

# HUMAN CHANGE!



From  
global  
ideals to  
justice  
(us)?



**17<sup>TH</sup> DRAMA FOR LIFE  
CONFERENCE AND FESTIVAL**

**8-10 OCTOBER 2025**

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG



**business  
and arts**  
SOUTH AFRICA

## 2025 CONFERENCE & FESTIVAL PROGRAMME



dramaforlife



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SOUTH AFRICA

## DAY ONE | Wednesday 8 October 2025

TIME	SESSION TITLE	PRESENTER	VENUE
07:30 – 08:30	Registration & Tea		Wits Theatre Foyer (Wits University East Campus)
08:30 – 09:00	Welcome	Friendly Drummers Marimba Band	Wits Theatre
09:00 – 09:30	Official Welcome	<p>Dr Linda Mdena Thibedi – Drama for Life Head of Department</p> <p>Professor Rene Smith – Wits School of Arts Head of School</p> <p>Dr Sibongile Bhebhe – Drama for Life Conference &amp; Festival</p>	Wits Theatre

		Convenor/Curator & Deputy Head of Department	
09:30 – 10:30	<p>Keynote Address: <i><b>The Practice of Justice: Centering collective, cultural and creative practice as a route to personal healing, societal repair and reimagined governance.</b></i></p> <p>Chaired by: Dr Sibongile Bhebhe</p>	Caryn Green – Sibikwa Arts Center	Wits Theatre
<b>10:30 – 10:45 Transition</b>			
10:45 – 11:45	<p><b>Performance Series: <i>Brutal Honesty</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Afolake Soogun</p>	Majesty Mnyandu	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
10:45 – 11:45	<p>Paper Series: <i><b>A Human Change! Facilitation Process Experience, Part One</b></i></p>	Drama for Life Masters Students – Hamish Neill	<p>Es'kia Mphahlele Building –</p> <p>Emakhaya Theatre, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor</p> <p>Gibson Kente Studio, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor</p> <p>Credo Mutwa Studio, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor</p>
10:45 – 11:45	<p>Paper/Performance Series: <i><b>Altazor, or the Parachute Got Stuck in the Ponte Tower</b></i></p> <p>Chaired by: Emma Hutton</p>	Gerard Bester – The Windybrow Arts Centre	Wits Theatre
<b>11:45 – 11:55 Transition</b>			

11:55 – 12:55	<p>Keynote Address: <b><i>Protest “Movement” – Embodied Storytelling as choreographed socio-political resistance through the creative and performance history of Moving into Dance Trust</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Nonkululeko Vilakazi</p>	Nadia Virasimay	Wits Theatre
<b>12:55 – 13:35 LUNCH BREAK</b>			
13:35 – 14:05	<p>Paper Series (Online): <b><i>KINA ko Ngoma: Drum making, drumming cultures and restorative justice</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Hamish Neil</p>	Dr Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja	Wartenweiler Library, Tutorial Room 2
13:35 – 14:05	<p>Paper Series (Online): <b><i>Democracy: Satire and Social Reflection in South African Theatre</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Dintshitile Mashile</p>	Philile Ntimbane	Es’kia Mphahlele Building – Yvonne Banning Studio, 17 <sup>th</sup> Floor
13:35 – 14:05	<p>Performance Series: <b><i>Library in Flames</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by Sebasa Mogale</p>	Lucky Nash Makgobane	Es’kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
<b>14:05 – 14:15 Transition</b>			

14:15 – 14:50	Paper Series (Online): <b><i>Theatre of the Fractured: Performing Trauma, Healing, and Hope in Post-Colonial African Contexts</i></b>  Chaired by: Conny Kruger	Innocent G. Mwapangira	Wartenweiler Library, Tutorial Room 2
14:15 – 14:50	Paper Series (Online): <b><i>Using Theatre-in-Education as decolonial pedagogics in teaching Shona novels: The case of Tambaoga Mwanangu TIE Project in Zimbabwe</i></b>  Chaired by: Lucky Moeketsi	Nicholas Mkaronda	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Credo Mutwa Studio, 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor (1503)
<b>14:50 – 15:00 Transition</b>			
15:00 – 15:30	Performance Series: <b><i>Seeing beyond Sight</i></b>  Chaired by: Limpho Kou	Gcebile Dlamini	Wits Theatre
15:00 – 15:30	Performance Installation: <b><i>Echoes of The Unseen</i></b>  Chaired by: Kirsten de Cerff	Phumudzo Matsila	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
15:00 – 15:30	Workshop Series: <b><i>Seeing the Self Through the Other: Image Theatre as a Pathway to Human Change and Justice(Us)</i></b>	Andima Kula	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Gibson Kente Studio, 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor (1501)

	Chaired by: Karabo Lambani		
<b>15:30 – 15:40 Transition</b>			
15:40 – 16:40	Performance Series: <b><i>Threads: Threading into Wholeness</i></b>  Chaired by Hamish Neill	APAAM is a DFL partnership with Joburg Theatre	Wits Theatre
15:40 – 16:40	Paper Series: <b><i>From speculative histories to imagining just futures: The performance-making process of Automaton(tik) (2025)</i></b>  Chaired by: Kirsten de Cerff and Dr Linda Mdena-Thibedi	Dr Kristina Johnstone  Dr Lelia Bester	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
<b>16:40 – 16:50 Transition</b>			
16:50 – 17:50	Performance Series: <b><i>Words &amp; Nightmares</i></b>  Chaired by: Zintle Letlalo	Seiphemo Motswiri – African Tree Productions	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
16:50 – 17:50	Performance Series: <b><i>The Injustice of The Innocence</i></b>  Chaired by: Vuyo Mthembu	Willy Khoza	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Gibson Kente Studio, 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor (1501)

16:50 – 17:50	Performance Series: <b><i>KELEDI! A Sotho Journey of Resistance Through Movement and Song</i></b>  Chaired by: Hlubi Nontlanga	Moeketsi Kgotle	Wits Theatre
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## DAY TWO | Thursday 9 October 2025

TIME	SESSION TITLE	PRESENTER	VENUE
07:30 – 08:30	Registration & Tea		Wits Theatre
08:30 – 09:00	Welcome & Day One Reflections	Dr Sibongile Bhebhe – Drama for Life Conference & Festival Convenor/Curator & Deputy Head of Department	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
09:00 – 09:30	Keynote Address: <b><i>Cultural Diplomacy from Below: A Critical Reflections on the SA-US Cultural Relations in the Donald Trump Era</i></b>	Dr Munyaradzi Chatikobo	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor



	Chaired by Dr Linda Mdena-Thibedi		
9:30 – 10:00	Performance Series: <b><i>Diaries of Retired Violence</i></b>	Sithembiso Khalishwayo	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
<b>10:00 – 10:15 Transition</b>			
10:15 – 10:55	Keynote Address (Online): <b><i>A re-emphasis on Indigenous practices in art therapy</i></b>  Chaired by: Kabelo Mokgehle	Thandiwe Ntshinga and Sarah Kabengele	Wartenweiler Library, Tutorial Room 2
<b>10:55 – 11:05 Transition</b>			
11:05 – 11:35	Paper Series: <b><i>Rethinking Digital Knowledge in the Anthropocene</i></b>  Chaired by: Lucky Moeketsi	Dr Renzo Filinich	Wartenweiler Library, Tutorial Room 2
11:05 – 11:35	Paper Series: <b><i>Laughter in the Margins: Black Feminist Aesthetics and Pedagogies of Care</i></b>  Chaired by: Limpho Kou	Dr Refiloe Lepere	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
11:05 – 11:35	Workshop Series: <b><i>Stories Black Men Tell: Storytelling, Healing, and Justice(Us)</i></b>  Chaired by: Moeketsi Kgotle	Kabelo Mokgehle	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Gibson Kente Studio, 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor (1501)

11:35 – 11:45 Transition			
11:45 – 12:15	Paper Series: <b><i>Hey Grok, are you changing our traditions? An Applied Drama/Theatre review of Blacking's Tradition and Change in Society in 2025</i></b>  Chaired by: Dr Linda Mdena Thibedi	Hamish Mabala Neill	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Credo Mutwa Studio, 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor (1503)
11:45 – 12:15	Paper Series: <b><i>Ngwana Ya Salleng: Judicial Theatre as a route for Justice(us)ness</i></b>  Chaired by Mammattli Nzuza	Selloane Mokuku	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
11:45 – 12:15	Paper Series: <b><i>Bed News (Film Screening)</i></b>  Chaired by: Teto Mokaila	Thabo Joseph Mabaso – Me4uTalented Studios	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Yvonne Banning Studio, 17 <sup>th</sup> Floor
12:15 – 12:25 Transition			
12:25 – 13:25	Panel Discussion: <b><i>Voices on the Edge: Freedom or Harm?</i></b>  Chaired by: Warren Nebe	Thamsanqa aka Mbongo Manzana  Panel: Mpho Molepe, Eugene Mthethwa, Sacha Knox, Sibongile Mngoma, Mxolisi Masilela  Facilitated by Evha Nteso and curated by Thami aka Mbongo Manzana	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor

12:25 – 13:25	Workshop Series: <b><i>Fuckalty and Siestems</i></b>  Chaired by: Dr Petro Janse Van Vuuren	Lucky Moeketsi	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Gibson Kente Studio, 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor (1501)
12:25 – 13:25	Workshop Series: <b><i>Understanding Neurodivergence: Beyond the DSM</i></b>  Chaired by: Afolake Soogun	Emma Hutton	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Credo Mutwa Studio, 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor
<b>13:25 – 14:10 LUNCH BREAK</b>			
14:10 – 15:10	Performance Series: <b><i>Gas</i></b>  Chaired by Kirsten de Cerff	Geralt Cloete	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
14:15 – 14:50	Paper Series (Online): <b><i>Even in Crisis: Improvisation as a Tool for Justice, Healing, and Human Change in Displaced Communities</i></b>  Chaired by: Petro Janse Van Vuuren	Oluwadamilola Apotieri-Abdulai	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Credo Mutwa Studio, 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor
14:10 – 15:10	Panel Series: <b><i>Fog to light: Reflective Practice as a Pedagogical Foundation for Scholars in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</i></b>  Chaired by: Dr Linda Mdena-Thibedi	Warren Nebe, Teto Mokaila, Lucky Moeketsi and Kabelo Mokgehle	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Yvonne Banning Studio, 17 <sup>th</sup> Floor
<b>15:10 – 15:20 Transition</b>			

15:20 – 16:20	<p>Panel Series: <b><i>Amongst other things, big and small, I too am here: eco-arts performance, ecological expression and communal healing</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Afolake Soogun</p>	Nobantu Shabangu	Wartenweiler Library, Tutorial Room 2
15:20 – 16:20	<p>Performance Series: <b><i>Project 2040 – Configured Attention</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Emma Hutton</p>	Collen Makua	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
15:20 – 16:20	<p>Performance Series: <b><i>The Red Thread of Radical Hope: Re-Storying Collective Futures</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Lucky Moeketsi</p>	Tarryn Lee and Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Yvonne Banning Studio, 17 <sup>th</sup> Floor
<b>16:20 – 16:30 Transition</b>			
16:30 -17:15	<p>Performance Series: <b><i>Just Shhhh... Ritual Closing for the Day</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Dr Linda Mdena-Thibedi</p>	Elikem Kunutsor	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor



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## DAY THREE | Friday 10 October 2025

TIME	SESSION TITLE	PRESENTER	VENUE
07:30 – 08:30	Registration & Tea		Wits Seabrooke Foyer
08:30 – 09:00	Welcome & Day Two Reflections	Dr Sibongile Bhebhe – Drama for Life Conference & festival Convenor/Curator & Deputy Head of Department	Wits Chris Seabrooke Theatre
09:00 – 10:00	Performance Series: <b>Error 404</b>  Chaired by Hamish Neill	MA Performance	Wits Chris Seabrooke Theatre
10:00 – 10:10 Transition			

10:10 – 11:10	Keynote Address: <b><i>Entangled with the most daring of times ~ brave and humble pathways for the artistic soul</i></b>  Chaired by: Dr Linda Mdena-Thibedi	Nobonke van Tonder	Wits Chris Seabrooke Theatre
<b>11:10 – 11:20 Transition</b>			
11:20 – 12:20	Performance Series: <b><i>Uloyiko: The Gukurahundi Genocide</i></b>  Chaired by: Dr Sibongile Bhebhe	Hlubi Nontlanga and Cast	Wits Chris Seabrooke Theatre
11:20 – 12:20	<b><i>Ko Kopanong Playback Theatre</i></b>  Chaired by: Phemelo Sello	Warren Nebe, Lucky Moeketsi, Kabelo Mokgehle, Teto Mokaila, Anna Moorad	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
11:20 – 12:20	Paper Series: <b><i>Stories amidst the ruins</i></b>  Chaired by: Limpho Kou	Cheraé Halley	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Yvonne Banning Studio, 17 <sup>th</sup> Floor
<b>12:20 – 12:30 Transition</b>			
12:30 – 13:00	Paper Series (Online): <b><i>Violent Strikes in the South African Workplace: An Applied Drama Perspective on Mental Fitness</i></b>  Chaired by: Moeketsi Kgotle	Bhekilizwe Bernard Ndlovu	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Yvonne Banning Studio, 17 <sup>th</sup> Floor

12:30 – 13:00	Paper and Radio Drama Series: <b><i>Radio Drama</i></b>  Chaired by: Gosego Mokoena	Mahlauli Pitso	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
13:00 – 13:45 LUNCH BREAK			
13:45 – 14:45	Workshop Series (Online): <b><i>Rupture and Repair: An interdisciplinary and embodied approach to Arts and Health Practices in a post-conflict South African context</i></b>  Chaired by: Afolake Soogun	Marlize Swanepoel	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Credo Mutwa Studio, 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor (1503)
13:45 – 14:45	Workshop Series (Online): <b><i>Inside Out: Puppetry and Improvisation for Such a Time as This Exploring the Expressive Release of Collective and Suppressed Emotions</i></b>  Chaired by: Boipelo Mokaedi	Jordan Daniel Stewart	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Yvonne Banning Studio, 17 <sup>th</sup> Floor
13:45 – 14:45	Panel Series: <b><i>Vuka Uzenzele! Changing the Lived Landscape of Youth in Squatter Camps</i></b>  Chaired by: Dr Sibongile Bhebhe	Dr Sibongile Bhebhe and the Vukuzenzele Team and Youth Team members	Wits Chris Seabrooke Music Theatre

13:45 – 14:45	<p>Panel Discussion: <b><i>Between Global Citizenship and Arts Activism: Tensions and Synergies in Applied Drama from Africa to the World</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Dintshitile Mashile</p>	<p>Dr Petro Janse van Vuuren, Mammatti Thakhuli-Nzuza, David Golding, Teto Mokaila, Bongani Ngomane, Nomfundo Ncanana, Nina Neubauer, Ntokozo Deyi</p>	<p>Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor</p>
14:45 – 14:55 Transition			
14:55 – 15:55	<p>Workshop Series: <b><i>Decolonial Public Art Protest Performance for access including artist with disability under the Soweto Creative Movement</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Buhle Sibanyoni</p>	<p>Paul Noko</p>	<p>Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Ngugi Wa Thiongo Studio, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor</p>
14:55 – 15:55	<p>Film Series (Online): <b><i>Film as a Tool for Cultural Reflection: Exploring Masculinity and Trauma through the Documentary 'Matabeleland'</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Phumudzo Matsila</p>	<p>Chloe Genga and Nyasha Kadandara</p>	<p>Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Yvonne Banning Studio, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor</p>
14:55 – 15:55	<p>Workshop Series: <b><i>Beyond the Western Frame: Lessac's Body Energies and the Lived Experiences of Black African Student Dancers</i></b></p> <p>Chaired by: Nonkululeko Vilakazi</p>	<p>Gavin Matthys</p>	<p>Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Gibson Kente Studio, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor (1501)</p>
15:55 – 16:05 Transition			



16:05 – 17:05	Performance Series: <b><i>Solitude</i></b> Chaired by: Erin King	Smangaliso Ngwenya and Cast	Wits Chris Seabrooke Music Theatre
16:05 – 17:05	Paper Series: <b><i>A Human Change! Facilitation Process Experience, Part Two</i></b> Chaired by Emma Hutton	Drama for Life Masters Students – Hamish Neill	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor Gibson Kente Studio, 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor Credo Mutwa Studio, 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor
16:05 – 17:05	Paper Series (Online): <b><i>The Ultimate Contradiction: How Mental Health Intersects with Creative Expression</i></b> Chaired by: Nonkululeko Vilakazi	Susannah Stahlman	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Yvonne Banning Studio, 17 <sup>th</sup> Floor
<b>17:05 – 17:15 Transition</b>			
17:15 – 17:45	Performance Series: <b><i>Never Again</i></b> Chaired by: Dr Sibongile Bhebhe	Darlingboy Creative Group	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Yvonne Banning Studio, 17 <sup>th</sup> Floor
17:15 – 17:45	Performance Series: <b><i>Meokgo</i></b> Chaired by: Kabelo Mokgehle	DFL MA students: Jabulani Lebeso  Cast: Thabang Kwebu, Palesa Makhalima, Richard Ranhlakgwe, Lehlohonolo Mohale	Es'kia Mphahlele Building – Emakhaya Theatre, 19 <sup>th</sup> Floor
<b>17:45 – 18:00 Transition</b>			

18:00 – 20:00	<b>OFFICIAL CLOSING</b>  Event Marimba Band Speech by Head of Department Speech by Warren Nebe Marimba Closing and Dance	Friendly Drummers Marimba Band Dr Linda Mdena-Thibedi Warren Nebe Friendly Drummers Marimba Band	Wits Chris Seabrooke Music Hall
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# CONFERENCE BIOS & DESCRIPTIONS

## DAY ONE | Wednesday 8 October 2025

SESSION TITLE	DESCRIPTION	PRESENTER
<b>Official Welcome</b>	The DFL Conference & Festival officially begins with a welcome note from the DFL Head of Department – Dr Linda Mdena Thibedi or WSOA Head of School – Professor Rene Smith or DFL Conference & Festival Convenor/Curator – Dr Sibongile Bhebhe	<b>Dr Linda Mdena Thibedi</b> – Drama for Life Head of Department  <b>Professor Rene Smith</b> – Wits School of Arts Head of School  <b>Dr Sibongile Bhebhe</b> – Drama for Life Conference & Festival Convenor/Curator & Deputy Head of Department
Keynote Address: <i><b>The Practice of Justice: Centering collective, cultural and creative practice as a route to personal healing, societal repair and reimagined governance.</b></i>	This presentation links antihumanism with indigenous, participatory practice and intentional governance. It shows how creativity and culture provide both the language and structures needed to translate distant visions of justice into sustainable, locally grounded practices of equity and belonging. Highlighting how small acts of collective-making ripple into institutional change, it offers a vision of creativity and culture as engines of radical reimagination - a practical route from abstract understandings to the everyday work of justice - capable of crafting futures in which power is exercised collaboratively, sustainably, and justly.	<b>Caryn Green</b>  Caryn Green is CEO of Sibikwa Arts Centre and a cultural producer, manager, and researcher whose work explores the intersections of arts, development, and governance. She is a PhD candidate in Cultural Policy and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand, focusing on new models of cultural cooperation between South Africa, the AU, and the EU. Her practice spans cultural leadership, international exchange, and arts and culture programming that link creativity with education, organisational development, and civic change. Caryn's research and practice emphasise participatory and decolonial approaches that centre marginalised voices, foster organisational cultures of care, and reimagine governance as an act of justice.

Performance Series: <b><i>Brutal Honesty</i></b>	<i>Brutal Honesty</i> is a realist theatrical monologue by Majesty Mnyandu. In this one-hander, he plays himself, voicing private frustrations about global injustices. The audience gains a rare glimpse into the unfiltered thoughts of a disruptive, fearless thinker. The work also imagines the future of humanity thousands of years ahead, exploring justice, race, and human relations in an era where humans occupy outer space.	<b>Majesty Mnyandu</b>  Majesty Mnyandu, living on the margins of economic and social injustice, survives through odd jobs, recycling, and community support while seeking work aligned with his talents and academic qualifications. His creative work explores economic, social, and political dynamics as a Zulu, South African, African, and global citizen. In performance, he extends this reflection into imagined futures of humanity in outer space, questioning justice, race, and human relations across time, weaving songs and dances into his ‘vocalized thought process.’
Paper Series: <b><i>A Human Change! Facilitation Process Experience, Part One</i></b>	First, is a deep trust in the aesthetic and enhancing power of embodiment (as informed by drama) to holding conceptual, communal, and dialogic process. Second, is the need for the facilitator(s) to find a critical lens to approach a given topic with, from which to locate their own positionality, and then, structure how to process said topic within a group context. As Tamara Gordon-Roberts writes when speaking on the training of Applied Drama and Theatre practitioners within Drama for Life: “...the two pillars of the “door into the unknown” becomes a continuous negotiation for the emerging self-reflexive practitioner.” (Barnes, et al., 2022, p. 84)	Drama for Life Masters Students – <b>Hamish Neill</b>  Hamish Mabala Neill is an Applied Drama/Theatre lecturer and project leader at Drama for Life. Having completed Honours in performance and filmmaking, Neill proceeded to hone his creative research abilities within a critical studies framework, advancing his study into the intersections of performance studies, social justice, and broader social discourses, in a contemporary Southern African context. His unique expertise profile across Applied Drama and Theatre making, theatre-making, dramaturgy within a South African theatre paradigm, teaching, and creative research coordination, has allowed Neill to work in multiple contexts across the region. Whether in a high-end professional theatre, a creative laboratory, or a community centre, Neill’s acute understanding of context, cross-cultural communication, and facilitation, allow him to move across spaces with ease. He was an Ampersand residency fellow to New York in 2017, a teaching-exchange candidate to NTNU in Norway, in 2018, and was selected as the University of Glasgow’s inaugural Global South Visiting Fellow in 2025.
Paper/Performance Series: <b><i>Altazor, or the Parachute Got Stuck in the Ponte Tower</i></b>	Altazor, or the Parachute Got Stuck in the Ponte Tower is a bold interdisciplinary project—an imaginative collaboration between the Windybrow Art Centre, the Creative Writing Department at Wits University, and the Anglo-American American Digital Dome. It invites Johannesburg youth to reimagine Vicente Huidobro’s avant-garde epic surreal poet	<b>Gerard Bester</b>  The Windybrow Arts Centre (WAC), one of the creative and learning units of The Market Theatre Foundation, is a space of connection and curiosity for children and youth residing in the inner-city of Johannesburg and beyond. The WAC is also home to the Kwasha! Theatre Company, a,

	Altazor through the lens of their own urban experiences. Set in Hillbrow, where high-rise living echoes cosmic descent, the project explores themes of gravity, fragmentation, and linguistic collapse as metaphors for migration, identity, and transformation.	ASSITEJ SA (Johannesburg branch) and Johannesburg Awakening Minds. WAC's goal is to provide quality performing arts and literacy programmes in a safe dynamic space to enrich the lives of young people residing in the area and surrounds by developing emotional resilience and inspiring life journeys. The WAC roots its work thematically, addressing current and relevant social issues that impact its participants and their communities.
Keynote Address: <b><i>Protest "Movement" – Embodied Storytelling as choreographed socio-political resistance through the creative and performance history of Moving into Dance Trust</i></b>	Dance and embodied storytelling in socio-political, personal, and collective instances have arguably been at the forefront of many protest movements. This is evidenced through Moving into Dance Trust, which was established in 1978 as a dance-driven struggle-against-apartheid organisation in Johannesburg, South Africa (Glasser, 2022).	<b>Nadia Virasimay</b>  Nadia has 20 years' experience in the not-for-profit sector and is pursuing a PhD in embodied storytelling as a tool for GBV awareness. She holds a Master's in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Management from Wits University and a Social Science Honours from UKZN. Her career spans lecturing at UKZN, UniVen, and Wits, as well as artist management and postgraduate supervision. Since 2005 she has been with Moving into Dance, serving as CEO/Director of Education, where she implemented the Performing Arts Learnership and contributed to the organisation's SETA accreditation. She has co-authored three Arts and Culture textbooks for Cambridge University Press, continues to develop curricula with SAQA and SETA, and has served on several cultural boards, including the Newtown Cultural Precinct and the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture's dance board. Nadia is known for her resilience, critical thinking, and ability to balance immediate organisational needs with long-term strategic planning.
Online/Paper Series: <b><i>KINA ko Ngoma: Drum making, drumming cultures and restorative justice</i></b>	This paper offers a listening to a recent sonic composition for KINA, a physical theatre piece which was developed out of a research project on drum making and drumming cultures of northern Namibia. The close and deep listening suggests Ngoma as an expansive conceptual and epistemic source useful for forging relatedness and restorative justice.	<b>Dr Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja</b>  Dr Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja is a Lecturer in Drama and Theatre Arts at the University of Namibia. He is a resident cultural worker, educator and writer at Owela Live Arts Collective Trust (previously known as Kaleni Kollektiv) since its inception in 2014. As a performance artist, his practice and research interests are in African performance archives and public cultures of social movements. He obtained a PhD in Performance Studies from the University of Cape Town and was previously trained at University of Witwatersrand (Drama for Life) and the University of Namibia.

<p>Paper Series: <b><i>Democracy: Satire and Social Reflection in South African Theatre</i></b></p>	<p>Democracy is a satirical play first staged in 2009 at the Durban University of Technology, exploring South Africa's democratic journey over the past 30 years. Through a diverse cast of characters — including politicians, students, social media personas, and everyday citizens — the play examines leadership, corruption, social inequality, and youth activism. Central to the narrative is Kholofelo, a blind law student whose rebellious actions challenge authority, question national ideals, and spark reflection on the contradictions of democracy.</p>	<p><b>Philile Ntimbane</b></p> <p>Phillie Ntimbane is an actress, director, facilitator, and arts educator committed to creating theatre that empowers children and young people. Philile holds a BA Honours in Drama (UKZN, 2011) and have extensive experience in applied theatre, including projects such as Dance in Education for children with disabilities and Theatre of Debate for youth development. Philile has directed and performed in productions that explore social issues, promote critical thinking, and foster creativity in learners and communities.</p>
<p>Performance Series: <b><i>Library in Flames</i></b></p>	<p>It is said, "When an elderly person dies, a library burns to the ground" (African Proverb). This is a fictional story about Gogo Moloï an old woman who was burnt to ashes by an angry mob, accusing her of being a witch. The story explores themes of violence against old women, who are battling with some mental challenges, in particular, dementia and questions the necklacing culture and power of mob psychology in the democratic South Africa.</p>	<p><b>Lucky Nash Makgobane</b></p> <p>Sir Nash is a 35-year-old founder of Cadres Films, playwright, director, poet, activist and performer at Cadres' productions. A film and television Assistant Director(AD), theatre facilitator and mentor from Tembisa.</p>
<p>Paper Series (Online): <b><i>Theatre of the Fractured: Performing Trauma, Healing, and Hope in Post-Colonial African Contexts</i></b></p>	<p>This paper examines how theatre serves as both mirror and medicine for fractured communities through an analysis of two original productions: Eme (2024) and Intutwane (2023), written and directed by the author. Through physical comedy and sharp dialogue, the play interrogates how political rhetoric around environmental justice becomes performative theatre while communities remain stranded, literally and metaphorically, waiting for change that never arrives.</p> <p>Intutwane is a surreal exploration of gendered trauma, featuring three women whose fractured lives reflect broader societal wounds: an educated professional violated by workplace power dynamics, an aging sex worker displaced by younger competitors, and a pregnant woman brutalised by patriarchal expectations.</p>	<p><b>Innocent G. Mwapangira</b></p> <p>Innocent is a Zimbabwean film, theatre, and television professional with extensive experience as both an academic and a creative practitioner. A former graduate of</p> <p>Drama for Life, his work is deeply rooted in using applied theatre as a tool for social commentary and community engagement. He is the writer and director of Eme, a political satire that metaphorically critiques leadership and societal stasis in a post-colonial context.</p>

<p>Paper Series (Online):  <b><i>Even in Crisis: Improvisation as a Tool for Justice, Healing, and Human Change in Displaced Communities</i></b></p>	<p>In times of crisis and forced displacement, the concept of “justice” can feel distant—an abstract global ideal, disconnected from the daily realities of survival, loss, and trauma. Yet even in crisis, the body remembers joy, the voice seeks expression, and the imagination reaches toward hope. This Zoom-based workshop shares the work of Access to Play, a Nigerian-led initiative using Improv Theatre and creative play with internally displaced persons (IDPs) to build psychosocial resilience, restore agency, and reimagine justice from the ground up.</p>	<p><b>Oluwadamilola Apotieri-Abdulai</b></p> <p>Oluwadamilola Abdulai-Apotieri (also known as Damilola or Dami) is a Nigerian applied theatre practitioner and founder of Access to Creative Play Foundation, a nonprofit organization using Improv Theatre and creative play to support trauma healing, psychosocial wellbeing, and resilience in displaced communities. He holds an Honours and Master’s degree in Applied Drama and Theatre from the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, and has trained with leading Improv and Playback Theatre companies across the U.S. and Europe. Damilola has led creative interventions in conflict zones, IDP camps, and post-crisis communities across Nigeria.</p> <p>His practice is rooted in community care, embodied storytelling, and play as a tool for justice and social change. He currently serves on the Board of the Centre for Playback Theatre (USA) and is passionate about amplifying Global South approaches to creative mental health and social transformation</p>
<p>Paper Series (Online):  <b><i>Using Theatre-in-Education as decolonial pedagogics in teaching Shona novels: The case of Tambaoga Mwanangu TIE Project in Zimbabwe</i></b></p>	<p>This paper is a practitioner’s reflection on a project using Theatre-in-Education (TIE) in the teaching of a Shona novel in Zimbabwe to form 3 students as an attempt in decolonial pedagogics. The paper is necessitated by the realisation that Shona novel writers in the colonial era found themselves in an invidious situation where they suffered both state and self-induced censorship, rendering their writings ideological tools for perpetual cultural, social and political domination of the blacks by the white colonial Rhodesian settlers.</p>	<p><b>Nicholas Mkaronda</b></p> <p>Nicholas Mkaronda is known for pioneering Theatre-in-Education (TIE) in Zimbabwe while he was teaching at the University of Zimbabwe in the 1990s. He founded the Alternative Savannah Arts Township Theatre (now known as Savanna Arts Trust) where he spearheaded the adaptation of Shona and African novels written in English, as well as devised History and Mathematics TIE projects on topics that were being studied in Secondary Schools. He is</p> <p>currently working as the Director of TIE with Vuka Afrika Performing Arts Trust where he continues to focus on the use of TIE in teaching Shona novels, with a view of supporting teachers and students in the Heritage Based Curriculum adapted by Zimbabwe’s Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.</p>

Performance Series: <b><i>Seeing beyond Sight</i></b>	This performance centres the lived experiences of blind young people in Johannesburg, exploring what it means to be blind through voice, movement, and storytelling. In partnership with local blind youth, this work will surface stories of perception, resilience, identity, and aspiration. This performance foregrounds issues central to justice: access, representation, prejudice, and the right to be seen and heard. It also advances Justice(us) by insisting that justice must include those whose voices are marginalized not only through policy, but through culture and performance itself.	<b>Gcebile Dlamini</b>  Gcebile Dlamini is a Community Theatre social activist through her theatre directing, writing and an actress born in the mountainous valleys of Swaziland. As a young girl, she was exposed to ballroom dance and musical instruments which motivated her to become an actress. She obtained her Masters in Creative Research under Drama for Life which she passed with Distinction. In 2014 – 2015, she obtained an Honours Degree in Applied Drama and Theatre under the Drama for Life division at The University of Witwatersrand. Prior to this qualification, she had completed her B-Tech Degree in Drama at the Tshwane University of Technology in 2011. Her first tertiary qualification was a Diploma in Drama which she studied at The Durban University of Technology from 2008–2010.
Performance Installation: <b><i>Echoes of The Unseen</i></b>	"Echoes of the Unseen" is a collaborative Performance-as-Research project led by director and applied facilitator Phumudzo Matsila. The work brings together a dedicated ensemble of multidisciplinary South African artists and Drama for Life students, including choreographer and movement artist Julia Zenzie Burnham, theatre artist and storyteller Seipati Aphane, Ndivhudza Tshilangwana, poet and actress Khanyisile Seroka, and poet and movement artist Collen Makua. Our collective strength is our deep, interdisciplinary synergy; each member is not only a master of their form but also a skilled facilitator in applied arts practices.	<b>Phumudzo Matsila</b>  Phumudzo Matsila is a multidisciplinary artist and facilitator whose work exists at the powerful intersection of visual arts and theatre. With over a decade of dedicated practice, Phumudzo forges a unique aesthetic language that is both visually arresting and deeply performative. His academic journey from a BA in Performing Arts to an Honours in Applied Drama and Theatre, and currently a Master's candidate at Wits, has solidified his commitment to art as a vital catalyst for social change. This foundation informs a practice where the evocative symbolism of painting and drawing converges with the embodied narratives of theatre-making. Phumudzo's performances are not merely presentations, but curated experiences designed to spark critical dialogue. He channels his multidisciplinary approach to illuminate and interrogate the pressing societal issues affecting communities in South Africa. His core mission is to use this fusion of forms as a tool for community building, empowerment, and transformative conversation. As both a creator and educator, Phumudzo brings this same transformative energy to his workshops, empowering diverse individuals across the nation.
Workshop Series: <b><i>Seeing the Self</i></b>	This workshop proposes Image Theatre as a method of meeting the inner self through others an exploration of how our deepest	<b>Andima Kula</b>



<p><b><i>Through the Other: Image Theatre as a Pathway to Human Change and Justice(Us)</i></b></p>	<p>personal narratives are mirrored, contested, and reimagined in the collective body of community.</p> <p>Ultimately, this workshop demonstrates that Image Theatre is more than an artistic technique, it is a praxis of human change. By meeting the inner self through the eyes, bodies, and gestures of others, participants are invited to reflect, resist, and reimagine how justice might live between us. In times of moral collapse, this becomes both an urgent necessity and a profound act of hope.</p>	<p>Andima Maria Kula is an applied drama and theatre practitioner, researcher, and facilitator</p> <p>whose work explores embodiment, justice, and healing. Born in Soweto and raised in Spruitview, her artistic journey began in childhood and expanded through dance, theatre, and international touring, including performances with Kelly Khumalo, Missy Elliott, and André Heller’s Afrika! Afrika! production. She trained with Moving Into Dance Mophatong and has worked nationally and abroad as a performer, facilitator, and arts educator.</p> <p>She holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Dance in Education, Communities, and Social Context (Wits, distinction) and is currently completing an Honours in Applied Drama and Theatre while concurrently studying Psychology 1 and 2, with the aim of pursuing a second degree in psychology. A certified yoga instructor and facilitator trained in Kenya’s Power Yoga, she integrates body, mind, and spirit in her practice. She also serves as a First-Year Mentor at Wits. Insights from mental health webinars shaped her belief that transformation must begin within the self before extending meaningfully to others</p>
<p>Performance Series: <b><i>Threads: Threading into Wholeness</i></b></p>	<p>The work is a collection of monologues, carefully crafted together into a very strong, professional and thought-provoking production. I watched the piece on 19 September and was really impressed with both the standard and content of the work. I strongly feel it aligns with the notion of Human Change!, namely around how it addresses: (i) Storytelling and memory work in post-conflict and transitional justice contexts and (ii) Collaborative praxis and community-anchored interventions.</p> <p>As taken directly from their programme synopsis: "Like strands woven into fabric, each story in Threads connects to form a tapestry of identity, memory, and resilience. Drawing from the concept of ukuzilanda—"to fetch oneself"—the production</p>	<p><b>APAAM</b> is a DFL partnership with <b>Joburg Theatre</b></p>

	<p>unravels the ties between past and present, trauma and healing, self and society."</p> <p>The work was created by "students and early-career practitioners", involving APAAM project students and University of Stellenbosch researcher, Gratia Aimee Ilibagiza Mutabazi, (Centre for the Study of the Afterlife of Violence and the Reparative Quest (AVReQ)), who works with story and healing as a methodology; and who offers a critical post-performance unpacking if requested.</p>	
<p>Paper Series: <i><b>From speculative histories to imagining just futures: The performance-making process of Automaton(tik) (2025)</b></i></p>	<p>The presentation reflects on the recent performance-making process of Automaton(tik) (2025) with a group of postgraduate students at the University of Pretoria, School of the Arts: Drama.</p> <p>Written by Prof Rory du Plessis, Automaton(tik) is a book of poetry created in remembrance of the patients of the Fort England Psychiatric Hospital, formerly known as the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum, which opened in 1875. Following an invitation to develop a performance from the Automaton(tik) book, our creative process continues and extends the 'critical fabulation' or speculative narrative methods set up by the book, refusing 'the possibility of recovery ... and yet [laboring] to paint as full a picture as possible' (Guilmette 2023:441). The embodied research process, using script-writing, and physical and sonic devising, explores how performance-making becomes a mode of reordering and confronting the past in order to rehearse better and more just futures.</p>	<p><b>Dr Kristina Johnstone</b></p> <p>Kristina Johnstone lectures movement and physical theatre at the University of Pretoria, School of the Arts: Drama. She holds a PhD from the University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg, South Africa) and is a Certified Movement Analyst (CMA) in Laban/Bartenieff Movement Studies. She has lectured part-time at the University of Cape Town and the Makerere University Department of Performing Arts and Film (Kampala, Uganda). Kristina's research interests stem from a desire to trouble colonial practices and epistemologies in performance and somatic education, and to challenge orientations towards humanism, universalism and whiteness in her own work, while seeking to engage possibilities for a decolonial choreographic and artistic praxis.</p> <p><b>Dr Lelia Bester</b></p> <p>Dr Lelia Bester lectures Acting and Voice at Drama: School of the Arts, University of Pretoria. She is a certified Lessac Kinesensics speech, body and voice trainer. Her research and teaching centre around the performance shifts actors must make to perform effectively in a variety of media. She has published on place making in selected television series and on emotional induction for film actors. Her creative research includes collaborative devising in theatre as well as directing and performing for radio. Her interest in the field of performance is informed by her</p>

		experiences as a South African actress, voice artist, casting director and acting coach
Performance Series: <b><i>Words &amp; Nightmares</i></b>	Martin Luther King Junior said “When scientific power outruns moral power, we end up with guided missiles and misguided men”. Words & Nightmares is one man play about a journalist compiling stories for his new book on geopolitical conflicts and genocides is thrown in and out of the experiences of the various people that he writes about. He is taken to moments and transported to personal narratives of war victims, and within them he uncovers the true cruelty of war and harrowing dehumanizing experience of facing death with no escape. Trying hard to emotionally detach from the stories he finds himself taken to places he did not expect.	<b>Seiphemo Motswiri – African Tree Productions</b>  African Tree Productions have produced several award-winning theatre productions and continue to use theatre as an educational and transformation tool. Some of the shows the company has produced include the multi award winning theatre production titled —The Systemll, which received 5-star reviews at Edinburgh International Fringe Festival 2013 in Scotland. The production also took part in Wan Smolbag International Festival 2014 in Vanuatu Island, Gauteng Ishashalaza festival where it won Best Writer & Best Director awards, Grahamstown NAF 2015 where it won Standard Bank Ovation, The South African State Theatre where it was nominated for Naledi Best Ensemble Award, The Baltic House International Festival 2024 where it won Audience’s Choice Award and Intwasa Arts Festival in Zimbabwe. The company also produced Be A Better Dog which was part United Solo Theatre Festival 2018 in New York where it received 5 Star Review from The Critic’s Choicell, and The Baltic House International Festival 2024 in Russia where it won Audience’s Choice Award.
Performance Series: <b><i>The Injustice of The Innocence</i></b>	This performance examines the harmful consequences of compulsive love. With its gripping courtroom drama, this performance will enthrall audience while posing difficult questions regarding justice, guilt, innocence, and the disastrous results of unbridled emotion. The play centers on a university student Keamogetse Letswalo and Fezile Mkhize who falls deeply in love with his partner, Keamogetse Letswalo. However, as evidence of adultery surfaces, their frenzied relationship takes a sinister turn.	<b>Willy Khoza</b>  Willy Khoza is a Pretoria based dynamic theatre practitioner, actor, and director with a passion for storytelling and artistic expression. A graduate of Tshwane University of Technology's Diploma in Theatre Arts and Performance (2025). Willy has made a name for himself in the industry with his innovative approach to acting and directing.
Performance Series: <b><i>KELEDI! A Sotho Journey of Resistance</i></b>	KELEDI! is an applied theatre performance that draws on Sotho storytelling, movement, and song to interrogate the cost of violence and the search for alternative ways of resistance. Emerging from the current global climate of war, repression,	<b>Moeketsi Kgotle</b>  Moeketsi Kgotle, from Tumahole, Parys, is an award-winning theatre maker, director, performer, playwright, percussionist, choreographer, and

<p><b><i>Through Movement and Song</i></b></p>	<p>and displacement—with Gaza, Uganda, and South Africa as its reference points—KELEDI! Follows the journey of one man who refuses to pick up weapons and instead reclaims embodied memory, ritual, and collective song as forms of struggle.</p>	<p>academic. With over a decade of experience, he has worked across communities, schools, and institutions, using theatre as a tool for education, healing, and social change.</p>
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# CONFERENCE BIOS & DESCRIPTIONS

## DAY TWO | Thursday 9 October 2025

SESSION TITLE	DESCRIPTION	PRESENTER
<b>Welcome &amp; Day One Reflections</b>	Welcome and Day 1 reflections by DFL Conference & Festival Convenor/Curator – Dr Sibongile Bhebhe	<b>Dr Sibongile Bhebhe</b> – Drama for Life Conference & Festival Convenor/Curator & Deputy Head of Department
Keynote Address: <b><i>Cultural Diplomacy from Below: A Critical Reflections on the SA-US Cultural Relations in the Donald Trump Era</i></b>	This paper interrogates the contours of South Africa–United States cultural relations during the Donald Trump era through the lens of “cultural diplomacy from below.” Departing from state-centric analyses, it foregrounds the agency of non-state actors—artists, intellectuals, activists, and civil society networks—in sustaining transnational cultural engagement amid the disruptive effects of Trump’s nationalist and transactional foreign policy.	<b>Dr Munyaradzi Chatikobo</b>  Munyaradzi Chatikobo is an academic and researcher in the field of Cultural Policy and Management, with specific interests in Community Arts Management, Cultural Diplomacy, Community Theatre Management, Culture and Development, Cultural Governance, Arts Marketing and Resource Mobilisation in the Cultural and Creative Industries. Munyaradzi Chatikobo holds a PhD in Arts and Culture Management (University of the Witwatersrand 2022), a Master of Arts Degree in Applied Drama and Theatre (University of the Witwatersrand, 2009), a Special Honours in Theatre Arts and BA General Degree from University of Zimbabwe, 1995. His PhD research area of study is Cultural Policy and Community Theatre in South Africa. In 2016 Munyaradzi co-founded Andani. Africa and served as a Founding Director and Lead Consultant until 2020. He is a board member for CHIPAWO Trust and a former board member of Nhimbe Trust, both in Zimbabwe. He is currently a Lecturer of Cultural Policy and Management in the Wits School of Arts.

<p>Performance Series: <b><i>Diaries of Retired Violence</i></b></p>	<p>“You either die a hero, or you live long enough to see yourself become the villain.” -Harvey Dent; The Dark Knight- This fictional one-man performance delves into the life of a former freedom fighter turned president, into a perceived dictator and war criminal by the world as he enters his retirement phase and starts taking time to reflect on his life, while an impending war crimes trial lays ahead of him. Through a dramatic performance with elements of satire and social commentary, the performance seeks to not only personalize the larger topics of war, dictatorship and violence but asks what may transpire if the so called aggressor was given a platform to share their own story before books and films are made about him.</p>	<p><b>Sithembiso Khalishwayo</b></p> <p>Sithembiso Khalishwayo is a creative researcher who holds both a MAAD and BAPVA degree. His forever focus is on the arts as a creative tool in making societal changes. Sithembiso “Sthe Khali” Khalishwayo is an actor, dancer, producer, teacher, writer, photographer, videographer, choreographer, a published poet and short story writer, sound and lighting theatre operator and a facilitator who studied and worked at the Wits School of Arts (WSOA) in conjunction with Drama for Life (DFL).</p>
<p>Keynote Address (Online): <b><i>A re-emphasis on Indigenous practices in art therapy</i></b></p>	<p>When white people say ‘Justice,’ they mean ‘Just Us.’” – African American proverb. According to the Western world, particularly in English-speaking and European countries, art therapy is regarded as a relatively new field that emerged in the 20th century. Often considered an “unconventional therapy,” it combines psychology and art to enhance cognitive and motor skills, encourage emotional release, build awareness and self-esteem, inspire resilience, and resolve stress or conflict. While art therapy may be new to the West, African traditions have long recognized the healing power of creative expression. Through rich heritage such as song, dance, storytelling and drumming, indigenous practices are culturally ingrained to address the spiritual, emotional and psychological needs of African people.</p> <p>From bead-making in Ghana—where creation fosters consciousness and transforms the mind toward creativity, peace, and restoration—to storytelling in South Africa used for HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness, the arts are part and parcel to African survival, resilience, and culture. Although often undermined, Indigenous knowledge systems have consistently influenced the Western medical model. Many psychological theories, such as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs</p>	<p><b>Thandiwe Ntshinga</b></p> <p>Thandiwe Ntshinga is a writer, researcher, and author of “Black Racist Bitch: How Social Media Reveals South Africa’s Unfinished Work on Race”, whose scholarship is situated at the intersection of critical whiteness studies and social anthropology. Her research examines the cultural, historical, and structural dimensions of whiteness, with particular attention to how it is reproduced, confronted, and made (in)visible in diverse social contexts. Drawing on anthropological methodologies, her work foregrounds questions of race, identity, and power in both local and global frameworks. Ntshinga’s publications and ongoing research engage with debates on decoloniality, epistemic justice, and the reconfiguration of knowledge production. By combining rigorous research with accessible storytelling, Ntshinga bridges academic inquiry and broader public conversations on race and social justice. She is committed to advancing scholarship that interrogates dominant racial paradigms while contributing to broader interdisciplinary conversations on inequality, representation, and transformation. Her work contributes to ongoing efforts to reimagine knowledge, decolonise scholarship and amplify voices that disrupt dominant narratives.</p> <p><b>Sarah Kabengele</b></p>

	<p>and mindfulness-based therapy, draw from the Blackfoot Nation of Turtle Island (North America) and Zen Buddhism and Hinduism from Asia, respectively. Similarly, African methods of wellness have been deconstructed, rebranded, and reframed by contemporary Psychology.</p>	<p>Sarah Kabengele is a mental health professional and educator with over twelve years of practical and theoretical experience in psychotherapy, psychoeducation, and counselling. Her work is grounded in Black feminist theory, pan-African Indigenous healing, and culturally inclusive, trauma-informed practices. As a Muluba person, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo and raised in South Africa, Sarah brings a deeply intersectional lens to her work, integrating African and Indigenous understandings of mental health into contemporary therapeutic practice.</p> <p>Currently based in Vancouver, Canada, Sarah serves as an addictions counsellor, working primarily with women and youth navigating substance use and mental health challenges. Her approach emphasises harm reduction, empowerment, and relational healing, ensuring that each client's unique cultural and personal identity is centred in their recovery journey. Passionate about decolonising mental health care, she advocates for accessibility, inclusivity, and community-based approaches that promote both individual and collective well-being. Sarah's ongoing commitment is to bridge traditional knowledge systems with modern therapeutic practices, fostering spaces where healing is both transformative and culturally resonant."</p>
<p>Paper Series: <b><i>Rethinking Digital Knowledge in the Anthropocene</i></b></p>	<p>This speech rethinks the nature of knowledge in the digital age, arguing that digital technologies reshape not only how we access information, but also how we think, learn, and live. Drawing on Bernard Stiegler's concepts of tertiary retention, exosomatization, and the pharmakon, it proposes a new framework—Digital Studies—to analyze the cognitive, technical, and social impacts of digital media. The talk distinguishes between procedural competence and transformative knowledge, emphasizing the need for disautomation in education and society. In the context of the Anthropocene, it calls for guiding digital technologies toward negentropy—the creation of sustainable and meaningful futures—through interdisciplinary care and critical engagement.</p>	<p><b>Dr Renzo Filinich</b></p> <p>Renzo Filinich is a media artist and researcher, known for his interdisciplinary work at the intersection of art, technology, and science. With a focus on the relationship between sound, digital media, and human perception, Filinich's work explores themes such as cosmotechnics and post-anthropocentric worldviews, particularly from a Latin American perspective. He has collaborated on numerous international projects, blending artistic practice with cutting-edge technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Quantum Physics. Filinich is also an academic, contributing research on the role of media arts in addressing contemporary social and environmental issues.</p>

<p>Paper Series: <b><i>Laughter in the Margins: Black Feminist Aesthetics and Pedagogies of Care</i></b></p>	<p>“Laughter is serious. More complicated, more serious than tears.” (Morrison, 1992). In this paper I explore the capacity for laughter to disrupt hegemonic narratives, create aesthetic practices, assert lineage of knowledges and create spaces for relationship building and healing. Here laughter is both testimony, and resistance, a performance and an exploration. The paper explores the radical and relational power of laughter within gendered, pedagogical, and performative spaces,. Drawing from Black women’s embodied experiences, laughter is positioned not merely as entertainment but as an aesthetic and relational practice, an act of breathing, and world-building.</p>	<p><b>Dr Refiloe Lepere</b></p> <p>Dr Refiloe Lepere is an NRF-Rated researcher, a transdisciplinary gender scholar, award-winning storyteller with over two decades of experience in the arts, she positions herself as a community-accountable creator, whose leadership in the cultural sector bridges performance, pedagogy, and activism. Currently a Senior Lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand, co-leader of the Creative Research Lab. She is also a Global Atlantic Fellow for Racial Equity, a Ford Foundation Fellow, a member of the Woodshed Collective (Georgetown University) and serves as President of the Humanities and Social Sciences Alumni Association (HSSAA).</p>
<p>Workshop Series: <b><i>Stories Black Men Tell: Storytelling, Healing, and Justice(Us)</i></b></p>	<p>The story of black men in South Africa is one steeped in histories of colonialism, apartheid, and ongoing systemic injustice. These realities shape masculinities in ways that silence vulnerability, restrict care, and often perpetuate cycles of marginalisation. Yet within these lived experiences are powerful stories; stories that can heal, transform, and mobilise change. Stories Black Men Tell is a space where Black men gather to reclaim storytelling as both a personal and collective practice of justice. Drawing on African Indigenous methods of dialogic storytelling, and role theory in Drama Therapy, participants will engage in embodied exercises that surface silenced narratives, affirm dignity, and open possibilities for new roles.</p>	<p><b>Kabelo Mokgehle</b></p> <p>Kabelo Mokgehle is a Drama Therapist in training with interest in the black male masculinity. Kabelo is also an applied drama and theatre practitioner, a listening hour guide and a member of the Listening Hour Community Cultural Committee. Kabelo is also staff member at Drama For Life and the Wits School of Education teaching drama.</p>
<p>Paper Series: <b><i>Hey Grok, are you changing our traditions? An Applied Drama/Theatre review of Blacking’s Tradition and Change in Society in 2025</i></b></p>	<p>This paper proposes a conceptual framework shaped by Prof John Blacking (1982f) that leads to brief contextual application of this framework, thus offering a brief commentary on our current ‘phase of human change’. The paper concludes with a call-to-action held by Applied Drama/Theatre praxis, as a way to lift and challenge the conceptual/theoretical positions off the page and into a critical and urgent strategy.</p>	<p><b>Hamish Mabala Neill</b></p> <p>Hamish Mabala Neill is an Applied Drama/Theatre lecturer and project leader at Drama for Life. Having completed Honours in performance and filmmaking, Neill proceeded to hone his creative research abilities within a critical studies framework, advancing his study into the intersections of performance studies, social justice, and broader social discourses, in a contemporary Southern African context. He was an Ampersand residency fellow to New York in 2017, a teaching-exchange candidate to</p>



		NTNU in Norway, in 2018, and was selected as the University of Glasgow's inaugural Global South Visiting Fellow in 2025.
Paper Series: <b>Ngwana Ya Salleng: Judicial Theatre as a route for Justice(us)ness</b>	The 2024 situational analysis report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) about the wellbeing of children and adolescents in South Africa, suggests that 58% of children aged 5 to 16 experienced direct victimization of sexual abuse. It is against this background that a new play borrowing from the tenant of Boal's (1985) Theatre of the Oppressed emerged. Through translanguaging, this paper argues that theatre that enables dialogue about subjects such as rape of children, for children can hold space for hope. It is reflexive and draws on the authors' journey as a co-playwright of the play Nompilo (2025) as well as being a witness to performances and post-performance workshops. This judicial theatre aims to expose and empower young persons in the ages of 10 to 12 about safety.	<b>Selloane Mokuku</b>  Selloane Mokuku is an Applied Theatre practitioner, writer and facilitates learning at Rhodes University. She tackles diverse social injustice issues in various contexts including schools. Her research interests include translanguaging and the use of the arts to facilitate learning everywhere. She is the Chairperson of ASSITEJ SA, an organization that pioneered Arts Rich Schools programme in South Africa. She co-wrote NOMPILO (supported by the South Africa Chapter on the International Association of Women Judges/SAC-IAWJ and Department of Basic Education/DBE ) with Omphile Malusi. She is the Artistic Director of MEQOQO Playback Theatre Collective (@meqoqoqcollective_). Her new children's book; The Butterfly Heart (published by Jacana) is due for launch in 2025.
Paper Series: <b>Bed News (Film Screening)</b>	BED NEWS is a visually raw, poetically driven narrative film exploring the ripple effects of gender based violence (GBV), absent fatherhood, and generational trauma. BED NEWS forces its characters and viewers to confront the pain of silence, the consequences of male absence, and the hidden wounds that women carry across generations.  This is not just a film, it is a reckoning. It dismantles broken systems and confronts family secrets while honouring the courage of women striving to survive amidst trauma and injustice.	<b>Thabo Joseph Mabaso – Me4uTalented Studios</b>  Thabo J Mabaso utilizes his extensive experience in performance arts, facilitation, and education to contribute as a change agent in the Free State and South Africa at large, advocating for healthy behaviour and community transformation through innovative teaching methods
Panel Discussion: <b>Voices on the Edge: Freedom or Harm?</b>	In a society still healing from deep wounds, how far can freedom truly go?  This conversation brings together practitioners to unpack the fragile line between freedom of speech and freedom of	<b>Thamsanqa aka Mbongo Manzana</b>  Thamsanqa Hawell Mbongo is a South African cultural activist, theatre practitioner, and researcher with extensive experience in creative interventions for social change. He has worked across community arts, drama for development, and performance advocacy, focusing on human

	expression in South Africa — where does one end, and the other begin?	rights, social justice, and youth empowerment. Thamsanqa's work bridges academic insight and practical theatre applications, exploring the intersection of art, policy, and societal transformation.
Workshop Series: <b><i>Fuckalty and Siestems</i></b>	This is a Forum Theatre project that seeks to challenge and transform the systems, promoting human change and justice silenced by barriers not only undermined the principle of education as a human right but also the voices that could contribute to the shaping of an inclusive society. For instance, the Fees Must Fall movement being commemorated by the very same university that closed doors for its students 10 years ago and still continuing #financialexclusion. Drawing from the Fees Must Fall movement, this project examines how Forum Theatre can reveal the lived experiences of blocked students and open space for collective problem solving.	<b>Lucky Moeketsi</b>  Lucky Moeketsi is a Performer and Educator with qualifications in Acting, Dance, and Applied Drama and Theatre. He has worked with notable industry figures, debuted in dance and acting in 2015 and 2017, respectively, and has choreographed and directed various productions. In 2023, he contributed to significant projects at the National School of the Arts and National Children's Theatre. Lucky continues to work as a Choreographer, Performer, Arts Facilitator, Applied Practitioner, Playback Theatre Performer, and Listening Hour Guide. He submitted his MA paper few months ago with the research topic: Embodied holding, Embodied witnessing: Using an Embodied Aesthetic in Playback Theatre to foster safety and wellbeing of performers and audience members. Lucky is currently working on research inspired by Listening Hour called Embodied Listening Hour, an unconventional Listening Hour. His interest is in the body and thus sees himself as an embodied practitioner and body explorateur.
Workshop Series: <b><i>Understanding Neurodivergence: Beyond the DSM</i></b>	Drawing on my perspective as a neurodivergent Drama Therapist, I will guide participants in embodied, experiential activities to deepen understanding of concepts such as masking, the double empathy problem, social isolation, and executive functioning challenges. The arts will be used as a lens for rethinking and engaging with neurodivergence, creating space for expression, empathy, and insight.	<b>Emma Hutton</b>  Emma Hutton is an HPCSA-registered Drama Therapist in private practice and a lecturer at Wits Drama for Life. She holds a Masters in Drama Therapy from Wits University and a PGCE from Rhodes University. She has a special interest in working with neurodivergent clients and is embarking on PhD research on the use of Drama Therapy techniques to address trauma in neurodivergent populations. Emma has previously taught English as a second language in China and Vietnam, and Dramatic Arts in both school and private contexts, with experience supporting learners with special educational needs. Her work is informed by her own neurodivergent lived experience, which shapes her commitment to affirming, non-pathologising, and person-centred approaches.

Performance Series: <b>Gas</b>	<p>Dawid returns to Alexander Bay after 15 years with an important assignment. He has to ensure that the community of the town where he grew up gives approval for a government project that will affect the whole of South Africa. However, his sister Maria, estranged from Dawid for years, is determined to shove obstacles in the way of this project that will profoundly disrupt the lives of the fishing community.</p> <p>GAS is an Afrikaans theatre production written, directed, and produced by Geralt Cloete under Nama Khoi Productions. The text was developed through the NATI Rising Stars theatre mentorship program, supported by the Jakes Gerwel Foundation, NATI, and Suidoosterfees. Inspired by the contemporary struggles of the Nama indigenous people of the Richtersveld, where the state has proposed the Boegoebaai Green Hydrogen Project on communal land, the play interrogates what is at stake for the community and explores the possibilities and consequences of such a monumental project in an indigenous context.</p>	<p><b>Geralt Cloete</b></p> <p>Geralt Cloete is a multiple SAFTA award winning artist from Sanddrift in the Richtersveld. He is a Director, Performer, Scriptwriter, Applied Theatre Practitioner and Theatre-maker. He has a master's degree in Dramatic Arts and an honour's degree in Applied Drama: Theatre in Education, Communities and Social Context from the University of the Witwatersrand. Central to his artistic vision are themes of home and belonging, evident in his directorship of Nama Khoi Productions. Through this platform, Geralt is dedicated to preserving, promoting, and</p> <p>enriching the language and culture of the Nama Khoi peoples through the medium of dramatic arts.</p>
Panel Series: <b>Fog to light: Reflective Practice as a Pedagogical Foundation for Scholars in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</b>	<p>This session combines academic paper presentations, a documentary film screening, and a facilitated panel discussion to foster interactive dialogue. The multi-modal approach integrates theoretical insights, visual storytelling, and collective reflection, aligning with the conference theme of "Human Change!" by exploring personal and societal transformation through reflective arts practices.</p>	<p><b>Teto Mokaila</b></p> <p>Applied Drama and Theatre practitioner, Filmmaker, Actor, Lecturer. Teto is an award-winning, all-terrain vehicle of an artist with over 10 years' experience, currently living in South Africa. He has an extensive background in stage acting and playwriting, starting his career as a stage manager at the biggest arts festival in Botswana, the Maitisong Festival, to becoming a headlining actor at consecutive festivals, including The</p>

		<p>Artscape Heritage Festival in Cape Town, and the Wushwini Arts Festival on the valley of 1000 hills in Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa.</p> <p>Through his film work, Teto has produced documentaries including his award winning docu-series on GBV in Botswana, and ‘Go Tla Siam’, an ethnographical documentary on language and cultural preservation in Botswana, which was produced in Johannesburg, South Africa.</p> <p>Teto’s formal education is in applied drama and theatre which he also lectures in at Drama for Life, University of the Witwatersrand.</p> <p><b>Lucky Moeketsi</b></p> <p>Lucky Moeketsi is a Performer and Educator with qualifications in Acting, Dance, and Applied Drama and Theatre. He has worked with notable industry figures, debuted in dance and acting in 2015 and 2017, respectively, and has choreographed and directed various productions. In 2023, he contributed to significant projects at the National School of the Arts and National Children’s Theatre. Lucky continues to work as a Choreographer, Performer, Arts Facilitator, Applied Practitioner, Playback Theatre Performer, and Listening Hour Guide. He submitted his MA paper few months ago with the research topic: Embodied holding, Embodied witnessing: Using an Embodied Aesthetic in Playback Theatre to foster safety and wellbeing of performers and audience members. Lucky is currently working on research inspired by Listening Hour called Embodied Listening Hour, an unconventional Listening Hour. His interest is in the body and thus sees himself as an embodied practitioner and body explorateur.</p> <p><b>Kabelo Mokgehle</b></p> <p>Kabelo Mokgehle is a Lecturer in the Wits School of Arts and Wits School of Education, an applied drama facilitator, playback theatre practitioner, listening hour guide and a member of the Listening Hour Community Culture Committee. Kabelo also is currently completing his Drama Therapy Internship.</p>
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<p>Panel Series: <b><i>Amongst other things, big and small, I too am here: eco-arts performance, ecological expression and communal healing</i></b></p>	<p>South African primary schools are often microcosms of broader societal challenges, including violence, trauma, and inequity, which can have profound implications for learners' mental health and educational engagement. The Masphefumule project, and now the Reconnection and Care Research Project, contend that the arts offer a unique means of addressing these challenges through embodied, creative, and relational practices. This research panel that will present key findings, case analyses, and experiential insights from the project's implementation across four research sites. The session will foreground practitioners and scholar voices, highlight the lived experiences of participating learners, and showcase the artistic output generated during the programme.</p>	<p><b>Nobantu Shabangu</b></p> <p>The Reconnection and Care Research Project, led by researchers Dr. Lucy Draper-Clarke, Dr. Carol Preston and Dr. Welma De Beer, is an innovative, arts-driven initiative designed to address the complex mental health and learning needs of primary school learners in South Africa. As the latest iteration of the acclaimed Masphefumule project, Reconnection and Care draws upon the transformative potential of the arts—especially drama, visual arts, and creative expression—as powerful tools for implementing regulation and coregulation techniques in educational settings. By fostering resilience, emotional intelligence, and social cohesion, the project seeks to cultivate safe, nurturing school environments where learners are empowered to thrive academically and emotionally.</p>
<p>Performance Series: <b><i>Project 2040 – Configured Artention</i></b></p>	<p>Project 2040 - Configured Artention is a multidisciplinary performance project that weaves together movement and storytelling to interrogate the complex intersections of identity, cultural memory, and personal transformation. Anchored in the metaphor of boxing, the work stages the many battles individuals encounter on the journey toward becoming. These battles are both internal and external: the struggle of carrying names that feel foreign within the body, and the broader</p>	<p><b>Collen Makua</b></p> <p>Collen Makua is a Scholar, Artist, Cultural Enterprise Leader, and Postgraduate Student in the Arts at Wits University's Drama For Life Department. With over a decade in designing and facilitating inclusive platforms, Collen has led several transformative projects through the Walkanam Group and other networks. Most recently, he directed the Storytellers Program in partnership with ASSITEJ South Africa, which</p>

	confrontations with history, heritage, and societal expectations.	<p>engaged over 8,000 young people across Gauteng and created employment opportunities for artists.</p> <p>Collen's artistic practice seeks to provoke reflection, interrogate the intersections of past and present, and ignite intergenerational conversations that contribute to the creation of a shared and equitable future. Driven by a commitment to creative excellence and social impact, his work focuses on developing meaningful, lasting experiences and co-creating a thriving cultural ecosystem that reflects the society we aspire to build.</p>
Performance Series: <b><i>The Red Thread of Radical Hope: Re-Storying Collective Futures</i></b>	The Red Thread of Radical Hope: Re-Storying Collective Futures' by Drama for Life Playback Theatre, a project of the Drama for Life Creative Research Hub Playback Theatre performance as an Applied Arts methodology to invite lived experience of shaping systems, healing trauma, challenging injustice, and envisioning change. Community wisdom rather than imposed solutions.	<p><b>Tarryn Lee and Drama for Life Playback Theatre Company</b></p> <p>Drama for Life Playback Theatre- celebrating 17 years as an active Playback Theatre group- is based in Johannesburg as part of the DFL Creative Research Hub. The DFL Playback Theatre company was founded in 2008 in association with the University of the Witwatersrand and is one of Drama for Life's longest running creative projects.</p> <p>We are storytellers and we believe in the transformative power of storytelling. We strive for <i>communitas</i>: the invisible bonds that connect us all, the very spirit of community. Our project work invites dialogue in communities and sites in and around Johannesburg and in provinces in South Africa. It is in the recognition of the lived experiences of others and ourselves that we stimulate empathy and promote a sense of wellness and awareness to those who witness a Playback Theatre performance.</p>
Performance Series: <b><i>Just Shhhh... Ritual Closing for the Day</i></b>	<i>Just Shhhh...</i> is a thought-provoking solo performance that intricately explores the emotional, political, and physical dimensions of a hug. Often perceived merely as a simple gesture of care and affection, this performance transcends that surface-level understanding, reinterpreting the hug as a complex battleground of emotions; a nuanced space where comfort clashes with control, intimacy intersects with	<p><b>Elikem Kunutsor</b></p> <p>Elikem Kunutsor is an arts educator, performer, performance maker, and project leader. He is interested in harnessing the transformative power of performance through co-creation with natural, cultural, and societal phenomena. His work in creative arts somatic education spans Ghana, South Africa, and Germany. Elikem has lectured in Movement Studies at the Wits School of Arts, Wits University, and the Centre for Theatre Dance and Performance Studies, University of Cape Town, South Africa. He has</p>

	intrusion, and the potential for healing intertwines with the pain of past traumas.	taught Performance Studies and Design in the Theatre Arts Department at the University of Ghana. Additionally, he served as the Head of the Creative Arts Department at Tema International School-Ghana. Currently, he is pursuing a PhD in the Centre for Theatre Dance and Performance Studies UCT. Elikem is also the artistic director of Meraki Arts Africa Ltd in Ghana
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# CONFERENCE BIOS & DESCRIPTIONS

## DAY THREE | Friday 10 October 2025

SESSION TITLE	DESCRIPTION	PRESENTER
Welcome & Day Two Reflections	Welcome and Day 2 reflections by DFL Conference & Festival Convenor/Curator – Dr Sibongile Bhebhe	<b>Dr Sibongile Bhebhe</b> – Drama for Life Conference & festival Convenor/Curator & Deputy Head of Department
Performance Series: <b>Error 404</b>		<p><b>Drama for Life Masters Students</b></p> <p>MA students in Applied Drama and theatre at Drama for Life, are united by their passion for the transformative powers of theatre. The cohort has collaborated on projects exploring the role of theatre in society. The creative team, comprising of <b>Dintshitle Mashile, Erin King, Jabulani Lebese, Karabo Lambani, Buhle Sibanyoni, Phumudzo Matsila, and Vuyo Mthembu</b> lend their multidisciplinary skillsets which cut across various applied theatre methodologies and performance components including visual arts, song, poetry and theatre. This performance and talkback will offer a rich versatility in craftsmanship by responding to the rapid expansion of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and what it means to be human.</p>
Keynote Address: <b><i>Entangled with the most daring of times ~ brave and humble pathways for the artistic soul</i></b>	The Artistic Courage for Justice-to-Come: Entangling Art, Politics, and Thought in the Age of Risk . Van Tonder’s most vital proclamation is for all knowledge to be available to anybody willing to pay attention: from pre-history to futurist, material to discursive, phenomenological to the scientific, from dark pedagogy to corporate, from state to village, from	<p><b>Nobonke van Tonder</b></p> <p>Nobonke van Tonder (70) is a veteran South African dancer, psychologist, and author of A POLITICAL LOVE – The Body Speaks, The Soul Knows. In this work she reimagines love as political praxis in post-colonial contexts, and embodiment as political testimony and legitimate knowledge. Her</p>



	<p>analogue to AI. But when knowledge is explored not as something contained within us, but as more-than-human, the dance becomes a generator of all that we know and sense. Straightening out history, Van Tonder loosens words from their hold, allowing the body to find differently entangled, emerging curricula of knowledge. At the centre of it all lies the nature of attention – attention as a form of love. The artistic soul – always, already at the forefront of reverence for complex and entangled intelligence – remains accountable for vital choices: intrinsic, collective, responsible. Art, therefore, is not ornament but a crucial and dynamic participant in our shared unfolding. And in these end-times, it is resonance, tempered by humility, that must accompany a courage we have not yet known.</p> <p>This presentation draws upon the poem <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i>, written by Constantine Cavafy in 1898. Due to political sensitivities, it was only published in 1904. In 1980, JM Coetzee released his novel of the same title, suggesting that the barbarians were not outside the city walls, but within them – wearing the face of empire itself. Almost a year ago, performance artist Laurie Anderson presented her own interpretation in New York City – vocal eloquence of the female voice. Today, Van Tonder brings the poem to life through dance, one that is not a future promise, but an ongoing ethical call, ongoing responsibility of the thick now: justice-to-come.</p> <p>“Then there is a very stark moment once you know that you are an elder, that you realise that you have passed through a door and would never be going back. All your life you have waited for this moment to arise. This moment demands attentiveness to what has been excluded. Scenes never rest, but are reconfigured within, dispersed across, and threaded through one another. It is the ultimate challenge for the</p>	<p>artistic contribution emerges from auto-ethnographic practice and the discipline of attentive journaling. As a posthuman scholar, she recognizes the perplexity of the decentered “human entity”—now wrestling with the eco-ethical—and gestures toward openings where relationships are complexly contractual, awakening dormant pathways of metabolizing, composting, and growing down to face our destiny as artists. Nobonke means: we are all together now. See her archive here: <a href="http://theimageofyourperfection.co.za/archive">theimageofyourperfection.co.za/archive</a>. Nobonke lives in Cape Town.</p>
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	aesthetic choice; as an artistic declaration of justice-to-come.” Nobonke van Tonder	
<p>Performance Series:</p> <p><b><i>Uloyiko: The Gukurahundi Genocide</i></b></p>	<p>A hard-hitting educational play premised on the liberation struggle of South Africa and Zimbabwe, neighboring counties that share more than a border. Heart wrenchingly narrated by Gukurahundi survivors, the play looks at key events and figures that shaped the current narration of freedom and land, exposing the effects of Cold wars in Southern Afrika during the 1980s.</p>	<p><b>Hlubi Nontlanga and Cast</b></p> <p>Hlubi Nontlanga is an actor, arts and culture administrator, writer, facilitator, project manager, director and researcher. He is currently a PhD candidate in the field of cultural policy and leadership at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). He holds a Masters degree in Cultural policy and leadership, an honours degree in applied drama: theatre in education, communities and social contexts both from University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). Holds a performers Diploma in theatre and performance from the University of Cape Town specialising in theatre making.</p> <p>Hlubi is Innovative and result-driven professional demonstrating over ten years of experience in delivering multiple projects within prescribed parameters for various reputable companies. Effective communicator with proven record of managing highly efficient teams and forging strategic professional relations with artists, government institutions, traditional leaders, and community-based organisations. Meticulous individual with outstanding track-record of producing comprehensive reports in accordance with national regulations and policies. Passionate about community development, theatre making, arts management, and cultural policy. Seasoned leader with an ability to deliver exceptionally well in demanding and fast-paced environments.</p> <p><b>CAST:</b></p> <p>Thando Masilela Anita Mhlali Matwa Lehlohonolo Selepe Yangintsikelelo Klaas Joseph Sipho Patoors Sibongiseni Daniel Daluxolo Xusha</p> <p>Choreographer: Katleho Moloji</p> <p>Creator: Ayanda Manala Sibindi</p>

		Writers: Yanga Mhlunzi & Prosper Dlodlo
<b>Ko Kopanong Playback Theatre</b>	<p>Playback Theatre, an improvisational form developed in 1975 by Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas, empowers audiences to share personal stories from their lives, which performers immediately enact on stage using movement, sound, and empathy-driven improvisation. This interactive ritual fosters deep listening, validation, and communal connection, bridging divides and honoring diverse experiences across cultures and continents. By mirroring narratives without judgment, it activates empathy, heals emotional wounds, and illuminates universal themes of humanity, making it an ideal tool for social justice dialogues.</p> <p>For the 17<sup>th</sup> Drama for Life Conference and Festival, Ko Kopanong Playback Theatre proposes a transformative performance to weave together delegates' stories on the fight for a just humanity. Emerging from the Koko! Mental Health Project, Ko Kopanong harnesses storytelling and witnessing to cultivate human rights and social justice cultures, promoting resilience and collective advocacy. Our ensemble—Teto Mokaila, Kabelo Mokeghle, Lucky Moeketsi, Warren Nebe, with partners Anah Moorad and Laone Thekiso from Botswana's Pula! Playback Theatre—forms a dynamic, cross-border troupe under Arts for Life Global Health.</p> <p>We will invite conference participants to share poignant moments of struggle, solidarity, and hope, replaying them through fluid sculptures, vignettes, and enacted empathy to affirm shared humanity and inspire ongoing action.</p>	<p><b>Teto Mokaila</b></p> <p>Applied Drama and Theatre practitioner, Filmmaker, Actor, Lecturer. Teto is an award-winning, all-terrain vehicle of an artist with over 10 years' experience, currently living in South Africa. He has an extensive background in stage acting and playwriting, starting his career as a stage manager at the biggest arts festival in Botswana, the Maitisong Festival, to becoming a headlining actor at consecutive festivals, including The Artscape Heritage Festival in Cape Town, and the Wushwini Arts Festival on the valley of 1000 hills in Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa.</p> <p>Through his film work, Teto has produced documentaries including his award winning docu-series on GBV in Botswana, and 'Go Tla Siana', an ethnographical documentary on language and cultural preservation in Botswana, which was produced in Johannesburg, South Africa.</p> <p>Teto's formal education is in applied drama and theatre which he also lectures in at Drama for Life, University of the Witwatersrand.</p> <p><b>Lucky Moeketsi</b></p> <p>Lucky Moeketsi is a Performer and Educator with qualifications in Acting, Dance, and Applied Drama and Theatre. He has worked with notable industry figures, debuted in dance and acting in 2015 and 2017, respectively, and has choreographed and directed various productions. In 2023, he contributed to significant projects at the National School of the Arts and National Children's Theatre. Lucky continues to work as a Choreographer, Performer, Arts Facilitator, Applied Practitioner, Playback Theatre Performer, and Listening Hour Guide. He submitted his MA paper few months ago with the research topic: Embodied holding, Embodied witnessing: Using an Embodied Aesthetic in Playback Theatre to foster safety and wellbeing of performers and audience members. Lucky is currently working on research inspired by Listening Hour called Embodied Listening Hour, an unconventional Listening Hour. His interest is in the</p>

		<p>body and thus sees himself as an embodied practitioner and body explorateur.</p> <p><b>Kabelo Mokgehle</b></p> <p>Kabelo Mokgehle is a Lecturer in the Wits School of Arts and Wits School of Education, an applied drama facilitator, playback theatre practitioner, listening hour guide and a member of the Listening Hour Community Culture Committee. Kabelo also is currently completing his Drama Therapy Internship.</p> <p><b>Warren Nebe</b></p> <p>Warren Nebe is the Founder and Director of Drama for Life at the University of the Witwatersrand. He is a senior lecturer, theatre director, writer, psychotherapist, and HPCSA and NADT registered Drama Therapist. He holds a BADA and two MA degrees from New York University. Nebe is also a Fulbright Alumni, educator, activist, and has experience as Managing Director of Themba Interactive - Initiatives for Life. Recently, he graduated in Playback Theatre Leadership from the Centre of Playback Theatre</p> <p><b>Anna Moorad</b></p>
Paper Series: <b><i>Stories amidst the ruins</i></b>	<p>This presentation aims to discuss the importance of story and storytelling as the anchor in the world, that which continues to remain in the aftermath of local and global destruction. This year The Market Laboratory final-year students performed the award winning and acclaimed Afropocalypse which clearly names stories as the only thing which keeps hope alive in times of despair. Using the production as a starting point, this presentation will share ways in which the work of The Market Lab contributes towards hope and imagination in fractured societies. And furthermore, how the Market Lab (as a site)</p>	<p><b>Cheraé Halley</b></p> <p>Cherae Halley is an actor, lecturer, theatre maker and an applied theatre facilitator. As an expert in the field of Applied Drama and Theatre, Cheraé has worked as an independent contractor across communities in South Africa building awareness and creating dialogue using theatre in addressing socio-political issues in education and both urban and rural community spaces. She has worked this way in fields such as HIV/AIDS, disability, sexual harassment, gender equity, LGBTI rights, human rights and oppression. As an education enthusiast, Cheraé has taught and</p>

	continues to uplift community-rooted knowledge systems, challenging Eurocentric paradigms of knowledge, and makes room for diverse stories to be told. The presentation will include a staged reading, by the final year students studying at The Market Lab reflecting that amidst the chaos of apartheid, poverty, femicide and genocide, stories continue to flourish, echoing the timeless truth that even in decay, there is a seed of renewal in every storyteller, waiting patiently to sprout again.	<p>trained in various drama and theatre programmes and institutions, she is currently the Head of the Market Theatre Laboratory – an arts incubator with a reputation for facilitating the development of exceptional young actors and theatre-makers and for creating innovative and relevant new plays.</p> <p>Cheraé was the former co-director of the Drama for Life Playback Theatre, the only accredited school of Playback Theatre in Africa.</p>
Online/ Paper Series: <b><i>Violent Strikes in the South African Workplace: An Applied Drama Perspective on Mental Fitness</i></b>	This paper interrogates violent strikes in the South African workplace through the dual lens of applied drama methodologies and the emerging field of mental fitness. Strikes in South Africa are not merely industrial actions; they are performative eruptions of embodied rage, historical trauma, systemic inequality, and contested ideals of justice. This paper explores how applied drama, as a praxis of performance and reflection, allows us to read strikes as both ‘theatre of resistance’ and ‘theatre of injury’—where the body becomes the text of both protest and pain. The paper introduces mental fitness as a conceptual and practical framework that goes beyond mental health, focusing instead on strengthening the capacity of individuals and collectives to respond to adversity with awareness, creativity, and resilience.	<p><b>Bhekilizwe Bernard Ndlovu</b></p> <p>Bhekilizwe Bernard Ndlovu is the Founder and Chief Happiness &amp; Productivity Officer of the Happiness &amp; Productivity Company, registered in Zimbabwe with continental reach. He is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand (Drama for Life Division) with a research focus on Violent Strikes in the South African Workplace: An Applied Drama Perspective on Mental Fitness. His work integrates applied drama, developmental psychology, and mental fitness frameworks to address workplace conflict, trauma, and systemic inequities.</p>
Paper and Radio Drama Series: <b><i>Radio Drama</i></b>	This paper and radio drama explores the use of radio drama as a tool for advocacy and freedom of expression for lesbian women in Lesotho. It argues that radio drama, through a practice-based approach, can serve as a powerful medium for strengthening marginalized voices in contexts where cultural and legal frameworks restrict self-expression.	<p><b>Mahlauli Pitso</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Applied Drama &amp; Theatre Practitioner.</li> <li>- Obtained my 1st degree/bachelor's degree in Applied Drama, Theatre and Performance from The National University of Lesotho in 2021.</li> <li>- In 2023, I joined Witsies and did my Honours in Applied Drama, then graduated with a Distinction in 2024, July. In 2024, I was enrolled for Masters in Applied Drama at Wits University(DFL) and</li> </ul>

		<p>completed my qualification with a Distinction, currently an MA graduand.</p> <p>Achievements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Postgrad Merit award for 2024 academic year.</li> <li>- Dr John Kani Certificates of Excellence</li> <li>- Awards as a best Creative Researcher and a best Theatre for Social Change Performance creator, 2023.</li> <li>- Wits Junction Top Achiever's Certificate of Excellence, 2023.</li> <li>- Wits Junction Top Achiever's Certificate of Excellence, 2025</li> </ul>
Workshop Series: <b><i>Rupture and Repair: An interdisciplinary and embodied approach to Arts and Health Practices in a post-conflict South African context</i></b>	This presentation is based on the work of a South African non-profit organisation called Sp(i)eel Arts Therapies Collective which consists of a team of Arts Therapists, Applied Arts Practitioners and Arts Activists who develop and deliver culturally-informed, community-based mental health care that recognises the interconnectedness of physical, psychological, spiritual, and environmental health. The presentation is framed by trauma-informed and healing-centred theories, and will offer case vignettes to illustrate the work.	<p><b>Marlize Swanepoel</b></p> <p>Marlize Swanepoel is an HPCSA-registered Drama therapist and the founding director of Sp(i)eel Arts Therapies Collective. She is a guest lecturer and examiner at the University of Cape Town and an enthusiastic advocate for the Arts for Health movement in South Africa that speaks to healthcare from a global South perspective.</p>
Online Workshop Series: <b><i>Inside Out: Puppetry and Improvisation for Such a Time as This Exploring the Expressive Release of Collective and Suppressed Emotions</i></b>	Using Disney's <i>Inside Out</i> as a framework, this interactive workshop explores puppetry and improvisational theatre as powerful tools for emotional expression and social change.	<p><b>Jordan Daniel Stewart</b></p> <p>Jordan Daniel Stewart is a 4th-year PhD student in Educational Theatre in Colleges and Communities at New York University, USA, specializing in Drama Therapy. He is a creative artist, arts educator, therapeutic arts researcher, pastoral counselor, and Drama Therapist in training. His research centers on autoethnographic performance exploring the experiences of Historically Black College and University (HBCU) students who have benefited from Drama Therapy. Jordan co-founded the HBCU Initiative within the North American Drama Therapy Association, advocating for Drama Therapy programs and resources at HBCUs.</p>
Panel Series: <b><i>Vuka Uzenzele! Changing the</i></b>	This interactive paper presentation shares insights from the Vukuzenzele Community Project, a youth empowerment	<p><b>Dr Sibongile Bhebhe</b></p>

<p><b><i>Lived Landscape of Youth in Squatter Camps</i></b></p>	<p>initiative based in Kya Sands, an informal settlement north-west of Johannesburg. The project responds to the urgent need for youth development, capacity building, and community advocacy in a context marked by precarious living conditions, poor service delivery, and systemic marginalisation.</p> <p>The presentation seeks to disrupt hierarchies of expertise and affirm the voices of those most affected by systemic neglect.</p>	<p>Dr Sibongile Bhebhe is an Applied Drama and Theatre facilitator, researcher, educator, and practitioner whose work explores theatre as a tool for youth empowerment, social justice, and community transformation. She has been working closely with the Vukuzenzele Community Project in Kya Sands, Johannesburg, using participatory theatre methodologies to support youth in building confidence, leadership, and advocacy skills. She is joined by a collaborative team that reflects the heart of the project: Oupa Nkosi, Nonhlanhla Mosebi, and Khomotso Rapetswa. Retired Judge Margie Victor has been a guide, supporter, and inspirational mentor, while Zakkie and Siddiqah have been excellent volunteers whose dedication has strengthened the work. Central are the voices of the Vukuzenzele youth (ages 13–18), who bring creativity, courage, and resilience.</p>
<p>Panel Discussion: <b><i>Between Global Citizenship and Arts Activism: Tensions and Synergies in Applied Drama from Africa to the World</i></b></p>	<p>In an era where global ideals often fail to translate into local realities of justice and human change, this panel explores the dynamic and sometimes contradictory relationship between global citizenship and arts activism within Applied Drama and Theatre practice. Drawing from ongoing transnational research collaborations between institutions in South Africa, Burma, and Palestine, we examine how applied theatre methods can navigate the tensions between universalism and local agency, diplomacy and dissent, and the personal and political.</p> <p>Our panel presents two primary case studies: an Arts and Global Citizenship course at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, and an introductory Peace and Conflict Studies course at Parami University in Burma. Through these contexts, we demonstrate how applied drama techniques—including story circles, forum theatre, hot seating, and Mono-logues —serve as pedagogical tools for exploring the global dimensions of experiences that are simultaneously deeply personal, embodied, and politically charged.</p>	<p><u>Panel Members and Presentations</u></p> <p><b>Petro Janse van Vuuren</b> (Chair)  <b>Nomfundo Ncanana</b> and <b>Empress Creative Taboo</b> (born uNtokozo wakwa Deyi): African perspectives in global citizenship – Manganyi, Mkhize, Nyamnjoh, Nkruma and others.  <b>David Golding</b>: The Conflict Within: Forum Theatre in Post-Coup Myanmar  <b>Nina Neubauer</b> From Johannesburg to Palestine - Story Circles and Monologues: Personal Narratives in Political Contexts  <b>Bongani Ngomane</b> Theoretical Tensions: The Personal vs. Political in Applied Drama Practice  <b>Teto Mokaila</b> Respondant</p> <p><b>Dr Petro Janse van Vuuren</b> is Senior Lecturer at Drama for Life, University of the Witwatersrand, specializing in applied drama and theatre and is the course coordinator of the new Arts and Global Citizenship undergraduate major.</p>

	<p>Central to our discussion is the question of how applied theatre can move beyond the rhetoric of global citizenship to embody what we term "Just(Us)"—a locally-rooted, co-created practice of justice that honors African epistemologies such as Ubuntu and Pan-Africanism while engaging critically with global frameworks. We examine how techniques like the Gaza Mono-logues and the integration of the South African Constitution create spaces for students to interrogate their own positioning within global and local power structures.</p> <p>The panel addresses the conference's core questions around human change by exploring how applied drama enables participants to move fluidly between personal, local, and global scales of understanding and action. We consider how these practices foster empathy and shared narratives across ethnic and religious boundaries, particularly in conflict-affected contexts, while simultaneously challenging dominant paradigms of citizenship and activism.</p> <p>Through our collaborative research involving early career researchers, we demonstrate how applied theatre can serve as both a method of critical pedagogy and a form of resistance to systemic violence and authoritarianism. Our findings suggest that the tensions between global citizenship and arts activism, rather than being obstacles, can be pedagogically leveraged to deepen understanding of justice as an embodied, relational practice.</p> <p>This panel contributes to the conference's aim of reimagining justice by presenting applied drama not merely as a tool for social change, but as a methodology for navigating the complex relationship between global ideals and local realities in fractured societies. We offer concrete examples of how arts-based practices can hold space for grief, rage, hope, and</p>	<p><b>David Golding</b> is the Chair of the Division of Social Science and Humanities at Parami University in Myanmar. Previously, he taught peace and conflict studies at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.</p> <p><b>Bongani Ngomane</b> is a PhD candidate researching the intersection of Public Ethnography, performance and Democracy.</p> <p><b>Nomfundo Ncanana</b> is a Masters Graduate in Drama Therapy from Drama for Life, contributing to research on Arts and Global Citizenship in a Fractured World, funded by the Faculty of Humanities Research and Innovations Committee.</p> <p><b>Teto Mokaila</b> is an MA graduate and sessional lecturer specializing in forum theatre and applied drama methodologies in educational contexts.</p>
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	imagination while fostering the kind of human change necessary for building just communities.	
Workshop Series: <b><i>Decolonial Public Art Protest Performance for access including artist with disability under the Soweto Creative Movement</i></b>	This workshop explores the use of indigenous African play-games as tools for reflection, justice, and collective care within academic and community contexts. Grounded in the philosophy of Ubuntu and the pedagogical insights of critical theorists such as Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal, the session positions play not only as recreation but as a serious methodology for learning and healing.	<b>Paul Noko</b>  Paul Noko received his education at the University of Witwatersrand, with a master's degree in applied Drama and Theatre in education, social and community building and process drama through therapeutic techniques. He holds a BA honors degree in Cultural Policy Making and Indigenous Theatre in Education for actors and non-actors as well at the University of Witwatersrand. Paul Noko did the theory of Practice as Research (PAR) in Norway University of science and technology in 2019 and he continues to educate himself by contributing to the constant upkeep of theatre, film, and live performance within the South African theatre communities across the country. In 2017 Paul was nominated for the "Fleur du Cap": Rosalie van der Grucht for young director's award.
Online Film Series: <b><i>Film as a Tool for Cultural Reflection: Exploring Masculinity and Trauma through the Documentary 'Matabeleland'</i></b>	<p>In many African contexts, masculinity is shaped by silence, stoicism, and the expectation to endure. Emotional expression, particularly among men, is often discouraged, and spaces to explore vulnerability, grief, or identity remain scarce. This session explores how film can disrupt these norms and serve as a catalyst for healing-centered dialogue among African men.</p> <p>At the heart of the presentation is Matabeleland, a documentary set in southwestern Zimbabwe. The film follows Chris, a 60-year-old immigrant navigating ancestral loss, fractured love, and spiritual reckoning. His emotional openness, rarely portrayed in African male protagonists, has struck a chord with male audiences across the region. Many see reflections of their own internal struggles in Chris's vulnerability, even when they disagree with his choices. For some, it's the first time their emotional realities have been mirrored so honestly on screen.</p>	<b>Nyasha Kadandara</b>  Nyasha is an award-winning pan-African director and cinematographer who tells stories that traverse the continent and reflect alternative voices. She is always looking to experiment with new forms of storytelling, including virtual reality, podcasting, fiction, and non-fiction. Her work has been showcased at numerous festivals, including Hotdocs, Sheffield DocFest, SxSW, and DOC NYC. Nyasha is a 2022 Brown Girls Doc Mafia Fellow, a Sundance Documentary Fund Grantee, and recently participated in the 2023 TIFF Filmmakers lab. She is developing her first fiction feature, 'Come Sunrise, We Shall Rule', and is in post-production with the independent documentary, 'Matabeleland'. Both films take place in her native country, Zimbabwe. Currently, with her love for all things sports, Nyasha is following the Copper Queens, who recently debuted at the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup.

	<p>Since its premiere at CPH: DOX 2025 and the Encounters South African International Documentary Festival 2025, subsequent screenings of Matabeleland across Southern Africa have elicited powerful responses, revealing a deep need for spaces where African men can gather not to perform strength, but to interrogate it.</p>	
<p>Workshop Series: <b><i>Beyond the Western Frame: Lessac's Body Energies and the Lived Experiences of Black African Student Dancers</i></b></p>	<p>This workshop engages with the urgent call of the 17<sup>th</sup> Drama for Life Conference to centre Justice(Us) by interrogating how somatic methodologies, originally rooted in Western epistemologies, can be reimagined in relation to the lived experiences of Black African students. The workshop specifically explores the intersection of the 3 Lessac Kinesensic body NRG's Buoyancy, Potency, and Radiancy in relation to the socio-cultural realities of African dance and choreography training.</p>	<p><b>Gavin Matthys</b></p> <p>Gavin Matthys is an actor, director, voice artist, writer, physical theatre performer and a voice coach. He is currently a lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand (WITS) where he lectures in the areas of Voice, Directing, Movement and Physical Theatre. Prior to his employment at Wits, He taught voice and physical theatre at the University of Pretoria (UP) and Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), respectively. Gavin is a certified Lessac Kinesensic Body and Voice Teacher ® (USA), 2022, and serves as a board member of the Lessac Training and Research Institution. He further holds a master's degree in Directing from TUT. As a director, Gavin has initiated and engaged with his own work and creative development on both national and international platforms. He has written and directed several productions that was staged at the National Arts Festival; the Clover Aardklop Festival; and the South African State Theatre.</p> <p><b>Azile A. Mningizane</b></p> <p>Azile A. Mningizane is a third-year Theatre and Performance student at the University of the Witwatersrand, specializing in Physical Theatre and Directing. Born in Kagiso, his work is rooted in personal and cultural narratives. He has directed Fences (Act 1, Scene 3) at the Wits Downstairs Theatre and co-directed Eskom-Se-Poosh at St Alban's College. As a performer, he featured in Seven Colours by Kamogelo Molobye and MEME[Tics] by Gavin Matthys. Azile's practice explores identity, memory, and the body, blending physical storytelling with community-driven themes and a commitment to innovative, embodied performance-maki</p>

		<p><b>Beata Bellé Wessie</b></p> <p>Beata Bellé Wessie is a multifaceted creative. A versatile dancer, thespian, model and digital creator. She is based in Johannesburg, currently doing her 3rd year in BA Theatre and Performance at the University of the Witwatersrand, majoring in Physical theatre and Design. Recent professional engagements she presented and performed in: Presented in the ‘Mapping Somatic Knowledge Ecologies Conference’ 2 at the University of Pretoria (2025), ‘MOLORA’ dir. by Tshepang Sehole performed and received an Ovation Award at the National Arts Festival (2025), ‘Seven Colours: LETSEMA’ directed by Kamogelo Molobye at the Market Theatre (2025) ‘MEME[TICS]’ dir. by Gavin Matthys performed at the Wits Great Hall (2024) and Pitso Ya Kalaneng Festival (2025). A series of impactful performances she was involved in include: ‘Letter 8 to Mousai’ dir. by Joziah Wheeler performed at the Wits Theatre and in the Pitso Ya Kalaneng Festival (2024/5), ‘Liminal Space’ dir. by Yemimah Jacobs (2024), ‘Ground Zero’ dir. by Gavin Matthys, performed at the Performance Studies International (Psi) Conference in Africa (2023). ‘For Coloured Girls’ dir by Jemima Jacobs (2023), ‘Eternal Peace’ written and dir by Thingo Mcanyana at the Emakhaya Theatre (2023).</p> <p><b>Sandile Sibanda</b></p> <p>Sandile Sibanda is a multidisciplinary performer and creative, working as an actor, choreographer/dancer, writer, singer, and musician. His stage experience includes major student productions such as KE NAKO (Tshegofatso Molaolwa) and BQ4: SISAZILILE! (Mandipumle Nokonya), as well as choreography and ensemble work in MEME[TICS] (Gavin Matthys) and QHAWULA (Naledi Tsolo). He has co-directed the children’s financial literacy play MJOJO and served as Assistant Director for The Nedbank Green Indaba &amp; Awards Performance (Zolani Shangase). Currently pursuing a Bachelor of Theatre and Performance at the University of the Witwatersrand, Sandile has trained in Voice and Physical Theatre with leading South African practitioners and completed the Lessac Kinesensic Intensive at the University of Pretoria. He has also presented in the ‘Mapping Somatic Knowledge Ecologies Conference’ at the University of</p>
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		Pretoria (2025). Alongside his studies, he facilitates Somatic Practices for voice work at Wits, mentoring peers while deepening his own artistic journey.
Performance Series: <b><i>Solitude</i></b>	<p>In collaboration with the WITS Third-year Physical Theatre Class, this artistic-academic offering is an exploration, unpacking and deconstruction of the glaring and weighted realities of being confronted with solitude, guided by the following synopsis of the works:</p> <p><b>SOLITUDE - IN WEIGHTING</b> They sit, walk, and move while waiting in silence, weighted by a growing load. A load of memories, losses, (re)births and glimmers of light. This creative process adopted a collaborative, learner-centred and embodied inquiry using dance and movement as a way of knowing.</p>	<p><b>Smangaliso Ngwenya</b></p> <p>Smangaliso Ngwenya is a multi-disciplinary artist, researcher, and founder of Isifiso SakaGogo Performance Theatre. The essence of all his offerings, research and writing is rooted in dance and movement initiated in the embodied, moving, dancing black body and movement/ dance as a way of knowing. This is towards investigating epistemologies and pedagogies in the black African experience and documentation of dance. He holds a Bachelor of Journalism and Media Studies from Rhodes University (2016) and a Master of Arts in the field of Cultural Policy and Management (2020) from the University of the Witwatersrand.</p>
Paper Series: <b><i>A Human Change! Facilitation Process Experience, Part Two</i></b>	<p>Drama for Life (DFL) has a legacy of producing skilled self-reflexive facilitators. This being a generally expected outcome of any Applied Drama and Theatre programme. Part of DFL's particular success is set on two key components aligned within the disciplines of Applied Drama/Theatre and Drama Therapy. First, is a deep trust in the aesthetic and enhancing power of embodiment (as informed by drama) to holding conceptual, communal, and dialogic process. Second, is the need for the facilitator(s) to find a critical lens to approach a given topic with, from which to locate their own positionality, and then, structure how to process said topic within a group context. As Tamara Gordon-Roberts writes when speaking on the training of Applied Drama and Theatre practitioners within Drama for Life: "...the two pillars of the "door into the unknown" becomes a continuous negotiation for the emerging self-reflexive practitioner." (Barnes, et al., 2022, p. 84).</p>	<p><b>Drama for Life Masters Students</b></p> <p>MA students in Applied Drama and theatre at Drama for Life, are united by their passion for the transformative powers of theatre. The cohort has collaborated on projects exploring the role of theatre in society.</p> <p>The creative team, comprising of <b>Dintshitle Mashile, Erin King, Jabulani Lebese, Karabo Lambani, Buhle Sibanyoni, Phumudzo Matsila, and Vuyo Mthembu</b> lend their multidisciplinary skillsets which cut across various applied theatre methodologies and performance components including visual arts, song, poetry and theatre. This performance and talkback will offer a rich versatility in craftsmanship by responding to the rapid expansion of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and what it means to be human.</p>

	<p>This notion of the ‘door to the unknown’ within our current global turn offers an interesting proposition from which this conference workshop is proposed. With increased levels of political polarisation (globally and locally), increased levels of isolation documented among youth (as reported by the WHO Commission on Social Connection in June 2025), and a hyper-acceleration of AI integration within all strata of society, there is a seemingly incomprehensible challenge on the facilitator and, perhaps more broadly, the role of facilitation itself, to determine which door leads to what unknown. This largely because of a significant component in our current world experience that sits in a dangerous liminality of an under-articulated ‘data-heavy ambiguity’ – where we have access to so much information but little expectation to articulate our positionality nor comprehend set data in context.</p> <p>It is from this contextual framing that this proposal is submitted. It is to host a multi-session, group (between 15-21 participants) workshop process that juxtaposes three Applied facilitation approaches; human-led, AI-prompted, and human-and-AI integrated, to grapple with two core questions:</p> <p>(1) What might be ‘the role of Applied Drama and Theatre, Arts Therapies, and other applied arts in fostering personal, social, political, and systemic change.’;</p> <p>(2) How juxtaposing of current and differing modes of ‘facilitation’ could create ‘a critical, creative space for artists, scholars, practitioners, students, and activists to reflect on how, when, and why human change should occur in times of socio-political disruption.’</p> <p>The structure of the workshop process would, ideally, fall over three days of the conference. Sessions on days one and two would be 60 – 90 min sessions, broken up into three working groups – one being human-led, the other AI-prompted, and</p>	
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	<p>the third a blended human-AI experience. Each working group would have the same starting objective and guiding questions, but will experience how these are processed differently by virtue of their facilitation approach. A final joint presentation session (90min), ideally on the final day, would be offered to the broader conference attendees, incorporating live performance/embodiment, technology, and discussion. The preference is that participants sign up on Day 1 and commit to the full process.</p> <p>The cohort of DFL MA CRP students (13 people), along with experienced lecturers (3), would design and guide the process.</p>	
<p>Online Paper Series: <b><i>The Ultimate Contradiction: How Mental Health Intersects with Creative Expression</i></b></p>	<p>This presentation examines a fundamental contradiction within contemporary arts practice: while creative expression offers profound opportunities for human connection and healing, the capitalistic and colonial structures governing arts industries often perpetuate the very dehumanization that applied theatre seeks to address. This contradiction becomes particularly acute within mental health contexts, where the tension between artistic liberation and systemic oppression directly impacts both practitioners and participants.</p> <p>Drawing from autoethnographic research and participatory action research conducted through my master's thesis at CUNY School of Professional Studies, this study investigates how applied theatre can navigate this paradox to create genuinely liberatory practice. The research addressed the central question: How does playbuilding within a liberatory mental health peer community inform both personal healing journeys and the evolution of identity as applied theatre scholar-practitioners?</p> <p>The research employed a two-phase mixed-methods approach. Phase one utilized autoethnographic analysis to</p>	<p><b>Susannah Stahlman</b></p> <p>Susanna Stahlmann (she/her) is a New York-based applied theatre practitioner, mental health advocate, and recent MA graduate from CUNY School of Professional Studies. Her undergraduate training was completed through the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theatre Actor Training Program. As a teaching artist, she has held residencies at Lincoln Center Theatre, Roundabout Theatre Company, St. Ann's Warehouse, and Arts Ignite, working across diverse contexts including detention centers, public schools, law classrooms, mental health peer communities, and internationally at Nkosi's Haven in Johannesburg, South Africa through artsINSIDEOUT. Her specialized practice focuses on trauma-informed pedagogy and working with English language learners through drama-based methods. Committed to challenging mental health stigma, her personal documentary film "Borderline Coffee" was featured on AMC+ streaming services in 2024. Her current research centers on decolonizing applied theatre practice within mental health contexts and developing accessible, liberation-focused creative methodologies.</p>

	<p>position my artistic trajectory within broader mental health discourse, examining how dominant industry norms systematically exclude those who don't conform to neurotypical, Eurocentric standards of "successful" artistry. Phase two involved analyzing a 12-week collaborative playbuilding workshop co-facilitated with peers Claire Fleitz and Kari Berggren-Olk at a non-clinical mental health community center, serving adult participants from diverse backgrounds and access needs.</p> <p>The study revealed specific devising methodologies that successfully supported diverse access needs while centering "art for art's sake" outside capitalist market demands. These practices became crucial tools for identifying facilitator biases regarding "quality" theatre and recognizing artistic excellence within non-traditional frameworks. Significantly, the research demonstrated that despite pedagogical differences between commercial and justice-oriented theatre, aesthetic judgments often remain unconsciously rooted in Eurocentric, perfectionist standards.</p> <p>Following Audre Lorde's assertion that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," the study asks: if theatre serves liberation, how must the theatrical tools themselves be liberated from oppressive frameworks? The research identifies concrete strategies for decolonizing both process and product in applied theatre practice.</p> <p>The presentation will facilitate critical dialogue around the complex intersections between artist, social worker, and applied theatre practitioner identities. How have white supremacist systems fragmented holistic, community-driven healing approaches, necessitating artificial professional categorizations? What ethical frameworks guide practice</p>	
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	<p>when arts work requires creative risk-taking while ensuring emotional safety for all participants?</p> <p>This research contributes to decolonial approaches within applied theatre by challenging Western therapeutic models and artistic hierarchies while offering concrete methodological alternatives. The work demonstrates how arts-based research methodologies can surface marginalized perspectives often absent from dominant human change discourses. By grounding theoretical frameworks in lived experience and community partnership, this presentation models the "embodied, relational, and co-created" justice practices the conference seeks to explore, demonstrating how applied theatre can simultaneously serve individual healing and collective transformation.</p>	
<p>Performance Series: <b><i>Never Again</i></b></p>	<p>This paper is a practitioner's reflection on a project using Theatre-in-Education (TIE) in the teaching of a Shona novel in Zimbabwe to form 3 students as an attempt in decolonial pedagogics. The paper is necessitated by the realisation that Shona novel writers in the colonial era found themselves in an invidious situation where they suffered both state and self-induced censorship, rendering their writings ideological tools for perpetual cultural, social and political domination of the blacks by the white colonial Rhodesian settlers.</p>	<p><b>Darlingboy Creative Group</b></p> <p>Creative arts students' group from VUT is a passionate collective of theatre-makers, poets, musicians, and multidisciplinary artists who come together to celebrate the power of physical and performance-based art. Driven by love for creative expression, the group provides a space where artists from all walks of life can experiment, collaborate, and bring their visions to life. From theatre and spoken word to music and movement, they fuse forms to create performances that are immersive, thought-provoking, and deeply human. United by curiosity, courage, and a commitment to storytelling, the collective explores social realities, emotional truths, and shared experiences, transforming stages into spaces of dialogue, reflection, and connection.</p>
<p>Performance Series: <b><i>Meokgo</i></b></p>	<p>Meokgo is a collaborative body of performance which explores the tears of black young men; unpacking toxic masculinity through the lens of cultural and traditional practices, rites of passage and what it means to be a young black man in 21st century in Tembisa, Johannesburg. This performance seeks to understand the social paradigms of</p>	<p><b>DFL MA students: Jabulani Lebesse, Dintshitile Mashile, Thabang Kwebu, Palesa Makhalima, Richard Ranhlakgwe, Lehlohonolo Mohale</b></p> <p>The cohort of Meokgo bring forth different lenses of artistic contributions within the performance itself and beyond. <b>Dintshitile Mashile</b> offers her intelligence through directing and <b>Jabulani Lebesse</b> as a playwright, noting</p>



	<p>masculinity, how it is accumulated through different practices, outlining various rites of passage both named and practiced.</p>	<p>that they are both trained applied drama and theatre practitioners currently doing masters. <b>Thabang Kwebu</b> is known for contributing strongly in Theatre and television. <b>Palesa Makhalima</b> understands music and the role it plays in theatre and acting. <b>Richard Rahlakgwe</b> is equipped with skill and knowledge playwright and television acting and currently attending his training in applied drama and theatre at Drama for Life - Wits University. <b>Lehlohonolo Mohale</b> is a skilled percussionist and currently offers his services at the TX Theatre. The cast brings unique group ethic and offers critical dialogue while developing different perspective of what reflexive and reflective entails.</p>
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## Thank You!

We would like to thank all of our partners who have supported us through these endeavours.  
Without you, none of this would be possible.



### Map for the Wits Theatre Complex and Emakhaya Theatre

