

MAAK KUNS VIR 'N DOEL: 'N ONDERHOUD MET REGISSEUR, FASILITEERDER EN PROJEKBESTUURDER, THSOLOFELO SHOUNYANE

MAKE ART FOR A CAUSE: AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR, FACILITATOR AND PROJECT MANAGER, THSOLOFELO SHOUNYANE



Q: Since graduating from the drama department you have been involved in exiting projects that has taken you around South Africa and abroad. Tell us about some of the projects.

A: Since graduating, I have acted and directed numerous times for *Arepp: Theatre for Life*, which is an NGO that focuses on Theatre for Education and Theatre for Development in Johannesburg. Through this work, we have travelled through many provinces in the country delivering shows in many of the popular South African languages – namely Sesotho, Setswana, English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa and isiZulu. I then moved on to working with the *Hillbrow Theatre Project* on drama facilitation and training for youth in the inner city high schools of Johannesburg. I moved on to work as a project coordinator for the *Southern African Youth Movement*. It is an NGO funded by Unicef and Unifem and works specifically with youth and women's empowerment and development. Through this NGO we travelled a few countries (most notably the Middle East) where I was appointed to give training to various youth and women's organisations from around the world. I moved to Cape Town and worked in the Events department at *Artscape*.

At present, I work as a production assistant, translator and voice over artist for a TV production company called *Two Blonds and a Redhead*, filming in Cape Town. I work on several projects where I do freelance writing for children's storytelling events and the writing of children's theatre and puppetry. I've also started my own business this year (2015) where I hand-make craft accessories and stuffed authentic African dolls. This is a project I am proud of as it was birthed from the womb of my mind and the dolls I make are crafted in our African Image and are my contribution to African identity and crafting.

Q: You are planning to enter the television sector in 2016 as an art director. Tell us about the project you will be involved in and what your responsibilities would be.

A: We are still waiting to hear about the commissioning of a new educational drama series through the SABC, so I cannot say much about this project yet. But were the show to be commissioned, I

would be appointed as a trainee producer and art director for the show being responsible for the overall look and feel of the series. I will also be assisting with scriptwriting and voice coaching.

Q: You have worked on the drama department's *Gogola: growth through knowledge* project, which was done in collaboration with AngloGold Ashanti's environmental division and Clover/Aardklop National Arts festival in 2011. What was it like step into the shoes of a lecturer and a production director for the project?



A: It was interesting and daunting. It is hard to direct and be in charge of people who are roughly your age – especially if you're much shorter than them! Though the students liked and enjoyed me, it took a while to earn their respect due to my age. But over time I earned their respect through my work ethic and skills. The advantage of this though, was that the students and I were able to relate on many levels and that also aided the teaching and learning process as I was not distant or far removed from them. My being there as an ex-student also showed them what they could look forward to for their futures. It was also wonderful to get the opportunity to apply all that I've learned and be able to impart that knowledge to others. You only know that you can do something once you ACTUALLY DO IT! Writing, workshopping and directing a show from scratch was not new to me, but having to do it on such a high level collaborating with important stakeholders was a challenge I wanted to take up and do well.

Q: What aspects of your drama studies did you enjoy most?

A: I enjoyed being part of productions. *Shiftings* (directed by Marié-Heleen Coetzee) and *The Merensky Project* (directed by Myer Taub) were two shows that were not at all conventional. I enjoyed being part of scripting and conceptualizing - learning how to make my ideas come to life. The drama department afforded us many opportunities that we would have never otherwise had. I was pushed to learn things I didn't know I could do, and even more important, to learn how to do better those things which I was already good at. I learned to compete with myself, rather than run a

race with others. I do wish I could've explored these talents more, but one can't study and stay on campus forever.

Q: What did the drama course offer you that you have applied in your working life since graduation?

I left TUKS knowing exactly what I could do and what I could be better at. Since leaving I have been employed as a radio host, actor, director, facilitator, singer, writer, performer and voice-over artist. And as I learn and grow, I find more and more talents that are hidden within in me. I am grateful every day for the chance to see them, acknowledge them and explore them in their fullness. I've always wanted to be more than just a star. I wanted to make art for a cause and I'm glad that I'm able to do that through the various employments and opportunities that I have had.

