy Thoane at the Spiritual Healing Festival and has also directed UQHAWUKIL' UJINGI at the Amazing Women Event (AWE).

“My voice and thoughts echoes all that came before me and I am present in then and now, my work is thus a spiritual journey which heals through seeing and believing”. Nasfa Ncanywa

LUKHANYISO SKOSANA

have had the honour of working on a two hander with Tshegofatso Mabutla: Love Like Blue directed by Puleng Steward in 2017. To continue my collaborations with insert really deep adjective about womxn of colour, Bana Ba Mobu was an experimental movement production choreographed by Tshegofatso Mabutla. Another two-hander performed with the goddess Anne Bosche. A production that had a substantial input on my spiritual awakening was Nguvu Ya Mbegu Directed by Mandla Mbothwe. It was a remembering-conjuring of forgotten seeds, performed with a phenomenal cast of 2nd year performers. I am currently Womb of Fire, A production written and performed by Rehane Abrahams and directed by Dr Sara Matchett. It is a work that explores the violations in which the female body has had and continues to endure due to Patriarchy. A work that explores the resistance against our perpetrators, us lamenting of the powers that exist in our being.

Why this story?

I read a couple of stories before I chose this one. I had a clear theme that I wanted to work with and even though I had read this story [*Ndawo*] before, I wanted to explore options. But I eventually returned to this story because of my connection to an ancestral calling. I come from a family of traditional healers, so I've been a spectator of the rituals and I was always intrigued. This [the adaptation] is basically me trying to understand the connection between the ocean and *ukuthwasa* [the initiation ritual into becoming a traditional healer] because a part of the ritual involves going to the ocean.

Why now?

So my mom went through the process [*ukuthwasa*] in 2009. She was a born-again Christian and didn't believe in any of this. Basically, my grandmother had a calling; and when she refused it, it was transferred to her daughter [my mother]. She started to get ill and Doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong with her. That's when she consulted *inyanga* [traditional healer] and was told she had to *thwasa*. The process took a year; though it can take between six months and a year. It was longer for her because she was resisting. In the first three months I was allowed to visit her at the *gobela* [house where initiates stay] and she would tell me that she doesn't understand why this is happening to her; she doesn't even believe in it. One day, during her stay in the *gobela*, she made the conscious decision to accept that this was happening to her. And things started to happen. Her health improved; she was more confident. She then moved out of the *gobela* and lived in a veld alone for three months; and she told me about how she didn't feel alone; she felt like she had people guiding her. Like when she got sick she knew what plants to use; what to eat and not eat; things like that. She then went to the ocean, in Mozambique. She didn't really tell me what happened at the ocean and I always wondered if she somehow lived under the ocean [chuckles]. She did say that after returning from the ocean, she felt like she was holding different people inside of her. This intrigued. So why now? She hasn't practiced [as a traditional healer] since 2014, so I feel like I'm just trying to understand her decision.

Who are you telling this story for?

I initially thought I was telling this story for me. I wanted to make this [the adaptation] as personal as possible. But in the process, I realised that there is some connection with my actors that I'm working with. I think that as Black people, there is a spiritual connection to the water, the ocean. We might not all believe in it, but we do have ancestors though we connect with them in different ways. I think I'm telling this story for Black people who do want to explore this connection.

What is your role in this process?

The way I've been working is basically to facilitate. I am facilitating their way into finding themselves within the context of the story; seeing if they have any kind of relationship to the water and to spirituality.

Why these actors?

[Laughs] well in casting, I requested two Black males and one Black female; all of whom can move and sing. So this combination was basically a happy twist of fate.

How are you navigating the sacredness or secrecy of the subject matter [ukuthwasa]?

The way I'm navigating that is that I am not dwelling on the secrecy. I am not dwelling on the process of the initiation itself. I am not going that route. I am not showing anything about the delicate and private parts of ukuthwasa. What I am trying to do is to see what kind of connection exists between the ocean and spirituality as a person who might not even have the same cultural associations.

Stylistically, where do you think it [the adaptation] sits?

Very movement[y]. Poetic. The reason I go with poetry is because I find the metaphors in the text [the short story] very powerful. I don't want to be literal; I want to give the audience room to interpret, to make their own meaning. I really just gave them [the cast] tasks and worked with what they came up with. I tried very hard not to impose a ritualistic style or feeling on their bodies.

In terms of being a maker and a storyteller, what are you discovering about yourself in this process?

So there's this weird thing that's been happening to me. I would have dreams about the subject matter of the story I'm creating at that time. I try to apply these dreams in the process without being invasive or imposing. I basically come up with different exercises that allow them to find their own way through the themes. I suppose I work from the gut and my dreams; I go with my instincts.

If there was one question that your adaptation asks, what would it be?

I know this might sound different to what I have been saying, but the question would be: why did the ocean allow the colonizer to take over us? I don't know what the answer might be or who it might come from though. It was interesting when we [the cast and I] went to the beach the other day and one of them said they felt betrayed by the ocean, though they couldn't articulate why.

BOIPELO MAETLA

is a South African public speaker, educator, debater, author, free-lance columnist and all round creative. Recently, she came in the top three of the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation speech contest which awarded her the privilege to share the stage with deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa, struggle icon Ahmed Kathrada and Business Day editor, Songezo Zibi. She is a once-off contributor for internationally based women and girl child empowerment company, Global Girl Media and a former volunteer for the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA). Boipelo Maetla is a published author, having been the youngest of the writers featured in the short story anthology by South African publishing house Black Letter Media, titled My Holiday Shorts (myholidayshorts.com). With the belief that solidarity for global cohesion is a social responsibility, the 18-year-old is also an on-call poet for the NGO, Palestinian Solidarity Alliance (PSA). As a poet, Boipelo has graced various stages, including Solidarity for Women of Palestine, Sandton Poetry Show and Poets in Offices under the pseudonym, Ben Jackson.

“I always advocate for the empowerment of the youth through literature. Literacy is the first form of liberation. I also believe that creativity exists in all forms and in every context and is an underrated agent of social change”-
Boipelo.

Ndawo, Nuances from the Ocean, the story upon which this adaptation is based was published on the Maudlin House website. It seems both fitting and poetic that this narrative should find its way to and be adapted for the theatre by Thapelo Tharaga, who much like Boipelo is a young, Black, South African wordsmith and creative.

DRAMATURG'S NOTE:

What Thapelo and his cast have created is something truly magical. I have often wondered what a uniquely African, South African, musical theatre might look like, feel like. And I am convinced that this is it! And achieved so delicately, so organically. Being in the rehearsal room as a dramaturg, and then having to comment on the process constantly was, I must admit, an uncomfortable task, and yet equally rewarding. Thapelo found a way to create this space, a space so easy yet potent; watching this team work was truly something special. From moments of intense productivity, to raucous laughter at the most ridiculous mistakes; they created a space full of heart. And it shows in the final product. The ensemble work is meticulous, and that is evidence of a team that took the time to become a team.

It was Anne Bogart who wrote: "the first time I had the opportunity to watch a theatre director at work, I could barely breath. The experience in rehearsal was intensely unsettling. I had the sensation of watching others make love. The interactions were sometimes tender, occasionally violent, often private, or exposed, at moments wonderful and at other moments, excruciating." Truer words cannot be spoken about my experience of being a part of this process.

I cannot conclude this without noting how sophisticatedly Thapelo thinks through his process. It is a puzzle, a collection of pieces that are strong standing on their own but become something truly inspired when put together.

CREDITS

*Production Manager: Luke Ellenbogen

*Head of Workshop: Nicolas Mayer

*Workshop assistants: Mark Miller & Justin Jacobs

*Senior Technician: Marco Frontini

*Head of Costume: Leigh Bishop

*Costume Assistant: Dilshaad Jack

*Costume Interns: Lindiwe Makaba & Michaeline Wessels

*Theatre Administrator: Tabassum Pansari

*Senior Stage Manager: Kei-Ella Loewe

*Financial Administrator: Rob Keith



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