

THEATRE PRACTICES



AND BUSINESS IN
NAMIBIA READER

2021

A COMPILATION OF PERSPECTIVES IN NAVIGATING THEATRE
SUSTAINABLY FOR EMERGING THEATRE CREATIVES IN NAMIBIA


NATIONAL THEATRE OF NAMIBIA

THEATRE PRACTICES AND BUSINESS IN NAMIBIA READER

2021

A compilation of perspectives in
navigating theatre sustainably for emerging
theatre creatives in Namibia.



A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue sleeveless dress, is shown in profile from the waist up. She is looking upwards and to the right, with her mouth slightly open as if singing or speaking. Her hands are raised and open, palms facing forward. The background is dark, and there are vibrant, out-of-focus lights in shades of blue, green, and yellow, suggesting a stage performance.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Adolescent Development
AMAA	Africa Movie Academy Awards
ASSA	Arts Summit of Southern Africa
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BAFTA	British Academy of Film and Television Arts
BIPA	Business and Intellectual Property Authority
BTP	Black Tree Productions
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COTA	College of the Arts
CV	Curriculum Vitae
CW	The CW Television Network
DCP	Digital Cinema Package
DDE	Da-mâi Dance Ensemble
DStv	Digital Satellite Television
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFACCA	International Federation of Art Councils & Cultural Agencies
IMDb	Internet Movie Database
KFC	Kentucky Fried Chicken
LAC	Legal Assistance Centre
LTCL	Licentiate of Trinity College London
MA	Master of Arts
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NACN	National Arts Council of Namibia
NASCAM	Namibian Society of Composer and Authors of Music
NCIG	Namibian Creative Industry Guide
NCIS	Naval Criminal Investigative Service, television series
NDA	Non-Disclosure Agreement
NFC	Namibia Film Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTFA	Namibian Theatre and Film Awards
NTN	National Theatre of Namibia
NUST	Namibia University of Science and Technology
NYC	New York City
O&L	Ohlthaver & List
OMI	Oudano Momve Investment
PA	Personal Assistant
R&D	Research and Development
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SMART	Self-Monitoring and Reporting Technology
S&T	Subsistence and Travel Allowance
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
SUV	Sport Utility Vehicle
TV	Television
TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
UCT	University of Cape Town
UNAM	University of Namibia
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
US	United States
WYS	Write Your Story

INTRODUCTION

Nelago Shilongoh

Artistic Director,
National Theatre of Namibia (NTN).



The Theatre Practices and Business in Namibia reader is a compilation of reflections, perspectives and recommendations by theatre and creative experts on how to navigate theatre sustainably in the country. Targeted for students and emerging theatre creatives, it echoes the realities, challenges and opportunities that lie within the Namibian theatre environment. Defined by various artistic forms, theatre is the performative sharing of our lived experiences and imaginations with a given audience. It maintains the heartbeat of a people, and, in turn, requires equitable reward and recognition for its labour and contributions. Through interviews and written segments, this reader presents a collection of lived experiences and guidelines on developing careers and sustainable processes in Namibian theatre.

The historical development and trajectory of theatre in Namibia can itself be taken as inspiration and justification of this reader. Historically, the national theatre (then named the Windhoek Theatre) produced seasonal shows that stemmed from operas, ballets and various western-influenced dramatic forms, that served a limited, elite space and audience. Following independence, and empowered by liberated possibilities, creative practitioners in urban spaces developed an off-stage orientation towards performances and settings, with social change and cultural transformation as central priorities. The past fifteen years have further witnessed the emergence of vibrant writers, directors and practitioners covering a wide range of topics and exploring alternative techniques. This motivation to seize opportunities and adjust to sociopolitical and economic realities can serve as a model as we face new challenges, and realise new opportunities to create viable and sustainable career options in the creative sector.

Nevertheless, despite its significant contributions, the predominantly social orientation and character of post-independent Namibian theatre means that its dynamic of passion and activist commitments are often not balanced with financial security, which is equally critical in fostering sustainable careers in the sector. Consequently, the rewards of working in theatre for several practitioners were, and largely remain, intrinsically linked to the thrill of the artistic work and its social value rather than, or in the absence of, substantial economic gains. With the emerging generation, the conversation around balancing creative passion with the creation of sustainable careers has become commonplace. These practitioners are increasingly delving into various prospects to explore artistically-inclined business prospects to sustain their lives. This has produced a useful backdrop of insights illuminating potential future directions. The mission now is to explore artistic work that is measured with innovation and passion on the one hand, and tangible value and financial viability on the other. This reader contributes towards this mission and offers recommendations on how emerging workers in the performing arts sector can address the pursuit of entrepreneurial theatre practices in Namibia.

The creative and cultural sector is an important component of

the Namibian economy and offers much potential in national development and economic return, besides its recognised sociocultural value. The sector has the potential to invigorate a resilient industry comprising of innovation and job creation.

While research and structural work continue to be directed towards attending to this complex objective, emerging creatives and theatre practitioners can gain from the insight resulting from the trial and error navigated by those who have tackled, and continue to negotiate, the prospects of theatre and business dynamics in Namibia. Earning a living in the creative and cultural sector is not at all easy, but, as continental and regional trends indicate, creative careers are increasingly in demand. Additionally, this set of work continues to demonstrate its relevance and resilience by instigating innovation and entrepreneurship through cross-sectoral cooperation. Indeed, culture and the arts are increasingly recognised as vehicles for social cohesion, and demand skills, competencies and resources that ensure they play their role on collective development. To make meaningful contributions in this regard, the practitioner requires critical research and relevant insight. It is for these reasons that this reader is developed through conversations with and reflections by experts in the sector.

The reader offers insights by:

- (i) Shedding light on lived experiences from theatre experts and drama graduates;
- (ii) Demystifying the uses of drama and storytelling skills;
- (iii) Recommending ways to sustainably practise and apply services within the performing arts sector and beyond.

The reader is not developed as an in-depth research or study, and does not employ a methodological scope or approach. Thus, the reader does not seek to define key terms, articulate industry classifications or offer statistical and economic indications. It does, however, seek to offer a foundational read on the opportunities available to explore both within the sector as well as in the general economic context. Most importantly, the reader aims to leave readers with critical considerations for professional development, career direction and cross-sectoral application.

The expert contributors – through interviews and written perspectives – cover varied areas such as arts administration, working as a producer, professionalism and etiquette, branding and marketing, filling industry gaps, storytelling in sales and advertising, cultural management as well as careers in the corporate, wellness, research, and education spaces. Though not all areas regarding theatre practices are covered for this edition, the recommendations are relevant to current circumstances. The terms cultural, creative and performing arts sector are used interchangeably to refer to all work that encompasses the art of storytelling. Acting on the recommendations from the contributors calls for further research to be realistically explored and tackled.

NOTE BY THE NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL OF NAMIBIA

Patrick Sam
Chairperson



The National Arts Council of Namibia (NACN) is pleased to have provided funding for the development of the reader: Theatre Practices and Business in Namibia 2021. The NACN, through its mandate, has the duty to lead advocacy for the case of the arts, to establish the arts as a viable career and to build an effective creative industry in order to bring prosperity to the nation and alleviate poverty.

Through various engagements, the council has been working towards implementing a knowledge-based creative and cultural sector to identify and articulate the various careers and economic orientations that inherently contribute to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). This includes developing research projects that can better inform the general public and stakeholders on the gaps and sectoral opportunities that can be explored.

Though the reader is a collection of reflections of individual experiences and guidelines, the recommendations cannot be overlooked as they draw from lived experiences from experts in the performing arts sector. Thus, it sheds light for students and the emerging generation of theatre practitioners to partake in the sector effectively. We thank the NTN and the contributors for this initiative that is contributing to conversations driving a sustainable creative and culturally-based economy.

Our next step as the council is to support research initiatives that can enhance and guide our sector to bring various recommendations to life. Finally, I have to add that if we want things we have never had, we must do things we have never done. This reader manifests that vision.

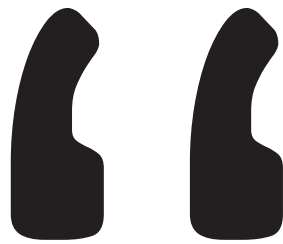


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Funding for this reader was partly provided by the NACN through its Covid-19 Relief Fund. Any perspectives, recommendations or conclusions expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NACN. The NACN is in no way mandated by the recommendations contained in this document.

All photos in this reader are contributed.



CREATE
REVENUE BY
CREATING
SOLUTIONS
TO LOCAL
PROBLEMS.

- Hazel Hinda



CON TRIBUTIONS

Photo by Jacob Shichilenge

HAZEL HINDA

**WORKING AS A VERSATILE PERFORMER BETWEEN
THEATRE AND CORPORATE SPACES**



THEATRE PERFORMER, WRITER AND DIRECTOR

Hazel Hinda has more than 13 years of experience in theatre, film, television as well as voice-overs. She graduated with a diploma in performing arts (drama) from the Tshwane University of Technology in Pretoria, formerly known as Pretoria Tech. She started her professional career as an actress on the set of the well-known South African soapie '7de Laan' in 2006, and played Danny for three years. Since then, Hazel has worked as a freelance actor and continues to be active in the growing Namibian theatre and film industry.

WE NEED TO BE ABLE TO TELL AND SELL NEW STORIES AS NAMIBIAN CREATIVES, AND THERE IS A LOT OF POTENTIAL IN COLLABORATING WITH OTHER SECTORS IN EXPRESSING AND SELLING OUR NARRATIVES.

Interviewed by Nelago Shilongoh: Artistic director, NTN.

What developed your interest in acting? What is the background of your training?

It all started as an afternoon extramural activity. My mother was a single working mother back then, and she didn't want me playing in the streets all day. In 1993, I was based in a rural school, and my mother thought I should do something to stimulate my social and speaking skills. That is where it all started, really. Further on in Windhoek, I attended drama lessons at the College of the Arts (COTA) and that is where I gained self-confidence to speak well, just like my mother had envisioned. Drama training shaped me and instilled my interest in human beings and understanding the diversity of our people. It is through my drama training that I have the capacity to work with so many people from various backgrounds.

It is unfortunate that many young people cannot participate in drama clubs today. The quality and quantity have definitely changed over the years. After my early training, I went on to study a diploma in performing arts (drama) at Tshwane University of Technology and after graduating, I was employed on '7de Laan'.

You are one of the few Namibian actors who has experienced a professional career in external industries like that of South Africa. In what areas did you exercise your skill set and what are some of the valuable

lessons you've learnt?

My first professional acting job was on a TV series. I went for the audition and was immediately casted. It was actually meant to be a one-day call. However, the director saw a lot of potential in my talent and skills and even extended my character's background by allowing the character to come from Namibia. It was wonderful to speak my mother tongue on South African national TV. However, after some time, I wanted to explore further performance opportunities, as I had said to myself that I did not study to play only one character for an extended period of time. Even though I had a steady salary, I also wanted to explore other genres/mediums. I was trained for theatre as the department back then had not incorporated performance for film and television. I am thankful I learnt acting for multi cameras on '7de Laan', which is very technically demanding, and I had to learn to tone down my theatre-like performance techniques. I had to adjust performing for three cameras. It was challenging and thrilling. Those were the first few things that I learnt. I appreciated that, because one never stops learning. After working for three years on the soapie, I decided to pursue freelance performances. My early exposure expanded from film to industrial, educational and children's theatre. I also extended to television, as I have done numerous adverts. Versatility is very important, as it makes you employable. This means being able to play any role in any setting or genre. For example, industrial theatre is very challenging; playing for an audience that is not theatre-savvy, so I had to learn the balance between educating

and entertaining in my performance approaches.

When I returned to Namibia, I started to work in film and theatre. Unfortunately, I have not done many soapies here, as there are not many in the country. I stayed committed to my ability to free myself and not hold myself hostage to a preconceived idea about theatre, nor hold myself to the standard of any other theatre-maker. I believe in my ability and craft as I present it, but I am not a 'know-it-all'. I humble myself in the process, whether it is working with a newcomer director or an experienced one. When working with newcomer creatives, I allow their learning and creative process to flourish without overstepping my boundaries. I feel that is important for them. I would only respectfully guide here and there.

The consistency of who I am is based on my professionalism and versatility. Anyone who has worked with me will account for my professionalism and work ethic. It is important for creatives to know that what is said about you as a business is your trademark, your brand. Professionalism is what keeps you going. You can be the most talented and famous, but if you do not have an attitude of workmanship and professionalism with others and respect for your colleagues, then you might as well stay at home and remain a diva. I want to add that as a country, we are too young and too small a sector to have room for unproductive personalities.

I would also not advise anyone to pursue this career if you do not have the passion for it. It requires passion to

move past the times when you do not have a steady income and earn a very small salary. Sometimes you do not get paid your worth. Sometimes you have to invest culturally and socially and think about what you want to give back to Namibia. These are the nuanced processes of our work. So, as much as I have my working rates, I do take into consideration through my given passion what I want to give back at times.

In your opinion, what is a versatile actor?

When I think of versatility, I think of many things. In terms of performance skills, I would pose the following questions: Do you have comedic timing? Can you effect dramatic acting? Do you have the intelligence and skill to play the depth and range of a character? What variety of characters can you play? So, versatile skills are different to versatility in terms of your practice within a given industry. If you can master performance and industry experience, then that is what really makes you an all-rounded versatile actor. Not everyone can be a versatile actor and that is also OK. To be an actor does not necessarily demand that you be versatile. That does not make you less of an actor. Sometimes, as an actor, you can only explore and exercise what your given skill is. For example, if you are a comedic actor – which, mind you, is very difficult – then you have to hone that skill and go as far and as deep as you can.

It can also be challenging to become a versatile actor in Namibia against the given scripts available. A versatile actor has the ability to play a wide range

of scripts. Historically, Namibia has a pool of political and social dramas and satires. With the newer pool of writers, we are beginning to see newer scripts local actors can play. It would be good as a local actor to expose yourself to these scripts to practise your playing ability. One can always visit the NTN for this. A versatile actor also has the ability to play a wide range of characters that even challenge your own personal orientations or beliefs. Being able to step into a role truthfully with integrity makes you versatile in terms of your skill set.

Within the given industry, versatility means being able to switch within different genres to expand your experience. This means that you can grow your experience across

theatre, film, TV and so on. It also means that you have the ability to adapt to different working environments. This also applies to behaviours and etiquette within a given space; being able to know how to conduct yourself in different spaces. For example, the flamboyant and energetic approaches and communal buzz of theatre spaces do not necessarily apply on set, and a versatile actor would know this and apply this accordingly. Versatility in the sector also relates to knowing how to apply acting techniques across different settings and genres. For example, when I worked for Ohlthaver & List's (O&L) Mwenyopaleka Road Show, I could not merely apply my dramatic theatre acting techniques to the show. Nor could I apply children's theatre performance techniques, because I had to play for employees who needed to be informed in an engaging and entertaining way. So, a versatile actor is experienced and intelligent enough to make independent choices that are right for a given environment and project, without being directed as it would be with a newcomer or emerging actor.

Perhaps you are versatile for theatre stages only and not for film or TV, and you should know this about yourself. Or perhaps you are a stage actor who plays for adult audiences only, and not for young audiences. This applies to voice acting as well and involves understanding the voice as a tool and not just the body. Can you act on stage and in studio? Can you do it effectively and efficiently? These are all important questions that get blurred sometimes. It is important to explore and expose yourself to different techniques and environments and find what you like,



THE CONSISTENCY OF WHO I AM IS BASED ON MY PROFESSIONALISM AND VERSATILITY. ANYONE WHO HAS WORKED WITH ME WILL ACCOUNT FOR MY PROFESSIONALISM AND WORK ETHIC.



your focal areas to hone further.

Being a versatile actor also means having the ability to do extensive research, prepare and ask questions to inform your decisions and applications. As we say in the performance world, “an actor prepares”. And you have to know your facts, what is expected of you so that you can offer optimum services in terms of context, technique and behavioural procedures.

It is unfortunate that we do not have extensive training opportunities in Namibia to understand versatility in terms of skills and the required etiquette across different working environments. Of course, not everyone can afford to go to university, but you can learn so much via online platforms. I would urge young and emerging actors to explore the internet as there are so many resources available at no cost.

An actor fundamentally tells stories, whether on or off stage. What are some of the misconceptions on the application of professional acting skills in various sectors? What viable platforms, generally, are there for actors to practise and sustain their careers besides and film and theatre?

My understanding of my abilities and potential of acting have led to me register for a communications programme and I am doing this to extend on my drama foundation for intersectional professional reasons. There are great communication practices within drama. It is unfortunate that many investors and potential employers do not understand the prospects of drama qualifications, especially when seen on a CV. My drama background extends from psychology and communications to even sociology. The basic principle of performance art is psychology and communications. And so I am studying this course to complement my existing skills in the performing arts. This intersectional approach can be useful in boosting and applying drama skills into other practices.

O&L was significant in expanding the sustainable use of industrial theatre for their work place. They understood the use of drama and communications, and extended this project for over 11 years for their employees. They did it because they understood that it was

impactful. Their employees enjoyed the shows, and were able to grasp the growing company culture and innovative ideas that were being implemented. This was a great project that used a mixed pool of professionally experienced and student actors to use theatre as a tool to communicate. It was a wonderful opportunity for actors to work and earn a reasonable living. I think it is also important to think of theatre practices and performance in the areas of cultural exports and branding. Performers and storytellers play a key role in this. We need to be able to tell and sell new stories as Namibian creatives, and there is a lot of potential in collaborating with other



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sectors in expressing and selling our narratives. We can ask ourselves: How does the globe identify Namibia? We cannot merely be known for deserts, diamonds and fish resources. To sell Namibia is to portray the culture, which can only be done through its arts and culture with its creatives and performers.

Essentially, performance opportunities are seasonal in Namibia, and it would be good for actors to blend their skill sets with other practices that can be used for sustainable purposes without straying too far from the drama field. This all calls for serious research and innovative thinking.

Do you see an opportunity for drama graduates and performers to sustainably explore Early Childhood Development (ECD)?

ECD is a critical time for learning and absorbing for a child. The more they learn and are exposed dynamically to the world, the better adults they become. The more well-rounded they become. If your ECD is well established, you are less likely to go wrong in future. Investing in creative learning and engagement is a way of tackling the problems youngsters are troubled with currently. The intensity of youth crime, violence and social ills is a reflection of socially malnourished children. Early development through creative learning and engagement helps us have less violent, frustrated and socially implicit adults. This has been proved countless times by psychotherapists, socialists and social workers around the world. Creative exposure at an early age boosts social, motor and cognitive skills and this has a holistic effect on a person. How wonderful would it be if we taught empathy, honesty and the value of communication and helpfulness through dramatic means? There is potential for actors and theatre-makers here.

There are many gaps to fill in creative ECD and children's theatre in Namibia, and there are opportunities around this. One has to design these services and experiences to targeted age and language groups. If you are fluent in your mother tongue, write and perform scripts for our local communities. That is also a way to create revenue – by creating solutions to local problems. There are opportunities to partner with local councillors to support social development initiatives if you are able to write good proposals and articulate your ideas and plans well. It is very important to articulate your skills and offerings well, otherwise you will struggle in this sector.

The Namibian actor today cannot just learn how to act on stage or on film. You need to learn the business side of things and the paper work. Learn to write proposals, research, read and understand our socio-economic environment. I would also encourage actors to spread out into the country and not limit themselves to Windhoek. Actors often stay in the capital city and wait to be casted in someone's production and that is not a sustainable way of looking at life or a career. Go back into your communities, identify the gaps, create relationships and sustain yourselves.

It is unfortunate that a lot of creative work is based in Windhoek and I too have struggled with this. I made a

decision to stay in the city for a while is as I wanted to plough my footprint where the opportunities were most offered, but eventually you should be able to expand your footprint and create new relationships and sustainable projects. If we are to build this sector, we also need to plough back into the regions and fill the gaps there. We cannot sit on our own bread and wait for productions to happen. Institutions can only do so much. A wonderful space I like to reference is the Arts Café in Rundu, which is vibrant and seems sustainable. They have traditional folktales and performances which are relevant to the audiences there. The one thing our government and local authorities have available are spaces such as halls and venue infrastructures that can be made use of. We need to be able to look at various ways of making an income. We need to be able to think expansively and make use of and collaborate with our communities. I remember participating in the Darling Voorkamerfest (front room festival) in South Africa's Western Cape region, which made use of residential houses as venues for performances. How wonderful is that? Why is it that we think we need to depend on expensive venues to host our work and sell tickets? This Voorkamerfest model can also be applied in Namibia.

Innovation is required of us right now. Innovation is needed for our sustainability. Innovation for sustaining this industry we all depend on.

Are you saying that performers do not think of their communities as important stakeholders?

We're definitely neglecting our communities. Theatre is not just what we assume as the Shakespeare, ballets

and operas. In the African context, what is theatre? Within our context, it means community. It means engagement. Raw, innovative and impactful. When we sat around fires and watched our family and community performers dramatically portray folktales. That is where our theatre comes from. We need to be able to appreciate the simplicity and beauty of these forms, and apply them to our contemporary times as well. Why can't we return to that kind set up? This was incorporated at the Nama Cultural Festival and it was beautifully welcomed. Our communities are hungry for these experiences, but we are just not trusting that they can become our greatest audiences. Instead we depend on an elitist or exclusive pool of audiences that frequent institutionalised theatre to receive and invest in our work. This is not sustainable or realistic. Art should never be exclusive. And the makers and audiences should not be either. Art is versatile. It is everywhere and can be anywhere. We should bust the myth that our local communities do not appreciate art, and rather do extensive research to create models our people can confidently invest in and support. One cannot merely remain a talented actor and want to be on TV. Not everyone can make it to TV, but with your brilliant talent and skills, why should the world still not have the privilege of your impact?

Is it any different working with theatre producers and corporate clients?

Yes, it is. The producer is often the client and they don't always have a theatre or film background. But there is certainly a difference between theatre producers and corporate clients. Often your artistic producers know what the process requires and what needs to happen. Corporate clients often do not

know these processes and at times question why there are certain costs involved. The myth out there is that art and performances just happen swiftly without intricate processes that take place. They are not always aware of what goes into it and the preparation thereof. The process of rehearsing and the hours of preparation are not understood, or are underestimated. Sometimes corporate clients do not understand that the performing arts are made up of professions, not just hobbies.

Artistic producers often understand the artistic process better, even though in Namibia there are still many exploitive accounts that happen with these producers. Key players are trying to set standards to influence younger actors and artists not to work for unrealistic fees. Thus, leaders and policymakers need to change their attitudes towards performing artists and creative industries. Part of the complexity of working with corporate clients at times may be the experience of unprofessional artists who have not offered valuable services and this has caused detrimental effects on creatives to follow. This effects the devaluation further. So, it is important for performing artists and actors to – at times – help corporate clients understand the processes and the value thereof by offering great services and being professional.

How would you advise emerging performers to articulate their skills and the value of their services amid so many myths?

This is where the business side of things comes in. First of all, you need to put together your profile. Just like a conventional CV needs to be updated and look professional, so does your



Photo by Opas Onucheyo



Photo by Opas Onucheyo

actors' or performers' one. Write down what your skills are. I have an actors' profile that contains all my work experience and the various clients I have worked with. I always share this with clients. You can work with a graphic designer or use a template to make it look visually appealing.

It is also important that you have professional photos of yourself. You do not necessarily need a website, because you can also rely on your social media platforms to articulate your skills and sell your work. Load your Z-Card and all your information. I would advise that whatever your skills are, put it on your social media and share it as much as possible. The way we see KFC adverts all over is the same way you should share your services. If you are a new and emerging performer, affiliate yourself with institutions and key players and share your resume as much as possible.

One must really self-invest, so go for that headshot, take time to create a resume and plan your activities for each month. I would also advise emerging actors to produce a variety of recorded monologues that can be loaded onto online platforms to show your skills and performance range. With the technology at hand, this can be done in a cost-effective manner. It is also important to have your footage and information organised and readily available so that it can be shared in one go upon request. Do not make prospective clients and collaborators wait. Be ready, always.

What are some of your methods and approaches in maintaining relationships and safeguarding your services with clients?

This is basic: Professionalism. Professionalism sells. It is amazing the impact professionalism has. People remember this and make reference to you in conversations. What is also very important is that you ensure that what you are selling is indeed aligned with the skills you have. Do not lie about your experiences and skills. Do not exaggerate them either. Diva attitudes are also a deal-breaker. No one wants to work with a diva. You have to be able to be good to work with and take direction without wasting time. As they say, time is money, and in this sector, there is no money to waste. You have to respect yourself and other people's time.

In your overview of current

opportunities and challenges in Namibia, what would you encourage as complementary/boosting skills to professional acting?

First of all, do your own skill audit and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of yourself. Ask yourself what it is you are brilliant at? What can you improve on? What can you learn anew? Doing a personal SWOT analysis can help direct where you need to go or what you should do next. Perhaps it is setting new relationships, attending training or expanding on new territories. Perhaps it is research on how to blend an 8-5 job



THE NAMIBIAN ACTOR TODAY CANNOT JUST LEARN HOW TO ACT ON STAGE OR ON FILM. YOU NEED TO LEARN THE BUSINESS SIDE OF THINGS AND THE PAPER WORK. LEARN TO WRITE PROPOSALS, RESEARCH, READ AND UNDERSTAND OUR SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT.

with a part-time acting career, as the arts and culture sector in Namibia is not a sustainable and flourishing industry just yet. There are many talented people working 8-5 who are unable to return to the industry because it is not a professional space where you can earn a full-time salary.

Of course, the institutions have a key role to play here, but you cannot

depend solely on institutions. Do research, do analyses and create good proposals. It goes back to your skills, and identifying what these are. I would add that it is important to expose yourself to the various processes in film and theatre. Try volunteering on productions and analyse the process of making the project. Speak to the NTN's artistic director and various film directors. Gain the right exposure and important skills.

It is also important to study the industry further, not just focus on complementary/boosting skills to professional acting. Understand entertainment law better. There are a few small agencies opening up that you can inquire from, such as [Intrik Consulting Services](#). You have to know your worth if you have levelled up all the skills you can acquire at that particular time. Acquaint yourself and ask the questions. We cannot sit on our hopes all day and not ask questions. Though our sectors are not the same, it does help researching the processes and regulations in South Africa in order to be better informed. Do the SWOT of the sector so you can manoeuvre around it in an informed manner and not get trapped in uncomfortable and exploitive situations such as working for exposure. I strongly advise that artists should never work for exposure. It is amazing how events and projects have big budgets for marketing yet creatives are paid so little or nothing at all. Creatives are essential in events. These events need that poet, singer, comedian or performer. You should never agree to be paid in exposure unless you can enter into barter agreements, which should be contractually signed and legally backed up.

What are some undesirable views on performers from the industry that you have experienced? In what ways can professional actors change these views?

As performers, we need to understand that as we work with various clients, such as corporate ones, we are always working to safeguard someone else's future employment. My unprofessionalism can easily cause a detriment on how investors view creatives and performers. If I am charging N\$5 000 for a performance, then I need to be worth that N\$5 000 and deliver my very best.

We have to bust the 'unprofessional'

myth of actors and performers in Namibia. It is important that you respect your craft. You have to respect time and other people's roles in the project you are working on. In theatre, we say there is no such thing as a small role, which also extends to no one is bigger than the other and you cannot act as such.

Substance abuse and use when rehearsing and performing is also problematic and has been a big challenge in our sector for many years. It has become so bad that contracts have these clauses as well. I have a personal practice that I only have a celebratory or social drink at the end of a production run or project, never in between, because I cannot show up exhausted and smelly with a bad voice or dehydrated. My body is my tool and I need to reserve all my energy to sustain the work I do. My work is also not a social affair, it is work. It is my career. So being on time, being professional, having etiquette and making sure that you are well behaved are crucial. Also, if

you are not a professional actor, please do not state that you are a professional actor! Don't oversell yourself, this can be detrimental and you could jeopardise real professional actors' opportunities.

In terms of the future of the Namibian creative sector, what is your hope for the emerging generation of actors? Besides the required institutional and government interventions, what does that future depend on from the individuals?

Please do not have a 'popcorn generation' work ethic. Do not feel entitled and think opportunities and work will be immediately offered to you. You cannot half-bake things. Emerging generations need to inquire about harnessing and sharpening their skills. It is only once in a while that you get a lucky break like I did for '7de Laan'. You have to work hard and seek innovation and sell your value. That means that you have to sharpen

your skills, to compete with current threats such as television networks, Netflix and YouTube. You have to create value. You have to create the need for people to actually spend money to come witness your talent. This is so that when audiences visit the national, community and regional theatres, they find joy and value in your work and invest further. You become your own custodian. So, therefore, it is important that you do not take for granted what can be taken away so easily.

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**VERSATILITY IN THE
SECTOR ALSO RELATES TO
KNOWING HOW TO APPLY
ACTING TECHNIQUES
ACROSS DIFFERENT
SETTINGS AND GENRES.**



Photo by Martin Amushendje



GIRLEY JAZAMA

**DEVELOPING NETWORKS AS AN ACTOR (REGIONAL AND
INTERNATIONAL MARKET): OPPORTUNITY WAITS FOR NO ONE**



ACTRESS, WRITER AND PRODUCER BASED IN NAMIBIA

A Hollywood Immersive alumna, Girley Jazama has been acting in film and theatre productions in Namibia for more than 15 years. Most recently, she is the recipient of the 2020 Sotigui best actor in Southern Africa award as well as the Sotigui D'Or award for her role as Sylvia Kamutjemo in the feature film 'The White Line', directed by Desiree Kahikopo and co-produced by Girley. She has also been nominated for a 2020 Africa Movie Academy Award (AMAA) for best actress in a leading role for her role in 'The White Line'.



“AS AN ACTOR, IT IS IMPORTANT TO STAY READY
SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET READY.”

*Girley Jazama accepting the Sotigui D'Or
award at the Sotigui Awards*

So many aspiring actors in Namibia think that being an actor is glamorous because that is what we see in Hollywood, right? With glamour, I am referring to living the lavish lifestyles Hollywood actors and producers live and earning the money they make.

Unfortunately, that isn't the reality in Namibia. The industry is seasonal. Our films do not have Hollywood blockbuster budgets. We have, let's say, one feature film produced in Namibia on a yearly basis, which means the chance of you being casted is pretty slim and dependent on so many factors, such as do you fit the brief of the character from the perspective of look and obviously your audition.

This means the industry doesn't cater for actors to work consistently. Sustaining a livelihood as an actor is tough in Namibia. Trust me, you will have seasons when you are broke.

As I sit to write this, my bank account is in the minus. As the days loom closer to the end of the month, I worry about how I will be able to pay for the basics. Why am I sharing this, you ask? Because I want to lift the veil on this 'glamour' notion.

Mind you, I have been in the industry working as an actor for the last 16 years. Would you think that someone who has been working in the industry that long would find themselves in such a predicament? No. Anyway, let's go back to the beginning.

In 2015, I said, f*ck it, I want to work full-time as an actor. I made the decision to change my reality and focus on being an actor. I quit my day job and made

the decision to pursue what my true passion is. I was so tired of feeling like I was sacrificing what my true calling is for the purpose of financial security. I was well aware of the fact that no one is going to make it happen for me. If you don't put yourself out there, no one is going to do that for you. You have to find and create these opportunities for yourself.

Having an understanding of the theatre, film and television space in Namibia and the challenges we already face, I decided to cast my net out internationally.

Google is your friend. I looked at what opportunities were out there for me to be able to get a step closer to my goal. In the process of doing my research, I stumbled upon StarNow, which is a platform where you can get casted as a model or actor.

I signed up for the basic access to the platform and saw an advertisement for the Hollywood Immersive Global competition.

StarNow and Hollywood Immersive have collaborated for many years on the competition. They select a winner from thousands of applicants for an all-expenses paid trip to train, network and connect in Los Angeles.

I couldn't submit for the call-out because it would require me to sign up for the pro version and unfortunately your girl didn't have money for that. I thus decided to see how I could get around it. I went to the Hollywood Immersive website to see if I could submit directly to them instead of going via StarNow.

It is also important to note that it is imperative to be ready so you don't have to get ready when you get that call. In this case, it's important to have an actor resume as well as headshots and a showreel. At the time, I didn't have a showreel but I did have a resume as well as professional headshots.

I submitted my headshots as well as my resume and got an email that I've been shortlisted and that I will have to perform a monologue for the final selection process. They emailed me monologues and I had to choose one I would perform via Skype for the director of Hollywood Immersive.

In preparation for my audition, I collaborated with David Ndjavera and COTA students to perform in 'Monologues at the Theatre'.

Fast forward to my audition with the director of Hollywood Immersive – I performed two monologues on a Friday via Skype. On Sunday, I received an email stating I've been accepted into the Acting Immersive Programme and that the total cost is US\$5 450. I would have to pay the deposit of US\$2 500 by 30 August 2016 to book my spot as they only have 15 slots available per programme. The remaining US\$2 950 was due on 31 December 2016 and the programme would take place from 21 to 28 February 2017.

At the time of submitting and auditioning for the programme, I had no clue what the cost implications would be, nor did I know how I was going to pay for it. I guess I had blind faith.

With that said, I jumped onto trying to raise funding to attend the programme.

I was so hopeful that someone would want to help because I was one of 15 people who were selected to attend this programme in the whole world. I was also the first from Africa and Namibia to be selected.

I received the invoice for the US\$2 500 on 22 August 2016 and I had to pay it by 30 August. I think I emailed every organisation I could think of for sponsorship. Long story short, no one wrote back nor were these corporate organisations prepared to help me.

In the end, my family did. My sister paid for my deposit. I am yet to pay her back for her selflessness. My aunt gave me a loan to pay for my ticket. My other aunt took a loan out for me to pay the remaining US\$2 950. I paid that loan off over four years – and because the bank added their interest, in the end, I ended up paying much more.

Moral of the story? Despite your challenges, continue to persevere. No one is going to invest in you if you don't. I truly believe in continuous development and honing my skills as an actor.

By the end of 2016, I was going through a divorce. When it rains, it pours, they say. I didn't have a place of my own to call home because I moved out of my marital home. It felt like I had to start my life all over again. I stayed with friends and family and put all my belongings in storage.

I attended the Hollywood Immersive programme in February 2017. I left Namibia with N\$2 000. I took that money, which at the time converted to US\$100, and knew I only had US\$10 to spend per day till I came home. Upon arrival in Los Angeles, we had a life coaching session with Dave Blomsterberg.

At Hollywood Immersive, we were mentored by Mark Gant ('The Bannen Way'), Luke Cook ('Guardians of The Galaxy Vol 2'; 'Chilling Adventures of Sabrina'; CW's 'Katy Keene'), Michael Petted ('American Horror'; 'New Girl'; 'Mayor Cupcake'), Gary Grossman ('Bachelor Party'; 'On The Air'; 'Leprechaun 4: In space'), Gerny Radin ('The Way Back'; 'The New World'; 'Cupid's Arrow'; 'Funeral Day') and Anastasia Leddick ('Good Trouble'; 'Beautiful Boy'; 'Ray Donovan'). We were also mentored by Steven Memel, who did accent work and voice work with us.

We stayed in a villa in Beverly Hills and had a private chef and a personal trainer with whom we trained every morning. The aim of the programme was to give us a 360 view of what it

takes to be an actor.

The seven-day programme comprised of:

- Scene rehearsals at Skylight Theatre
- Scene blocking at Beverly Hills Playhouse Theatre
- Rehearsal and script breakdown at Beverly Hills Playhouse Theatre
- Monologue work at Skylight Theatre
- Scene work and group improvisation at Beverly Hills Playhouse Theatre
- Cold read with Chadwick Struck, who is a casting director
- Meeting with Luber Roklin Management
- Meeting with Warren Binder MGMT Management
- Admin class / business of acting with Mark Gantt
- Fine tuning and final scene presentation at Beverly Hills Playhouse Theatre
- Meeting with immigration attorneys
- Dress rehearsal for the final performance at Skylight Theatre
- Accent and voice work with Steven Memel
- Performance for industry guests at Skylight Theatre.

The one thing we were encouraged to do at Hollywood Immersive was to collaborate. Create work for yourself. In 2017 upon my return, I bumped into Desiree Kahikopo and she asked me whether I would like to produce the feature film 'The White Line' with her and Micheal Pulse. She also casted me on the spot to play Sylvia in the film. We then approached the Namibia Film Commission (NFC) for funding to shoot the period piece. At the time, the commission gave us N\$65 000 to shoot the film. We knew we wouldn't be able to shoot with that, seeing as it is a period piece. We thus decided to shoot the trailer in 2017 as a means of raising funding to shoot the full film. We then went back to the NFC and showed them the trailer and they committed to giving us N\$1.3 million to shoot the film. We filmed in 2018, edited in 2018/2019, and did the festival run in 2019.

During the festival run, we met our African distributor, Gravel Road Distribution Group, at Joburg Film Festival where 'The White Line' was selected. We released the film theatrically in November 2020 and released it on DStv Box Office in February 2021.

Mind you, it wasn't all smooth sailing producing this film. We needed additional funding for post-production (my boyfriend loves saying "editing is

never done, it is just abandoned" and that is so true), festival submission fees and covering costs to attend the film festivals, creation of digital cinema packages (DCPs), courier costs to send DCPs to film festivals, etc. At times, we had to pay out of our own pockets. Yes, this movie sucked us dry of every cent we had. Someone should have given me the memo that producing is no joke. This was truly a labour of love. I don't know how many times I cried and struggled with depression just to get this movie out.

The stress of the debt we still owed some of our crew and suppliers consumed me to the degree where I felt like I was going to die. Whatever award we won that came with monetary compensation went to paying off this



**THE ONE THING
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debt. We finally managed to pay off the outstanding debt by March 2021 with the help of the NFC.

It is imperative for me to thank the NFC because without them, we would not have been able to produce this film. They gave us the majority of our funding. Thank you for believing in us and we hope this movie will continue to make waves globally.

In November 2018, I was approached by Andrew Botelle asking if I would be interested in co-writing and co-producing 'Baxu and the Giants', which was commissioned by the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC). We then asked Florian Schott if he would be interested in directing, co-writing

and co-producing. He said yes. With the seed funding we received from the LAC, we commenced writing the script. We filmed in February 2019 and had the premiere in September 2019. While filming, we raised additional funding for marketing and distribution. We also did the festival run in 2019. In March 2020, Florian attended Rapid Lion Film Festival where 'Baxu and the Giants' was selected and met a sales agent in South Africa. In September 2020, it became the first Namibian film on Netflix.

Throughout the years, based on my training at Hollywood Immersive, I made contact with talent agents and managers, giving them regular updates regarding my acting, writing and producing. The one feedback I would always get was "oh sorry, we can't represent you because you are not based in South Africa or the US". That didn't ever deter me, and I continued to send updates to ensure I remained top of mind. Someone will eventually say yes, that's what I told myself.

In 2019, I had a bit of money and invested in creating a showreel for myself because that was the only thing I didn't have.

During lockdown, I made a conscious decision to actively seek representation. I created an Actors Access account. There was a call-out to audition for

'NCIS'. I submitted what was required and received feedback to submit a self-tape, which I did, but unfortunately didn't get the role.

While scrolling through my Instagram, I saw an advertisement by Warner Brothers in May 2020 - it was a call-out for 2020 acting graduates who couldn't graduate due to the pandemic. They were being encouraged to apply for the Warner Brothers Actors in Training programme. When I saw that, I thought I had struck gold.

I followed the link and found an email address. I decided to email them even though I wasn't a 2020 graduate. I even stated that I wasn't a 2020 graduate, but this is my story.

I received an email back stating the casting executives of Warner Brothers Casting would like to extend the opportunity to video conference with me after reviewing my material and reading my "very compelling email".

I met with the senior vice president, the vice president, the manager of their New York office and another manager. That is a relationship I still continue to nurture by keeping them in the loop regarding my career. Hopefully something will come of it in the near future.

Mid 2020, I sent my resume, showreel and headshots to various directors in South Africa, stating "please consider me for any future projects". In September 2020, I received an email from a casting director saying he got my details from the director of 'Blood & Water' and they would like me to audition for 'Blood & Water' season two. I submitted my self-tape.

At the end of 2020, I won the best actor of Southern Africa award as well as the Sotigui D'Or award at the Sotigui Awards in Burkina Faso for my role as Sylvia in 'The White Line'. I was also nominated at the 2020 Africa Movie Academy Awards (AMAA) for best actress in a leading role for my role as Sylvia.

'The White Line' was nominated for five AMAA awards and 'Baxu and the Giants' had one AMAA 2020 nomination.

As per my usual actor admin work, I sent out an email to agents, casting directors, etc., sharing the awards and nominations. I then received an email from a talent agency I have been emailing and they wanted to represent me.

Before signing the contract, I went to go see who they represent. I was hesitant to sign with them because they didn't have any big names.

I then saw they were representing one



Photo contributed by NFC



Girley Jazama at Durban International Film Festival

A-listers and I then made it my business to get hold of this actor to find out what his experience was being represented this agency.

Through a friend, I managed to have a WhatsApp call with this actor and he explained that based on what I am looking for, he wouldn't advise me to sign with that agency because they were more like a booking agency and I was looking for an agency that would help me craft my career. He then suggested that I rather sign with another agency.

Mind you, the agency he was suggesting I sign with was very hard to get to because they didn't take any unsolicited emails. This was one of the agencies I had been emailing but never received any feedback from. They worked by referral and their annual audition call-out only. I explained this to the actor I spoke to and he said "just email them and say I referred you".

I emailed them but never received any feedback. I then went back to this talent agent/management website to see if I could get a direct email instead of the info email I had been using to correspond with them.

I found the direct email to the CEO as well as the senior agents. I emailed them and received an email back from the CEO saying they would like to schedule a Zoom meeting with me. I agreed, but heard nothing back from them.

I waited a week and then decided to try and find a cellphone number. Lo and behold, when I went back to the email I received from the CEO of the agency, there it was. I then decided to call her via WhatsApp. She answered. I

explained who I was and she apologised for not having reverted back as she was currently out of the country visiting family. She then suggested that we chat via WhatsApp. She asked me a couple of questions. I answered her and she said "well Girley, this was the conversation I was going to have with you via Zoom. With that said, welcome to the Moonyeen Lee Associates family. My PA will email you all the paperwork for you to complete".

By 21 January 2021, I was officially signed and represented. Thus far via my agency, I auditioned for a series and feature film in South Africa and there are two feature films I will be acting in, in the next couple of months.

As a producer of a film, it is important to not only submit to film festivals, but to attend too. It is an opportunity for one to network with agents, managers, sales agents and distributors. It also gives you the opportunity to pitch your next project for funding.

With that said, when creating a budget for your film, ensure that you make provision for film festival submission and to be able to travel to attend these film festivals in person. It is also important to have a marketing and distribution budget. So please also cater for that, don't just focus on prep, principal photography and post-production. Please also factor in a contingency budget for any unforeseen expenses.

As an actor, it is important to stay ready so you don't have to get ready. It is imperative to have professional headshots, a bio, a resume, a showreel and an IMDB Pro account. You have to start treating acting like a business because as an actor, that is your

business. You are the business.

It is also important for you to have acting experience – in order to be an actor, you have to act. So, collaborate with friends to create content so you can add that to your resume. Please also know no role is too small because every role you get is an opportunity for you to hone your skills.

I am still not where I want to be in my career but every day is a chance to find opportunities that will elevate me to the next level. Rome wasn't built in day, so keep at it and don't give up. Thank you to my boyfriend, family and friends for the unwavering support. I hope my story will inspire someone else.

All of these experiences have made me who I am today. This is the season I am supposed to be in. I learnt valuable lessons along the way that will inform characters in the foreseeable future. I thank those I am currently collaborating with and look forward to adding value not only as a cast member but perhaps also a crew member.

Let's continue to create. Anything worth having takes courage and continuous pursuit. I will continue to be resilient as f*ck. I will die trying. I am a canvas and a catalyst. I will continue to send out those emails and even if I get a no, at least I got your attention.

Plant those seeds now and harvest in abundance. I've learnt to be grateful for what I have and embrace every moment and experience. I am grateful for my loved ones and my health. Covid-19 has taken its toll on all of us. Continue to persevere. Never give up. That's not even an option.



**I AM STILL NOT WHERE I WANT TO BE
IN MY CAREER BUT EVERY DAY IS A
CHANCE TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES THAT
WILL ELEVATE ME TO THE NEXT LEVEL.**



KULAN GANES

DEVELOPING A CAREER AS A MAKE-UP AND WARDROBE PROFESSIONAL



MAKE-UP AND WARDROBE ARTIST, CASTING DIRECTOR

Kulan Ganes is an all-round creative who has over 15 years of experience in the film and entertainment industry. She has a certificate in film and television make-up artistry from Prestige Academy in Cape Town and was part of the Oscar and BAFTA award-winning make-up team for the Australian post-apocalyptic film [‘Mad Max: Fury Road’ \(2015\)](#). Kulan has made a name for herself by continuously working to ensure training and a favourable working environment for artists while providing clients with premium talent. She is the director of the recently-launched casting agency, [Pencilled Casting](#), which seeks to recruit unique talent in Namibia.

Actress **Jennifer Timbo**, make-up-artist **Kulan Ganes**, and producer **Mpingana Dax** behind-the-scenes of *litandu*. Photo by **Masiyaleti-Mbewe**

I DO MY BEST, LITERALLY, ALL THE TIME.

Interviewed by Lavinia Kapewasha:
Production coordinator, NTN.

How has your training as a make-up artist geared you for your career thus far? What skills and experience have you gained along the way?

I was trained by a film and theatre make-up artist who actually had experience working in the two industries for many years. She ran the training like we were on set or on stage. That helped my understanding of the dynamic film and theatre spaces before expanding into them professionally and independently.

My formal training began 16 years ago; a time when our industry was in its foetal stage. At that time, make-up was not fully acknowledged as a key and integral department that contributes to the quality of films and theatre designs. This affected the appreciation of the intricate process of make-up work, and the resources required as well. It is through my training that I was able to contribute and articulate that make-up was needed in our artistic creations.

My career is a constant learning process. I have always had to learn along the way because the technology, formats and products of make-up keep changing. So, I have to consistently invest in my craft and, at the same time, lean on what I have learnt along the way. I have learnt to be creative and adaptable, especially when budgets are tight on a project.

How did you start working in the Namibian theatre scene?

On a warm sunny day, the late film-maker and arts sector contributor

Oshosheni Hiveluah called me and said "hey, do you want to do make-up for 'Olivia Toyeta'?" This was Namibian theatrical adaptation of the famous Oliver Twist story. The rest is history.

Costume design for theatre and performances is often misunderstood to be the same as that of couture fashion design. What is the difference?

Couture fashion is made for an individual because they want to feel some type of way. I think couture fashion is more personalised, but theatre costumes are more functional for the character's design and also for the performer's performance support. It is certainly blurred sometimes when we have fashion designers booked on theatre productions and this causes delays and dilemmas sometimes as they are not as sensitive about the production's processes and technicalities. Theatre costumes have to be functional as much as they are visual. You cannot have a design and select a merely visually stunning costume for an actor, and have their stage movement limited due to that lack of consideration. Creating something for the stage or screen is like a relay or torch being passed on to create the final performance. This is the same for make-up. It does not shine alone; it completes the desired look and scene to ensure visual quality for audiences.

What geared you to work interchangeably within theatre and film?

I would like to say I wanted all the money and fame that comes with it! [laughs]

But I love theatre because it is fleeting

and film because it is enduring (at least for a while). Seeing my work on stage and screen allows me to see possibilities as an artist. It really is profound how you are able to tell stories through make-up and costumes. That makes me proud. I also enjoy the challenge of working between theatre and film, as the processes and demands are not the same, and that keeps me on my toes in the integral process.

Please elaborate on how you have managed to sustain a career as a make-up artist and costume designer in Namibia.

I do my best, literally, all the time. This has allowed me to sustain some clients. I have also learnt everything about the industries and different spaces, and I think people see this in me. People like to work with people who are dynamic, resourceful and have good work ethic. I made it a point to understand the inner workings of set, stage, productions and the different roles. And then I worked really hard. Your next job is only as good as your last. I would say that you should always be driven by passion. If you are only driven by money, you will be miserable on a film set, and no one wants that. A miserable, sour person on set is not desirable, and will not get called back for another booking. Throughout my career, I was also able to compare and regulate my rates and fees, request for clear contracts, clarify terms on bookings, acquire non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and request for adequate working conditions, all while being professional. So, people see this in me - not being difficult, but a professional; like any other by asking the right questions.

This has sustained me.



What was the biggest setback you've faced in your career and how did you overcome it?

I have never really had a major setback. Of course, I had some challenges, but I would not call them major setbacks. My passion and willingness to continuously learn has carried me through my career and ensured growth and opportunities in film and theatre. I would also add that my ability to adapt to circumstances and different projects has helped me maintain a good attitude throughout the growth of my career. I have been able to adapt and work between film sets, principal photography and on theatre productions. That is useful. In the Namibian creative space, it is very important to maintain your standards and be adaptable at the same time. It can be a challenging balance to pursue. I also want to remind aspiring make-up and wardrobe professionals that you can expand your skills across different spaces, and not just limit yourself within arts and culture. There are opportunities within the advertising and corporate spaces that you can also tap into, especially on various communications and marketing projects they employ through artistic and storytelling means. This will be something to pursue, as it will challenge you to share your information on your skills, network and be inquisitive about potential clients. Be sophisticatedly inquisitive. There will be many emails with no responses, but you should know that once you reveal yourself to people, they will always have you in the back of their mind.

What is the most challenging part of collaborating with producers, directors, artists and other production staff to discuss and execute make-up and

character costumes/clothes?

Budget constraints. Producers, directors, artists and other production staff don't see make-up and costume as very important. This is still an issue. Our job becomes quite strained and we have to make do with what we have. With low budgets or little resources planned for make-up and wardrobe, the words "beg, steal and borrow" become a reality. You end up sourcing materials from your networks to help you, as there is no budget to buy materials. This sometimes means that the desired look is not achieved. This happens in principal photography as well. Final checks are so rushed, we get shouted at because the actor arrived late and we get pressured to apply a whole third-degree burn within limited time while the director takes a nap. I have experienced this, and it is terrible. Respect is a key factor in the collaborative process in both film and theatre. Every move has a ripple effect on other processes. I have had numerous disagreements about being pressured to do my work in limited time and being disrespected on set. Production collaborators need to understand that make-up and wardrobe/costume are as important as all other departments. The visuals which translate the story depend on us being allowed to do what we can do to the best of our ability. This is but a few experiences, and one should prepare to face this and consistently speak up against it in an efficient manner.

The quality and aesthetics of live events in Namibia are growing steadily. What value do costume and make-up artists offer for the live events industry? Are these roles increasing in demand in the live events industry?

My grandmother used to say "we buy with our eyes". Make-up and costume are the selling points even before anyone hears or experiences the performance. These two departments add a great visual appeal for the show. Imagine having a great set and technical design but no attention was paid to the make-up and wardrobe. This will affect the quality of a given set or production. Make-up and wardrobe set trends to overflow into other sectors of the entertainment industry. This keeps people on their toes, creating interest in who was behind the look and feel of a given personality or character. So, yes, it adds tremendous domino value effect to the industry. I see so many talented make-up artists and designers - not just in Namibia, but all over the world - who add that little sparkle to the events industry. We are definitely in demand and gaining momentum locally!

Where can Namibia excel more in terms of the craft of make-up and costumes? Where are we lacking and what can be done to curb it?

Discipline is an issue. When we speak of sustainability, discipline is critical. It should be in the back of every creative professional's mind. Discipline attracts trust and investment. We also lack the essence of sharing information. It is disheartening how some people in the creative sector are self-serving and won't think twice to throw someone under the bus just to get ahead. You should be prepared for this, but do not let it throw you off your journey. We have also made the industry about the nominations and the interviews (yes, I am doing one now). What I am trying to say is that we can't keep on portraying the industry as this glitzy place where we frequent red carpets

with flashing lights only. It is work, and first and foremost, be interested in your career and how you want to contribute – do not do it for the glamour only. There are real processes that happen, and that should be paid attention to as well. Creative departments and work spaces are collaborative, and this integration needs to also extend in attitude, because that is how we are going to grow the sector further.

Where can one look for training to specialise in costume design and make-up for stage?

We have COTA for both sectors. The University of Namibia's (UNAM) drama department also has some modules on stage make-up. This can be useful, and it would be worth contacting the lecturers to see whether you can take specific courses on a non-degree basis for skills and self-development. I am also looking into hosting a series of workshops based on make-up and wardrobe for stage and film, focused on breaking down special effects and character make-up, as this is really needed.

If you could go back and tell yourself one thing before beginning your career, what would it be?

“Are you sure?” [laughs]

Because it is challenging, yet thrilling, to contribute to the growth of creative sectors.

“

I WOULD ALSO ADD THAT MY ABILITY TO ADAPT TO CIRCUMSTANCES AND DIFFERENT PROJECTS HAS HELPED ME MAINTAIN A GOOD ATTITUDE THROUGHOUT THE GROWTH OF MY CAREER. I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ADAPT AND WORK BETWEEN FILM SETS, PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY AND ON THEATRE PRODUCTIONS.



Photo by Opas Onucheyo



Photo contributed by NTN

FELLEMON NDONGO

**DEVELOPING A CAREER IN STAGE MANAGEMENT
FOR THE EVENTS INDUSTRY**



STAGE MANAGER, FILM-MAKER, PRODUCER AND PERFORMER

Fellemon Ndongo has qualifications in media arts technology and communication. He is a well-known film-maker and performer with interest in the live events industry. He has experience in writing and directing numerous stage productions.

CONNECT WITH PEOPLE! EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE IS SO IMPORTANT.

*Interviewed by Lavinia Kapewasha:
Production coordinator, NTN.*

You're a film-maker, performer and production coordinator. With your varied experience, how were you able to transition into the role of stage manager and assistant director?

Everything came to me round about the same time. Film-making and theatre, I love both equally. Production coordination came at a later stage when I started working for dB Audio Namibia. When I moved to Windhoek, my focus was on performance. At the same time, I decided to study television production at COTA. But my dream of being a performer never went away.

As a child, I would sit in front of the TV and fully be immersed by the creativity. I was hooked. Imagine a village child fresh in the city. It got me interested in new technologies. At the college during my second year, I did my first professional production already, where I was an assistant director assisting Marinda Stein for the then [Goethe Centre's](#) funded G3 music video. I loved the whole culture of production and teamwork where I got to experience the beginning stages of developing a script to the realisation of the project. I gained a substantial amount of knowledge.

At dB Audio Namibia, which is a versatile and learning organisation, I started as a production assistant, moved up to show calling and then eventually became a production coordinator. I decided to remain in the production coordinating department because I felt something deep within me crave that human connection. I didn't want to restrain myself to one space and

production coordinating would see that I had a window for me to be able to work at dB Audio Namibia, but also to experience my other film work, which I loved. I can say it is the leadership from dB Audio Namibia and other institutions that saw my ability to connect and deal with people. I am a people's person, and even on sets as a first assistant director, it is all about managing myself, people and managing time. Stage management is similar to managing every aspect of the stage. But more than anything, people believed in me holding the space and they could listen to me, which I realised was my space.

How does one go about becoming a stage manager? What are the required skills? Does being an artist give you an advantage?

I have to begin where I started - at the soup kitchen at a community group where I eventually became the director of drama. I had a few experiences from school, which gave me this opportunity later on in life. I could see where the gaps were and started to formulate plans. My first stage managing job was in 2014, where I did my first play, 'The Mad House'. It was a great experience and I liked it, and it taught me a thing or two about dealing with people, from different walks of life. And of course, we had different cast members from different countries. It was a learning experience.

If you want to get into this line of work, the best advice I can give is calmness and interpersonal skills. You need to be able to understand people so they can exchange and do what you want them to do for you. So, having them understand me from early on was a strength.

You need to learn how to swim, figuratively. I have learnt how to swim in deep waters. You need to overcome your insecurities to better understand yourself. Being an artist has advantages, no doubt. It is for this reason that artists understand how much it takes to do the work and see how everyone who contributes to the projects is valuable and is the key to the success of it all.

You studied television and film at COTA and you have worked on many film and television sets in Namibia as an assistant director. What are the similarities between stage management and assistant directing? Why did you choose to venture into both roles?

You're still working with people. It may be a small group, it may be a large group, but you're still going to be working with people. They're both management roles because you are in a position to anticipate, react to and respond to various complex processes and responsibilities. Both roles provide clear instructions and information, which make you the guide. So, all in all, planning for resources, time management and holding space are the similarities.

What do you think are the qualities to be able to work in an industry that is comprised of irregular bookings and budget shortages and is in its early stage?

Stage management is a practice that is found in live events (corporate, government and entertainment) as well as in theatre. So, for the Namibian space, a stage manager needs to be to have the skills to work with different clients, in



different environments, while meeting a wide range of demands, which are sometimes ad hoc, putting you on the spot to make quick decisions. Yes, certainly, you will not always know when your next booking is going to come in, especially given that the live events industry has a high and low season annually. But you can expand the learnt skills from stage management into other projects and processes as well. For example, event planning and performing arts administration are skills that can be gained from years of stage management, and this is what you can do when you are not contracted for a project. You can work as a freelancer – as an administrator for projects. It is important that you maintain networks, as they become very useful when bookings are low from your main clients. Selling your work as a stage manager means doing the work well, because people are always watching how you communicate, take care of things, make responsible decisions and make the stage business as smooth as possible. This is how to ensure prospective clients have you in mind so that booking calls may come in when business is quiet. It is very useful to be on your A game all the time.

Performing arts administration is on an increasing demand, as are roles in arts projects. This is because more artists are seeking to focus on the creative things while backed with the support of an administrator who takes care of the logistics and resources needed. Arts projects usually run on funding, and one can always work as an administrator on independent projects as well. To stage manage is to administer everything to work well for a given project or event. I would also say that a prospective stage manager needs to expose themselves to various industry

processes so that you build networks and gain understanding of various processes. For example, working as a stage manager with a broadcasting network during live event coverage has allowed me to expand my skills and ensure that I may be considered for an event or project being deliberated in a room. Being a stage manager is having the ability to act as a magician in very demanding and tough times, which you will be able to apply to any other related industry role, such as an event planner, producer, administrator, floor manager, etc.

It is also important to understand that events are so vast in terms of scale, design and budget. Working across various events will teach how to work on both high and low budgets, and how to conduct them with utmost professionalism while meeting client expectations. You will not always get paid your rate, as events are different and so are the resources allocated for them. This is a mixed process you have to learn in order to stay afloat.

At dB Audio Namibia, not only were you the production coordinator but one of the event show callers as well. What is the difference between stage management and show calling? What are the similarities?

Stage management encapsulates show calling. I would say show calling is an aspect of stage management. It becomes that space when the event is happening where you are the orchestra conductor. You have the programme in front of you, your technicians are ready, performers are backstage and everybody is ready for the show. You orchestrate the show by making sure the lights, music, performers and

cues are ready; the media is playing; everything is on call and in order. You are making sure that the message the client has hired you for reaches the audience in a clear and presentable manner, as the client is paying money and they have invested in you because they trust you. It is also damage control if anything is to happen.

Stage management has its stages, from pre-production and communication to considering safety for all involved, ensuring that technicians and cast can work well. With stage management, you cannot miss a thing. You need to know who everyone is, where everyone is, the requirements, the props, the cues. Yet again, it is managing the relationships, because you are the one to hold space with a bird's eye view. Stage management requires more management of all stakeholders, while show calling is only for that one specific moment and working with the team at that time. In a very high scale event, a stage manager would typically work alongside a show caller to ensure smooth event running. But on a manageable event, a stage manager can play the role of show caller/director as well as at the final running stage of a given event.

The Namibian events and entertainment industry is growing but still faces some challenges. In your perspective, what value do show callers bring to the development of live events?

Show calling was emphasised in the country by dB Audio Namibia after highlighting the importance of it. They sent us to South Africa to upgrade our knowledge and our skills. It came about as they saw the need for engagement



with the client on-site without their management or company involved, so the person who is the spokesperson is the key to link the client, technicians and other service providers. Clients invest a lot of money for a great show and this has to be respected. That is why a show caller is there to assist the client and technician in accommodating and upholding that. Show callers add great value to the Namibian live events industry, as the minor things get paid attention to. This is inclusive of timing, organisation, artistic detail and a dramatic touch to the event. Show callers see a story in every event they direct and work to ensure that the prepared narrative is being presented with utmost quality and attention.

Namibia's creative economy and live events sector is boosted by corporate events that happen throughout the year. As an all-round creative, was the choice of show calling and stage management motivated by the viability of corporate events?

I was able to do both as I've taught myself how to work with different people. I realised the needs for each space and I can easily point it out if something is not done. My eye for detail helps. Show calling is intertwined with corporates; it has to guide creatively and, on the day, it is how it happens and the way you manage it to happen.

At dB Audio Namibia, I fell into show calling. Zellmari Brandt, the lady who trained me, carried me through, and I realised I liked doing it. As much as it was stressful at times, the adrenaline was

invigorating, as there was a pleasure in seeing that we have served our clients to the best of our abilities.

You need to sway yourself with these opportunities. You need to be able to package yourself like a brand. Some artists are more talented than others. Some are more hard-working than others. Know your weaknesses, and work it to work at them. You need to know and study the industry, not only the artists but the other stakeholders as well.

But to answer your question further, yes, the corporate sector is a big stakeholder in Namibian live events, adding more sustainable opportunities for stage managers and show callers.

Events have become increasingly complex with ever-evolving technology. How do you keep attuned to the latest developments, especially in terms of digital and technological advancements and innovation? What does that mean for many corporate events? How do you as a show caller assist clients to share their message?

All in all, if you do not follow and study the local live events industry, and keep up with international trends, you will eventually become irrelevant to prospective clients and investors. I ensure that I follow events as much as I can, and read the feedback from audiences as it informs me on how things can improve or work differently next time.

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**BEING A STAGE
MANAGER IS
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TO ANY OTHER
RELATED INDUSTRY
ROLE, SUCH AS AN
EVENT PLANNER,
PRODUCER,
ADMINISTRATOR,
FLOOR MANAGER,
ETC.**

The roles of stage management, show calling and assistant directing all have one thing in common – confidence. Is this something you naturally were able to adopt or did this come from trial and error? What are your tips and tricks to ensure you are always delivering?

Don't forget to smile and focus. Once you have the love for something to go well or you have the best intention for something, eventually you start shaping your mind to do things right and doing things right means that you need to prepare.

Also important is consistency – I don't leave anything hanging. So, if it needs to be done, it needs to be done right. That's where the power of teamwork comes in. Taking pride in your work. I stood up for the culture and the values. I was working from the qualities we stood on. You have to have the willingness to better yourself, to want to have a better life. Over time, that gave me confidence and the experience.

There is no doubt that trial and error shaped my perspectives and methods in doing things. I learnt a lot by diving in head first. Unfortunately, good stage management and show calling are not dependent on theoretical learning only.

Do you think it is important for artists and creatives to consider roles that are behind the scenes? If so, what are the benefits thereof?

Yes, certainly. Especially in our performing arts sector that is not consistent with opportunities. As a creative, you will find yourself having to do a thing or two off stage to make ends meet. Do not only consider it, but study it as well, as it also helps you craft your services better when you understand the complex process and schedules of a technician, the lines an MC has to prepare, or the technical programme the stage manager has to marry with everything else. For example, if an artist understood the complex cue sheet and preparations that a sound engineer needs, then they would not show up last minute with their backtracks on a USB when the event has started and sound check not been done. This happens a lot at events, and can only change if artists are more understanding of the roles and processes behind the scenes. I cannot insinuate that all artists have the potential to become stage managers;



Photo by Willem Vrey



Photo by Willem Vrey



Photo by Willem Vrey



ALL IN ALL, IF YOU DO NOT FOLLOW AND STUDY THE LOCAL LIVE EVENTS INDUSTRY, AND KEEP UP WITH INTERNATIONAL TRENDS, YOU WILL EVENTUALLY BECOME IRRELEVANT TO PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS AND INVESTORS.

however, I think artistic services can become smoother if artists understood better the demands, schedules and checks that need to take place in order to have smooth events for clients. You gain holistic understanding that way.

As an artist yourself, how do you work behind the scenes in production and still keep your artistic interests alight?

You must always establish and outline the roles. It sets me in a better position. I would want to do more performances, but out of respect for the role and knowing what it brings to the table, I would choose. Take for example being an assistant director: I would have to ensure that the production schedule is thorough and is carried out until all the shots are done. I would have to be accountable for the product being made. I would also respect that this is the role I have been given now, which I must dive into, give it my all and realise what it offers and what it entails for me to have this part, with respect and trust. If these opportunities come, you must embrace them as it is not happening by chance.

With the nature of the industry, freelancing is how many artists stay afloat. How do you go about planning your work schedule and mapping events you might have to show call, stage manage or be on set as an assistant director?

I make sure that my bookings do not overlap and leave breathing room between contracted projects. Some projects can demand a lot, and it is unprofessional to cut commitments short with clients to meet other ones. So, planning is certainly key, as well as checking in on regular clients who have annual, committed events. It helps to let them know that you are still running your services and that they can engage with you when they are ready. This is maintaining relationships. Do not be pushy, but just remain in the background so that you are kept in mind for when the time comes.

I am also careful when I decline offers and bookings to do it respectfully and add an added value service by referring my client to another stage manager, show caller or assistant director I know can do the job. This maintains the

relationship with my client, even when I am not available for that particular time. Maintaining relationships with other professionals who offer the same services is also important, as you may receive referrals in return that way too.

Collaboration is one of the key factors for live events and the film industry. How do you go about working with various creatives, technicians and practitioners? How do you navigate the environment, the communication and the managing of people?

Connect with people! Emotional and social intelligence is so important. I would highly suggest for aspiring stage managers to read up on people skills. There are a lot of useful theories out there. You need to be a respectable person for people to work with and trust you, especially under pressure. Though this is at times contentious, I would suggest that aspiring stage managers should make themselves available for work that is not paid to build networks. This is where relationships are built, especially with institutions.

You have to be a team player and appreciate what everyone brings to the table. Here's the thing about human beings: We all like to feel valued and important, and if a stage manager can make people feel this way, have good communication skills, be patient and gain respect, then you are on a very good route for the collaborative aspects of event staging.

Managing client expectations can also be challenging, especially when last-minute requests have a ripple effect on what has been previously prepared. Of course, you have to be flexible, but also show leadership for the benefit of the event and project. I do not always say yes to clients' requests, because they do not always understand the deeply logistical and technical implications of some requests. It is not about impressing, but ensuring smoothness for the event, as per the provided resources. Being a 'yes man' stage manager will have you shooting yourself in the foot. Respect the client's vision and learn how to advise against certain requests, respectfully, because you have a much more holistic picture of the technicalities involved.

For the assistant directors on film sets, the emotional and social intelligence demand is also similar. The same with time management, and ensuring that everything happens smoothly without being disrespectful or stepping on people's toes. Being a stage manager and assistant director on set means having the precise ability to walk on egg shells, but make things happen at the same time. Try to know as much as you can about all departments or the whole production itself, to ensure a smooth collaborative event under your control.

Where can one access resources to familiarise themselves with the role of a stage manager, show caller or assistant director? Are there many opportunities for one to learn on the job?

I gained my assistant director skills by studying at COTA, and through my work on film sets across the years. I would suggest offering yourself as a volunteer on film sets, which is often welcomed in Namibia due to tight budgets. You get to analyse and gain a lot as a volunteer, from whatever role you are assigned to. You can also approach the NFC as they fund various short and feature films, and would happily direct you to a producer or director for you to volunteer on their scheduled set.

There are great free online booklets available for stage management, particularly for theatre. You can also volunteer to be an assistant on a theatre production, and this would certainly give you some insight. The NTN, for one, is a great place you can approach. For the live events industry, dB Audio Namibia has certainly been my greatest training and learning space, as I gained a lot of insight into stage managing and administering for different events and meeting their unique needs.

You have to offer yourself to the sector; that is how many of us learnt along the way. Combine that effort with online learning, and if you cannot afford a course, there are countless resources online that are available freely.



NDINOMHOLO NDILULA



PERFORMER, CREATIVE ENTREPRENEUR

[Ndinomholo Ndilula](#) prides himself in working with hybrid-strategies based on creative, computational and entrepreneurial thinking. He is a graduate of the University of Pretoria with an honours degree in drama and is completing a masters degree in arts administration from Indiana University. His academic and professional interests lie at the intersection and meeting point of the creative economy, AI technology, and development economics.



Ongaipi reader. Yo! Other authors have shared with me and I am so excited to have this opportunity to share with you. I hope that you too are very curious about opportunities for creative entrepreneurship in digitising theatre practices in Namibia. This is a very complex conversation. I cannot actually tell you anything about this topic because I don't particularly know you and I don't know your business. I also carry no substantive certification in the fields of formal entrepreneurship or computing, but I have for quite some time occupied myself with matters concerning storytelling and the digital age for the Namibian context.

I have been working as a freelance artist since graduating from university, and by establishing Oudano Momve Investment CC (OMI) – I bring together my unique skill sets and experiences in creativity, leadership and entrepreneurship in order to fulfill my storytelling ambitions. My artistic intention is to entertain, enthrall, delight, mesmerise and touch you. My ambition is to take you on many, many incredible adventures and journeys through different stories, emotions and experiences. My context is live experiences. My work and my business were directly impacted by Covid-19 where the health and safety of my co-workers, partners, customers and audiences were put at risk by attending exhibitions and gatherings, and achieved by the necessary lockdowns and social distancing guidelines. Since the founding of OMI in 2013 and its subsequent realignment and rebranding in 2017, the company's primary incoming revenue has been in services related to live performances. So far, the byNdinomholo brand has returned one trademark and several copyrights and kept the company afloat through the research and development phase of the company's short life. The experience of temporarily not gathering in person has significantly impacted and changed the mental models and expectations of what 'live' and 'digital' mean for different people in different communities, and yet it also created a unique opportunity to test what features and benefits were constituted as 'live enough'.

My passion is bringing history to life in order to facilitate a spiritual experience with those who came before and, through that experience, bridging an encounter with the divine. This is done through employing and exploring

various forms and technologies in order to bring about these experiential spiritual experiences. I would say that this is where the digitisation plays its role; to ensure effective connection between the storyteller and consumers in dynamic ways and across vast localities when required. If we are to tell Namibian stories to the world, then space and locality are areas to critically think about. It is often asked whether "digitisation is the future of theatre", and I would say the future of theatre responds to the arrangements, needs and desires we find ourselves in that particular time. Right now, among many other things, the arrangement is increasingly digital, calling on creatives to adopt internet-centered and dynamic technological formats. This means that as storytellers, we have to explore the ways in which experiential products and services can be produced, packaged, sold and consumed within the creative sector. This requires a sociological and resource analysis around the given environment(s).

I am self-employed as the managing member of OMI – O as in Otjiwarongo, M as in Mahangu and I as in India – where my work is to provide creative services and solutions to productions, customers and clients, to provide management and strategic focus and to deliver new products to local, regional and international markets.

As an entrepreneur, I initially registered Black Tree Productions CC (BTP) as a publishing house for the strictly live performance-related intellectual property that would be created by the byNdinomholo brand. Designed as a small-but-good business in a niche market, BTP transformed into OMI after a two-year research and development (R&D) process that resulted in the development and subsequent implementation of the Oudano Digital Strategy in 2017. While BTP was designed to only have one employee (ame), OMI aspires to one day employ many people at a design and creativity studio, SMART manufacturing factory and research and development laboratory.

I introduce all of this background because while I may not be certified to teach you about stuff, I can share how I am thinking about digitisation in the theatrical and live performance sub-sector.

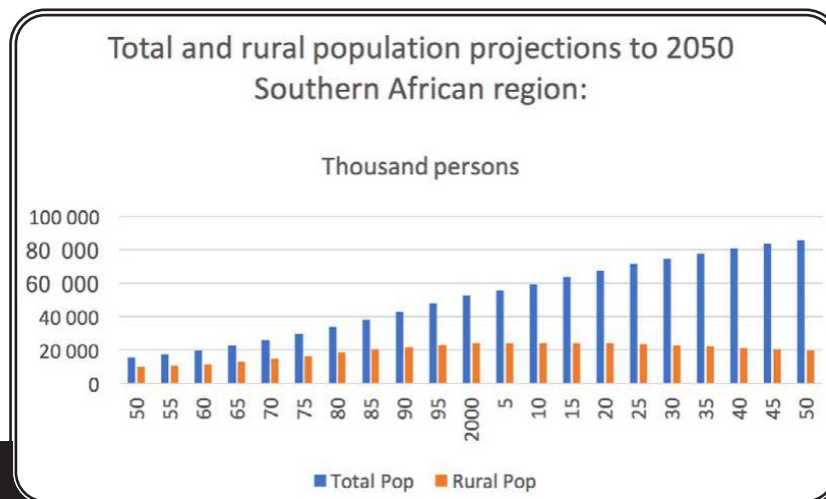


FIGURE 1. Total and Rural Population Projections to 2050 Southern African Region **Source:** UN World Population Prospects⁴

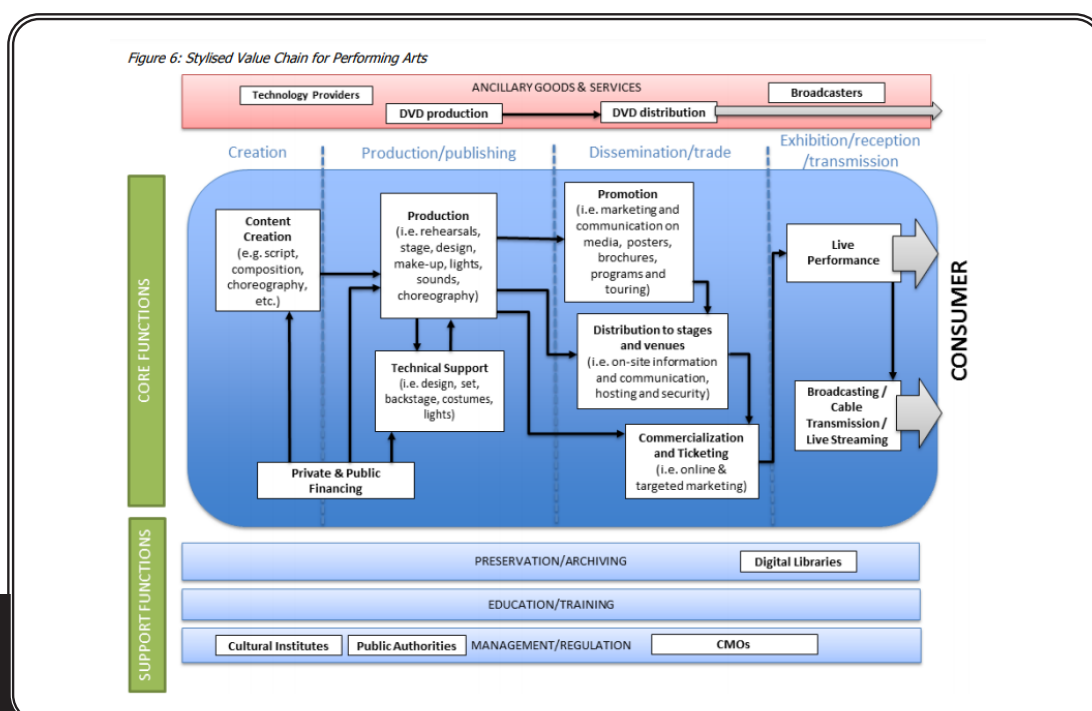
Source:

<https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/109136/SADC%20Mega%20Trends.pdf>

To begin, acquainting yourself with as much data as is available and relevant is of great importance. Within the regional market that we seek to be active in, it is estimated that there will continue to be more people – more people in urban and peri-urban areas and more people of working age. There will be wildly different cohorts of customers and audiences from the high-end to the extremes of niche markets. Each cohort represents a set

of different pains, needs, features and benefits. What exactly does this mean for the storyteller? It demands for the creative entrepreneur to critically think about product creation, the market and forms in which targeted customers and audiences may have efficient access. Cohorts within this region will largely be aligned to different languages, storytelling cultures and performance practice traditions. Access to the

internet at different speeds, on different devices, at different proficiency and latency levels will directly impact the relevance and competitiveness of in-person, offline and online offerings to different cohorts within the market. It is, therefore, of critical importance for emerging creative businesses to understand what value drivers these different cohorts care about, and how to be wherever they are with the most suitable solution.



Source: <https://docplayer.net/59592262-Mapping-the-creative-value-chains-a-study-on-the-economy-of-culture-in-the-digital-age-final-report.html>

AS A CREATIVE OR THEATRE ENTREPRENEUR, IT BECOMES IMPERATIVE TO CONSIDER TECHNOLOGIES AS CRITICAL RESOURCES IN YOUR CREATIONS AND OPERATIONS.

This brings us then to the conversation about what is 'actually' to be digitised. Using this stylised value chain illustration, OMI is specifically focused on impacting the digital quotient in three areas:

1. Core functions: Distribution to stages and venues

- The question "where in Grootfontein, Maputo and Kigali can I stage my production?" "Which is the best route?" is critical when I think of having my work accessible across different geographical spaces.
- Being able to match production needs to specific or generic venue offerings was the catalyst and initial point of curiosity that sparked OMI's digitisation strategy.
- How am I able to create products and have them available to different customers and consumers? How can this accessibility be packaged? I foresee the creation of an open source database of venues and exhibition spaces linked to a sophisticated set of computational algorithms, distributed through a series of customer-specific webpage interfaces, each designed to communicate directly to a demographically and psychographically aligned cohort.
- How am I able to sell my work and make it accessible to investors?

A system such as explained in the point above will broaden the market entry opportunities for theatre businesses within the region and attract foreign investment as players based in other regions are enticed by the ease and functionality of the SADC system.

2. Supporting functions: Management/ regulation: Chief marketing officers

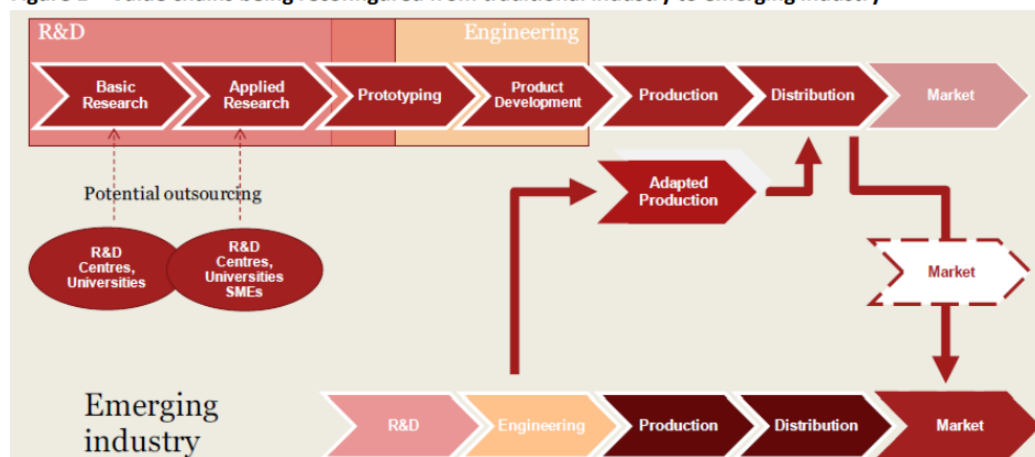
- Data collection, archiving and reporting – "How many times was my costume worn in performance?"
- The work process: The opportunity to automate agreements and enhance the use of blockchain technologies to generate ledgered accounts of transactions that will create a healthier workplace environment within the SADC theatre market.
- The current absence of legal and financial transparency is experienced when creators and creatives receive no data and no royalty statements for works that they have created, co-created or contributed to. Public content management organisations such as the Namibian Society of Composer and Authors of Music (NASCAM) will be positioned by the market as regulators who develop guidelines and advisory notes on

the operations of independent systems.

3. Ancillary goods and services: Technology providers

- Service provision – "Who is the leading provider of theatre-based technology in your local market?"
- [The Namibian Creative Industry Guide \(NCIG\)](#) was a game-changer when it was first published in 2018. Mapping activities are notoriously difficult to conduct and to communicate. The NCIG made it possible and simple to identify suppliers of many forms of theatre technologies who are already providing generic and built-for-purpose solutions within the specific environment. As the NCIG and the underlying ecosystem grows, I foresee theatre practitioners being able to make decisions that positively impact the creativity, sustainability and profitability of their productions and creative businesses.
- More nuanced analysis of market data and heightened data security requirements will also produce a market for new technological tools designed for professionals and organisations within the ecosystem.

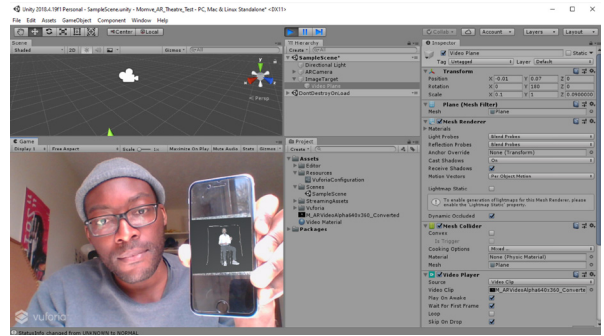
Figure 1 – Value chains being reconfigured from traditional industry to emerging industry



Source: European Cluster Observatory (2012) Emerging industries: report on the methodology for their classification and on the most active, significant and relevant new emerging industrial sectors.²

In conclusion, “no one is coming to save you!” Whether you are “into technology” or not, it is happening. As a business leader in the 2020s, it is necessary to understand this, and to think about one’s role in this fast growing emergence and development. As a creative or theatre entrepreneur, it becomes imperative to consider technologies as critical resources in your creations and operations. The task is weighty, as we also need to understand how dynamic technology can be within our given spaces. This written piece did not attempt to paint a clear picture of digitised theatre and its prospects in Namibia, but rather to trigger you to consider the evolving sociological, economic and technological processes, and the given response a storyteller needs to take on efficiently and sustainably. After all, the storyteller is the griot, and responds to where the people wander off to. Thank you for your time, Mwameme. Ka.

Photos contributed



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RIGHT NOW, AMONG MANY OTHER THINGS, THE ARRANGEMENT IS INCREASINGLY DIGITAL, CALLING ON CREATIVES TO ADOPT INTERNET-CENTERED AND DYNAMIC TECHNOLOGICAL FORMATS. THIS MEANS THAT AS STORYTELLERS, WE HAVE TO EXPLORE THE WAYS IN WHICH EXPERIENTIAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES CAN BE PRODUCED, PACKAGED, SOLD AND CONSUMED WITHIN THE CREATIVE SECTOR.



Owela Festival 2019. Water Project Performance. Photo by Opas Onucheyo

ONLINE STREAMING TICKETING SERVICE PROVIDER

ibuynam is a business that fully specialises in a secured online streaming, events management, and online ticketing system. The digital pioneering transformer focuses on secured, monetised live streaming, video on demand (VOD) streaming, events management (box office services), online ticket sales, and management.

*Interviewed by Lavinia Kapewasha:
Production coordinator, NTN.*

How was ibuynam, a platform for digitised and monetised content, conceived and why was it important to create this platform in the Namibian industry?

During the first lockdown in Namibia, most creatives, especially musicians held various free online shows to keep entertaining their fans and hoping that a corporate sponsor comes on board to support their online event financially.

What is video monetisation? Can you clarify the differences between advertising video on demand (AVOD), subscription video on demand (SVOD) and transactional video on demand (TVOD)? Where does ibuynam fit in?

Video monetisation is a way of making money off your video production. This can be a live video or pre-recorded video. AVOD is defined as: "Audiences can access videos without paying money to the content owner, or to the platform owner, in exchange for subjecting themselves to the advertisement(s) that run in front of, or alongside, or in the middle of, or at the end of the video". (clearbridgemobile.com, n.d.). ibuynam does not offer AVOD.

SVOD is referred to the ability to stream videos once you have subscribed. ibuynam can offer this service.

TVOD, which is ibuynam's business model, is where clients pay per view, within an allocated viewing period.

What benefits do artists, performers, and content creators get by putting their content on platforms such as ibuynam and not on YouTube?

Through the ibuynam platform, creatives have control over their finances as they have direct access to the live/current information in terms of ticket sales and the number of people streaming their event. The ibuynam platform allows creatives to sell their services and makes sure that only paid clients can view their content and the link to the content cannot be shared (secured). Which is the opposite of other free platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, etc.

What content does ibuynam look for and utilise?

ibuynam is looking for creatives that can showcase their talent through produced videos and live recording performances or shows/talks.

Not many artists understand the reach of the internet. Why is it important to upload content on the internet? What advantages are there?

The internet is a global marketplace that has managed to interconnect the whole world. So, as a creative, one expects to be recognised for their talents, and the internet is the cheapest – yet most effective – way of doing that.

With the current pandemic circumstances, quite a few events have moved to Zoom or other live streaming services. What advantages does ibuynam have by providing live streaming services? Can artists, performers, and content creators earn from live-stream events as well?

ibuynam allows creatives to make money when performing online. So yes, artists and other creatives can make money through live-streaming their events through the ibuynam platform, as ibuynam offers online ticket sales as well.

How do artists, performers, and content creators earn from their content on the ibuynam platform? What does it entail?

Creatives sell tickets to their events via the ibuynam platform. ibuynam will then be able to securely allow paid-up customers to view the content and not able to share the link to the event with anyone else. ibuynam deducts a small commission fee – or 8.25% from the total ticket sales – and the rest belongs to the creative. Our ticket sales system is also secured with a licensed payment gateway system. So the whole process is efficient and user-friendly. Keep in mind that the video can be hosted on ibuynam servers and can be accessed and sold at any time to the public.

When it comes to utilising ibuynam services, who does the content belong to in terms of rights of usage and copyright?

The content will always belong to the creator/creatives. ibuynam is simply a platform for creatives to share and sell their content.

Can artists, performers, and content creators decide the price of the ticket, the duration of the streaming of the content, and the percentage cut for profit?

Yes. ibuynam is flexible and always ready to discuss.

Who administers the tickets, the communication, and the liaising with the public?

Both ibuynam and the creative may be able to administer the tickets. As

for any technical issues, the ibuy**nam** technical team is always available.

How long can one be entitled to these services?

The duration of the services is depended on the package the creative chooses.

What content has been streamed before on the ibuy**nam** platform? What were the reach and the engagement rates? Are there any success stories? ibuy**nam** streamed the MTC #KnockOutHomelessness event and it reached an audience of over 30 000 people.

Boet & Sus VOD through the NTN reached over 5 000 people and event page visits.

What type of content is uploaded? Are there any technical specificities one needs to pay attention to?

Ideally, the content needs to be of the best quality to ensure a smooth stream or live stream. Therefore, paying close attention to the production of the video or the live stream is critical.

The file formats we expect are:
MP4 or MOV

The video quality we expect is:

Codec supported
Frame formats supported
Resolution: 1 920 x 1 080
Video bitrate range: 3 000 to 6 000 Kbps

For live streams, cameras should capture the stream at a high level in 720p or 1080p. However, 4k can be considered depending on circumstances.

The audio quality we expect is:
Codec PCM (Little or Big endian/16bit / or 24 bit)
Sample rate: 48Hz

Channels: LR (Stereo)
Audio and video must be embedded in one container format and not delivered separately.

It is important to consider equipment and content when creating video productions. Ensure that you have consulted production houses who will assist with the video production, using high-grade and quality equipment and technology to ensure that the video production or the live stream is uploaded as the best quality.

What are the security parameters of ibuynam** to ensure content is not illegally taken, forged or duplicated?**
ibuy**nam** has secured and encrypted the stored content. The content cannot

be shared through links.

What are your rates? What are all the costs involved to have video content uploaded and streamed, or to have an event live-streamed?

Below are our packages.

How can artists who live in the regions access ibuy**nam** services?

ibuy**nam** is online, meaning it can be accessed from anywhere with internet access.

What preparations should prospective clients have for the marketing and promotional features of the streaming content?

The client has to be prepared and drive all the marketing and aspects of their content. This requires research as marketing for online content and services has its own demands and strategies. Creatives are encouraged to think critically about their target audience, partnerships, promotional strategies, and overall competitive value of the content.

Email ibuy**nam** at
[local@ibuy**nam**.com](mailto:local@ibuynam.com)

Beginner

100 GB Bandwidth
5 GB Storage
8.25% Ticket Commission to us

N\$299 monthly
N\$1,500 semi-annually
N\$2,400 annually
N\$4,999 event-streaming, once off

Intermediate

350 GB Bandwidth
10 GB Storage
8.25% Ticket Commission to us

N\$399 monthly
N\$2,100 semi-annually
N\$3,600 annually
N\$4,999 event-streaming, once off

Advanced

750 GB Bandwidth
50 GB Storage
8.25% Ticket Commission to us

N\$799 monthly
N\$4,500 semi-annually
N\$8,400 annually
N\$4,999 event-streaming, once off

Professional

1 TB Bandwidth
Unlimited Storage
8.25% Ticket Commission to us

N\$999 monthly
N\$5,700 semi-annually
N\$10,800 annually
N\$4,999 event-streaming, once off

SANDY RUDD

**WORKING AS A PRODUCER FOR THE CULTURAL AND
CREATIVE SECTOR IN NAMIBIA**



PLAYWRIGHT, PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR

For over 30 years, Sandy Rudd has worked as an artistic director, producer, lecturer and manager of the Bank Windhoek Theatre School and the College for the Arts in Windhoek, Namibia. Sandy has been passionate about theatre and live performances ever since she can remember. Her productions have toured both nationally and internationally.



One of the reasons I have sustained my career is because I am transparent with donors and sponsors – there are no unpleasant surprises on opening night.



Photo by Councillor Leitago

*Interviewed by Lavinia Kapewasha:
Production coordinator, NTN.*

You are one of Namibia's most renowned theatre-makers and practitioners, how have you been able to sustain your career?

Thank you. I think I have had an incredible career in the theatre. I am so grateful for the opportunities I've had. Working for the last 25 years at COTA has been remarkable, as I was able to produce and direct plays with both college students and professional actors. Fundraising was easy when the college was the main recipient of funding, as big corporations and national collaborations prefer to work through a recognised institution.

On the other hand, my own little theatre company [The Playmakers](#) – in existence for over 30 years now – is a platform for a more experimental, non-conformative type of theatre. For example, the subject matter of '[Meet Me at Dawn](#)', a play I did about a lesbian relationship, was too risqué for the corporates. In that instance, I had to rely on existing Playmakers funds and make a deal with the actors that the box office takings would be shared. It is a risk to ask actors to work without a fixed fee, but we wanted to do the play anyway. There was enough to pay the actors, but we did not make any profit on the show. Without good

sponsorship, it is impossible, I believe, to cover costs for a production. If you want corporate funding, you have to put on a show that has cross-cultural appeal and is squeaky clean, as corporates want to keep their image spotless. A political play, a queer play, a nude play, a play with bad language will not get any funding. Luckily, I like doing big musicals and they have great appeal to the corporate world. '[Meme Mia!](#)' is a perfect example of local content, famous actors, students and a fabulous story. Funding for that show was easy!

One of the reasons I have sustained my career is because I am transparent with donors and sponsors – there are no unpleasant surprises on opening night. I always write a report, and I always inform the donor immediately if the budget line has changed. If that is the case, I find ways either to renegotiate the new budget line or to return the funds. Once you become established as a reliable recipient, the next time you ask for funding, you can rely on that sound and solid reputation.

Funding is central to the sustainability of this business. It is the reality of show business. You need real passion and dedication to ask for money; it is not easy. However, it is less difficult if you believe in your product and find incredibly creative ways of cutting the budget. Using your extended family for crowd scenes is one way to limit costs.

Keep focused at all times, holding on to the mantra: "The show's the thing". Don't digress from the core of what you are trying to say. Find fabulous ways to tell your story and when the show is over, start thinking of, planning and working on your next one.

Booking your venue is the first step for any new production. Once that is done, you are committed to do the show. By planning and doing at least two to three shows a year, you will sustain your career, you will become well known and funding will become easier and easier to source. Promoting yourself is also a good idea. Try and get good publicity for what you are doing. Somehow a famous face gets funding!

What keeps you engaged and motivated to keep nurturing the industry?

The musician Emmylou Harris says: "There is no one who creates music in a vacuum". The same could be said for writing a play. Working as a team with a clear vision of the production is a deeply rewarding experience. When we all become one, when all the elements are fused in a shared harmony of balance – in my opinion – that is when the beauty of theatre is realised. I firmly believe that the person who puts up the posters is as important as your leading actor; as is the technical team, the whole team. When the whole cast and crew feel they

are all inter-connected with the magic of the performance, they are hooked for life. Standing in the dark and leaping into the light is an extreme sport! You just don't quite know what will happen. That is how you keep the industry going. In the doing, your cast, crew and the audience will be dedicated, loyal and devoted to the craft forever.

I am proud of my track record at [NTN](#) of having a show almost every year for over 30 years, and I am pleased that I can work with the same cast and crew over and over again. If you nurture your cast and crew, they will enjoy working with you again and again. Love your cast and crew, be kind, and delight in all the wonderful new experiences and enthusiasms.

As a theatre director, how did you end up working as a theatre producer as well? Did it come easy or were there many lessons learnt along the way?

In Namibia, we just cannot afford the luxury of having a producer. Budget is just too tight to have an extra role which should be equal to that of the director. So, you just have to be both; otherwise, you would just be overloading the budget. However, this is unsustainable in the long run, and for future productions, a producer's fee should be included. Producing is fun, but it is also a very important role. Many people do not know the difference between the two roles. A producer produces the show (see duties below). The director has all the artistic dramatic duties of the show. A director directs, a producer produces.

Duties of the producer: (not in any particular order)

1. Fundraising
2. Copyright matters
3. Negotiating contracts
4. Budget
5. Transport and refreshments
6. Marketing
7. Press releases
8. Auditions (finding the space, advertising and organising the smooth running of the auditions)
9. Working with the venue, making sure it is open, paid for, conducive, clean and always available according to your contract with the venue owner.
10. Coordinating the technical requirements with the director
11. Together with the director, identifying the designers and negotiating the fees of:

- Costume design and production
- Technical design
- Sets and props
- Poster and programme design (printing, putting up posters, programme)
- All aspects of marketing and media engagements (social media, TV, press, radio, pop-up theatre)
- Getting permission from the municipality for posters and pop-up theatre
- All aspects of front of house (tickets, ushers, programmes, cash box, fire brigade, refreshments, etc.)

12. Paying the cast and crew

13. Getting ministry permission to perform in schools

14. Getting parental permission if working with children (ensuring safe transport home, etc.)

Lessons I have learnt;

1. It is essential to have a sufficiently large budget line for contingencies—at least 15% of your budget. Things will happen that you cannot even imagine beforehand.
2. Nurture the press on every level possible, get to know them, flatter

They get lost in junk or they might not seem too interesting. Go sell your show to the media. Very rarely do I not succeed in getting good cover for my shows. Always offer free tickets to the people promoting your show — as many as they want. (I've never given away more than two, it just sounds wonderful to offer lots of tickets). Afterwards, go back and thank everyone who gave you publicity. Flowers and chocolates are good ways to say thank you. Don't forget to include those flowers and chocolates in the budget!

3. Pay your actors on each day of rehearsal and performance. Total payments all at once are for some too tempting to go and spend.
4. Food and refreshments are an essential part of planning; remember, a hungry actor is an angry actor.
5. Make sure that contracts are signed at first rehearsal and make sure everyone understands the terms and conditions.
6. Be as transparent as possible at all times, especially when money is concerned.
7. My favourite saying in the theatre is "use the difficulty", so when things go horribly wrong, you still have to make them work. Think it through, be creative in your solution, be positive and know it's for the best. It has to be.



TO PRODUCE SOMEONE'S PLAY, YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE IN IT AND HAVE A GOOD VISUAL OF THE FINISHED PRODUCT.

them. The press is your best friend. 'Bums on seats' is everything. I make a day available to visit all the newspapers and radio stations to talk about the play and I save the press release with fabulous pictures on a flash drive and deliver it in person. You can't rely on sending press release by email.

To produce someone's play, you have to believe in it and have a good visual of the finished product. If I am producer of a play and raise a substantial amount of money and commit myself completely to the process, I would have to have a very good working relationship with the director and a shared vision of the production. It would be difficult to raise funds in the future for a show that is flop. Be involved. No surprises.

How did you develop the skills of managing the business of theatre? Or was it the environment and industry that helped shape your craft and producing skills?

I ran the Theatre School for 20 years, and each day was a new learning experience. Running the school and producing more than 50 shows over the years gives you a good idea of what you should be doing. The more you do, the more you learn. 10 000 hours makes you a competent person in your craft. I believe that. The environment and industry are changing all the time. You



Photo contributed by NTN



Photo contributed by NTN

have to be tuned into the new ways of thinking and doing. Adapt or die. Being curious and taking risks is always the most rewarding part of doing things. You can achieve this by exposing yourself to everything that is happening. Go to every single theatre production: School plays, NTN plays, UNAM plays, COTA plays and all the independent shows. I've learnt so much from going to all these shows and have seen the incredible talent the community has to offer. You can learn from all these shows and find ideas and new raw talent you can use for your own future productions.

There are certain misconceptions within the industry that a select few artists and practitioners are awarded funding or grants. Which attributes and qualities are critical to have as a producer when it comes to securing funds for projects and productions?

Selective funding certainly seems like that to many. I know I have often been accused of that. As I said earlier, I had the encouragement of COTA to support my applications. I know what kind of plays the donors want. I do the plays people want to see; they are, I hope, always quite different from the previous productions. I do not churn out the same old thing all the time; rather, fresh innovative productions that have the audience wanting more. I want my plays to make you feel good about yourself and life and I want the audience to be happy to pay the car guard N\$100 when they leave the theatre! I like doing shows that entertain, educate and, most of all, make you feel good about yourself and life. On the other hand, some of my plays have had the audience

feeling as if they have been punched in chest, and that is also a good thing, but regrettably, those shows generally do not get sponsorship.

What do you think is an economically viable theatre work or project? How do you go about choosing your projects?

Commercial theatre, theatre that has a wide spectrum of audience appeal; conversely, experimental raw theatre is a difficult genre to try to make economically viable. This is a very disappointing dichotomy because economically viable theatre is not necessarily the theatre piece you would like to do.

Young theatre practitioners and artists often do not feel confident approaching corporates and brands. What tips can you share to capacitate them?

1. Have confidence, know you are as good as anyone else.
2. Do not be intimidated by your inexperience.
3. If you have a burning passion and desire, that will come across to the donors.
4. The donors love to support a new person with fresh, strong, viable ideas.
5. Write up the most professional looking application form you can think of. Find an application form from NTN, the NACN, the internet – use the format and adjust to your requirements.
6. Once you have written up the proposal, get a good editor to edit it. Your proposal must be as professional looking as you can think it can be. A good cover,

good pictures, and, most of all, your vision must be articulate and easy to understand. If your proposal is slightly shabby and scruffy, that is exactly how the donor will think your show will be.

7. If you are meeting the donor, be on time for the interview and dress really smartly. I always make sure I have new lipstick! If you look fabulous, you feel fabulous and you feel confident. Your nerves will not show; you are in performing arts, act gorgeous. Have two hard copies, one for the donor and one for you. It gives you confidence to talk through and about your project.
8. Listen and be polite; don't make big promises that you have not thought of.
9. Always keep your donor in the loop on the production. If there is anything going wrong in the production that will impact the donor, keep them informed. A bad story in media will alienate you from the donor forever. Stuff happens, stay calm and find ways of sorting it out.
10. Always send the donor a beautiful report within a month of the end of the production.

How have you approached corporates in Namibia with viable theatre works? How do you make corporate Namibia see the value in art and creative economy?

The idea has to be sold: They want the most for their brand. You can do this by offering a good platform. An interesting campaign, lots of advertising, newspapers, flyers, radio interviews, pop-up trailers of your show in interesting places... (All of this will

generate extra press coverage.) The interest shown in the production will have a knock-on effect with the donor and the public. Big corporate donors are actually asking what the production can do for them, rather than what they can do for the community. Of course, they are pleased to be supporting the arts and it is a good thing, but the bottom line is how much the public is aware of their impact on the production. Always make sure you have the right branding and logos. Big trouble if you use the wrong logo! I don't know how you can make corporate Namibia see the real value in art. Unfortunately, they all have their own agendas and there is no solid policy for supporting the arts. They have their social responsibility budget, which is all rather ad-hoc with no long-term vision. Many of them change the emphasis on their designated support; one year it's the arts, some years it's schools, sports, health, etc. The non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the embassies, the European Union (EU), and similar organisations like to support artists with a more altruistic vision.

Some artists may feel that collaborating with corporates can infringe on their creative expression. How can one still find freedom in expression while meeting guidelines and stipulations from their funding partners?

If the project is accepted and a contract signed, it is rare for the donor to infringe on the creative expression within the project, but a problem can arise if you change the accepted brief. Any new idea must be introduced to the donor. If the donor does not like the new element, you have to accept that you cannot do it. It is advisable not to introduce anything new once the memorandum of understanding

(MoU) is signed.

The pool of funders in Namibia, be it either cooperates, NGOs, institutions or funding bodies, are not enough to sustain all sectors of the industry. Where can one look for viable funding elsewhere for theatre projects?

A barter system is one way of looking to cut the budget. For instance, a hall may be used for free if you offer a free or reduced show for the community that usually uses the hall. If your show talks about a certain product, find a company that specialises in that part of your story. Crowd funding is a new and interesting way to fundraise. Look for organisations all around the world that share your vision and your ideas; share your script/idea for social media funding. The film *'The White Line'* did that most successfully. Approach foundations, institutions, embassies. Approach your application from a different angle. Many different sponsors can support a play. Don't forget any sponsor's logo, no matter how small the contribution.

You have been invited to and showcased at the Makhandia Festival a considerable number of times. Theatre festivals are a means to get the product to the markets. How does one approach festivals and festival submissions? And how does one stay informed on the Southern African sector particularly?

If you can, the best way to get involved in a festival is to go and meet with the organisers. Subsequent correspondence is so much easier with someone you know. I have been working with the same Makhandia Festival (formerly Grahamstown)

coordinator since 1992. If you cannot do this, remember it is the job of festival organisers to organise and provide the entertainment for the festival. All festivals have a website and the necessary forms to fill in. They are tricky and difficult; I get a computer expert to help me fill in the online forms, which are a nightmare, actually. Find someone who is familiar with these forms and they can help you. Getting accepted for festivals is a long and difficult task. Just keep at it, one festival will like your concept; don't give up. Find a good website that promotes festivals and keep informed. If you like what you see, fill in the entry form as soon as you can. Missing a deadline through lack of information is very disappointing. Read the fine print – many festivals do not pay you to attend, you have to pay to get there, pay the rent, pay your actors etc. It is a tough gig doing festivals.

How important is networking and utilising festival contacts and maintaining those relationships for future projects?

As I mentioned, I only have one contact at the Makhandia Festival because she has worked there for all these years. However, working and utilising contacts is a nebulous thing. People change, people take on new projects; show business is a transient business. I don't tend to maintain relationships. Concentrate on new works, new ideas and new contacts that are immediately involved with the project and festival people on hand. Most communication is online now, so it is difficult to know who you are dealing with.

With producing comes the managerial overseeing of artists and collaborators who are resources in their own right. How do ensure that all parties



Photo by Willem Vrey

signing on to a project have their best interests met?

Once the contract has been signed and all parties know what is expected of them, keep to that negotiated deal. If you call extra rehearsals, or ask for an extra dance or song, negotiate the extra time with financial support. You can't expect the artists to do more than they have signed on for. By the same token, the director expects the contract to be obliged to. Open communication at all times is crucial to keep the sensitive issues of money and abuse in check. Obviously, during the process something may take a turn; a new song is needed, a different costume, etc. Check your budget line items before you float the idea with the cast. If you do not have the budget, drop the idea. Sometimes the cast might agree to sing that extra song for the sake of the show, but never count on the goodwill of your cast, it is abusive to do so. It is in your best interest to keep open communication and embrace new ideas with the budget at the back of your mind at all times. In one of my shows, an actor wanted to sing his own song; I liked the idea, but then things turned sour when I did not offer to pay for it after the show, as I did not communicate or asked what it would cost. Another time an actor wore his own red jacket in the play and sent me the bill for hiring the jacket. It is a tricky business.

As a producer, what are some of the challenges you've experienced with the performing arts? How can these challenges be overcome?

Every element involved in the production is a challenge. The first challenge is getting the actors on your side. From the first day at the audition, have the schedule ready, the contract ready, the venue ready and, most of all, the financial commitment you have to the actors. Actors who do not understand this obligation to the production are a big problem. Many misunderstandings will follow.

If you the producer at any time go over this obligation, that is your problem and you have to sort it out. Actually, that is the biggest challenge across the whole spectrum of producing. Keep everyone involved in the loop of the production. A MoU given to each and every person

you are dealing with is important. I had a costume designer who was not aware when the show was to start, and was hurriedly making costumes backstage on opening night. It was my fault, as I had assumed he knew the date. I had been waiting anxiously for costumes that had not been made. All challenges can be reduced if there is a solid understanding of dates, deliverables and fees. My biggest fault is that I presume too much; sometimes I think that the cast and crew know what I am thinking without my saying it out loud. Very dangerous. Say everything you are thinking, even if you think it is trivial, it may not be.

How can one produce socially relevant work while still respecting cultural heritage, integrity and not simply be motivated by financials as critical benefits?

In 2018, I was commissioned by the EU to do a cultural [performance](#) of Olufuko (from an Oshiwambo term referring to girls' rites of passage to womanhood – it is an annual festival held in the town of Outapi, but previously it was a six-day rite of passage held in villages for young Aawambo women in traditional settings). This was an extremely contentious and sensitive production to do. I had to find a way that celebrated the cultural ritual and acknowledged that the integrity of the performance had to be maintained. The Outapi festival, as the event that encompassed Olufuko practices, was finding resistance on many platforms, and attracting negative criticism from many Namibians and all around the world.

While the financial aspect was being sponsored by the EU, the play had to celebrate the traditional aspects of the ceremonial procedure but, in my opinion, offer modern choices to young women watching the performance without denigrating the festival.

With a lot of creative thinking and many interviews with young women and working closely with the drama group from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) – who had carried out interviews in their own home towns and villages – we also did a lot of research on the meaning of the words, the different roles of the players in the ritual and why it was

so contentious. Having fulfilled our obligation, the cast and crew were able to include all these themes and issues in our production. Research with the right people is crucial. One paper I researched was an essay criticising urban feminists on their depiction of the festival. That was interesting reading. I had never heard that term before, but it helped me to understand the festival from a better perspective. I did the performance in two time zones. By utilising this simple theatre technique, I could offer a solution that satisfied all the different stakeholders. When the script is finished, share it with the stakeholders to ensure you get the go ahead to put on the play. You don't want a negative reaction to your production. Sensitive cultural heritage issues should never be motivated by financial benefits, only by the critical, informative, educational benefits.

Having seen the realities, opportunities and challenges of the Namibian creative and cultural industry, what is your hope for the oncoming generation of theatre-makers and practitioners?

The biggest problem the country is facing at the moment, in my opinion, is the fact that there is little or no arts training in the current school curriculum. Our youngsters are not being exposed or stimulated by any art education. That is very sad and even terrifying.

The future of theatre in Namibia is completely dependent on the presentation of marvellous, controversial and brilliant productions. A dull theatre will soon dull the public. Theatre has to be vibrant and exciting; we are competing with social media and the internet, we have to reinvent a way we can present theatre with the same vibrancy and willingness. There are people out there who can do this. These are the brave souls with entrepreneurial spirits who make calculated moves while understanding that there are never any guarantees of success. It's also the ability to work autonomously and be decisive. These people and the NTN have doubled audience numbers over the past decade, with well-respected determination to considerably increase a more diverse demographic, so all is not gloom and doom. Whatever we are doing so far seems to be alright.

A LAST WORD! LISTEN TO YOUR INNER VOICE AND TAKE YOUR PASSION AND MAKE IT HAPPEN. TELL YOUR STORY.





VERONIQUE MENSAH

**RUNNING INDEPENDENT PRODUCTION COMPANIES:
OPPORTUNITIES IN NAMIBIA**



**STORYTELLER, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, CULTURAL RESEARCHER, THEATRE-MAKER AND
EDUCATIONAL THEATRE PRACTITIONER.**

Veronique Mensah is a Naledi Award nominated performer, storyteller, theatre-maker, researcher, writer, applied theatre practitioner and producer. She is the executive producer of [VM Born Stars Productions CC](#), the co-founding president of the Peace Strings Network, the co-executive director of the [Owela Festival](#) (Germany, Namibia) and the co-producer of the Kalahari International Festival of the Arts (Namibia).



TO BUILD REQUIRES HARD WORK, PLANNING, SHOWING UP AND STICKING TO YOUR GOALS, NO MATTER WHAT CHALLENGES YOU FACE. THESE ARE LESSONS I LEARNT AS A PRODUCER AND COMPANY DIRECTOR.

Journey to storytelling

As a child growing up in Mariental, we did not have recreational centres where young minds could meet and engage in cultural activities outside the school premises. The only source of entertainment that was available was the television and my grandmother and great-grandmother's stories about growing up in then German South West Africa, the arrival of Catholic missionaries and the impact it had on life as they knew it along with folktales and life lessons transferred to me through stories. I was an extremely inquisitive child, always wanting details and asking questions. The Afrikaans saying "En Nog" (what else/and more) was my nickname for a few years because I would constantly ask "en nog?" whenever a story came to an end. I knew from a young age that I wanted to tell stories mainly because through storytelling and sharing you gain knowledge and grow.

My grandmother ran a soup kitchen with German support sourced through the Catholic church, and my weekends and most holidays were invested in doing bulk shopping for clothes and stationery and helping pack care packages for the less fortunate. This act of charity and community work moved me, and my grandmother would always ask me to either tell my peers a story or teach them a dance. We would often perform while waiting for the food to be served and it stirred a love for community theatre inside of me.

When my grandmothers were tired of telling stories, I headed over to the television set. There I would be glued to South African soapies and American sitcoms. When the popular American improvisational comedy show 'Whose Line is it Anyway?' hit the screens, I knew for a fact that I wanted to be on stage. I was still in primary school when I started telling everyone in my community that I would go study drama in South Africa.

In 2007, I matriculated from Mariental High School and I was off to study for a certificate in drama and marketing management at Northlink College in Cape Town, South Africa, to thereafter get university admission. I had one chance to get into Northlink College and this meant I had to ace the audition with absolutely no prior performance training. My grandmother sent me to teacher Olga Visser, she was the only person in town known to have a drama/performance background. I remember walking into her home with the prescribed text along with my choice of poetry - I presented my material to her and she told me I'm perfect and it was so. I completed my audition and was granted admission into Northlink College in 2008.

2008 was a year of adventure as it was my first time to be introduced to the cultural and creative industry first-hand. I watched my first professional theatre production, which was a performance of William Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' at the Maynardville Open-Air Theatre in Cape Town, South Africa.

Because the theatre industry is huge in South Africa, especially in Cape Town, Northlink College afforded its students the opportunity to watch productions every weekend. This gave me the opportunity to learn the way I knew best - through watching, observing and applying. The more we attended theatre shows, the more techniques I learnt and till this day I apply them in my work.

After Northlink College, I got university acceptance at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and I moved to Tshwane (formerly Pretoria), South Africa. My training at TUT was both challenging and fulfilling; as students we were involved in productions as both performers and organisers. Arts administration gave us as students the chance to be in charge of the two major festivals of the institution. Here I got to learn how to direct a festival, its programme and technologies - skills that are valuable for today's independent theatre-maker.

After completing my degree at TUT, I worked mostly in the educational theatre and children's theatre sector of the South African entertainment industry. I had the opportunity to work with and for independent production companies as well as national institutions, where I learnt that every production house/company has its own journey to fulfill the ultimate goal of building, growing and expanding the creative industry.

Journey to opening a production company

In 2016, I returned to Namibia, coming from an industry in South Africa where I was represented by an agent who would inform me where to be when for an audition. I now had to ask around and find out where auditions take place. I wanted to go back to South Africa, where I knew as a performer I didn't have to know the casting agent to be auditioned. My mother, however, convinced me to stay and open a production company and do the same work I would be doing in South Africa here. I still remember my grandmother saying to me "the Namibian child too deserves educational theatre and children's theatre" and this was and still is the truth. I thereafter registered [VM Born Stars Productions CC](#) at the Business and Intellectual Property Authority of Namibia (BIPA) with the aim of using performance art to work towards social change and human development in Namibia, and being committed to the art of multidisciplinary storytelling. This, I would say, is the gap that [VM Born Stars Productions](#) looks at filling in the local theatre sector. The opportunities are vast in using storytelling for social communion and development, and therefore, it is imperative for theatre-makers to focus on filling the gap in the creative sector when considering opening and running an independent production company.

Running a production company

As artists, one should remember that in order to be identified for your work, you need to be protected by your work and all the operations around it. A company is a separate legal entity that works as an ongoing concern for specific goals and objectives to be carried out. It is through a production company that creatives can have the institutionalised opportunity to design, focus and articulate their cultural and artistic programming for the sector and investors. Stakeholders in the cultural and creative industry all have different roles to play, and this becomes more articulate within our differently set up structures, obligations and target reach. Moreover, as an artist, it makes sense to own your own goods, programmes, products and services legally for operative and sustainable purposes. Our government has made the process of registering a company easy and this can be completed [online](#) using your smartphone.

Filling the gap

After registering my company, I realised that there was a clear need for result-oriented art products, a need for connection to humans and for human development in Namibia. This realisation has helped shape the gap-filling that VM Born Stars Productions does. This birthed phrases such as

'Occupying the Co-Narrative' and 'Body Space as an Archive', because we wanted to devise terms that would contribute to social change for progressive development and resilient knowledge-based economies. In expanding our programming, we then became a member of the Peace Strings Network with the aim to reach artists around the world to develop and capacitate the Namibian arts industry in this approach. From there, we started engaging performance learning tools/products to learn about society and reflect on it without the bureaucratic trauma. This is the gap VM Born Stars Productions is filling in the creative and cultural sector.

Upon my return to Namibia and during the early months of opening VM Born Stars Productions, it was clear that there was not enough creative professionals reflecting on society using and drawing from national policies and directives, nor on the provided tools legislation gives to engage/intervene the public. It is through this reflective process that we realised a significant gap between national and independent cultural agencies and governmental objectives. This drove VM Born Stars Productions to further address certain social ills such as: Drug and alcohol abuse, the increasing number of school drop-outs, teenage pregnancy, human trafficking, child welfare, genocide, health, safety and hygiene along with labour and



welfare, to name but a few. Hence, one could see that the role VM Born Stars Productions was playing in the sector was not one of mere entertainment and creative leisure, but one of social- and youth-oriented programming drawing from already prepared highlights from the government.

Approach and programming

As a theatre-maker and executive producer of the company, I love making use of applied theatre techniques while telling educational stories because they examine, critique, exchange and makes one reinterpret cultural values. It allows us to challenge and question global and national issues and at times seek cures/solutions against social ills. It creates body space for knowledge productivity and allows the theatre-maker to have an intersectional function in the education of the citizen. As VM Born Stars Productions, we have identified a growth opportunity within knowledge production, particularly life skills. We aim to transform the life skills classroom into an express lab where the teacher uses applied arts tools from Afro-musicology, applied theatre techniques and game design in an endeavour to equip the learner with the appropriate skills and etiquette for leadership as a cultural citizen.

Applied theatre techniques are amongst the most underutilised tools in the Namibian theatre industry. It is exactly these techniques that we have to engage to really work towards social change and enhance education. Applied theatre also has a decolonial and therapeutic role to play in healing, which is much needed in a post-colonial society such as Namibia. Through telling stories, we learn about life and how to cope with different issues. We have told stories in communities, hospitals, malls, parliament, museums, hotels, the Ghost Town, schools, streets, in theatres, parks, galleries, prison, parking bays, festivals and in the desert with a wide range of audiences and performers ranging from cultural experts and political leaders, school-going youth, the homeless and other community members, both online and offline.

The joy of making applied theatre is that you are not confined to a traditional theatre space and it creates body space for knowledge and productivity and makes use of what is available. It is designed for the oppressed, hence there is not always a huge financial burden attached to the making as it also allows the oppressed the opportunity to contribute to the narrative at hand. However, financial support – in line

with applied theatre productions – is a matter of management design.

Opportunities for more gaps to be filled

Our Namibian creative and cultural industry's goods and services have not been thoroughly examined. The potential has not been explored so as to make enough of an economic impact. Further research and analysis is required in order for one to understand where and how they can sustainably expand their footprint and approaches to cultural programming. VM Born Stars Productions analyses creative economies by comparing creative reinterpretations of the Namibian social narratives; we call it co-narrative economics. This approach develops impact literacy to a level that cultivates the cultural citizen towards human development and social change. Essentially, what is being highlighted



THE OPPORTUNITIES ARE VAST IN USING STORYTELLING FOR SOCIAL COMMUNION AND DEVELOPMENT, AND THEREFORE, IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR THEATRE-MAKERS TO FOCUS ON FILLING THE GAP IN THE CREATIVE SECTOR WHEN CONSIDERING OPENING AND RUNNING AN INDEPENDENT PRODUCTION COMPANY.

here is the need for research in order to create adequate structures that can impact society profoundly, and also function sustainably within our economic processes. One cannot simply open a production company to run haphazard projects. It should be

strategic, impactful and sustainable. Ask yourself what is significant about what you want to do, and how will it create impact and support your livelihood?

Expansion of the production company

The Born A Star Academy is a public art intervention that has education and social justice at heart. It is a phasal design of performative learning for artists and life skills educators in the different regions of Namibia. The programme makes use of theatre, visual arts and music practices to facilitate co-narrative devising at national level. The academy engages issues children, adolescents and young adults face around the regions of Namibia. This through our express sessions, workshop facilitations, round circle discussions and forum devising along with music and game design. The methods we use engage the participants with their social welfare at heart.

In 2019, VM Born Stars Productions, supported by the directorate of arts in the [Ministry of Basic Education, Arts and Culture](#), began the Born A Star Academy and its basic performance facilitation programme.

The academy stems from concepts such as theatre of the oppressed, theatre for development, children's theatre, theatre in education, youth theatre and community theatre. The genealogies of these techniques originated and are influenced by different parts of the world. The reason why we are taking an integrated approach is because we found that community education thrives through hybrid and plural methodologies. The Born A Star Academy triangulates these practices to negotiate and implement its objectives with the target groups.

Basic performative facilitation is the devised integration of performative learning within a knowledge-based economy through impact literacy. It incorporates a dynamic series of enhancement programmes carried out to capacitate creative competence for public body space narratives and its related ethics. The integration has delivered an investment-minded approach, growing towards inter-sectoral spaces. Hence, basic performative facilitation is continuing to cultivate long-term strategic commitment towards economic growth while imparting relevance to human and intellectual capital. This, by

far, has been our biggest achievement.

One cannot deny that our creative industry in Namibia is so diverse and independent producers must be prepared to embrace this diversity by accepting the strengths and weaknesses of other key industry players as well as the independent producers' own strengths and weaknesses. Theatre producers must loosen their imagination so as to enhance creativity and solve our industry problems, and have the courage and confidence to speak up when needed. To build requires hard work, planning, showing up and sticking to your goals, no matter what challenges you face. These are lessons I learnt as a producer and company director.

Running a production company will be met with great challenges, but it could reach great heights if the strategies are fit for the sector's needs and contexts. Operations in the company will be the most challenging, as there will not be consistent support for your everyday administrative processes. One has to be prepared to acquire entrepreneurial and research skills, sociopolitical mindfulness and find their place within the sector.

I would also advise that you think carefully about the kind of organisation you want to run, and learn from others who have tried. Think big, but start small. Designing and running a creative company is an intricate and laborious process. There is a lot of stopping

and restarting. However, there is no doubt that independent production companies and agencies play a key role in intervening in the sector by catering to different needs and possibilities that are left uncultivated.

Role playing and integration

It is important that creative industry professionals gather consistently to seek similarities and differences for close observations, not to judge but to learn from one another. I particularly think internships are beneficial for emerging theatre-makers and will assist them in knowing how to professionalise their discipline. As far as creative development is concerned, there is a need to make use of artistic work as a call for a targeted response.

VM Born Stars Productions aims to build intersectional partnerships while cultivating conversations that emulate similarities with justified support in order to build a stronger sector. Intersectional partnerships appropriate professional disciplines, services and goods to produce the relevant creative and cultural derivatives required in a resilient, knowledge-based economy.

I always say this to our students: In Namibia, you need to be more than an artist to make a living from the industry. You need to have a vision of what you can contribute to the building of the industry. Being just an actor or a dancer is not enough; you need to continuously grow and develop your skills and that

of those you encounter. It's not always easy because support streams in Namibia are different in comparison to so many countries and access to information is a major challenge, especially in developing the industry. Owning a theatre production company will allow you to bring that vision into existence with the relevant input.

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Photo by Thabiso Dube



ZELRINE VERDOES

RUNNING A PERFORMING ARTS TRAINING STUDIO



CECCHETTI BALLET INSTRUCTOR

Born in 1985 in Rundu, Namibia, Zelrine Verdoes spent much of her life in Cape Town, South Africa from the age of 10. She received her Cecchetti ballet training qualifications and a Sport Science degree. After moving back to Namibia in 2011, Zelrine taught First Language English at Windhoek Gymnasium High School for two and a half years. In 2014, she bought the National Ballet School from Jenny Schuster and took up teaching ballet full-time.



I THINK YOU MUST DO WHAT YOU DO WELL; THERE IS NO POINT TO TRY TO TEACH SOMETHING THAT YOU ARE NOT A MASTER IN.

Interviewed by Nelago Shilongoh: Artistic director, NTN.

What is the background of your training?

I had been dancing from the age of five and experimented with tap, modern, contemporary and Irish dancing. But ballet, my big love, required the most time and dedication. I successfully completed the Advanced 2 dancer's examination in the Cecchetti method and received the internationally accredited Cecchetti classical ballet Associate qualification in 2005 and the Associate Diploma qualification in 2019. I had been privileged enough to be instructed by some of the best ballet trainers in South Africa and abroad during various summer and winter schools. While completing my studies at Stellenbosch University, I received my pilates trainer qualification as well.

What are some your performance career highlights?

I never performed for a living; after I received my associate qualification, I really wanted to study at a tertiary institution. For quite some time, dance was not part of my life. By the time I started work as an English teacher, the dream of performing was no longer there. As a dance student, our studio took part in many Eisteddfods and competitions in the Artscape Theatre

Centre and small performances wherever we could. One of my highlights was taking part in the showcase of a Cecchetti summer school in Michigan, USA. The same year I watched Carlos Acosta's performance of Tocaroro – A Cuban Tale at Sadler's Wells in London. During that trip, we visited the Royal Ballet and I was able to observe a class of the senior students. I was privileged enough to travel to Russia in 2019 and attend a performance of Swan Lake at the Bolshoi Theatre as well as a traditional Russian folk show in St Petersburg.

How was the National Ballet School developed? What are some of the school's milestones?

I did not create National Ballet School; I bought and took over the studio in 2014 after teaching there part-time as one of the faculty members. I was still a full-time high school teacher when I was convinced by the ballet school's previous owner that it was a sustainable business. The National Ballet School was already an established ballet studio with a very good reputation. The previous owner was at retirement age and was looking for a young teacher to take over from her.

For me, one of the first milestones was to enter the entire studio solely under my name and also to create and stage a theatre production as the sole teacher

and owner of the National Ballet School. Next year, my very first students – who started with me about eight years ago – will be seniors; this is a wonderful achievement for me as it enables me to see the real progression the students have made under my teaching.

In terms of gaps in the sector, what gaps does the National Ballet School serve in the Namibian performing arts?

There is definitely opportunity for more qualified ballet studios to open. Ballet is very popular in Namibia and it is impossible to accommodate everyone who wishes to enrol for classes. We are very few qualified classically trained ballet teachers in Windhoek. By 'qualified' I mean ballet students who have not only done ballet as children but received a certified classical ballet teaching qualification under a certified umbrella entity or tertiary institution after a few years of specialised training. 'Qualified' to me also means enriching yourself with additional training and courses in your field and beyond while you are working. In the Cecchetti method, you can qualify as a teacher at different levels.

National Ballet School offers the average child the opportunity to learn a very specialised skill and to perform on stage to the best of their abilities. Most students will never perform on

stage once they leave school, but while they are part of a performing arts studio, they will experience the magic of the performing arts so that they can influence others to support the industry as well.

Would you suggest that one has to particularly focus on “the gaps to be filled” in the sector when considering opening a performing arts training school?

I think you must do what you do well; there is no point to try to teach something that you are not a master in. But if you choose to do something that many others do, you need to do it better or at least differently.

What were some challenges in developing and running the school, and how were you able to overcome them?

For two years, I taught ballet part-time and still continued with my day job. It would not have been sustainable to continue with that longer than was necessary. I had to make a choice because running your own business (and that is what a dance studio has to be if you want to make living from it) is a full-time job if you are the one doing everything from actual teaching to admin and the books.

When I took over the studio, the biggest challenge and responsibility was to maintain the students who were so loyal to the previous owner and teacher, Jenny Schuster. I had to show them that I had a few new ideas but was as hard-working, knowledgeable and caring as her. Thankfully, she mentored me a great deal and the dividends were that almost all her students chose to stay on when I took over.

Another big challenge is the lack of teaching support in Namibia. Many people do not realise the sustainability of a ballet school in Windhoek and, therefore, do not feel encouraged enough to pursue a career in teaching ballet. That makes it hard to find qualified people to assist you when you are ill or injured.

Are you still performing?

I perform with the students in our theatre productions when I feel like it. Practically, I don't think I would be able to run the ballet studio if I wanted to dance professionally. Ballet is an extramural activity for children and the ballet studio's classes run from 13:00 to 19:30 each weekday. I have no assisting

teachers; if I do not teach, I do not get paid.

I get the biggest kick out of seeing my students turn into better dancers than I was.

One requires expansive experience in the sector before opening a training school. Would you agree? At what stage in one's career can one consider opening a performing arts school/studio?

In the Cecchetti method, there are very clear rules and regulations for when a prospective teacher wants to open a ballet school. The person must have received their Advanced 1 dance qualification – which means



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that they would have had training and completed a series of ballet exams over at least 10 years – before they would be considered to enter the associate teaching exam. I think one has to put in the hours and receive the proper training before even considering opening a dance school. You work with other people's children so the responsibility is enormous, and if you are not up to that challenge, you should not pursue it.

One has to be a good facilitator to offer training. What does this demand? How can prospective performing arts trainers hone this specific skill?

I think the following can help: Job

shadowing and attending various teaching/coaching courses; spending time with people who you think facilitate well – I really believe in mentoring; asking for tips, be open to share ideas and take criticism; and most importantly to be willing to get 'down' to the level of the person you are teaching.

How do you retain your clients? What does this mean for the professionalism and smooth administration in running a training school?

If you are passionate about what you teach, and if you believe in the method and process, your clients can't help but be passionate about it as well.

I think by finding a balance between what the clients want or expect and what you know has to happen for them to achieve a certain goal helps to keep clients happy. Your clients have to understand that nothing happens overnight and that most things that are hard, like ballet, take time to master. Getting back to basics is vital for success.

However, you have to try to be open to new trends or ideas. Showing clients that you are willing to improve yourself is very important. Exposing students to different teaching methods or performing experiences locally or abroad is important. If that means that you have to create these opportunities, then so be it.

I try to be as professional as possible; people don't like their time to be wasted, so working hard to develop good administrative skills pays off. In my experience, though, being dependable and honest goes a long way and people tend to be forgiving of small admin mistakes if your character is honourable and you are organised most of the time.

What advice do you have for a dancer who hopes to start their own training studio business? What organisation and entrepreneurial skills does this demand?

Understanding basic business principles goes a long way. No one is going to just give you money, you have to take responsibility for every client and the fees they pay you. Asking for financial advice and how to run a business successfully and ethically is important. In my experience, keeping communication channels open between myself and other dance



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teachers helps me to keep perspective.

Opening a training school can be quite challenging especially when one does not have the infrastructure such as spaces for rent. How can one look at exploring infrastructures such as venues economically?

This is a serious problem because there are only so many venues that are affordable. Collaborating with other performing arts teachers to build or utilise a venue together will still have enormous financial implications.

When it comes to performing venues, we are very limited in Namibia. In Windhoek, the only facility that is really suitable to stage large-scale dance productions is the NTN, and they are partly state funded. With this financial limitation on the institution, that means that the infrastructure is there but not always upgraded, but the costs to utilise the venue is unaffordable for dance teachers. If you do not have sponsors backing you, it is not financially viable

to perform there. If it is more affordable to the average dance teacher, more theatre productions can take place more regularly – not only every two or three years as is the case with the National Ballet School. Regular theatre productions will allow more exposure to our students and will generate more income for the performing arts sector. Thus, one can look at school facilities that are also maintained and conducive for dance training.

What philosophies do you abide by when it comes to skills and professional development in performing arts sector?

You are never too old to learn, and if you can learn one thing from an experience or person, that is still very useful. You have to better yourself – whether that is professionally or personally. You must also be willing to put in many hours of hard work.

Working ethically is very important to me. That allows people to trust you and,

therefore, be more willing to collaborate or help you.

Working towards excellence is my primary goal. If you strive to produce extremely well-trained students and excellent shows, there is no reason why young Namibians can't make a success as ballet dancers or trainers anywhere in the world. When other corporations and companies become aware that your business is not mediocre, they are more likely to assist you financially. Many times, dance studios need the financial assistance of the public to create and stage theatre productions – good relations and a good reputation go a long way.

What is your hope for emerging dancers in developing sustainable careers in Namibia?

My hope is that parents and students realise the benefits of teaching ballet full-time. You are able to do something you love and enrich other people's lives while still being financially independent.

Photo contributed by Clemens Hess

TURA SPRINGER



LAVINIA KAPEWASHA

CONSIDERING A CAREER IN ARTS ADMINISTRATION



ARTS ADMINISTRATOR, PRODUCER, PERFORMER, FILM-MAKER.

Lavinia Kapewasha is an all-round creative, performer and film-maker. She describes herself as multi-dexterous, taking a liking to being on stage and behind the scenes as well. She is the co-founder of [Dark Crown Productions](#). She is the current production coordinator at the NTN.



THE BEAUTY OF NAMIBIA'S INDUSTRY IS THAT WE HAVE OPPORTUNITIES; WE MUST JUST LOOK FOR THEM.

I returned to Namibia as a fresh, eager and energetic performer. I had a bachelor's degree at the ready and I wanted to grace stages and make an impact through performance. To my surprise, making an impact was going to take more than just a fancy piece of paper and the ability to soliloquy. My homecoming was overshadowed by my ignorance. I hadn't studied the industry, didn't know the inner mechanics nor did I research what it would mean to work as a full-time artist in an ever-developing Namibia. Fast forward a few years and where do I find myself? Working at a national institution with the mandate of creating, producing and promoting performing arts in all its dimensions. It might not be the same for each creative, musician or artist you come across, but it was the case for me. I somehow managed to find a footing in arts administration, and so can you.

What is arts administration, you might ask? Arts administration is all the work you don't see but will end up appreciating. The dictionary definition: It is a field in the arts sector that facilitates programming within cultural organisations. Arts administrators are responsible for facilitating the day-to-day operations of the organisation as well as the long-term goals, and fulfilling its vision, mission and mandate. To take out arts administration from the equation would see your favourite headlining artist stranded without

transport to the concert you paid your hard-earned cash to watch, your favourite yearly festival not having a venue or your bespoke art piece left in a warehouse and not delivered to you. These are mere examples to introduce you to the world and responsibilities of art administrators. They're found in cultural and artistic institutions, NGOs, entrepreneurial start-ups and even within the government.

Why arts administration?

As the industry grows, so does supply and demand. However, what can support the industry if the demand increases? The administrators. It is their knowledge, tools, creativity, nature and ambition for development that shows their value. Administrators within the arts see the value of art and work to see the industry grow, forging better paths for artists. For Namibia to have a creative industry that is productive and profitable, we need the administrators to plan, facilitate, fundraise, strategise, market and more. These roles are vital in the expression of art and culture because one without the other is not a sustainable ecosystem. The point being: If you want artists to make art, then you need the administrators to do the rest.

How do I find work as an arts administrator?

Namibia has national institutions, cultural bodies, production companies

and NGOs as well as the corporates who employ arts administrators. Arts administrators come in various roles, at different skill levels:

- Curator
- Marketing intern
- Production assistant
- Talent manager
- General manager
- Production manager
- Creative director

It is always ideal to look at what institutions are in your vicinity. Research the entity, look out for what they represent and see if you can picture yourself there. If there are any career postings, apply for one of the roles, but make sure you look at the requirements fully and understand them beforehand. If there are no vacancies, write to them for an internship opportunity. I see the value and importance of internships, especially for newcomers and enthusiasts. An internship will give you insight into the working mechanisms and will allow you to get the necessary experience. Apply for internships everywhere; it can be treated like a short course, just as if you were enrolled at university or college, but getting the first-hand experience in the workplace. Depending on your level, you may want to start at entry-level, which would look at lesser tasks and/or less demanding tasks. Either way, apply for posts or internships to bridge the gap and open doors elsewhere.

I never thought I would work as an art administrator; my focus primarily was on performance. I studied at the [University of Essex](#) and attained a bachelor of arts degree in acting. I followed my passion as I always wanted to be a storyteller for all forms. However, with little to no opportunities for work, reality dawned. Life is not easy. Instead of looking at the negative, I focused my energy on creating opportunities for the work to arise. This mindset change allowed me to see the potential of being a key player behind the scenes. We can't all be the stars, some of us have to open the doors for others. So, I decided to work behind the scenes, which led to my first internship at dB Audio Namibia. Working at an institution that prides itself on growing and broadening experiences for its team, I was able to flex any muscle I wanted to. I dabbled here and there and got to understand where my strengths are and got to understand my weaknesses. This internship laid the foundation for my career in arts administration, as it allowed me to not only get a glimpse into the creative sector but the corporate sector as well, and the marrying of the two.

As the idea of making work never faded, and with new skills and networks, my second foray into arts administration came from a need to creatively express the frustration of being an artist via the medium of the small screen, which my business partner Jenny Kandenge and I developed into a web series. I like to say sheer confidence and lack of experience propelled us to undertake this, however, we pooled our resources, knowledge and tenacity into creating

the work. We inadvertently became art administrators through the process, having to coordinate, schedule, contract and manage the various creative stakeholders as well as doing financial reporting. We did not call ourselves art administrators, but what we did was exactly that, as we had to oversee a project from inception till the debut. That was all arts administration, and we got a first-hand course in it. It also made me realise I enjoy overseeing projects, as it echoes what I enjoy doing – directing.

As a freelancer, I struggled with whether I made the right decision in my career choice. With arts administration, I say I fell into the sector. My previous experiences from producing for the small screen to working as one of the project managers for the Owela Festival has led me to my current position, as the production coordinator at the NTN. I work within the production office as part of the team that oversees NTN-produced productions and NTN client rentals from the onset and throughout. It is a multifaceted position where you execute tasks to ensure projects are completed, work with stakeholders, liaise with clients, do financial accounting, and a lot of planning, coordinating, contracting, and more.

Opportunities

- The beauty of Namibia's industry is that we have opportunities; we must just look for them. Before working full-time in arts administration, I networked ferociously. I credit my early tenacious energy to my future

work experiences. I wrote to many places, I had no shame to email creatives and stakeholders within the industry, I researched funding bodies, and I assimilated with the right people. We can always thank the country's population for the ease of networking in Namibia; it goes without saying that someone knows somebody. I never felt any shame to call or email or text an industry player; there should not be any fear in it. I advise younger generations to do more of that. Make people see you, as you cannot work in isolation and expect them to know your work ethic and productivity. They need to see you, even though you may annoy them here and there, they'll keep you in mind. We're a country that is new on the regional and international level, hence we can engage the institutions, organisations and corporates with complex and stimulating projects that can correlate with their brand, identity and social corporate responsibility. There's room to play. Look for the ideas that no one else in Namibia has managed to bring to fruition yet. Once you have done so, you'll be able to find the pool of endless possibilities. As a highly skilled creative, make yourself known. We can afford to do so in Namibia. Attend shows, festivals, productions and socialise with the organisers and artists. Share your expertise in elevating their work.

- If you are a highly skilled artist, there is room for teaching and managing. Namibia's industry has room for managing bodies to





take over an artist's administrative duties. Having peers dedicated to entertainment law, business development and workplace safety would astronomically grow the industry, creating an ecosystem that works in cohesion with other industries. We need more entertainment lawyers, union lobbyists and agents. We haven't yet reached the full potential – there are far more investment opportunities to highlight how the industry is cohesive and self-sustaining.

- Additionally, working in arts administration, you are on the precipice of change in Namibia and have a role to play in the culmination of policy reform and law change, which will make the industry more viable.

Challenges

- As a developing nation, policies and frameworks that coincide with the protection of artists and the working environment for the arts are still being formalised and lobbied. Not too many policies and guidelines at play mean formalities are not followed, which can create environments that are mistrusting and tense to work in.
- The limited amount of funding bodies within NGOs, institutions and the corporate world affects the distribution of funds. Either all funding bodies are overwhelmed, or underfunded.
- Low rate of recruiting art administrators in the labour force. Arts and culture are constantly cut during economic downfalls, which

won't leave room for new arts administrators to take up office.

Our nation is still fighting inequalities, especially in terms of marginalised communities that do not have access or cannot afford the privileges of art. Art might not be accessible, so its worth and value are questioned with the notion that if it doesn't bother or change my life, does it matter?

Resources

- You don't need an MBA yet (you can get one later), but you need every resource at your disposal. The closest to you are your peers, your mentors, your idols. Everyone you meet in this industry is a resource, with vital skills, insight and knowledge. Meet as many peers, idols or mentors; consult with them, implore with them and most definitely learn from them.
- The internet is the gift we asked for. Use it and abuse it, as it has endless resources to suit any qualm. I for one have used the internet when I freelanced and, till this day, I use the internet to help me keep abreast of current trends. If you do not have a computer or laptop, do not fret, as you can make use of your smartphone. Utilise what you have, and you'll be surprised by the leaps and bounds you can make.
- Remember you're a human first. Part of being an arts administrator is managerial skills, which we learn from socialising. Always consider putting yourself in someone else's shoes to understand them. Move with compassion and consider another human's plight, well-being

and circumstances when working within arts administrations. Once you understand people, you'll better understand how you can work and maintain allyship for the administrative world and the artists. You will never be sorry for that.

One valuable lesson I have learnt in my experience is that the paths were not made today. There was another artist who had to forge and scrap through the bureaucracy, budgetary constraints or bigotry for all of us to have this place now, therefore we have to treat it with care and value. We're pieces of a puzzle that will keep growing; we have to play our part to ensure we can keep doing what we love. For the passion for art. This is why being an arts administrator is promising.

“

ONCE YOU UNDERSTAND PEOPLE, YOU'LL BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW YOU CAN WORK AND MAINTAIN ALLYSHIP FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE WORLD AND THE ARTISTS.



MICHELLE NAMASES

CONSIDERING A CAREER IN ARTS PROGRAMMING



CULTURAL COORDINATOR, GOETHE-INSTITUT NAMIBIA

Michelle A Namases is a young, purpose-driven Namibian arts administrator, committed and passionate about changing the landscape of the creative industry in Namibia. Her work as the cultural programmes coordinator at the Goethe-Institut Namibia has assisted her in coordinating and facilitating cross-cultural multidisciplinary work that has benefitted young emerging artists. Her main interest is bridging diverse contemporary social views through innovative and stimulating artistic approaches.



THIS GOES WITHOUT SAYING. THE INDUSTRY COULD BENEFIT FROM PROFESSIONALS WHOSE SOLE FOCUS IS PUSHING FOR THE ARTS TO BE A SELF-SUSTAINING COMMODITY.

*Interviewed by Lavinia Kapewasha:
Production coordinator, NTN.*

Where did you go to school and what did you study at university?

I completed my senior secondary at St Paul's College in 2010. Thereafter, I pursued a joint honours degree in performing arts and history at UNAM.

What was your dream career or occupation?

Growing up, I was always interested in the performing arts. Whether putting on a show for all three of my stuffed animals or pretending to be a news anchor, my imagination allowed me to create scenarios in my head that I performed out. My love for performing arts grew throughout high school. I was always a part of school plays. My first theatre experience was at the Warehouse Theatre with a musical comedy piece titled 'Bugsy Malone' - I knew then I'd pursue a career in the arts.

How did you start working in arts administration?

My first introduction to arts administration was through the drama society at UNAM. I held the position of president and the roles and duties basically geared me into the direction I am in now. My first year after graduating I had acting gigs that

sustained me throughout the year but with growing responsibilities, I had to look for something that could offer more financial security. In 2016, I started at Goethe-Institut Namibia as an assistant to the culture department, which later led to me being the coordinator of the department.

Did you ever think you would have a career in arts administration?

Not initially. The older I got, the more I was exposed to experiences and opportunities that moulded the path to arts and culture management. It was easy at first being a part-time employee. I would work in the morning and could focus on my craft in the afternoon. It is, unfortunately, not as simple anymore because running a department full-time is quite demanding.

What are the main tasks for your role?

As the cultural coordinator at Goethe-Institut Namibia, I am in charge of programme and initiative conceptualisation as well as the logistical and coordination management of these programmes. I ensure that strategic planning is carried out through the programmes and handle all managerial decisions within the culture department. I liaise with artists and partners and facilitate the process that goes into producing

art, events and programmes and how that is then presented to the public - in essence, all the nitty-gritty behind the scenes. Some joke that my job is to sip wine, be merry and socialise at events - a slight exaggeration of an important aspect of my job which is networking. A great deal of the work is out at festivals, museums, theatres, performance arenas - everywhere, as art and culture is anywhere. My personal interests lie mainly in music and performance art, but my role allows me to cover diverse programming.

What are the challenges of art administration?

Outdated and established understandings of the industry have made it difficult to introduce policy reforms. The attitude of "things have been done like this in the past, it doesn't need changing" stifles the growth of art administration, which often leads to frustration and power struggles between the established and upcoming administrators.

Lack of financial funding and training opportunities hinder the interest in arts management as a career option. This, in turn, leads to the lack of professionals in the field. Curators, artist managers and critics are few and far between. A prime example is the first appointment of an artistic director at the NTN only a few years ago. The absence of art at grassroots level also contributes

to the cycle. Perhaps if it is offered in school curriculums or after-school programmes, fewer people would view it as a last resort if life takes unexpected turns.

Art is not fully understood as a self-sustaining career, thus many treat it as a hobby or side hustle, and this attitude often leads to the unprofessional conduct of artists and their art. Most artists can't afford a manager or representative who focuses solely on the management aspect of the art/artists. As a result, artists neglect to harness their craft, sign phoney deals and end up frustrated and prematurely end what could have been spectacular careers.

What are the opportunities of art administration?

As an art administrator, you carry an important role as an advocate for the arts. If done strategically, taking advantage of the gaps and shortcomings outlined above can easily catapult the industry to new heights. The lack of financial support at government level can motivate artists to look into collaboration, partnership and corporate funding. Stepping away from silo working and coming together to collaborate with fellow artists within the country, institutions such as the Goethe-Institut Namibia and institutions abroad can open doors for those interested in the career.

Art administrators can relieve stress from artists who aren't well equipped to handle all the bureaucracy surrounding art management. Having someone who understands the 'system' can creatively find ways to make it work in favour of the art/artist/programme.

What tips can you give to an up-and-coming art administrator?

First and foremost, care about the arts and its contributions to society. There's nothing worse than occupying such a space and having no tolerance, appreciation or patience for the industry. Acquire as many skills as possible. Attend workshops, seminars and events and pick up as much as you can. Remain updated with relevant global trends.

You'll be working with artists and their work and often that means turning

down proposals. In such cases, being sensitive and professional and having great interpersonal skills is a must. Master the skill of being assertive without being rude as the two can easily be misconstrued.

Time and stress management are vital in a position as an arts administrator. I tend to disagree with the idea of multitasking – there's always the chance of missing something and, as they say, the devil is in the details. Don't be afraid to ask for help or consult with those who have been doing it for a while.

What have you learnt about the Namibian creative economy and scene as an art administrator?

An interesting paradox. We are the first to buy the latest fashion trend, Billboard 100 album and tickets to a mega blockbuster. However, we are very hesitant when it comes to supporting our own by going out to their shows, negotiating prices at markets, etc.

The art scene mainly targets tourism – money is frankly the only motivational factor for produce and purchase. As it stands, it is mainly targeted at the privileged who can make it to an exhibition opening or music show in town.



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Locally produced works seldom target the locals or meet their needs, while the locals are not taught to understand and appreciate the locally produced products.

How can an up-and-coming arts administrator work within the sector as a freelancer and not for an institution?

If taking that bold step by leaving what Boomers call the "conventional" workplace to pursue a career in arts management, be ready for a slow start. If possible, start your own company while working within an institution – whether formally or through internships. Then, go independent and establish your own frameworks and processes. Formal employment can teach you a lot about managing finances, professionalism, maintaining standards and other aspects that could prevent your failure. Make sure you've established yourself as reliable, trustworthy and ethical. These are skills no one can teach you but are skills that would easily get that donor or artist to take a risk on you. Build a good referral base; set up an online presence through LinkedIn or any other suitable platform for your targeted interest.

Set your asking price and stick to it. Be open to negotiations but always be the first to start the conversation. Be bold and confident in your work and demand its respect by being stern when it comes to financial discussions. Collaborate; barter skills with people you know; shoot your shot as far and wide as you can. This creates innovative opportunities that are vital to the industry. The pandemic has pushed us more than ever to daily sharpen our tools and constantly fine-tune our creative hats and find ways to make things work.

Do you think art administration is needed, especially in Namibia?

This goes without saying. The industry could benefit from professionals whose sole focus is pushing for the arts to be a self-sustaining commodity. For this, there should be a mindset change on the role, benefits and understanding of the arts. There definitely is a shift in perspective so I am confident that our gruelling advocacy for art is not in vain.



DR LAURINDA OLIVIER-SAMPSON

**THEATRE IN THE CORPORATE SPACE: THEATRE
AND COMMUNICATIONS**



PLAYWRIGHT, DIRECTOR, POET, PERFORMER, EDUCATOR, INDUSTRIAL THEATRE PRACTITIONER

Dr Laurinda Olivier-Sampson is a lecturer and the section head for drama in the [Department of Visual and Performing Arts](#) at UNAM. She has written a number of plays that have been performed over the years, two of which were published in New Namibia Plays Volumes 1 and 2. She is often involved in projects where informal, grassroots performers are given performance and employment opportunities. In 2012, she received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Namibian Theatre and Film Awards in recognition of her contribution to the development of theatre in Namibia.



I PERSONALLY BELIEVE THAT A NUMBER OF THE GOOD THINGS ABOUT THEATRE IN NAMIBIA IS AS A RESULT OF THE CANON OF WORK THAT HAPPENED IN THE SPACE THEATRE.

Interviewed by Nelago Shilongoh: Artistic director, NTN.

In your PhD dissertation, you analysed some practices and trends in Namibian theatre since the mid-1980s to the turn of the century. In your perspective, has Namibian seen a sustainable turn in theatre practices over the past 20 years?

During the period under investigation in my research, most Namibian theatre-makers had to rely on their own wits and resources to be able to stage their work. The NTN at the time offered limited assistance. The greatest change since then has been the involvement of the NACN in assisting creatives as well as the various programmes offered by the NTN such as Theatre Zone, for which I credit Terence Zeeman. These have enabled many people to stage their work. Another significant change is the number of young people who write and direct their work. Of note here is that a number of these were in some way involved in drama at UNAM.

At the UNAM performing arts department, which you head, you offer the module Arts Marketing and Management for third- and final-year students. What does this module entail

and how are performing arts students being equipped for the industry?

It has been my experience that many creative practitioners do not consider the business aspect of their art. This does not only apply to theatre, but to visual artists, musicians, designers, etc. They have a creative idea which they want to express and share, but they rarely consider that the product will not necessarily sell itself. People need to know about it. Namibia does not have many good artist managers, which means that creatives do not have many places to turn to for assistance. Much good work is never seen by the wider artist community and that limits the buying/paying population for the work. Namibia has come a long way from the stereotypical image of the struggling artist, but the truth is that many artists in Namibia still struggle. The module aims to make students aware of the processes of marketing their work. They learn about industry requirements, reaching their target audience and, very importantly, they learn about budgeting. The latter is something artists very rarely think about. They also learn about pricing because, again, most artists do not know the value of their work. I must add that even while learning about it, most find it tiresome.

The primary aim of the module is to realise that on the one hand you have a product (your arts or that of someone else), and, on the other hand, you have those who need to experience and pay for the product. These two need to be brought together.

In your early theatre career, you emerged as a performer, playwright and director for stage. This extended to practicing educational and industrial theatre. Can you share on how you extended to industrial theatre and what it generally entails?

Since the early years of doing protest and political theatre as well as studying the work of practitioners such as Augusto Boal and Bertholt Brecht, I have always been convinced of the power of theatre to influence the way people think, even just the few who come to see a performance. Even if that influence does not always become a way of life. I have also long been aware of the poor customer service in a number of businesses serving the public and I pitched to some of the bigger corporations the idea of industrial theatre to improve their corporate practices. Although the methodology is widely used internationally, the concept was new in Namibia and they were

not convinced. The only exception at the time was [O&L](#). They understood the potential of the methodology and they have implemented it for over 12 years with much success. Some other companies have shown interest but they have generally not committed because there are financial implications. This links to what I said earlier about artists not knowing the worth of their work. The general public also does not consider that an artist should be paid fairly for their craft.

Industrial theatre – as it is practiced here at the moment – entails getting the ideas and planning of management across to the workforce and attempting to get labour to come on board to those ideas, enabling the company as a dynamic unit to strengthen. A company can only really grow strong and prosper when everyone, management and the workforce, have the same values, vision and aims for the company.

Industrial theatre may also be used to make management aware of the shortcomings in their unit from the perspective of the workers.

You have worked as the writer and director of the 11/12-year long Mwenyopaleka Road Show, which was produced by the O&L Group. What is the background of this project and what are its milestones?

Yes, [Berthold Mukuahima](#) and I are the longest serving members of the Mwenyopaleka team. This is a difficult one to answer and I think the company will be better able to do so. However, from my understanding, the leadership of O&L showed some very progressive and forward thinking. They realised that without a committed workforce, good products and services, they cannot grow. They needed a vehicle to speak interactively with the workforce in a way that made them feel part of the process. They have won the best place to work award not just locally, but internationally as well, and they credit Mwenyopaleka as part of what made that possible. Such information is shared with the workforce through live interaction during the shows and collectively they absorb that as part of their own success.

Milestones – there were many, but I prefer not to speak for the company. What I can say is that, through doing industrial theatre for O&L, the genre has become known and respected in Namibia.

What further/other opportunities did the Mwenyopaleka Road Show offer for the creative participants in the project?

It has been a really wonderful opportunity for drama students to be exposed to the workings of the industry. Our students generally do not have the opportunity to do internships to gain practical knowledge, and a number of drama students have gained from this collaboration. There is also the financial aspect which assisted those participants to pay university fees or buy needed equipment and, in some cases, even assist their families. Also important is that I use the whole rehearsal process as education. This



THE CORPORATE WORLD IS ABOUT DOLLARS AND CENTS. THE BEST WAY TO PITCH IS TO TRY AND CONVINCE THEM THAT, IN THE END, THEY WILL BENEFIT FINANCIALLY THROUGH THEIR INVESTMENT IN YOUR WORK.

empowers the participants with tools to be able to do industrial theatre as a means of income. What holds them back is the willingness of the corporate world to invest in this great medium. It further offered them an insight into how the corporate world functions and they had good opportunities to interact with technical personnel like lighting and sound technicians. I also believe that these connections were pursued beyond Mwenyopaleka.

Industrial theatre is a sustainable practice that can be explored more by Namibian theatre-makers to improve on processes for corporate works spaces, as an example.

However, it can be quite hard to sustain this practice, which is dependent on continuously pitching one's services to investors and corporations. In your experience, how can one best articulate the benefits of industrial theatre services for potential clients?

The corporate world is about dollars and cents. The best way to pitch is to try and convince them that, in the end, they will benefit financially through their investment in your work.

The practice of pitching and selling one's services requires much experience. How can one develop their selling and communication skills in this regard? What has worked for you in your experience?

You are correct. Pitching is not easy in the sense that you have to convince an often-sceptical audience within a short period of time. Think of the following:

1. Keep it short and information-rich, i.e. tell them the important things upfront like what is the product, who is it for (target audience), when is it scheduled, where, cost, what you want from them, how they will benefit, any other sponsors already on board;
2. Appear confident and enthusiastic about your product;
3. Find out as much as you can about the business of the people you are pitching to;
4. Be prepared to answer questions;
5. Be prepared for failure and to try again.

What are some overlooked areas and mistakes that theatre-makers make with regards to gaining potential corporate clients or maintaining business relationships? What areas must one be attentive of?

This is very important. Since gaining corporate clients is so difficult, it is of the utmost importance to deliver the quality of work that ensures that you will be engaged again. Be attentive of:

- Punctuality
- Reliability
- Professionalism
- Preparedness
- Understanding the instructions
- Understanding the values of the company you will represent
- Delivering on time



- Delivering quality
- Ability to accept differences without getting argumentative
- Be prepared to work with other industry practitioners whom you would not normally interact with
- Understand your responsibilities and make sure they understand theirs
- Be prepared to start over if the client does not like what you present
- Do not undersell yourself
- Be realistic about how much you charge.

Industrial theatre practices require research and awareness on key factors, such as management practices, advertising trends, human behaviour and so on. What guidelines do you have on how theatre-makers can stay informed on how various sectors are functioning and transforming?

It is not possible or necessary for theatre-makers to stay on top of all corporate developments all the time. It is, however, important to understand the forces active in the company you

will be working with at the time you are working with them. It is true that they expect you to know things about their world when they do not always take notice of what happens in the arts. But, as you say, research is key. I have come out of corporate engagements much better educated about management practices, advertising trends, corporate responsibility and so forth. Coming from a psychology background, I have a small understanding of human behaviour and, of course, that plays a large part in the workplace. The industrial theatre-maker should also be very aware of and sensitive to cultural differences within her/his audience and management structures to which they pitch. You will not always know all these things when you start a project, but you will need to educate yourself about them very soon. So yes, research is important and ongoing.

'Corporate theatre' is where education formats and theatre are blended to create a powerful learning experience in an entertaining and engaging manner. How extensively does one need to exercise their performance and director muscles before they can move

into leading industrial theatre projects?

Because this kind of theatre can be interactive, the actors need to be guided towards ways of responding to audience interjections or participation and 'thinking on their feet'. I am aware of two younger theatre-makers who pitched and won projects, but with unsuccessful outcomes, because they had not flexed their director muscles sufficiently. This is counter-productive because their client will not have faith in the genre in future. A client, any client, needs to know that you know what you are doing. I understand why theatre-makers try it; they have to eat and pay rent, but in the long-term, it damages the future possibilities of industrial theatre-makers.

How would you advise young theatre-makers to operate industrial theatre services? Does it require putting together and registering a production company?

Registering a production company can be useful if you are assured of regular work. Corporates also prefer that. Otherwise, it can be a bind because a registered company requires the services of auditors, tax consultants and other people in those fields. And you have to pay them all. They have to submit audited books at the end of the financial year, etc. If one makes enough money, it is advisable. It is possible to pitch your work as an independent. There are tax implications whichever way you go, but in the initial stages, and depending on how big the job is, you can save on some of those costs by not registering a company. I just have to add that it is unlikely that there will be another industrial theatre project the size and scope of Mwenyopaleka, which means that the projects coming your way will be much smaller and do not always justify the difficulties that come with running a production company properly.

Running a theatre production company in Namibia comes with its challenges. In your view, what are currently the best and most economical approaches to running a theatre company in the areas of producing works and offering various theatrical services?

I am not convinced that having a theatre company is necessary or viable. There are many legal, labour



law and tax implications in running a company. The only entity in Namibia which I believe could run a production company is the NTN.

Perhaps a film production company still has a chance. As I said, clients and sponsors prefer that because of the legal checks and balances. Combined with the legal ramifications, there is also the reality that we as theatre-makers have to face in that we are competing against Netflix, streaming, YouTube, Zoom, etc. We know the value of our live performances, but theatre audiences are shrinking. If the aim of the theatre production company is to supply people with paid positions, the company will struggle. There is still room for independents to write and direct their work on an ad hoc basis and be successful. A production company has to produce continuously to make a profit.

If we lived in a time when artists had patrons and they did not have to concern themselves with financial issues, I believe we would have seen a lot more work.

As the head of department of UNAM's performing and visual arts department, what are some of the successes you have witnessed from the department's alumni? What are your hopes for new drama

graduates towards them seeing sustainable careers?

You ask me about alumni. You are a perfect example, considering the position you now hold at the NTN. I designed the drama curriculum, with all its strengths and weaknesses, at UNAM, and I am hugely proud of our alumni. Not just for what they do after university but the astonishing work some of them did while they were there. I personally believe that a number of the good things about theatre in Namibia is as a result of the canon of work that happened in the Space Theatre. Naturally, not all were or are successful in the field. Everybody went through the same curriculum but it is what you do with it that will determine the work you produce.

I do not wish to mention names, but you can be sure that I follow our students after they leave us and I do so with pride. New students have a greater challenge. Because of the economic situation in the country, less and less money is available to the arts, which are deemed by some as not essential. However, you who have gone before them have paved a better way for them in the industry than the one you had. They will have to fight fewer battles because past alumni have fought those battles already. I am just becoming more and more aware of the fact that live theatre performances

will continually face the dilemma of smaller audiences. This is not good from an economical perspective, but is great from an artistic perspective in the sense that those who attend theatre will be a small core of people well versed and appreciative of theatre. However, for a performing artist who needs to make a living from their craft, it is bad news.

What key areas would you suggest are unexplored opportunities for sustainable careers by theatre-makers and performing artists in Namibia?

Industrial theatre, community theatre and children's theatre. I would include training in how to get their work online.

Lastly, any other sentiments and perspectives you would like to share?

For me, it is a pity that the NTN does not have a resident theatre troupe. That could also be said of the Space Theatre. I understand that logistically it may not be possible. Just think about it: There would be performances going on all the time; aspiring directors would have a dedicated cast to work with; great experimentation could happen and some Namibian performers would earn a salary. We can dream. Can't we?

Photo by Willem Vrey



BETTY SIBESO

**BUILDING A STRONG ONLINE PRESENCE
FOR YOUR BRAND**



CREATIVE ENTREPRENEUR, DIGITAL AND BRAND STRATEGIST.

*Betty Sibeso is the creator of Namibia's leading digital magazine, [Monochrome Magazine](#),
and the founder of creative agency [Beso Media](#).*



SOCIAL MEDIA, IF DONE RIGHT, SHOULD WORK FOR YOU. YOUR FOLLOWERS BECOME YOUR MARKETING TEAM. THEY SHARE YOUR CONTENT - READ "WORK" - FOR YOU, FOR MORE PEOPLE TO SEE. AS AN ARTIST, THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO GET NOTICED.

Social media has launched so many careers since its inception, even more so in the past year. Most times it requires consistent work and creation, but sometimes all it takes is one viral video and your career kicks off.

As an artist in this day and age, having an online presence is just as important as your actual work.

Mainly because if a short clip of you goes viral, how much of your work is curated on the internet for potential employers to find? What happens after you are an internet sensation? Where can people go to see your other - probably better - work? Where do they go to learn more about you? What will they find on your social media platforms? Will it reflect you in the best way? Will it convince them to invest in you?

If you aren't proud of what they will find (or not find) on your pages, then the best solution is to prepare for that now. Curating your online presence allows you to take charge of what you want potential employers, brands, project managers, etc. to see. Your online brand acts as a CV. It gives them a look into your work before they call you for an interview. Wouldn't you want what they see to convince them to invest in you? I know I would.

Here are a few ways you can do that:

1. Build a website

Not any website, a professional one. One that speaks to you and your brand. One that's easy to navigate. One that shares everything you'd want them to know, watch and see. And, more importantly, how they can reach you. Building a website has become easier. You don't need to pay someone to do it for you, although I advise that you should if you don't have an eye for these things.

If you are tech savvy and can follow instructions, there are plenty blog posts and YouTube videos on how you can create your own website.

There also several content management systems that practically have already-built websites you can customise. My top three are WordPress, Squarespace and Wix.

These allow you to purchase your own domain, host and build your site. They also have effective 'help' resources to help you easily create your website. They have free templates you can easily customise with your own data as well. This means the site is already made; you only need to slot in your content.

As a beginner, you will have to rely on blog posts and YouTube to put it all

together, and it may take you a while, but it's all worth it. After your first site, you will be able to create the next one with more ease. Practice does make perfect.

Here's what your website should include:

- Past work or links to that. This would be your portfolio.
- An 'About' page that speaks about who you are as a person and as an artist. It should be a little personal.
- Visuals! Images of you and your work should make up most of the site.
- A contact page with recent details of how people can reach you.
- A captivating homepage.
- A page for your services/offerings. Be clear on what you offer, what that entails and how you work.

2. Curate quality content on your social media platforms

Just like your website, your social media should include information about you and how one can contact you. It should showcase your work and your offerings. However, it should be a space on which you create and put out more content than you do your website. It should technically drive traffic to your website.

Social media, if done right, should work for you. Your followers become your marketing team. They share your content (read “work”) for you, for more people to see. As an artist, this is the best way to get noticed. So as much as you may be creating for yourself, you should create for your audience too.

Gauge what they enjoy by looking at your analytics and create more of that, and in between create content you enjoy too. And that may not be what they enjoy. Find a balance.

Here are some practices to ensure that you are making the most of your social media:

Branding:

- Find at least one platform you enjoy that works for you and master it.
- If you have more than one platform, make sure they are all branded the same so that it’s easier for people to find you.
- Use the same profile picture, the same handle/username, have the same information in your bio.
- Make sure your email address is readily available on your profiles.

Content:

- Work on a content plan; it should include a list of content types you will be putting out.
- Divide your content ideas under the educate, entertain and inspire pillars. Your content should be able to cater all three pillars, but not necessarily at the same time.
- Educating content can include you sharing how you create something in your line of work.
- Entertaining content can include posts like jokes, singing, memes,



- dancing, etc.
- Inspiring content can include posts about your story and journey or even processes.
- To get the most out of social media, you need to consistently and frequently put out content. Posting at least three times a week is the standard, while posting even more is advised.
- Study your analytics to know what is working and what isn’t.
- Stay updated with the trends and app updates. Use the most recent feature as soon as it’s released as the algorithm pushes creators who do that more.

- Invest in good equipment to constantly elevate your content.
- Collaborate with other creators.
- Invite your audience into your world by sharing behind the scenes content on your stories.
- Let the people get to know you better by hosting Q&As or Lives.
- Follow and consume pages or channels that teach you how to up your social media game.
- Constantly create. Keep creating even if you aren’t getting the views and likes you’d like.

CURATING YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE ALLOWS YOU TO TAKE CHARGE OF WHAT YOU WANT POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS, BRANDS, PROJECT MANAGERS, ETC. TO SEE. YOUR ONLINE BRAND ACTS AS A CV. IT GIVES THEM A LOOK INTO YOUR WORK BEFORE THEY CALL YOU FOR AN INTERVIEW.



For more tips, follow me on Instagram or Twitter at @bettysibeso and @besomedia.



TRIXIE MUNYAMA

PREPARING ARTISTIC WORKS FOR FESTIVALS



PERFORMANCE ARTIST, FACILITATOR AND CHOREOGRAPHER

Trixie Munyama's dance career began as the SWAPO Pioneers' Cultural Group leader, performing and observing traditional Owambo dances in the Kwanza Sul camp. She went on to formally train at Leyton College, London, in performing arts, with a major in contemporary dance before working with young and elderly people in northern Namibia for Tudhaneni Dance Project, using traditional dances as modes of preserving heritage. After graduating from the University of Cape Town (UCT) - majoring in African dance, Trixie has been employed at COTA where she continues to work as a dance lecturer focusing on dance performance and the practice and theories of dance. She is the founder and artistic director of [Da-mâi Dance Ensemble \(DDE\)](#) whose work addresses topics such as post-colonial politics in contemporary society. She regularly curates independent creative projects.



ARTISTS CAN BE CULTURAL AMBASSADORS WHO PROMOTE THE COUNTRY THROUGH THEIR WORKS.

Interviewed by Nelago Shilongoh: Artistic director, NTN.

What informed your artistic interests? How did this inspire the kind of artist you are today?

Influences that inform my artistic interest largely stem from Namibian traditional dance vocabularies. I am inspired by their ability to continuously evolve, yet manage to offer a glimpse of the past. The collision of old and new, my self-expression in that 'in-betweenness', my past experiences, things I hear, see and feel as a multifaceted black Namibian woman.

What is the background of your training? When and why did you start to explore blended/alternative forms of performance?

As a child during the liberation struggle in Kwanza Sul, I was a team leader of the SWAPO Pioneers Cultural Troupe, performing Owambo dances at various events – mainly political. I like to state that is where my training in dance began and sneaking off to watch and sometimes participate in full moon dances performed by the young adult women for their own entertainment and connection. I was intrigued by the deep bass rhythms from the long

ngoma drums, and the nuance of these dances was different from the ones we did as young dancers during the day.

During the transition period to independence, I was sent off to my mother in London (where she was sent by SWAPO to study midwifery) where I joined an Egyptian dance club (even though I had no idea what that was). During this period in the UK, as a teen and young adult, I attended a local dance school in modern, jazz and Latin American classes, went to college and studied contemporary dance and theatre studies and the biggest opportunity then was when I qualified for a summer school programme at the prestigious London School of Contemporary Dance at the Place Theatre. Upon returning to Namibia, I worked in the north as a project manager for a dance project with the objectives of transferring traditional dance knowledge to young people through exchanges with elder dancers. I went on to UCT and completed further studies in dance, majoring in African dance and anthropology, then later attended a short course in contemporary African dance at Ecole d' Sables, Senegal, where I was honoured to attend classes facilitated by [Germaine Acogny](#).

Formal or informal, these spaces have moulded and filled me with the

necessary technical skills I applied to my teaching/facilitation and performance-making. At some point, as I evolved as an individual and artist, my approach and viewpoint on dance evolved too.

You have worked with various creatives and later established DDE. Can you share what inspired you to establish this ensemble and the artistic vision behind it?

During my short course training in Senegal, I noticed a significant number of young dancers gathering, training, rehearsing, and producing works in informal spaces and places such as an open field, a car park, in their small family yards, etc. They were constantly working and not deterred by the circumstances of their social environment – whether they had funds or not, they met and did the work. This inspired me greatly because, in Namibia, it seemed we are always waiting for something to propel us to create – money, venue, etc., so I decided then and there to establish the dance company, which I had been putting on hold. A proudly Namibian company that tells Namibian stories, real or unreal, through a new language and one that would allow us to see and experience

Namibian dance from a different scope.

What are some of the works developed by DDE, and what local, regional and international platforms did they travel to?

'In the Beginning' was DDE's maiden work in 2014, followed by ['The Tale of Nyambe'](#) (2015) inspired by the Siperu dance of Masubia in the Zambezi. (We actually went to Bukalo village to research folktales and learn the Siperu dance before creating the work.) This was followed by 'Pamwe' in 2016, a collaboration with the Zimbabwean dance artist McIntosh Jerahuni. We also presented our first installation of 'The Mourning' in the same year. 'Land' was created and directed by Haymich Olivier for the Windhoek International Festival. 'The Mourning Citizen', curated by Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja in collaboration with a number of artists including Hildegard Titus, Nicola Brandt, Isabel Katjavivi, Nesindano Namises and Vitjitua Katjangua, was performed in Windhoek and in Cameroon at the [Burden of Memory Cultural Week in 2019](#), and again in an online readaptation of the same work for [Latitude Festival](#), Berlin, in 2020. Our latest work for 2021,



AS AN EMERGING PERFORMER, IT'S OK TO FIGURE YOURSELF OUT AS AN ARTIST BY EXPERIMENTING WITH ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF PRODUCING WORK AND GOING AGAINST THE STATUS QUO.

'Hidden', is a collaboration with Christian Etongo's company from Cameroon and continues the conversation on the colonial effects on contemporary Africa.

As an independent artist, my travelling works include: 'XŪN' (2019) – Owela Festival, Windhoek and Vavasati Women's Festival, Johannesburg, South Africa, and Africa Moment Festival in Barcelona in 2020; and ['SOLD TOO'](#) in collaboration with the late, great South African artist [Themba Mbuli](#), performed at [Kinani Contemporary Dance Festival](#) in Maputo, Mozambique, in 2019.

What are some of the challenges of running an ensemble? What do emerging performers need to consider when looking at opening a dance ensemble or even a dance company?

The arts sector is set up in such a way that we cannot be full-time artists operating from a solid structure as we have to work full-time jobs outside of our art to survive.

You need funds to create, to produce work on a regular basis, but that is not a reality, unfortunately. So, it's to try and keep the ensemble active during those periods where there is no possibility of performing. You have to maintain the passion; it cannot dissipate just because there is no money. Something has to keep you there and often it's passion and the desire to participate in creating a thriving sector for the next generation.

As an emerging performer, it's OK to figure yourself out as an artist by experimenting with alternative methods of producing work and going against the status quo. Find like-minded artists who share the same goals, and capacitate them to lead the company/ensemble when you are unable to.

There are great works by Namibian artists that saw a short life span on stage (limited restaging). In your perspective, why do some works by Namibian artists not see longevity?

One major factor is continued financial support. We must be realistic in noting that our industry is not competitive yet. The restaging of works depends on your means to acquire funds – performers need transport and to be remunerated for their services.

Why do you think it's important for international and diverse audiences to see Namibian works?

Namibian works have been under-represented in the international arena for a long time and yet we have an incredible number of stories waiting to be told through many mediums. I believe, though, that this is an advantage. Besides our traditional modes of attraction – arts and crafts – audiences are able to experience Namibia's cultural, political and social values in theatre works. Artists can be cultural ambassadors who promote the country through their works.

In the business of the arts, an artist who creates works also has to think like a producer and have a long-term vision for their work. Do you agree?

Yes, in fact, the artist has to wear many hats just like in other jobs; the creator, director, marketer, administrator and sometimes the performer because of the environment under which we operate.

Do you think there is a general misconception on the business value of taking works to festivals?

For those entrusted with fully supporting travelling works, I can imagine it would seem that there is no value in doing so, yet we do not acknowledge the many benefits it holds to sustain the industry from a touristic perspective. To place Namibia in the worldview with other counterparts generates a deeper interest in the country and its history as a means to connect with others globally.

How would you encourage emerging movement artists to create culturally impactful works that are also strategically sustainable?

Art is a reflection of what is happening in society and, as such, emerging artists must recognise they are the eyes and ears of society; they are commentators and give critique to the political, social and economic systems and the intersectionality of what these mean to us as active participants in these very systems that define us. The magic of being a creative is that you act as a catalyst for social change. Works of this nature, ones that are universally and socially relative and are thoughtfully engaging, have the ability to have a long life span.

In your perspective, how does one develop work/concepts that can be readily proposed to investors and producers upon request? How does one stay ready?

I have learnt along the way to package artistic works in digital formats; something we are now forced to familiarise ourselves with. Having a talented videographer and photographer who works closely with you during the devising and production process can help with this as well as developing a dossier of the company

profile, with updated information. The digital world is fast expanding and is the marketplace to sell our work. Although time-consuming, one needs to be dedicated or hire and pay an expert to do the job for you. You remain relevant by having an online presence; engaging, collaborating with other artists from a different discipline and creating visibility of your work beyond the familiarity.

You have showcased works in process before – that are not in their final stage. What are the benefits of this approach?

The audience is not usually privy to the devising and making process of works, specifically intimate performances. I find that it is a good way to keep fans in the loop of what is to be expected, and adds value to your work. The audience only sees the finished product and here they get to see the effort involved in a body of work.

What skills would you encourage artists to gain when it comes to festival and proposal applications?

This is a skill one learns on the job, unfortunately, as there are no skill specifications one learns formally. I would recommend, however, that one researches the organisation/institution hosting the call for proposals thoroughly, investigate whether your work suits their thematic ideas of the call/festival and whether your artistic vision aligns with theirs before applying. One needs to have good time management as calls come with deadlines before, during and after the application process. And then there's writing a comprehensive budget plan with realistic expectations and aligning your language to that of the organisation in your proposal.

There are institutions that have a key focus on arts from Southern Africa. How can one stay informed with these platforms?

All of these institutions recognise the power of the internet with regular active interactions and information-sharing that one must be proactive in seeing. I subscribe to newsletters via email, follow their social platforms for up-to-date information and, through the connections one makes with other artists from other localities etc., these networks are valuable in disseminating information rather quickly.

Would you say that tertiary art institutions/departments in



Photo contributed by Trixie Munyama



Photo by Meridian

NAMIBIAN WORKS HAVE BEEN UNDER-REPRESENTED IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA FOR A LONG TIME AND YET WE HAVE AN INCREDIBLE NUMBER OF STORIES WAITING TO BE TOLD THROUGH MANY MEDIUMS.

Namibia capacitate performing arts students enough on the business of arts? How would you suggest emerging artists to stay informed and learn from the local industry?

I suggest for emerging artists to participate in as much art as possible. Be visible in the creative spaces.

Having seen the realities, opportunities and challenges of the Namibian performing sector over the past years, what is your hope for the coming generation

of dance and movement artists?

My hope is that we look at opening up to non-linear ways of being artists; that the generation is well equipped – technically and creatively – to question the old ways and construct a new progressive agenda that is inclusive and pushes boundaries by taking risks in the production of new critically engaging works. However, for that to happen, artists are encouraged to define themselves, find their niche and develop their own movement language that comes as a result of practice and using the tools that exist at their disposal.



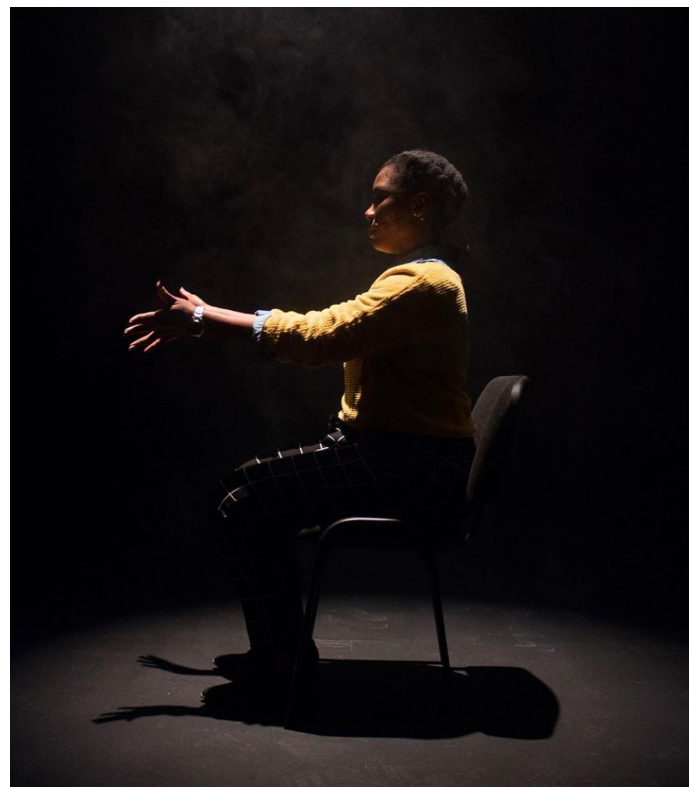
SEPI SO MWANGE

DEVELOPING A CAREER IN EDUCATIONAL THEATRE



PERFORMER, APPLIED THEATRE PRACTITIONER AND DRAMA EDUCATOR.

Sepiso Mwange is an applied theatre practitioner, a lecturer at UNAM, a radio host, a communication coach and a 2019 Mandela Washington Fellow. She is also a recipient of the 2019 NTFA for best stage, set and costume. She has performed in and directed productions on both the local and international stage.



I THINK THE IDEA THAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY GO TO DRAMA SCHOOL SHOULD BE ONE THAT IS TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY.

*Interviewed by Nelago Shilongoh:
Artistic director, NTN.*

Why did you study drama studies? Were you always interesting in teaching?

I always say that getting into drama was a happy accident for me. I remember being a first-year student at UNAM and needing to fill up my course load. One of the drama teachers came up to me (I must have looked very confused or like I really needed help!) and suggested I take drama because "it's work, but it's really fun".

Although getting into drama was a happy accident, my choice to further my studies in it was a conscious one. I continued with my studies in the subject because I was very intrigued at the communication and creative possibilities this medium offered. Whether it was through dance, crafts or acting, I was constantly saying something. And it was that 'saying something' that intrigued me. I think it created an awareness and responsibility in me that I never had before. It made me think about what I was contributing to the department and to society. What were my views?

Who inspired them? Could they be changed? Should they be changed? As a communication graduate, I am constantly thinking about how information is given and received and I have found drama to be the best tool through which this can be explored because it is a 'shapeshifter', as described by Dorothy Heathcote. Most importantly, it is a lot of fun. Turns out that drama lecturer was right after all!

As for being a teacher, I always knew I was going to be a teacher of some sort.

You pursued your honours degree at UNAM and went on to study applied theatre at UCT. How did your MA course expand your thinking on theatre practices and career options to explore?

I think it was when I did my MA that I realised what is meant by the phrase 'drama/theatre as a tool for....' I started looking at it as more than an entertainment tool and saw it as a catalyst for whatever change one wanted to inspire. I have a keen interest

in education – specifically language learning methodologies – and I was interested to see if there was a crossroad where drama methodology and pedagogy met and whether a different methodology for learning (second) languages could be created.

I guess one can think of it as the 'aftermath of the show'. What happens when the curtains go down and the show ends? This was the question that set me on my MA course and made me investigate how other disciplines could be integrated and assisted by theatre practices, what different schools of thought had to say about said integrations, the pros and cons. How to take drama/theatre beyond the stage while still keeping (if need be) to the ideals and perceptions that people have about the traditional theatre performer.

This thought pattern definitely put me on a path of wanting to be a practitioner, to do the act versus teaching it – which is ironic given my present occupation! Suddenly, I found myself wanting to have an attainable goal at the end of the day. With most theatre shows, the experience is ephemeral, but with applied theatre, the results are

tangible, long-lasting, documentable and transferrable.

You get to a point where you can say and show with data that this is what drama/theatre can do and here's why and how. It moves beyond the 'touchy feely' (let me say here that there is nothing wrong with that and that too has its place) and into a world where it can be used as a problem-solver or negotiator or awareness-raiser. I guess it's the shift from theatre as performance to theatre as practice.

In a way, it became more personal to me to the extent that I don't only see myself as an artist or creative, but as an educative creative (is that a thing?). That is what drama/theatre means to me; that is what it is able to do through me.

The growth of the Namibian performing sector is intricately dependent on training and skills development on various levels. What are your perspectives on this, and how does this reflect the opportunities for more educators and trainers required in the sector?

I think the idea that people actually go to drama school should be one that is taken more seriously. Some people see the work that is put on stage and think 'oh I can do that too. That's not too hard. I don't have to go to school for that'. There is a certain level of disrespect towards the idea of going to an educational higher institution to learn how to act or dance or direct or make stage props that needs to be done away with. That coupled with the infamous 'you do art because there's nothing else to do'. Or 'shame, you weren't smart enough to get into [insert course here]'. That entire thought pattern needs to change.

Even though you might be greatly talented and feel you don't need to get any training for drama/theatre, there is a visible difference between someone who underwent training and someone who did not. And it is that training that puts you at a better chance to not only have opportunities come your way, but it also influences your pay cheque.

When I came back home from my studies, I was one of the few applied theatre practitioners in the country and when I applied for the lecturer position at UNAM, I was competing in a small pool. But because the pool was small, it had to be my education, expertise and experience that ensured I land the job. I think that in order for our industry to

grow, we need to start taking ourselves more seriously and invest in educating ourselves and developing our skills. Even though employment is difficult within our industry, when you have the right skills or education, your chances of getting some financial assistance or building credibility and trust with potential collaborators is increased.

I know that we are constantly on the lookout for part-time lecturers to assist in the department and sometimes it is a challenging task because of the lack of skills of some of the potential employees.

Being knowledgeable and skilled in your field, even if it doesn't get you a job, it can allow you to start your own thing and you can use your skills and knowledge as a foundation.

You also work as a radio presenter and host training opportunities for public speaking. How would you encourage performing arts experts to diversify their training capabilities, not just limited to the theatre stage or camera for film and television?

Transfer! Transfer! Transfer!!!

The skills you have as a trained performance artist are transferable to any industry. Don't limit yourself to one thing. If you are a trained actor, then give acting classes or voice classes. There are tools you have, so use them to make some extra money or to build your portfolio.

I am able to be a radio host and a communication coach because of the training I received in drama school.

Performing arts educators in Namibia do not always have the opportunity for full-time employment by an institution. What is your advice for freelance performing arts experts towards practicing their training service? What are some economic and innovative ways of pursuing this?

My advice to freelancing performing arts experts would be to make sure that you protect your intellectual property! Whether is written work or paintings, make sure that no one can steal or copy your work and make money from it. Secondly, don't accept exposure for payment unless that exposure can be leveraged at some point in time for money or a bigger opportunity. Do some market research, decide how

much you will charge for your product or service and stick to it. You are a business owner, run your business as such and only give or do freebies if you can afford to do so.

Get your business registered. This might not matter if you are working with individuals, but if you get corporate clients or clients who have money they want to spend, they probably have a finance team who will want to verify that they are working with someone whose business is legit and registered. This may sound silly and simple, but make sure you have a professional



EVEN THOUGH EMPLOYMENT IS DIFFICULT WITHIN OUR INDUSTRY, WHEN YOU HAVE THE RIGHT SKILLS OR EDUCATION, YOUR CHANCES OF GETTING SOME FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OR BUILDING CREDIBILITY AND TRUST WITH POTENTIAL COLLABORATORS IS INCREASED.

email account. Things like 'smileysally123@gmail.com' don't leave a good impression. Also remember that even though you are an artist, your money may be coming from clients who are not familiar or part of your industry, so be sure to look presentable and like someone you would actually do business with.

I think there are quite a number of opportunities, you just need to package your service or product in a way that addresses a need in the community. So, be willing to be flexible and make the necessary changes to attract your ideal client or target market.

The need for training comes with the awareness on its necessity. How would you advise performing arts experts or educators to articulate the value to their services for prospective consumers and

clients? How can one look at selling this value?

At the end of the day, a prospective consumer or client will want to know 'why do I need this and what makes you qualified to give it to me?' So, the product or service must address a need in the community. Someone's life should be made easier or improved by what you are offering. That's how you create value.

When you are taking a course or studying, you also need to think of how that course will add value to your life and how that value can be transferred to someone else. You could hold workshops or trainings or live sessions on social media to show what you offer. If your focus is on solving a problem in your community, people will always be willing to pay the price to get the solution.

Additionally, you need to be credible in your field in order for consumers or clients to trust you and want to work with you. That credibility can be built through education, training, association or referral.

You are the founder of an organisation called WYS (Write Your Story) Arts Workshop. What is the vision behind the organisation?

Let me just start off by saying that when I started WYS, I was sitting with my MA degree at home, unemployed. But when I applied for funding for a project I wanted to do, and I attached my certificates and showed my skills and experience, I was confident I was going to get. And I did. I am just highlighting the value of being educated and skilled in your craft.

WYS's vision is to create a reading culture among children using theatre. Reading was my first introduction to theatre and it changed my world. Yes, I know that is very cliché, but what can I say? It's the truth.

Anyway, the aim is for kids to put their favourite stories on stage. They pick a story and then they become the creators by making it come to life. I want to teach them how their thoughts

can become reality and how they are able to change that reality once they see it. So, the kids are in charge of the production from beginning to end and I am there just to facilitate the process. The end goal is to encourage them to, of course, read more, but also be inspired to write their own stories and consider a career in theatre.

Running community-based projects is important for society. From a creative entrepreneurial perspective, how can emerging theatre-makers look at running impactful, and at the same time, sustainable community-based projects? What are your ideas on this?

When I started WYS and what it is today are two different things. Initially, it was based on what I wanted to do and when I got to the actual community and got to know the kids and the facilitators better, I realised that my vision had to be adjusted in order for it to have relevance, impact and longevity.

Community projects are for the people who live there, not for us who host projects there. I think it is important to find out what the needs are and how you can go about addressing them collaboratively with the community members.

Unless you are a millionaire, self-funded projects are very difficult to maintain. Look around and see if you can partner with an organisation whose values or works aligns with yours. And even if they can't give you money, they might be able to help in the form of venue or materials or advertising and marketing. Set up the project in a way that it can still run without your presence. Get volunteers on board, train them and delegate certain tasks to them. If these volunteers are from the community, even better. If that project has products or services that can be sold, sell them and put the money back into the community or project.

In your perspective, how necessary and viable are performing arts facilitative processes for ECD and

Adolescent Development (AD)? Would you suggest that there are career opportunities around these areas in Namibia? How can they be pursued and explored further?

I think performing arts facilitative processes are very important for ECD and AD because at this stage, children learn through play and the more they can be stimulated, the better. Arts facilitative processes may also afford kids with different learning abilities the chance to learn in a manner that is best suited to them.

I think there is definitely an opportunity for a career in this in Namibia, but it would require skilled and educated individuals. Learning happens in various ways and our current education system only caters for one style of learning – from kindergarten to university. So, a lot of kids are 'lost' in the system because their style of learning is not accessible to them.

This will then require that teachers be trained and educated in a different way and maybe a revision of some curriculum. With everything that has happened to our education system since Covid-19 hit, a revamp might not be a bad idea.

What further training and skills development does a theatre-maker need to invest in when looking at practicing theatre education and facilitation work? Where are some of these training opportunities in Namibia?

I think a multi-disciplinary approach may be useful. So, looking into other industries in which theatre practices or methodologies might be applicable and valuable. There needs to be an openness towards the application of their skills to areas that are outside of their field.

Perhaps training in how to protect their work, monetise their work and build themselves as a brand.



*My Koek is Moeg 2014. Written & directed by Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja.
Photo contributed by NTN*



SVEN-ERIC MÜLLER

DANCE AND MOVEMENT APPLICATIONS IN THE WELLNESS SECTOR



THEATRE PERFORMER, CHOREOGRAPHER.

Born and bred in Namibia, Sven-Eric Müller pursued a formal education in theatre. He spent the last decade in the professional South African theatre industry with a short stint in Australia and the odd trip to Namibia. During his theatre career, Sven-Eric spent five years with a contemporary ballet company, growing to from apprentice to principal. He moved on to musical theatre where he did everything from cabaret to 'West Side Story'; many musicals led to buckets of knowledge and experience in theatre practices. He shifted gears once more and entered the creative space through choreographing and directing his contemporary ballet 'Aivilo'. He has been the resident choreographer for Gate69 (cabaret theatre) in Cape Town for the past four years. Recently, his career took another shift to the healing arts where he is co-facilitating trauma release through dance in a six-month programme alongside his partner Melissa Mukaiwa, called [Release and Renew](#).



WE NEED NEW VOICES, WE
NEED A FRESH PERSPECTIVE.

*Interviewed by Nelago Shilongoh:
Artistic director, NTN.*

What is the background of your training?

I was formally trained in classical ballet, jazz, tap and contemporary dance with exposure to many other dance forms and styles. I am a fully qualified ballet, tap and contemporary dance teacher and have done multiple choreographic trainings as well. I did an international personal training certificate through the Health and Fitness Professionals Academy. I have a Licentiate of Trinity College London (LTCL) in musical theatre and drama and rigorous private vocal coaching to finesse the understanding and the use of the voice. I am a reiki master energy healer and a life coach. (I have always craved versatility and the more I knew, the better and more holistic my career would become and is still becoming.)

Please share the backdrop of your performance career? What are some of the highlights?

In my second year of study, I was able to join a ballet company as an apprentice (it was wild, I had no idea what I was doing). Within five years, I had worked myself to the bone and was able to hit soloist level (in Year 3) and by Year 5 I was one of the principals of the company (aka top spot). It was

the most alive and physically able I have ever felt in my life; it was glorious. Unfortunately, the company went under and my ballet life was cut short, but it was a glorious time. Another highlight was my time in musical theatre with the Fugard Theatre. We created such a family environment – from the bar staff to the ushers to the cleaning staff, all the way to top management... we were a family. It was incredibly taxing (eight shows a week plus media appearances), but it was incredible... all the different characters I got to play and all the amazing creatives I got to work with. I learnt more than just performance skills; I learnt how to do theatre! It was magical.

With your extensive experience in Cape Town, how was your experience working between ensembles/companies and freelance-based work? What has this blended work arrangement taught you?

Being a freelancer is always tough. You constantly fluctuate between unemployed and being overworked... Very much like being an entrepreneur. It was what I wanted as a lifestyle, though – choices and versatility. When in an ensemble or a project, it was always the best of times because you felt secure and sorted for those few months; you had a purpose and you knew what you were doing. Then the

contract ends and you are back to zero. In most industries, you do this once every decade. In the theatre freelance business, it's once every few months (if you're lucky). It's incredible taxing on the psyche. But your skill set gets improved at an alarming rate – it's always sink, swim or adapt and when you have the courage to push through and assert yourself and believe in your still untapped ability, it can become an incredible growth potential for you as an artist. The freelance element of this arrangement meant I got to do film and voice work on the side, and many other little gigs to keep afloat. It taught me to hustle like a champ and to have the stamina of a work horse. It became very clear to me in the early years of my career that I needed some form of stability, something to sustain me through winter while waiting for the next performance gig. This is where teaching, choreography and coaching came in and changed my life and my career. So, as an artist, I would say I have learnt to always have my fingers in more than one pie so that when the one dies down, you still have the others to sustain you. This does, however, require good time management, the ability to multitask and an eagerness to do it all with dignity, accountability and grace.

What are some of the important entrepreneurial skills you gained working as a freelancer in Cape

Town and other industrious arts spaces?

Time management. How to conduct myself in stressful situations (firm but always with kindness). Organisational skills. Work ethic. Being reliable – if people know your work is solid and they can count on you to show up on time and ready to work, your talent will soar. How to multitask and make sure you don't neglect any of the pots on the boil (this is the hardest one to achieve and to this day I am still working on perfecting the skill). Self-reliance... if you are able to rely on yourself, then others can too. Most important one is asking for help – you are not an island, nothing you do happens in a vacuum, learn to outsource and ask for help... you need it!

What has been the most effective way of raising awareness of your skills and performance work and connecting with new producers/investors?

Show up to show out. Be sure your skill is always ready to make an appearance, be so courageous in your expression of it – even when you have no idea what you're doing or how to do it, be ready to show yourself. The vulnerable essence of you will be seen and that essence is what will get you the job. The last and most important one is it's who you know – when you have the opportunity to audition, connect or be in the presence of someone with power, make sure you are friendly, punctual and ready to mingle. In the creative field/a production, we spend so many hours together that it is important for producers and directors to get on with you. Having an attitude is for divas, and no, it's not a desirable trait.

It is usually assumed that dance and movement practices are limited to entertainment. What developed your interest of applying dance and movement to the wellness sector?

So much of our daily human experiences happen with and in our body. It would be silly to assume that making use of the body in movement could be limited to dance in the entertainment sector. Because we use our body in our daily life, literally every second of every day – be it through movement to get places or bodily functions such as digestion – our body is in a constant state of motion. What we know is to move. So, the inspiration to use the

natural motion of the body for wellness purposes stemmed from the mere idea that if we start becoming conscious of our movements and really connect to our body in a mindful way, our body could be more than just a digestion vessel that gets us places but rather be the birthplace of good feelings and release. Shortly after this realisation, I met Melissa Mukaiwa. With her training in somatic release techniques and years of coaching, meditation and yoga practice, we discovered that trauma is stored in the body, in the fascia. These traumas are old and we aren't aware of them, but there they sit. Meditation helps, coaching helps, even going to a psychologist helps, but there is always some sort of residue of those traumas left in the physical body. And that's where dance came in... connecting consciously to your body and then exploring new depths of that connection through dance-related movement in connection to somatic release practices such as breath work allows us to see a much deeper release. One that has literally changed lives. The body is a clever little tool, you just need to understand how to use it. And what I discovered after my years of training and performing is that I had such a deep understanding of the body, a knowledge that could be taught to people who don't have access to the experiences and education I have had, and with that knowledge and those specific practices, they can find a healthier and more connected existence – mind, body and soul.

How is dance therapy different from regular dancing?

It isn't. The only differential is that instead of being conscious of technique and performance while we move, we shift the gaze inwards and use the movement to heal. In dance therapy, we put the consciousness into the body and take it deeper and through this deepening we find a trance-like state where we are able to connect to something more than your physical and mental self but every fibre of your being at the same time... then the magic happens. I have entered this state many times in my professional career, that state where you are out of your body but in it at the same time; a space where you just flow – it's incredibly healing. You'll find many dancers say that dance is a space of safety or belonging, a place to hide or cope or be free... I believe that that is the exact space we tap into in dance therapy, we just do so consciously and in held and guided spaces. So same, but different.

It is well known that the arts are critical for health and well-being. In terms of work creation, do you see a viability for local dancers to create performance works that have health and well-being as objectives for audiences (stakeholders), and not just for entertainment and leisure purposes? Would you see this as a sustainable format in Namibia?

Absolutely! I'd go as far as to say that is needed in this industry. Focusing purely on entertainment as a medium of expression, we limit our entire sector to being show ponies. If we create theatrical experiences that are educational and immersive, where audience members get to join that deeper state of consciousness, we open our little entertainment world up to more possibility. Through the medium of education or immersion or any other expression of this art form, it can act as the bridge to inclusion into the various economic sectors that aren't entertainment. It's something we should strive for; it's something that would give us, as artists, longevity and sustainability in our craft. Namibia doesn't have a large enough population to create a sustainable pool of audience members purely for the act of entertainment. If that is our only goal, we won't survive the modern age we are in.

What would be some of the anticipated challenges of applying performing arts practices across different sectors, such as performing arts in the wellness sector?

Opportunity, funding and courage. Namibia can be a challenging space to welcome new and alternative ideas; there is lots of work to be done to get our people to understand the power of creative medium and its essentialness to a healthy social and economic existence. So, the more funding and opportunity there is for creatives to explore, the deeper we will be able to infiltrate other economic and social sectors. To do this and brave the wilderness that is society at large requires courage, buckets of it.

What advice do you have for a young dance creative looking at exploring business ideas in the wellness sector? Would you suggest pursuing further qualifications in the wellness

sector to boost success?

Qualifications are always helpful. They have a two-fold upside: They expose you to more knowledge and introduce you to new people with similar interests. A qualification in its nature is a further set of acquired knowledge. You get exposed to new themes, ideas, skills and concepts and then spend time, effort and money to acquire these themes, ideas, skills and concepts as your own so that you can practice and further your life and career. On that specific trajectory. The second benefit to a qualification is a new pool of people that conglomerate around this specific sector or industry. As an example, I'll use my theatre studies. While studying, I was exposed to so many people who work in the industry, so by the time I finished my qualification, I was already in contact with the best of the best. I knew whose door to knock on and because they had met me before or heard of me, it was easy to get my foot in the door. The rest is hard work, diligence, reliability and dedication and trying not to agitate too many people. That being said, I don't see a qualification as a complete must in order to further yourself in life or your career. There are so many entrepreneurs or CEOs or top creatives who have zero qualifications, so you don't need it! But it certainly does help and if you are stuck or confused, a qualification is a great place to start.

Research, findings and recommendations are often required to persuade funders to support cross-sectoral arts programmes and projects. What is your suggestion for young dancers looking to produce new

ideas for institutions around the application of dance in various sectors? Would you suggest that they conduct research to produce new ideas and solutions for Namibian performing arts sector? If so, how can one go around this?

I think yes, especially for the youth or young up-and-coming artists, it is important to explore what your voice is and what your stance is in life. There is no time like the present, even when you are young and just starting out. The pandemic has delivered us this opportunity to start fresh and build from the ground up, so find out what makes you tick or the rhetoric you'd like to see in the world and create it. We need new voices, we need a fresh perspective.... What you are thinking about might just be what Namibia needs. So put it together and apply for funding, and if you'd not know how, ask for help!

My door is always open. Every piece requires research, often (especially when starting out) that research is on you - on your time and your dime. You'll reap the rewards when your product gets made. Yes, it's a raw deal but you just don't have much choice. There will, however, hopefully come a time in your career where your research process gets funded. That, my friends, is a glorious day. So, work hard for that day and enjoy it when it finally comes, but until then, use your sleepless nights to research, ponder, dream and plot your product. The more prep work you do, the better the final item will be and the more eager funders will be to fund you. Knowing what you want specifically is a super power.

With your overview on the opportunities and challenges in the performing arts sector in Namibia, where do you see opportunities for dance practitioners to explore further?

Grassroots theatre; theatre for the underprivileged that isn't confined or designed for expensive spaces but rather can be put on anywhere. In this way, you don't need much to create a lot. Street art and pop-up performances form part of that same idea. Another place I would go is community type theatre: Schools, churches, community centres, etc. There might not be a lot of money available, but you'll learn to hone your skill in a collaborative space and you'll learn how to sell your skill. It's a great low-risk environment to start and learn in.

Please share your closing thoughts. Any big ideas on sustainable dance career formats for Namibia that you often think of suggesting for the coming generation of dancers?

Collaborate, get together and form teams. You are not the only one wanting to achieve this or make it in the industry. Seek out your peers and create collaborative efforts that speak to everyone's skills. Theatre is a team sport; the sooner you learn and practice that, the faster and greater you'll grow. This life is about having community. One that will support you and advise you along the way. The more the merrier. Do it while you're young and the feeling of aloneness and isolation will evaporate a lot quicker. We all need community; no man is an island.



Photo by Opas Onucheyo



VICTORIA SANYIME

USING STORYTELLING SKILLS IN THE ADVERTISING SECTOR



CREATIVE WRITER

Victoria Sanyime freelances in the advertising, film and theatre sectors. She also teaches scriptwriting at COTA on a part-time basis. Her love for stories goes as far back as she can remember. She has studied performing arts at UNAM and has a keen interest in the anatomy of a story. She has worked on numerous award-nominated and award-winning local productions. Her proudest achievement to date, in this space, has been getting to work as the screenwriter for the Namibian team on 'Breaking Borders', a SADC female film-makers collaborative project.

Once Upon the Eleventh Grade

Growing up in the northern town of Oshakati, 'theatre' was not really a word I heard. Until one day in the eleventh grade, when a theatre programme came to my school. We finally had an extracurricular activity I loved; one where I truly fit in.

My love for story started as far back as I can remember, but it was after I read Kagiso Lesego Molope's novel 'Dancing in the Dust' around the sixth grade that I knew I wanted to tell stories.

Tihelo, the main character, was a little girl. Just like me. She sat under a tree with her friends and chewed on soft homemade flavoured ice tied in little plastic bags. Just like me. But unlike me, she was biracial and lived in apartheid South Africa. Tihelo grappled with concepts of identity and belonging. Although I didn't share her turbulent circumstances, I sympathised with her because I knew the feeling of not knowing where you belong.

Tihelo was a fictional character I met in the pages of Kagiso's book, but the connection I had with her was real, at times more real than the people around me. I often thought of her, long after I had returned the novel back to the library.

Tihelo's story changed me, as young as I was; it made me more empathetic and more conscious to the human condition. It didn't matter that she was a fictional character, because deep down, I could identify with her human experience.

This is what I wanted to do, to share human experiences... that make a difference.

I soon met others who shared my love for story, and the hall we used as a makeshift theatre became my second home. There, we learnt how to take sparks of inspiration and turn them into short three-act plays; we laughed and we cried, we examined and shared our humanity.

At the end of the programme, I had decided: I am going to study theatre.

Ready, Set... Wait

Armed with relentless conviction, I was ready to finish senior high and go off to UNAM and study theatre. This state of determination was short lived as my conviction soon began to wane after I started career guidance counseling. I was forced to confront the realities of the sustainability of what I wanted to go study; not only by my guidance counsellor, who in hindsight seemed to

have had a bias against the arts, but my family as well.

With a lot of zeal and passion but very little information, I could not answer the simple question: "what are you going to work as after you complete your studies?" Deep down I wanted to say 'I am going to write and direct stage plays', but I knew that was not a satisfactory answer, so I had to relegate my passion to the realm of hobbies and choose something more sustainable.

A Different World

Clad in my crisp white lab coat and safety goggles with my dissecting kit in hand, I was off to the UNAM science department. Although my 'scientist look' was the most exciting thing about all of this, I was determined to complete my bachelors of science in microbiology and biochemistry.

When I was not in class or in the lab, I escaped to COTA - I had a few close friends there. It was there that I got introduced to the back end of the exciting world of advertising.

One of my friends was studying photography and graphic design at COTA's New Media Centre. They had a programme where an industry practitioner from the digital and graphic creative space would come in and share with them their experience to inspire them.

One day, an associate creative director from one of the leading ad agencies in Namibia came to give a talk about the advertising industry and the skills needed in that space from a design point of view. But because this associate creative director also happened to be a film-maker, he also touched on the persuasive power of both non-fiction and inventive storytelling in advertising. He asked if we knew the 2005 hit comedy 'Are We There Yet'. Almost all the hands flew up. He then told us that that movie was one giant advert. Confusion hovered in the room for a bit... until he explained:

The plot included the Lincoln Navigator 2004 SUV, and the second act of the movie entirely revolves around that car. The manufacturers wanted to brand it as a family car, so the screenwriters made it an integral part of a comedic family drama. As Ice Cube's character takes his girlfriend's kids on a trip that proves to be very bumpy, in his brand new Lincoln Navigator 2004, we learn so much detail about the car - in a non-traditional telemarket-ish way. The car somehow also ended up being the hero in the story. It was done in such a skillful and sophisticated way it didn't feel like

Photo by Pandu Shinana



an advert at all, in fact, it felt just like a regular movie. But the advertising clearly worked because after the release of that movie in 2005, the sales of the Lincoln Navigator 2004 saw a drastic spike.

Overjoyed at this new knowledge, I was both intrigued and challenged, all at the same time. I just got introduced to a vibrant creative and sustainable industry that uses storytelling, a craft I desperately wanted to build a career on; this was a major deal for me. The thought started to bubble up in my mind that maybe, just maybe, there's a way I can still study drama in Namibia and not be a starving artist. So, I got to work: I started to do research on advertising, brand storytelling, industrial theatre, experiential marketing, etc. I started to clearly see how the business (strategy) and the art (creativity) came together to serve the bottom line.

If I was to be teleported back into my guidance counsellor's office with what I knew at that point, I would have told her "I am going to work as a copywriter in an advertising agency and work my way towards running my own creative agency that uses performing arts as an advertising vehicle for the corporate sector in Namibia".

And that was indeed my plan.

Ready, Set, Go!... Finally

With this new paradigm shift, I was confident to once again pursue my studies in theatre.

I spoke to my parents, quit my bachelors of science course and applied to study drama the following year. But now I was not just a young artist who wants to study drama because she was enamored by the art form; now I had a long-term career plan. I was committed to getting into the advertising industry and learning and experiencing how theatre and performing arts in general can serve the corporate world from an advertising point of view; this actually ended up being my research topic a few years later.

After completing my studies, I immediately went to work as a copywriter for a leading ad agency. As a first-time copywriter, I learnt a lot on the job, but I also had to read books and watch webinars to get a hang of the trade. But most importantly, I learnt by studying some of the world's best ads.

Before I get into what copywriting in the advertising space entails, let me note here that you do not need a specific qualification to work as a

copywriter in Namibia. If you respond to a vacancy or express interest in any agency, they normally give you what is called a copy test. This is a test given to first-time copywriters – it's used to gauge your creativity and writing skills. It's the results of this test that largely determine whether you get hired or not. Here's a well-rounded and all-encompassing definition of what copywriting is from Wikipedia: "An occupation of writing text for the purpose of advertising or other marketing forms. The product, called copy or sales copy, is written content that aims to increase brand awareness and ultimately persuade a group of people to take a particular action".

The keyword there is persuade, that is the whole purpose of advertising; to persuade people to take a particular action. Now, this can range from sales-driven advertising that tries to persuade you to buy a particular brand of beer as opposed to another competitor brand, to advertising as an agent of social change that tries to persuade you to change your behaviour towards drinking and driving.

Hey... Can I Buy You a Drink?

Great advertising persuades people to take action, and behavioural economics teaches us that people's decisions are influenced by their emotions. This is why storytelling works so well, because when done right, it can evoke the deepest of emotions.

We all know, every story has a beginning (set-up), middle (conflict) and an end (resolution). We're introduced to a character in the beginning, and then somewhere in the middle, we learn of their dramatic problem, and at the end, the dramatic problem comes to some type of resolution.

This basic anatomy of story is what we (copywriters) use in advertising, even for 30-second radio ads. We mostly set up the story in a way that the product (brand) resolves the dramatic problem, and leaves the character in the satisfactory state that the brand promises.

You can even set up the story in a way where the product is the reason why the character is in conflict, as long as you make the product look good, and clearly express the brand promise. Or the product can introduce a new plot twist, and the ad ends as a cliff hanger. It's all up to your creativity.

Let me give you an example that has been used by so many alcohol and soft drink brands (even by Coke). It was just

done in different ways, but it's the same basic premise.

Set-up: Guy sees girl, we can see he wants to get her attention (in a bar, in a club, at the park... or wherever)

Conflict: He wants to talk to her but can't (he's shy, she's out of his league, she's with her girlfriends... or whatever reason)

Resolution: The product saves the day (he buys her a drink and she smiles, sends over a drink to her table and she notices him, he takes a sip and suddenly has the confidence to talk to her... etc.)

Those were pretty basic scenarios. These TV ads are usually a bit more creative than that, but the point I am trying to show you is that it's the same three-act structure used in motion picture, novels, theatre, and even documentaries.

Every good story is founded on character, desire and conflict. These are exactly the same elements we focus on when using storytelling for advertising; it's just that the plot is considerably shorter.

5...4...3...2...1... Skip Ad

As we've previously established, a copywriter in advertising writes copy (text) that is intended to persuade. This is mostly for:

- Print ads (billboards, newspaper, brochures, magazine articles, etc.)
- TV ads
- Radio ads
- Digital ads (social media content/posts)

These are normally the jobs that will land on your desk on a day-to-day basis, but once in a while, you'll have a client that wants a script for a radio drama, a short film or stage play. In my experience, within the Namibian context, long-form narratives such as radio dramas, short films and stage plays are commonly used for campaigns that are geared at changing social perceptions that inform negative actions, and not necessarily to drive sales. E.g. a short film about a father stuck behind the wheel, helplessly watching as his daughter bleeds to death after a drunk driver crashed into their car. A film like this is aimed at persuading people to stop drinking and driving by showing them the fatal consequences in a heart-wrenching way.

Using long-narrative form drama

(stage, radio, and screen) to drive sales is still very much an unexplored avenue within the Namibian space. This form of advertising forms part of what's called branded entertainment and global leading experts believe it's the future of advertising. South Africa and a large part of West Africa have already jumped on this bandwagon, but locally, traditional advertising (print, radio and TV) is still the dominant form used to drive sales.

Remember the movie I spoke about earlier, 'Are We There Yet?', and how it was used to sell the Lincoln Navigator 2004 SUV as a family car? That's a perfect example of what I mean when I speak of using long-form narrative drama to drive sales.

Globally, the effectiveness of traditional advertising continues to decline, especially with millennials and the younger generations. There are a number of reasons contributing to this, i.e. the upsurge of digital technology, like streaming sites. These new conditions have made traditional advertising seem more intrusive than ever. Young people are leaving traditional subscription TV like DSTV and flocking to streaming sites like Netflix because there are no ad interruptions.

Even digital advertising that was once considered to be the saviour is failing because people are skipping ads and installing ad blockers. But branded entertainment has proven to be very effective in this era because it's non-intrusive, and, well, it's entertaining. So, brands all over the world are creating long-form narrative dramas; from

motion pictures to Broadway theatre productions, all in an effort to persuade audiences to buy into their brand propositions (brand offering).

Improves Finally Pay Off

As a copywriter, one of the key skills you need to have is the ability to think and work quickly. You have to craft your ads within the given deadline. You hardly (I really want to say never) have the luxury to sit and wait for inspiration.

Having done improv for all those years as a student has somewhat trained my mind to generate dramatic scenarios quickly, which comes in very handy during tight deadlines.

Theatre is a dialogue-driven art form; it's more than just words, it's a rhythm. When you're immersed in it for a long period of time, you develop a knack for witty and functional dramatic dialogue. This comes in handy when you have to write radio ads and dramas, which are also very dialogue-reliant.

I say this at the risk of sounding dreamy, but theatre is a truly magical art form; it has a way of retaining our childlike sense of wonder and curiosity. This is a great quality for a copywriter and any ad person, really; if you're too grown to play, then advertising is not for you.

A New Meaning to Working Late

They say an artist never finishes, they just quit. Well, this is true in the advertising industry. The ads are never really done; you just stop when you're out of time, especially when you're trying to win an account. You're always thinking of how you can improve on

it, so you keep at it, until the very last minute. And sometimes a client will send you back to the drawing board because they are just not happy with what you came up with.

In order to survive in an environment like this, you have to be able to handle criticism (of your work), to work well in teams, to work under pressure and to work long hours.

By long hours, I don't mean till 19h00 or 20h00, I mean till the next morning. Yes, the next morning.

If you ask any ad person in Windhoek, they'll tell you the craziest time in an ad agency is during an account pitch. This is when you work on a campaign that you're going to pitch (against other agencies) in order to win a new account or retain an old account.

It is such a high-pressure time because there's a lot of money at stake for the agency.

I have worked on pitches as a full-time copywriter and as a freelancer at different leading agencies, and the experience is pretty much the same – long, crazy hours. I remember a couple of pitches where I watched the sun come up from my desk.

But there is a silver lining to the madness. Ad people work hard but they also play just as hard. When you're not working on a high-pressure job, an ad agency is a really fun and creative space to work in.

Photo by Paavo Shooya



Photo by James Jamu



Photo by Pandu Shinana



Photo by Willem Vrey



PATRICK SAM

**TOWARDS POLICY DESIGN AND
STRUCTURAL SUPPORT FOR THE CREATIVE
AND CULTURAL SECTOR IN NAMIBIA**



**CHAIRPERSON OF THE NACN, BOARD MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ART
COUNCILS AND CULTURAL AGENCIES (IFACCA).**

Patrick Sam is a Namibian thought leader, born and raised in Katutura and Khomasdal in Windhoek. He is an international development expert, anchor and art activist. As a Fulbright scholar, he completed an MA in International Education Development from Columbia University in New York City and holds a BA (cum laude) from University College Utrecht in the Netherlands.

Please share your background, and insights into your role at the NACN.

My background and practice is implementing systems around human development, with a primary focus on education and a shifting interest in advocating for how arts, culture, and heritage are essential for human development. My professional career started in international development as an education and governance specialist, with a MA in International Education Development from Columbia University, Teachers College in New York City and a BA (cum laude) in Social Sciences from University College Utrecht in the Netherlands. The international exposure sparked my interest in looking into systemic challenges faced by people like poverty, violence and inequity. My role is working in a consultative manner to find systemic solutions. Hence, my background is in having the desire to establish an enabling policy environment that enables people to thrive.

My experience in public policy is targeted at changing lives, however, at times the public doesn't understand the nature of a policy. A policy is a vision. To establish a vision, people need to use their imaginations to design foresight about what the future looks like, having the ability to visualize, and articulate that destination. That destination is a vision which is intended to inspire us to develop a road map towards that policy that achieves our dreams. Developing the road map is essential, while looking at where we are and how we want to get there is imperative.

For instance, from a public policy perspective, as Namibians, are we able to say we want to live in a multicultural country where individual expression is placed at the same level of significance as our collective consciousness? A consciousness that promotes who we are and where we want to be, enriched by our indigenous understanding? Are such possibilities reflected in our rich ecosystem that appropriates heritage, history, and artistic freedom? These are the kinds of questions we as scholars have to pose in the public policy discourse. We have to question, how we reflect these realities in public space. We have to answer these questions by interrogating, experimenting, exploring, and finding new ways to disseminate knowledge and truth production.

My interest in human development made me apply to the National Art Council of Namibia (NACN) position. Through my position at the council, I have been influenced by my background as a professional. My role at the council is essentially to facilitate the involvement of artists and contributors in the creative and cultural sector. In doing so, I am able to draw from spaces that have been influential in my journey, such as Spoken Word Namibia and Free Your Mind as these spaces have contributed to shaping urban culture in contemporary Namibia. My role is having the ability to be many things. My personal and professional backgrounds have informed all the work I do. I have been interested in what I call the 'language of instruction'; which is the language people use to transmit knowledge and education; how this has influenced various processes to either develop or disrupt us in terms of our development as people through our relationship with arts, culture, and heritage.

If the ideal policy of the council were to be attainable now, what would this picture look like?

I think the ideal is something I can't even talk about. By the time I got into my position as chairperson, there was already a council suspended for three years. There was no system in place, no policy, and money was not accounted for. There were no audited general statements. This is the kind of structure that we had inherited, and so there were many things to rebuild and formulate in our tenure. It is only in 2020 that the council was able to complete a nine-year audit. So, the interesting thing is that within the five years that we have been there, our role comprised largely of cleaning up. We wanted to develop all sorts of projects, develop partnerships, and a national arts festival. But you cannot do that when the vehicle you are driving is broken.

Our role at the council has been about fixing a vehicle, by looking at ordering the right parts so that the appropriate repair could be done. The current council is transitioning, and needs to drive the vision on a systemic level. That has been our mission here; to get a system in place that can work. That has been challenging because of the habits of public institutions. At the same time, there have certainly been some achievements along the way, such as hosting the 2019 Arts Summit of Southern Africa (ASSA), along with collaborations between local and

regional artists, developing institutional partnerships, and rolling out the N\$5 million Covid-19 relief fund through the digital migration mechanisms. To make a long story short, people view the arts council and government agencies as if the institutions do not belong to the people, but they do. Therefore, the task of cultural leaders is to ensure that there is a public sense of ownership around these institutions, this is also why I introduced a public jury that was voted for by the public during the adjudication of Covid-19 grants. Public institutions shouldn't be disconnected from the people because it's easier to work without people. The work of cultural leaders is difficult and if individuals are not rightfully equipped, they must vacate the space for those more capable and connected to the desires of citizens.

It is not always clear to many people what the council performs on an annual basis, and this is something we can improve on in terms of visibility at a national level. The ideal, of course, would be to have been able to achieve the strategy of the NACN. However, there are three huge gaps in our sector that limit our impact. This is limited infrastructure, lack of capacity and skills, and finances. I will admit that it has been difficult to reach a fully functional art-, culture- and heritage-body that can create sustainable opportunities. It's difficult to convince institutions in charge of our national wallet to invest more in our cultural and creative sectors. Namibians don't make this fundamental to our human and national development, and this is as an industry that can help to promote equality, peace, and equity.

The council has gone through various transitions and shifts. Recently there has been a significant interest in supporting career development in cultural management. How does this reflect on where we are as a sector?

The beauty in being an artist is in the making process and then sharing that creation with people. But who is paying attention to that making, regulations, and environment around it? We need institutional and sectoral memory. We need people who can monitor what has happened, what is happening, and critically look at what is to take place in order to direct us where we need to be. So, the motivating factor is this: I will make the case within the existing various 'schools of thought' that arts,

culture, and heritage are fundamental to human development. The state, private sector, or civil society are really there to develop human beings. We know that the state is responsible for many different things through its power and resources. Human development means a lot of things for many different people, but human diversity must be acknowledged as essential. I am from the school of thought that if we are to prioritise arts, culture and heritage, then we are able to become a better society. Other people may not believe that, they believe in industry, and that if we are able to pursue hard labour and eat, then we are able to develop a human society. This is already indicative of the school of thought that dominates us. And within our national plan, we should be making ourselves known; our perspective on how we should be developing human beings must be heard. You will see that we have not been able to be prioritised, and as a result, art, culture, and heritage have become marginalised in human and national development. The agency within arts, culture, and heritage is essential to human development, but it's intentionally being neglected.

The arts council is thus interested in human development, and how arts, culture and heritage function as vehicles for this. Hence, the question becomes; how does the NACN use the sector as a vehicle for human development? There is a gap between our vision, policies, and implementation. So what enables policy, knowledge, research, and data? Policies are driven by a systematic intervention, which involves the coordination of power and resources. How do we actualise the services we need? This narrative of overcoming gaps is enabled by cultural managers and leaders. We cannot make informed decisions if we are not organised and if we don't have the correct information. This is what cultural management comprises of – data mining, knowledge, research, coordination, implementation, management, monitoring, budgeting, evaluating, and accounting. The council is interested in who is going to mine that data, to ensure decisions are made towards dignified livelihoods of artists and cultural practitioners. So, it is not merely about supporting careers that can administer fine arts, literature, theatre and music, and so forth. It is about human development and how humans, in return, cannot develop without sounds, stories, and sights. That's the motivation; the need for our public systems to acknowledge that arts, culture, and heritage are

fundamental for human development and we need to intentionally train cultural leaders and managers to assist in implementing, managing, and accounting for public, private, and civil society investment.

On the lack of skills and capacity, you have a holistic view, both on a macro and micro level. Namibia has a vast pool of talent, but we are currently low on the capacity to enable it efficiently towards a sustainable sector. What does this skill set look like and who falls under this umbrella?

Let me talk from a NACN perspective. The first thing you have to do as a public institution is to be accountable and compliant. We have to have a culture of accountability. There are a lot of issues around supremacy and entitlement in this country – the cultural ecosystem can be toxic. There is no shame in having to be accountable, and having to deal with all the processes that follow that. The lack of accountability reveals a cultural problem. It is a reflection of where we come from – our households. Yes, we have great talent, but that talent cannot be efficiently expressed if the collective culture is disruptive, and if our society keeps treating and telling artists that they have made a mistake in choosing this career. Second is resource mobilization; the fuel to drive that creativity. This is where international development comes in. For instance, in predicting future developments, the World Economic Forum forecasts that there are three things that are going to be trending:

1. **Social safety nets** – a sustainable issue in terms of human dignity.
2. **Transition into a greener economy** – for example, how we can think of theatre practices in greener economies?
3. **Environmental and social impact** – how the sector identifies things that are transitional contributors to the positive status of the environment and society.

So, when we really look into it, resource mobilisation is not about pushing theatre, but rather about pushing human development through theatre. For instance, how are we able to address issues of disability, vulnerable children, sexual- and gender-based violence, and so on, through theatre? We should not lose ourselves too much in the narrative about building the sector, but I suggest that we talk

more about how we enable discussion around human development, dignity, and life through the arts.

Distribution is also important, and looking at the commercialisation of arts, culture, and heritage on top of that. That is industry-specific. This means reconsidering the roles and responsibilities in the industry, how to utilise trade agreements, cultural exchange, and how to be more intentional about consumption and production. It's really looking at goods and services. Building partnerships is essential as it helps us to create local, regional and international synergies. Finally, learning from marginalised communities is also important. This means allocating public money to the most vulnerable communities to establish market access.

In producing a resilient and sustainable cultural creative Namibia, what would you say to young creative minds looking at working as drivers of a creative and sustainable vehicle?

I think from there to now; the keyword is going to be ecosystem. It's the ability to accentuate and illuminate the collective effort. Do you understand the ecosystem of your career? How do you find effective ways to illuminate those ways through anti-bureaucratic, decolonial, intersectional, and inclusive means? I would be encouraged by a young person who decides that they want to be a driver of this vehicle, because yes, there is so much dignity in it. The reason why some countries are doing so well is that people understand the functions around their 'job' and what it weighs and how it contributes to society, which must be the bigger picture. It is in the ability to see our different skills and position ourselves differently. I would say to that young person that, it is about where and how you want to plant yourself. I think the message is not so much about pressuring people to make the right career choices, but enabling them in the choice they make. Thinking about the approach to the ecosystem. This is a cultural issue. I don't think it is about getting it right, but how can we oversee the evolution of change in mobility, security, and opportunity? It is more the soil than the seed. It is about studying the given environment. Good seeds don't grow in bad soil, but bad seeds can grow in good soil. This is not necessarily intentional, but it is just the way it is. I am interested in ensuring the environment attracts those seeds to

grow. This means creating an enabling environment for artists and cultural practitioners because I am from those communities.

How does the seed plant itself in the environment? It cannot just remain aground?

I am not saying that the required work and effort of the seed is irrelevant; I think it is just secondary. Because it is the environment that determines whether we are fruitful or not. It is about what is primary, and the perpetuated narrative about the environment must be reinforced. Secondly, the seed has so many instructive and nurturing tools in the 21st century, so they must use those tools. People say that a lot of our challenges are about a lack of resources, and it is not entirely that – it is a lack of culture. We have been drunk from lethargy and disinterest

as a people. So I want to change the conversation at a local level. It is about accepting the power of creativity, producing and effecting change on a broader base. It is about understanding lives and livelihoods especially in the era of a pandemic.

So you are encouraging a broader conversation? That to think of yourself as a driver of the creative sector is to stand firm on culture? That is where we should return to?

Yes, because all the administration, design, and management are just the tools, and I think we are at a place where we comprehend this, but we need to think about the bigger philosophical picture about how best to bring human dignity to human diversity. It is important to demystify

how exactly we can drive these tools in the given public institution ecosystem. It is going to take critical processes to actualise policies around sustainable arts, culture, and heritage. I think what we need to do is explain the different kinds of available environments, and the possibilities around them. I also think it is powerful to clean up the room a little more to ensure greater investment. It is refreshing to know that we have a foundational build for the further development of the sector. Please watch this space as the NACN embarks on formalising Cultural & Creative Namibia, which is intended to be a multi-sectorial platform to champion the commercialisation of arts, culture, and heritage in Namibia, while at the same time, the NACN will continue to unlock the creative potential of the nation in the non-commercial space.



A POLICY IS A VISION. A VISION IS A USE OF OUR IMAGINATION IN HAVING FORESIGHT ABOUT WHAT THE FUTURE LOOKS LIKE, HAVING THE ABILITY TO VISUALISE AND ARTICULATE THAT DESTINATION. DEVELOPING THE ROAD MAP IS ESSENTIAL, WHILE LOOKING AT WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE WANT TO GET THERE IS IMPERATIVE.



Photo contributed

APPENDICES



PREPARING FOR A PRODUCTION

Sandy Rudd

BUDGET

It is very important to try to establish some kind of budget before you start. You have to know where you stand financially before you even start holding auditions to choose your actors. You have to have a clear understanding of how much you can spend. Money is always a difficult subject. Only trust yourself with the money; spend it wisely, and keep a good record of what you spent and how much you have left. Balance to budget to suit your priorities. I like spending a lot of money on the lights and sound, as I think when you are working with non-professional actors (amateurs), it is good to give them a professional boost with good lights and sound. However, this is purely a personal preference – you may feel differently and want to spend more on costumes or the stage set, for example. The way you balance the budget is entirely up to you.

Once you have your budget in place, and you've chosen the cast, keep your actors and backstage crew informed about what is happening, and how you wish to spend the money. Your cast and crew will want to know exactly what is happening. You must be open with them from the beginning. **Be transparent with the budget.** Money is a very sensitive subject; the more information you give your team, the more supportive and understanding they will be. Do not be intimidated if

they want to do something different with the budget. **You are in charge, and they must accept your decisions. Stick to the budget – do not spend more than you have planned to.** It is a nightmare to go over budget. Trying to find money for a show while the show is being rehearsed or is already showing is not on. No sponsor will support you late in the day. So, look at the budget every day, and make sure you're not going over.

Your budget should reflect all your expenses. This is why it is important to find out right at the beginning whether you will have to pay for the venue, and for lights and sound. These are your basic costs. Your next costs are the actors and stage crew. Are they going to come to rehearsals after school hours? How will they get there? Do they need taxi money, and will they be hungry? In a budget, there is usually an item called "subsistence and travel" (S & T). Travel costs are usually taxi fare; subsistence is a fancy word for food. In my experience, S & T turns out to be one of the biggest items on the budget. A performance fee is a fee you usually give to the actors and crew for being in the play. If this is a school production and you are all in the play for the school or your club, no one will get a performance fee. If the director is not being paid, they can claim within the limitation of the budget for personal expenses, which are usually administration costs. The director's

phone costs (only for calls made in connection with the production), printing costs (scripts and rehearsal schedules), and taxi fare (for travel connected with the production) should all be covered (for example, going to look at different venues, finding sponsors, putting up posters, etc.) You must realistically cover your basic costs. If you start doing this project for the love of it with no budget and you find it is hurting your pocket, you will find yourself becoming bitter and resentful. You are doing the school, the community and the cast and crew a great service by putting on a play; do it with dignity and make sure your personal expenses are covered.

Believe in yourself and your project, and you will find a way of covering your costs. Find a sponsor, get the school to cover your printing costs, exchange free tickets for services, taxis and printing costs, borrow costumes and props, go to the local shops and see how much they are prepared to sponsor you. If your project is good and you believe in it with all your heart, you will get someone to believe in you. Remember: For every 15 people you approach for sponsorship, you will usually find one who will give you something. Never give up – there is someone out there who will believe in you. Do not ask for full sponsorship; if your play will cost N\$4 000, get smaller sponsorships of N\$500.

THINGS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR BUDGET:

Director/producer	(S & T)
Cast and crew	(S & T)
Sound	(Equipment)
Sound	(S & T)
Lights	(S & T)
Costumes	(Design, material and making)
Posters and programmes	(Printing)
Theatres hire	(Cost of hiring hall)
Band expenses	(If you are using one)
Choir expenses	(If you are using one)
Administration costs	(Printing, etc.)
Press photographs	(Fee of photographer and printing costs)
Props	(Design, material and making)
Set	(Design, material and making)
After-show party	(Food, transport, drinks) (VERY IMPORTANT!)

Contingency (10% of budget*)

*Contingency – unforeseen events

It is always important to put in a 10% contingency allowance as you always have unexpected expenses, things you did not expect to happen. For example, if the total of all the other items in your budget is N\$4 000, you **MUST** put in a further N\$400 as a 10% contingency allowance.

All these items listed above are important to make a play. You must do a lot of planning and thinking before you put on a play. Think of all the elements and how you are going to bring them together. When planning the play, you must keep asking yourself: "Are all the elements working together to make the play work?" If you are doing a sad scene, you do not want happy music, or bright lights. Another

question the director must ask at all times is what the reason is for using a specific prop, costume, light, sound, movement, etc. If you cannot give a good enough explanation for using an element, **do not use it**. Everything must have a reason for being on stage, from a simple hand gesture to the choice of lights. **Be realistic in your expectation and keep it simple at all times.** Work within your own limitations and realistic expectations.

Your first play will be the most difficult, but it will also be the most exhilarating. Your sense of achievement will be awesome – you will never feel quite the same again. The most important thing about being a director is to remember the **play** is bigger than you,

your cast and your ego! Just focus on the finished product and take each day as one step towards your goal. Do not focus on the finished product (the play) – focus on the problems and challenges of each day as it arrives. There are always problems – cast members cannot make it to rehearsals, your stage manager is not available, the promised money has not been paid, the lights are broken, etc., etc. Each day may feel like a nightmare, so remember that these problems are all part of the process of putting on a play. Keep calm, and deal with each problem as it arrives. **Do not panic, it will "be alright on the night"**, as the saying goes – and, in fact, it always is – that is the magic of theatre.

WHAT/WHO	N\$
Director/producer (S & T) * & fee	
Cast and crew (S & T) & fee	
Sound (Equipment)	
Sound technician performance (S & T)	
Lights (Equipment)	
Lights (S & T)	
Costumes	
Posters and programmes	
Theatre hire	
Band expenses (if you are using one)	
Choir (if you are using one)	
Printing/press photographs and advertising	
Administration (copy paper/stationery/transport/printing costs)	
Copyrights	
Props	
Set	
After-show party (very important!)	
Contingency	
TOTAL (N\$)	

* S&T: Subsistence and travel expenses (food and taxi fare)

* Try to establish an estimated income. Try to cover all costs without relying on you estimated budget. Profits go towards the next show.

Once you have written up your budget, you have to find sponsorship to cover your costs, so you will have to write a proposal looking for funds. Try to keep your proposal short – no more than two pages.

WRITING A PROPOSAL

APPLICATION / REQUEST FOR MONEY

A good formula is to follow the four Ws (what, where, when, who) and the budget. If possible, always submit your proposal a good three months before the event. Potential sponsors need plenty of time to think about your submission.

WHAT: What is happening?

You are doing a play – let us say it is called 'Happy Days'. It is a play that explores the relationships between four young people and their futures. The play is relevant to young people and has a strong message about taking control of your future. (In a proposal, always stress the bottom line of your production, and mention the purpose of the play. Your potential donor wants to see that his money is going into a worthwhile project.)

WHERE: Where will it take place?

The school hall / Market Place/NTN/ Theatre School/ Boiler Room/ House /Theatre/ Katutura Community Art Centre.

(Name the venue and give the street address.)

WHEN: When will it take place?

State the performance dates and times of your play.

WHO: Who are the cast members? (NB: Write up contracts!)

If possible, submit the names of the people involved in the production. If it is a club putting on the play, name the club, and state when and why you meet. It is important for the donor to

see that you are a serious group of people who really intend to put on a good play. You can also mention any successful projects you have carried out in the past.

Once you have explained the project, submit the budget and show the potential donor how much funding you are requesting. Put a nice cover on your proposal and make at least 20 copies. Go personally and deliver it to as many businesses and NGOs as possible which might be interested in supporting your project. It is important to know that you will get many rejections, no matter how good your proposal may be! For every 20 persons visited, maybe one will be interested. You must just persevere and know in your heart that someone will support you. Looking for a donor or sponsor is the most difficult part of producing a play.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Your schedule should look something like this:

April – May:	Rehearsals up to three times a week; two to three hours per rehearsal
	Final week – scripts down (no script on stage; actors must know their words by now)
4 May	Technical rehearsal (15h00 – finish); Lights and sound (no cast)
5 May	Full dress rehearsal (15h00 – 19h00); full cast and crew
7 May	Rehearsal (15h00 – 19h00); full show
8 May	Rehearsal (15h00 – 19h00); full show
9 May	Final dress rehearsal (18h00 – 19h00)
10 May	Show 18h00; be at the venue by 17h00
11 May	Show 18h00; be at the venue by 17h00
	After-show party, yippee!

REHEARSAL RULES

(Write up the rules and the schedule and make sure your potential cast understands what they are letting themselves in for. Make them sign the contract on the day of the first audition.)

Please attend all rehearsals.

Please be at rehearsals on time.

If you miss three rehearsals in a row without informing the director beforehand, you will be dismissed from the show.

Always call the director if you cannot be at a rehearsal.

Put your phone number on the schedule.

Thank you for being part of this play, and may you have a wonderful experience.

AUDITIONS

Once you have secured the sponsorship for the production, announce your intention of putting on a play by calling (advertising) an audition. Use the Four Ws (what it is, where and when it takes place, and who should apply to be in your play) to make the posters announcing the audition. Put many of these posters up all over the school and the favourite local shop(s). The who is important, as it is no good just saying you want four adults – you have to stipulate the sexes and ages of the characters. Give a little summary (synopsis) of the play; make the poster exciting – people should be curious and want to attend the audition. If you have a local radio station, try to get a chance to talk on the radio about the show; place adverts in the local paper and try to get a journalist to do an interview for a newspaper.

AUDITIONS – DAY ONE

Remember an audition is one of the most stressful things anyone can do! You must be extremely kind to the candidates at all times. Never be arrogant or behave like a big deal. The first things to do are to thank everyone for coming; to explain the play to them; to explain the rehearsal schedule to them (it is very important to have the rehearsal schedule printed out so everyone can see how much time is involved); and to explain where and when rehearsals are going to take place. Explain the extra costs that they

might have to cover themselves. There may not be money for taxi fare or food – be completely open with your cast and crew right from the beginning. Once you have covered all the different aspects of the production (again, use the four Ws), see how many people are still interested; hand out the script to all them and have a reading of the script. That will be enough for one day. Call another audition and advise the people who came to the first audition that they can borrow a script and choose the part they want to play, and prepare for the next audition in a week's time. I find this a most useful tool for auditioning, especially if you do not have a clear idea of how you want to cast your play. You will be most surprised at the parts people want to play, and in most cases, if someone has a good idea of how they will play the part, they will be good for the part.

AUDITIONS – DAY TWO

Decide how you want to hold the audition. You can have an open audition in the school hall and have everyone present to watch the whole process, or you can choose to have a private audition, and see the candidates individually. You must be very well prepared for the audition. It is a nerve-wracking experience, and if you are well prepared, you will handle it well. At an audition, you will need many pencils to fill in the forms, which will have spaces for the details of the

candidates. One side of the form will have spaces for:

Name, contact number, age, sex and school.

On the other side, you can write your own notes:

Physical appearance (fill in your own comments, e.g., “too tall”, “too short”, “not the right look for the handsome young lover”, “just right!” etc.);

Voice (e.g., “nice voice”, “terrible voice” etc.);

Improvisation skill (your comments on the candidate's ability to do a simple improvisation game – watch how the candidate handles taking an instruction and see how they acts under pressure).

Do not tell anyone they have the part at the audition; go over your notes many times and think long and hard before you make final decisions. Once you have decided and told someone they are in the play, it is your responsibility to make that person right for the role. Unless someone is really, really sick and cannot play the part, you as the director have an obligation to keep that person in the part.

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APPENDIX 2

PREPARING A PROPOSAL

National Theatre of Namibia

One of the essential keys to ensuring funding, cooperation and partnerships is an articulate and well prepared proposal. This is ensured by preparing a clear and concise document that expresses the vision, motivation and objectives of a given project. Good proposals stem from the art of persuasion, and one does this by offering a sharp, confident, and unique proposition.

The following section takes you through the requisites and frequently made errors of proposals.

1. The following are the different types of proposals stipulated on the [Illinois University Library](#) website:

- **Solicited proposals**

Proposals submitted in response to a specific call issued by a sponsor/donor.

- **Unsolicited proposals**

Proposals submitted to a sponsor who has not issued a specific call, but is believed by the applicant to have an interest in the subject.

- **Pre-proposals**

These are requested by a sponsor who wants to minimise an applicant's effort in preparing a full proposal. They are usually in the form of a letter of intent or brief abstract. After the pre-proposal is reviewed, the sponsor notifies the investigator if a full proposal is warranted. This is usually the common form of proposals.

- **Continuation or non-competing proposals**

These confirm the original proposal and funding requirements of a multi-year project which the sponsor has already provided funding to for an initial period (normally one year). Continued support is usually dependent on satisfactory work progress and the availability of funds. This is typical in [donor-funded projects](#) that comprise of large project funds.

- **Renewal or competing proposals**

Proposals which request continued support for an existing project that is about to end. These requests – from the sponsor's viewpoint – generally have the same status as an unsolicited proposal.

It is, therefore, important to acquaint oneself with the different types of proposals, which require their own specific structures, tones and complementary engagements.

2. A good proposal generally has the following features:

- It is a sufficiently structured document that is not too lengthy.
- It contains a cover page which gives an executive summary about on the applicant's background, content of the proposed project and the objectives around it.
- It clearly offers context into the applicant's professional background, and includes relevant information that is linked to the skill set needed for the proposed project.
- It includes information on projects that were actualised by the applicant previously.
- It reflects truthfulness and accuracy on the applicant's background, skills and information.
- It is clearly structured, organised and contains the following:
 - Executive summary – details about the background and vision of the proposed project
 - Statement of need – details about the significance of the proposed project
 - Applicant's details – provides information about the applicant, their background and skill set
 - Project description – details the specifics, objectives, timelines and activities in the proposed project
 - Budget analysis – provides concise details on the resources required
 - Conclusion – summarises the proposal's main points
- It is well written, comprehensible and engaging.
- It clearly outlines the key objectives of the proposed project.
- The project vision is refreshing, unique, well thought through and realistic.
- It clearly outlines the envisioned timeline of the project.

- It is reflective of early planning, and does not request for resources immediately before the project's commencement
- If it is an unsolicited proposal, submit a proposal at least three months before the envisioned commencement period.
- It includes a risk assessment, and offers envisioned mechanisms around the projected risks.
- It clearly compliments the recipient's mandate and values, showing that thorough research was done.
- The requested resources are realistic.
- Requested resources are market-related.
- It is not submitted haphazardly, but stems from a series of introductory conversations that were had [unsolicited proposal].

An unsatisfactory proposal contains the following features:

- It is incomprehensible, badly written or contains communication approaches not suitable for the recipient.
- Proposal contains too much technical language, driving recipient away from following the content of your proposal.
- Background of applicant is untruthful and blown out of proportion.
- It is extremely short, lacking significant information.
- It is too lengthy, containing too much unnecessary information.
- Project design is unrealistic, and objectives are blown out of proportion.
- Project design is not relevant (mandate and values) to the recipient, showing a lack of research.
- Project design is against capacity of the applicant. Start small, according to your background and capacity.
- Objectives are too many. This is a sign of no direction. Clearly outline what your key objectives are; three to five are sufficient.
- It is overtly narrated, and does not clearly outline the proposed terms of funding/partnership or resources required from the recipient.
- It leaves too many questions for the recipient to follow up on.

3. What do prospective funders/sponsors and partners want?

- A skilled professional deserving of a grant or partnership
- Experienced in project management, particularly knowledgeable in the administering project funds.
- Presenting a well-organised and articulate image, complementing that of a professional organisation
- Extensive research on the organisation, informing the needs and gaps being filled by the applicant
- Project /proposed idea is aligned with the organisation's mandate and values
- Project/proposed idea is socially and politically mindful
- Project/proposed idea allows for the organisation to reach a target audience / readership in line with that of the organisation
- Project/proposed idea does not pose a threat to the organisation's image and brand
- Project/proposed idea is refreshing and unique, and reflects the organisation's position on development and innovation
- Project/proposed idea positions the organisation in a forward-thinking and socially progressive manner.

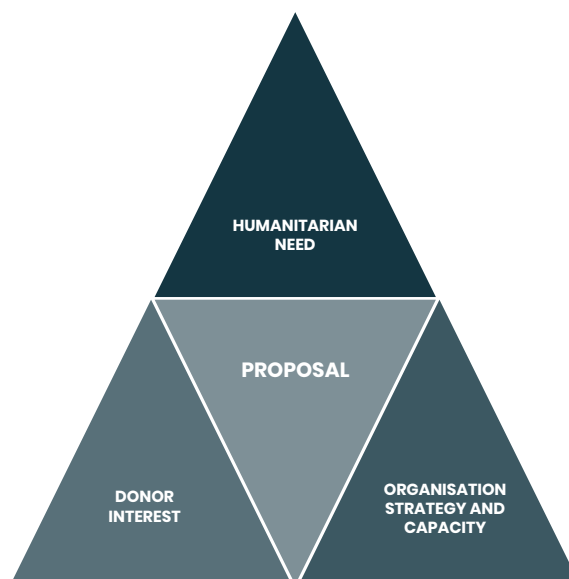


Image Source: <https://had-int.org/blog/what-makes-a-good-proposal/>

4. Useful practices to abide by:

- If provided, follow the guidelines and instructions of the sponsor/funder (solicited and continuation or non-competing proposals).
- Provide all the requirements stipulated.
- Do not prepare a proposal last minute. This will reveal a rushed and unprofessional image of yourself.
- Write clearly and concisely. Start by writing down as much as you can, and condense the content of the proposal to fit the appropriate direction and tone. Avoid writing irrelevant things.
- Review and revise your proposal draft. Ask the right people with the appropriate expertise. This includes proofreading.
- List the contents of the proposal and concept notes, and outline key differences between the two documents.
- Outline the use of a [theory of change](#) to demonstrate how change will happen.
- Outline the use of a logical framework and recognise the difference between activities and results at different levels.
- Inquire on requirements of and templates used by different funders/donors.
- Write proposals in a style which is concise, accurate and engaging.
- Develop a narrative note to accompany an activity-based budget.
- Integrate international standards and cross-cutting trends throughout the proposal.

APPENDIX 3

COPYRIGHT

Business and Intellectual Property Authority (BIPA)

Copyright is an exclusive legal right acquired by a creator/author of original works of authorship expressed in a tangible form. Copyright is an automatic right by virtue of creation.

A closely associated field is 'related rights', or rights related to copyright, that encompass rights similar or identical to those of copyright. The beneficiaries of related rights are: Performers (such as actors and musicians); producers of sound recordings (for example, compact discs) and broadcasting organisations in their radio and television programmes. Works covered by copyright include novels, poems, plays, referencing works, newspapers, advertisements, computer programmes, databases, films, musical compositions, choreography, paintings, drawings, photographs, sculptures, architecture, maps and technical drawings.

How do I protect my copyright?

Copyright protection is automatic under international law, but in the event that your work is infringed, evidence may be required to support your claim. It also helps to deter infringement (particularly from those who do not understand copyright) if you make it clear that your work is protected under copyright law. So, ensuring the best protection for your work relies on several factors.

There are four simple steps you can take that can ensure that your work is safe:

1. Ensure your work is properly marked

A correctly worded notice will deter infringement as it states that the work is protected under law.

Although a copyright notice is not required (work is automatically subject to copyright protection under law), displaying a notice shows that you have an awareness of copyright and take infringements of your work seriously.

2. Register your work

If your work is infringed and your claim to copyright is disputed (i.e. in a plagiarism case – where the other party claims the work is theirs), you may need evidence to help prove your claim.

3. Keep or register supporting evidence.

Supporting evidence falls into two categories:

Evolution of ideas

This is evidence of the progression of the work. Early drafts, synopsis, rough recordings, sketches, etc. are all evidence that the work progressed over time, rather than being copied from elsewhere. Although it is possible to fake such evidence, it is often time-consuming to do so, so it can be fairly good evidence to demonstrate that you created the work from scratch over a period of time.

Footprints or watermarking

This is normally evidence inserted into finished documents that will identify the author in some way, such as deliberate mistakes, or hidden data that can be read using special applications.

4. Agreement between co-authors

If your work is a joint venture, be sure you know exactly where you stand, who will own what rights, and what happens when someone leaves.

What rights do copyright and related rights provide?

The creators of works are protected by copyright and their heirs also have certain basic rights under copyright law. They hold the exclusive right to use or authorise others to use the work on agreed terms. Similar rights, among others, fixation (recording) and reproduction are granted under related rights. The creators can transfer these rights to companies that are in a better position to develop and market the works, in return for compensation. The economic rights in copyright law's duration is 50 years from the day of creation or fixation of the work, and 50 years after the creator's death.

What are the benefits of protecting copyright and related rights with BIPA?

Copyright protection testimonials serve as an exhibit or prima facie evidence in the court of law. As the owner of the work, you can submit the testimonials as evidence that the work belongs to you.

For more information on copyright, please visit the [World Intellectual Property Organisation](#) website.

Retrieved from the [BIPA website](#).

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Intellectual property protection is technical and frustrating.

We provide creators with a Strategy to Protect, Optimize and Monetize their new products, innovations, brands and creative works to continue innovating confidently and well-informed.

**THE KEY TO
INTELLECTUAL
PROPERTY OWNERSHIP
IS
STRATEGY**



OUR MISSION

To ensure that creators are recognised and rewarded for their contributions to our community.

SERVICES

TRADEMARKS

INDUSTRIAL DESIGNS

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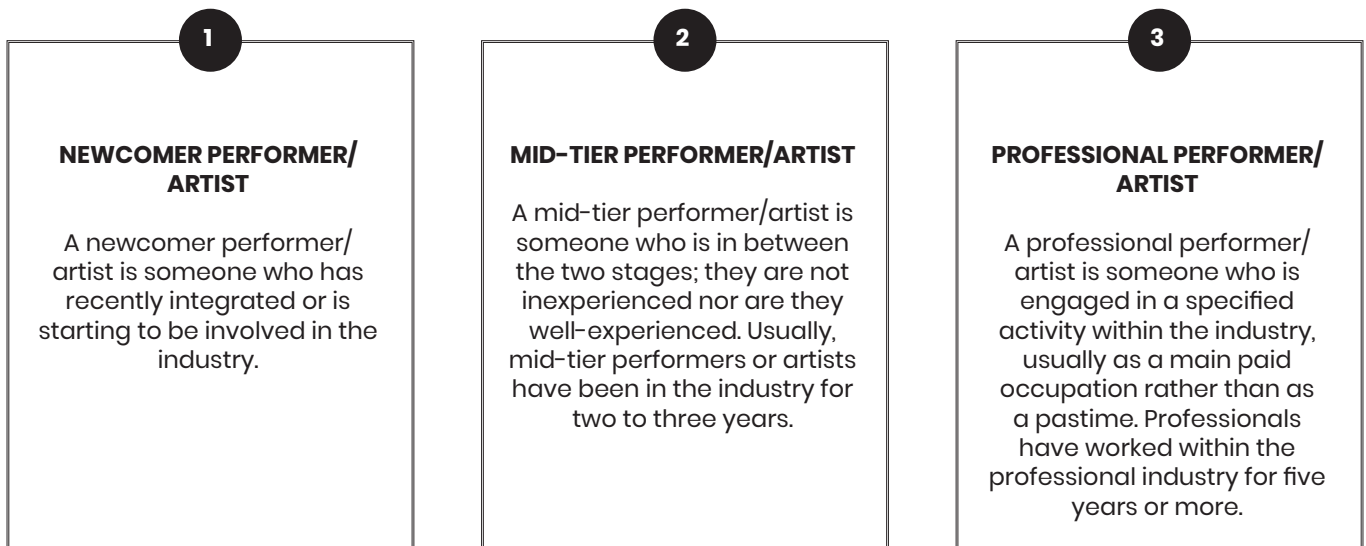
APPENDIX 5

QUOTING YOUR SERVICES AS A PERFORMER/ARTIST

National Theatre of Namibia

As a freelancer, you have to be able to sustain your career and livelihood, and to do so, you need to be aware of your worth – realising your worth is paramount to having a sustainable career. In many parts of the world, either management or agencies fight the good fight and ensure artists and performers are paid ethically and equitably. However, in the Namibian industry, there is a lack of monitoring bodies or unions that determine, set and govern artistic rates and payments. Artists are left to fend for themselves and formulate figures to fit their needs. For the industry to grow, setting guidelines and frameworks leads to growth, development and structure, which will change the inner workings of the industry for the better. If you do not know how to go about it, here is a practical guide on how to set up your rates:

Firstly, you need to understand and consider your career and experience according to three key stages:



Rating yourself

When setting up your rates, consider the following;

1. Project scope – What is the project about?
2. Project timeline – What are the stages of the project?
3. Rehearsals and preparations – How will the project stages be broken down; how many days will I rehearse or prepare?
4. Performances/recordings – How many performances or shoots will take place?
5. Locations – Will I require transport to and from rehearsals?
6. Travelling – Will this be in Windhoek or another region or even country?
7. Resources – Will this require that I acquire additional materials or collaborators for the job?

The following are a range of minimum costs that one benchmark when contracted for a performance or project:

Newcomer performer/artist

Taking into consideration these factors, newcomer performers/artists can quote according to these rates:

- **Rehearsals/preparations: N\$80 to N\$100 per day**

- This fee is inclusive of taxi fare, meals and logistical costs
- Newcomer performers/artists can look at N\$400 to N\$500 (four to five days a week) being earned weekly during rehearsal periods.

- **Performances/recordings: N\$800 to N\$900 per day/session.**

- **Local travel:**

- Accommodation: Get clarity on whether accommodation will be catered for by the production
- Per diem: N\$200 daily (excl. accommodation and breakfast)

- **International travel:**

- Flight ticket: Depending on country and airline costs
- Visa/work permit: Cost of visa or work document
- Health insurance: Health insurance varies, however, factor in N\$500 to N\$1 000 depending on location and scheme
- Per diem: Different countries have varied rates for per diems according to regulated policies
- Accommodation: Get clarification on whether accommodation will be catered for by the production.

Mid-tier performer/artist

Taking into consideration these factors, mid-tier performers/artists can quote according to these rates:

- **Rehearsals: Minimum N\$100 per day**

- This fee is inclusive of taxi fare, meals and logistical costs
- Mid-tier performers/artists can look at N\$500 (five days a week) being earned weekly during rehearsal periods.

- **Performances/recordings: Minimum N\$1 500 per day/session.**

- **Local travel:**

- Accommodation: Get clarity on whether accommodation will be catered for by the production
- Per diem: N\$200 daily (excl. accommodation and breakfast)

- **International travel:**

- Flight ticket: Depending on country and airline costs
- Visa/work permit: Cost of visa or work document
- Health insurance: Health insurance varies, however, factor in N\$500 to N\$1 000 depending on location and scheme
- Per diem: Different countries have varied rates for per diems according to regulated policies
- Accommodation: Get clarification on whether accommodation will be catered for by the production.

Professional performer/artist

Taking into consideration these factors, professional performers/artists can quote according to these rates:

- **Rehearsals: N\$120 per day**

- This fee is inclusive of taxi fare, meals and logistical costs
- Professional performers/artists can look at N\$600 being earned weekly during rehearsal periods.

• **Performances/recordings: N\$3 000 to N\$5 000 per day/session (depending on scale).**

• **Local travel:**

- Accommodation: Get clarity on whether the accommodation will be catered for by the production
- Per diem: N\$300 daily (excl. accommodation and breakfast)

• **International travel:**

- Flight ticket: Depending on country and airline costs
- Visa/work permit: Cost of visa or work document
- Health insurance: Health insurance varies, however, factor in N\$500 to N\$1 000 depending on location and scheme
- Per diem: Different countries have varied rates for per diems according to regulated policies.
- Accommodation: Get clarification on whether accommodation will be catered for by the production.

***Note:** Daily performance / project rates increase the wider your radius grows from your residing base. For example, as a Windhoek-based creative, you would not charge with your usual rates if the project were based in Swakopmund, Johannesburg or Berlin. This is to factor in that the performer/artist has been relocated, taking up further costs for the period of relocation. Consider travel costs, accommodation, transport, standard three meals per day and daily supplies and services needed.

Safety

Performers/artists must consider their safety when working as well. As a performer/artist, your livelihood is dependent on your health, therefore consider hazard pay when setting up your rates.

What are hazards?

- Rehearsal space: Wood floor, concrete floor, dance mats, etc.
- Physical exertion: Lifting, throws, falls, acrobatics, etc.
- Faulty costume
- Special effects: Weapons, fire, pyrotechnic devices, etc.
- Mechanical devices
- Severe allergies

Costs not covered by the contractor:

The above-mentioned minimum rates are not inclusive of the following items:

- Extensive stationery, printing, copying and logistical resources
- Costumes, hair dressing, make-up and props to be hired and paid for
- Additional gear and equipment to be rented for the project
- Additional collaborator(s) to be added to the project
- Medicals costs caused from health and safety hazards from the working environment
- Additional services and items not stipulated or agreed on with the client.

Ensure that your contractor/client will take care of medical costs should an accident take place, arising from health and safety hazards from the working environment. This should be stated and agreed upon in the contract.

Never work without a contract! This creates exploitive circumstances and blurred points not backed up by a signed agreement. It also helps to keep all communication on email, so that written communication can be traced and referenced to should disagreements take place. Verbal and telephonic communication do not carry enough grounds. Not all clients will have contracts in place, thus it is useful to have a personal template in place and on standby. Further, it is highly encouraged that you look into the working or performing hours you will be contracted for. If hours are extremely extensive such as being bound for extended hours on a site, then you may have to reconsider your rates.

For guidelines on what to consider as baseline rates for stage managers, arts administrators, directors, choreographers, dramaturges, workshop facilitators, technicians and various creatives, email prod@ntn.org.na.

For contract templates for your use, email prod@ntn.org.na.

Finally, it is highly encouraged that all matters pertaining to copyright are stipulated into your contract. For commissioned work, it is very important to have clarity on who will have ownership to the work before agreeing and signing to develop and create the work. This is the same for recorded footage. Ensure that you understand where and in what context the footage will be distributed, and if you can have access to the files for your archives.

APPENDIX 6

GUIDELINES ON WORKING AS A FREELANCER IN THE NAMIBIAN PERFORMING ARTS SECTOR

National Theatre of Namibia

Pursuing full-time freelance work is a big step that, when transitioning from full-time based work, should be informed by key considerations such as your skills and abilities, objectives, plan and marketable products or services. This transition should not be taken lightly and haphazardly. Freelance work offers huge benefits and opportunities, but also comes with its own dynamic sets of challenges.

The following are basic guidelines to look at when considering a career as a freelancer:

1. Start off slow and identify your key objectives

- Identify why and how you are going to produce your products or services. Have conversations with people who have pursued freelance creative work in your specialisation area and make informed and analytical decisions. Freelance work can be difficult, thus evaluate your SWOT in your ability to run your work on a freelance basis.
- With the inconsistent job opportunities in the creative and cultural sector in Namibia, it is best to start your freelance creative work on the side part-time, so that you ensure basic provision for your livelihood as you work your way up towards a well-informed, independent, networked and strategic creative freelancer.

2. Rates and costs

Working as a freelancer means your sole income comes from work offered to you on an often periodic basis. Thus, you should be able to have gained enough skills to professionalise your products and services to a point where you can standardise your rates according to your abilities, expertise and background. This is so that clients pay your work around or close to your rates. Compare market rates for productions or services by looking at other freelance businesses in your specialisation and design your rates reasonably around what they charge. Do maintain your worth and charges, and navigate costs around your rates along the various projects and experiences.

3. Develop your skills

- You have to consistently develop your skills so that you stay up to date with the latest industry demand and trends. Skills development is a requirement you should consider as part of your annual expenses. These are the kinds of skills that would help establish your work further and create unique offerings, enough to want to make people pay and invest in you.
- You will also have to ensure to learn the following:
 - Understanding different market-related pricing to set the right rates
 - Developing clear briefs and contracts
 - Tax systems and issues
 - Productive working methods.

4. Maintaining your brand and profile

- Self-promotion and marketing yourself as a freelancer is key. With so many service providers available, make sure to articulate what is you do and how it creates solutions for prospective clients. Mystical freelancers are often viewed as undesirable and untrustworthy by clients, particularly in the corporate world. Demystify who you are by having your profile and background readily available, an updated online presence for background checks and clarity on the previous clients and consumers you've worked with.
- Excellent products and services often bring back clients and help to maintain business relationships. Thus, consider the following for excellent and competitive client services:
 - Organised and efficient logistical processes
 - Responsiveness and clear communication skills
 - Politeness, empathy and adaptability
 - Maturity - emotional and social intelligence
 - Innovation and accountability
 - Patience and truthfulness
 - Sticking to timelines and deadlines
 - Provision of added value products or services for clients and consumers.

5. Financial Management

- Financial management is critical to the work of a freelancer. You have to ensure that your basic personal and operational resources are catered for. Thus, acute financial planning is essential, which in turn creates more demands on the innovative and strategic actions to acquire prospective clients. The general rule is that you should foresee financial stability on a three-month advanced basis to cover your personal basic and operational needs. It is further encouraged to separate your personal and operational expenditure for bookkeeping and accounting purposes. This may require for you to register a business and open a separate bank account when you are ready.
- Apart from your living expenses, operations and taxes, consider affordable schemes you can take on to cover for your health insurance and retirement plans.

6. Operations: Organisation and administration

Though the availability of work can be sporadic, it does not mean that your organisation and administration processes should be too. With the dynamic and resilient nature of freelance work, it is important that you create a routine, as you would at any other regular job. Thus, routines around the following areas are essential:

- Marketing and creating awareness of your work and services
- Developing skills and staying up to date on the latest developments and trends
- Maintaining an updated portfolio to showcase your skills
- Maintaining efficient and organised communication
- Maintaining networks
- Planning and scheduling timelines accordingly to avoid undesirable clashes
- Developing multiple strategies to find and retain clients.

Making the leap to start freelancing full-time should not be a quick decision, but one that is well considered and informed. Preparation and asking questions is key before the big leap.

APPENDIX 7

GUIDELINE TO EXPLORING CREATIVE AND CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

National Theatre of Namibia

Exploring cultural entrepreneurship is crucial for sustainability in the performing arts sector. With employment in the performing arts sector significantly dependent on producers and funders, many creatives choose to work as freelancers, while others register businesses in order to operate their services more efficiently. Due to the irregular nature of the Namibian creative and cultural sector, there is a relatively small pool of creative businesses in the performing arts environment. These enterprises tend to be limited due to the extreme environment they have to withstand. Though starting a creative business can be directed with great vision, it is important to understand the various challenges inherent in the development and operations of running a business in the sector. This intricate process should be met with strategic vision, market research and innovative thinking in order to meet objectives and desired financial gain.

Firstly, it is important to understand that art entrepreneurship identifies with the following features:

Understanding the relationship between consumers and producers

Creating value-based products, experiences and services.

Market-oriented production

Identifying with the market to meet consumers' needs and create solutions.

Consistent product creation and service provision

Ability to produce products, experiences or services that can be packaged and consumed on a periodic basis.

Collaborations and partnerships

Maintaining networks within the creative and cultural sector and beyond. This is to maintain fruitful cooperation, competition and stimulate new needs and trends.

Arts businesses are found on innovation and entrepreneurship and their processes are as intricate as that of any other business. Thus, they should be met fairly with their demands and needs. Creative entrepreneurs have the task of integrating their artistic skills with managerial and entrepreneurial abilities. This includes all prescribed business practices. Navigating these demands requires informed decisions that can only be directed by consistent market research, associations and skills development. Thus, it is necessary to – critically with time – think about the given gaps and opportunities available, and your approach to intervene in local problems with artistic services and solutions.

The following outlines a five-year plan that can be considered by creatives looking to develop businesses in the sector.

Note: *The following context refers to creatives who are in the very early stage of their careers.*

YEAR 1

EVALUATING AND CONCENTRATING YOUR SKILLS

Once you have completed your standard training in your relevant discipline, it is important to define what it is you want to concentrate on in the sector. This can be in the areas of performance, producing, education, training, administration, programming, etc. Concentrating your specific skill set offers opportunities for possible employers, producers and funders to work with you, as they understand your articulated skill set. Ask yourself what kind of creative you are, and what products, experiences, services, solutions or experiences you have to offer. Fine-tuning your interests and skills also informs the kind of business model to be developed at a later stage. Though exploring your artistic skills can be dynamic across your career, it is important to pinpoint the areas of focus and specialisation. This simplifies perceptions of your abilities and prospective products and services. The process of evaluating yourself allows for opportunities in measuring your given SWOT around your talents and skills.

WHAT ARE MY SKILLS?			
What are my strengths?	What are my weaknesses?	What opportunities are there for me?	What threats are there against my businesses ventures?

CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTOR RESEARCH

- Acquaint yourself with key organisations in the local and regional creative and cultural sector. Study and consistently read up on their operations, and what value they offer their given communities. This will help shape your understanding of the environment around you and opportunities therein.

- Pursue internships and residencies in organisations in order to expand on your skills and understanding of institutional processes.

Set plan for Year 1 – Starting out:

- **Skills development** – Develop your skills further by consistently attending workshops and development programmes and seminars by arts, culture and heritage institutions and drivers. Consider online platforms as well, especially for the international context. Ensure to sign up for newsletters for various arts, culture and heritage institutions so that you can stay up to date with their projects and programmes.

- **Start creating projects** – Begin conceptualising and developing artistic works/projects in the disciplines you are focusing on. Focus on small-scale works that you can produce economically. Do not go beyond your means, as this can be detrimental on the personal resources you have to rely on in your early career. Inquire how you can share and market your projects with various sector players and contributors. Ensure to archive all of your work, including audio-visually. Practice this on a consistent basis; you will get to learn and relearn a lot through practise. Individually-driven projects are also useful in displaying your determination, resilience and independence. Keep a lookout for projects and opportunities by institutions, but at the same time, produce your own works as well.

- **Internship** – Voluntarily apply for internships in arts, cultural and heritage institutions. Alternatively, apply for shadowing work on a project basis in institutions in order to gain insights into their operations. This is how you can learn efficiently by witnessing processes unfold around you. Internships are great for gaining foundational interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence found in team-based work.

- **Self-exposure** – Expose yourself to professionals and organisations in the sector in order to instigate relationships. Practise good and informative self-presentation. This is how you can begin to secure networks, as professional individuals and organisations are always keen on working with new and self-organised people. Present yourself as a learned, self-organised and determined individual. Effects of these relationships may not be immediate, but they can come in handy with time.

- Invest in trending practices and discourse – Invest in resources and materials that expose you to the fields and practices you are skilled in and interested in pursuing. This will develop intricate and critical thinking that is required for your practice and business at a later stage.

– Read up on annual reports and studies conducted on processes and projects involved in the sector. Ensure to read up on annual company reports as well. This will expose you to important data and language inherent in arts and cultural entrepreneurship.

– Continue the above activities throughout your career.

- Skills development – For Year 1, make an effort to register for short courses in the following areas:

- i. Project management (beginners)
- ii. Business writing skills
- iii. Presentation skills

YEAR 2

SETTING OUT A SERVICE PLAN

Continue to enhance and define the work and services you are interested in as a practitioner. Develop further small-based works and projects that can help articulate the kind of work you are interested in. Continued development of individually-driven projects will create a background reflecting your activity and career development. At this stage, content for your resume should be growing. Share this document with key players and contributors in the sector on an annual basis.

PURSUIING REGULAR FREELANCE WORK

Pursuing freelance work means that you have acquired the basic skills and experience to offer products and services to paying clients. Your basic training in presentation skills, business writing and project management from Year 1 would have given you a good ground to start off. Acquaint yourself with spaces, professionals and organisations in your disciplines. Do not overwhelm yourself with too many contracted projects at once, as this early stage is essential to proving your professionalism and quality work for clients to remember and for referrals to foster.

DEVELOPING FURTHER RESEARCH

- Continue pursuing internships and volunteer work in arts, culture and heritage organisations.
- Begin doing research on interdisciplinary projects that cross between arts, culture and other sectors. For example, artistic projects that have been applied in environmental issues, gender rights, health education and so on. This research will help shape your understanding of how arts, heritage and cultural practices can have business viability into other sectors.
- Attend seminars that are not only related to arts, culture and heritage. Expose yourself to evolving discourse and trends in other sectors such as education, health and social services, trade and industrialisation, urban and rural development, environment and natural resources, agriculture, tourism, youth and sports, and gender and child welfare. Exposing yourself to issues and processes in other sectors will help create a basic understanding on how you can apply your creative skills in alternative sectors and fill gaps. Apart from leisure and entertainment, keep in mind that creative skills are tools that can be applied for the purposes of:

- Communication
- Advertising or commercialism
- Event producing and planning
- Creative direction for projects
- Education
- Activism and political change
- Psychological and healing purposes.

Set plan for Year 2 – Applying yourself as a young professional:

Creation of interdisciplinary works/projects – With your one-year background of individually-driven and produced projects in the arts, cultural and heritage sector, you should have gained a foundation within your discipline to start crossing over to other sectors. Begin creating small-based works and projects that apply in other sectors, not only limited to arts, culture and heritage. Archive all projects and processes.

Typical example

Year 1 – You created artistic works for specifically for arts, cultural and heritage sector (a dance showcase drawing from traditional Nama techniques and showcasing its rich cultural heritage)

Year 2 – Add works that can be applied to alternative sectors (a dance showcase depicting environmental issues of the Okavango delta).

- Freelance work – Continue pursuing freelance work and projects as this will teach you basic resilience and expose you to dynamic working relationships you need to experience. You can also do freelance work should you have a full-time job.

- Collaborations – Start developing collaborations with other professionals in the sector. This expands your network and develops your approach to working dynamically across different projects.

Typical examples

- A.** Collaborating with a writer to create a choreopoem for a public performance.
- B.** Collaborating with a historian to create a performance work on history of King Mandume yaNdemufayo of ovaKwanyama people.
- C.** Collaborating with a child psychologist to create a performance work that teaches toddlers empathy and kindness.

- Advance internships – Continue pursuing internship programmes and advancing them. It is important that you apply for internships that not only grow your creative skills, but organisational skills as well.

- Skills development – For Year 2, ensure to register for short courses in the following areas:

- Project management (intermediary)
- Advanced management and effective administration skills
- Bookkeeping

YEAR 3

FREELANCE WORK OPERATION

Continue pursuing freelance work. Pay particular attention to work in other sectors. If projects are not forthcoming, study organisations and propose how useful your skills and services may be to them. Ensure that a financial package for your transport and basic costs are covered by the institution.

NETWORKING

Strengthen your networks with professionals and organisations. Create work relationships with people across various sectors as well. Creative entrepreneurship is intrinsically dependent on networks and the perception of how people understand your skills and services. At this stage, your works, profile and resume should be professionally organised on platforms and readily available. Further, it is useful to read up on people skills, social networking and emotional intelligence at this stage.

PURSUE THE BUSINESS MODEL

- At this stage, your envisioned business should start shaping itself. This should be directed by your developed interests, gained skills, projects you have worked on and opportunities and gaps you have identified in the sector. Begin to create strategic projects that will eventually influence the model of your business to be registered. Your individually-created projects and works should start growing to new and advanced stages, so that it can start shaping and moulding your plans for a business.
- Pursue bigger projects than the previous years. Bigger, but reasonably measured with your level of expertise and experience.
- Pursue funding for your growing projects. Start with local funding streams to learn about funding structures and processes. International funding is advised to be pursued once you have basic experience from your sectors locally. This is due to the demands and bookkeeping responsibilities international funding programmes have.

Set plan for Year 3 – Shaping the creative entrepreneur:

- Shape online presence – Create an online presence that is well organised and curated with the projects you have worked on over the past two years.

- Strong working relationships – Grow and maintain your strong relationships in the sector. Use these networks for bouncing off ideas.

- Market strategies – Learn marketing strategies and trends that you can apply. Invest in resources that can open your mind to evolving trends and discourses.

- Proposals – Begin pitching ideas to organisations. Start with small organisations first, so that you can learn your way up. Practise your presentation skills. See what works and what doesn't with the different institutions. This will help you gain insight and experience regarding what institutions generally expect. Always align proposals with the mandates of the organisation. Your given projects and works of the past two years will help create a background of your work and capabilities as well.

- International funding and projects – Pursue international funding.

–Skills development– For Year 3, ensure to register for short courses in the following areas:

- Project management (advanced)
- Change management
- Basic accounting.

YEAR 4

DEVELOPING A FLUID BUSINESS MODEL

Take time to research and develop your desired business model, based on the projects that you've run and continue to run. Work closely with a business strategist in this phase. This is where your business plan will begin to be drafted.

MARKET RESEARCH

- Do market research with the services and products you are continuing to create, and that will be applied to your business. You can always investigate on what approaches to take to your research, e.g. interviews, questionnaires, in-depth conversations, etc.
- Market research is the process of evaluating the viability of a new product or service through research conducted directly with potential targets and consumers. This will allow you to discover your prospective target market by collecting organised data to make informed decisions.
- Importantly, evaluate the value of your business. Ask the following questions:
 - o What is unique and competitive about my potential business?
 - o What solutions does it offer?
 - o What are the possible threats for my potential business?
 - o What opportunities could it attract?
 - o What flaws and weaknesses are there?
 - o What additional support, resources or partners will I require?
- Continue to assess the local sector and the gaps it presents, and evaluate how it aligns with your gained skills, networks and business vision.

Set plan for Year 4 – Designing the business plan:

- **Business plan** – Begin to develop a business plan
- **Review proposals** – Evaluate feedback on pitches and proposals
- **Work** – Continue freelance work and skills development
- **Partnerships** – Continue to maintain collaborations and partnerships
- **Skills development** – For Year 3, register for short courses in the following areas:
 - Basic and advanced income tax training
 - Basic and advanced VAT training
 - Organisational effectiveness.

YEAR 5

REGISTER YOUR BUSINESS

A registered business allows you to operate smoothly in accordance to the country's laws and regulations. Registering your business helps with avoiding legal problems with the government and secures your reputation as a legitimate business. An operational business builds trust amongst your prospective consumers and customers, and opens opportunities for bigger projects and business opportunities. At this stage, with your given experience and gained skills, you should be able to register and start to incorporate your products and services through the business, and not the individual.

General Information (retrieved from [BIPA](#))

Public companies, private companies and NGOs require memorandum and articles of association that need to be certified by a notary public who is a member of the legal profession. Therefore, applicants applying for any of the business entities are encouraged to use the services of legal practitioners.

Forms for close corporations ([CC8](#), [CC1](#) and [CC2](#)) and defensive names ([CM5](#), [CM8](#), and [CM8A](#)) are available at all offices of the Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and SME Development country-wide and at the Namibia Chambers of Commerce and Industry (NCCI) and its branches at no cost.

Once a client has collected their registered documents, they must also ensure compliance with the requirements of other relevant institutions namely:

- the Ministry of Finance (registration for VAT and company tax)
- the Ministry of Labour
- the Ministry of Home Affairs (work permits, visas, etc.)
- the Social Security Commission
- The Namibia Financial Institutions Supervisory Authority (NAMFISA)
- Local authority by-laws such as those specified by the City of Windhoek, or local authorities in Swakopmund, Walvis Bay, Keetmanshoop, Oshakati etc.

For a guideline on how to ensure that your business name is successfully accepted, please click [here](#).

Resources to read on further:

1. [How to start a business – BIPA guide for beginners](#)
2. [Setting up a business in Namibia – Six step considerations](#)
3. [How to register a defensive name \(sole proprietorship\) in Namibia](#)
4. [Registering a company](#)
5. [Doing business in Namibia](#)
6. [Frequently asked questions on business registration \(BIPA\)](#)

CREATE A FOOTPRINT OF YOUR BUSINESS AND WORK

Geographical footprint

Expand your projects regionally, and create a mark internationally through partnerships and international clients.

Ensure a digital footprint to serve your business

- Use social media channels wisely
- Content marketing is crucial
- Create a website as a base for your brand.

Set plan for Year 5 – Starting off the business:

- **Consultancies** – Ensure to inquire from experts so that your business processes are protected and aligned with regulations
- **Accounting** – Create a strong relationship with an accountant to ensure that your bookkeeping is in place and ready for annual submissions
- **Expanding footprint** – Expand your work across different towns and regions. Start pushing for international projects to grow your resume

- Work creation – Do not forget to continue creating work.

YEAR 6+

Proceed to expand your business, and grow with partners and/or employees. Successful businesses do not grow in a short span, thus you have to be patient, resourceful and creatively dynamic over the years. Internal evaluations and risks assessment are extremely important. Start and operate your business from a small scale to maintain your independence and allow flexibility throughout. Further, consult with the suitable experts and entities so that you are well informed all the way.

What are the particular characteristics and development needs of creative businesses?

Frequently identified needs in creative and cultural entrepreneurship include:

1. Innovation and application into alternative sectors not limited to arts, culture and heritage
2. Entrepreneurial skills
3. Business language and writing skills
4. Awareness of different funding issues and structures
5. Proposal writing
6. Marketing skills
7. Administrative and organisational skills
8. Bookkeeping and basic accounting skills.

What are the barriers to overcome in running a creative business?

- Overcoming public perception of art practices and artistic solutions to everyday needs
- Overcoming the cultural problem of creatives being reduced to arts, culture and heritage sectors only
- Convincing the relevance of arts and culture in corporate spaces
- Drastic changes in arts and culture funding locally, regionally and internationally
- Operational support from partners and institutions, especially in early years of your practice and business
- Acquiring the skills mentioned above.



**National Theatre
of Namibia**



National Theatre of Namibia
2021