

MUSHO! FESTIVAL REPORT JANUARY 2011



PERFORMING ARTS NETWORK OF SOUTH AFRICA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The sixth annual Musho! Theatre Festival was successfully staged in Durban from 12 to 16 January, 2010. The festival focuses specifically on the genre of one-and-two person plays. The aim of the festival is to promote this genre, to encourage new work by local theatre-makers, and to showcase established national and international productions.

The event was hosted and organised by PANSAs, and made possible through generous sponsorship from The Ethekwini Municipality, Twist Theatre Development Projects, KwaZulu Natal Department of Arts and Culture, The Daily News and Pentravel.

FACTS AND FIGURES:

- From over 45 applicants, 9 productions were scheduled for the main part of the festival, and 6 productions for the fringe of *Musho with a Twist*.
- The festival drew in an audience of over 900 theatre-goers over the weekend.
- With ticket prices of R50 for adults, and R25 for students and pensioners, the box office made a total of R 16 393.50.
- Financial support from sponsors amounted to a total of R 101 000 from our sponsors.
- Festival costs to date have come to a total of R 73 000.
- The remaining funds from the festival will be paid to PANSAs to cover office costs and preparations for Musho 2012.
- 26 individuals directly earned an income as a result of the festival through PANSAs.
- 72 individuals earned an income through the *Musho with a Twist* programme.
- The festival received extensive media coverage in newspapers, magazines and radio stations.

With the Christmas festivities of 2010 now behind us and the sporting calendar still to get underway, the first few weeks of the New Year allow for a brief period of reflection whilst we ponder the meaning of life, burgeoning waistlines and what the coming weeks and months will hold.

The Musho festival, now in its sixth year, nestles comfortably into this slot. Comprised mostly of new, one and two hander plays, it is a platform for writing talent and often serves up surprising theatrical gems.

Anthony Thoms, Live Wire.

DETAILED REPORT:

Preamble:

For the 2011 festival, the funding provided was confirmed by most of our sponsors very late. This meant that we did not plan any international acts, and had in fact decided to keep the festival as a pared-down event. The intimacy of this strategy made for a great festival atmosphere over the 4 day period.

Venue:

The Catalina Theatre on Wilson's Wharf was the site for the festival, holding 166 people. While most audience members remark that they love the venue and setting of the theatre, we received a number of complaints from audience members about the noisy extractor fan. If the Catalina is used as a venue into the future, this must be remedied, with either the performers wearing microphones, or the extractor being moved.

Programme:

9 productions were selected to appear on the main festival programme. The selection included a variety of different styles and content to appeal to diverse audiences. The shows were mostly of a very high standard. Some of the more avant-garde productions created a great amount of debate amongst the festival-goers.

The Musho with a Twist programme included 6 productions that generated a great deal of excitement amongst theatre goers, and in the national media. Twist Theatre Development Projects would like to continue the partnership with PANSA, and this welcome addition to the programme and the funding will remain for the 2012 festival.

Main festival:

The main festival included the following productions:

From bush to country

Written and performed by Arifani Moyo. Directed by William Le Cordeur.

F*ck politics – let's dora

Written and performed by Robert Colman. Directed by Toni Morkel.

Shika-land !

Written and performed by Shika Budhoo. Directed by Dhaveshan Govender.

H.O.T.T.

Written and performed by Nkosinathi Gaar and directed by Sjaka Septembir.

Ouma

Written and performed by Sjaka Septmebir and directed by Nkosinathi Gaar.

Paperboy

Written and performed by Grant Jacobs and directed by Liam Magner.

Crush hopper

Written and performed by Mandisa Haarhof. Directed by Ntokozo Madlala.

The swansong of Norrie Da Silva

Written and performed by Belinda Henwood.

Men's room

Written and performed by Mary Steward. Directed by Emma Durden.

Musho with a twist:

The following performances are a result of the Twist Theatre Development Project pairing community theatre groups with professional writers and directors for fresh and gritty highly watchable theatre.

Kwanele: it was enough! –

Uthando Lwabaqulusi Theatre Group (Vryheid)

Written by Amy Jephtha and directed by Themis Venturas.

Camp 13

Just Don't Theatre Group (KwaMashu)

Written by David Stein and directed by Jerry Pooe.

Still Waiting

Sakhisizwe Theatre Group (Zululand)

Written by Bhekani Thabede and directed by Edmund Mhlongo.

The poisoned mango

Umphithi Theatre Arts (Pietermaritzburg)

Written by Anton Krueger and directed by Zeph Nzama with Gcina Mdludli.

Legacy

Ubuntu Productions (KwaMashu)

Written by Dhaveshan Govender and directed by Bheki Mkhwane.

To be like this rock

Umsindo Theatre Projects (Umlazi)

Written by Neil Coppen based on a workshop production, and directed by Debbie Lutge.

Organisation:

The festival was organised by a sub-committee from PANSA KZN and an appointed co-ordinator to drive the process. This process began in August 2010. Organisation was smooth and we once again received numerous favourable comments from festival participants and audiences.

Sabelo Ndlovu was employed as an additional assistant, usher and helper over the festival period, and this proved very useful to the organising team.

Tickets:

Ticket prices were again set at R50 for adults, R25 for pensioners, students, and PANSA members. Complimentary tickets were given to sponsors and members of the press. Tickets were available through the Box office at the Catalina Theatre and through Strictly Tickets (online) and at the door.

Although only 400 tickets were sold, there were over 500 complimentary tickets given away over the course of this festival. A number of those were given to sponsors, to the live-wire reviewers, to the performers and to the Twist performance groups.

There is a move within the industry to reduce the number of complimentary tickets given away for theatre, and the festival committee will consider ways to balance this.

Publicity:

3500 festival A5 programmes were printed, as well as 100 small posters. These programmes were distributed in theatres, coffee-shops, galleries, markets and bookshops throughout the city. General awareness of the festival was high.

Before the full funding amount was confirmed, the festival organisers decided to forego the expensive cost of printing and installing posters around the city. However, to ensure greater awareness for the next festival, this cost should be prioritised.

Newspaper coverage of the festival was high, and the festival also received attention on a number of radio stations, including SAFM, Ukhozi FM, and East Coast Radio.

The addition of *The Daily News* as a festival sponsor ensured that there was extensive coverage in that paper, and this was a welcome addition to the festival's publicity.

The festival was featured on a number of websites.

Please see the attached publicity report for more detail.

Website:

The website has been accessed by both patrons and performers. According to the web counter as of the festival end date, www.mushofestival.co.za was accessed by over 3000 users over the period November 2010 – January 2011.

Reviews:

Reviews of all of the shows at the festival were written by the community of “live-wires”, regular theatre-goers who had their reviews posted on the website daily. These reviews are extremely useful for the actors in taking their shows forward, and also builds recognition of the festival.

This year, the reviews are accompanied by excellent production photographs taken by Domy Cortes, which the performers can use for future publicity.

Funders:

Funding was pledged for the 2011 festival from the following sponsors:

The Ethekewini Municipality: R 50 000
Twist Theatre Development Projects: R 20 000
KwaZulu Natal Department of Arts and Culture: R 16 000
The Daily News: R 10 000
Pentravel: air travel tickets to the value of R 5000.

All of these sponsors were thanked at the opening and closing events of the festival and have been acknowledged, in programmes, in the media and on the website.

This generous funding allows us to continue to pay our PANSA intern, and to keep the Durban office running for 2011, as well as to have seed funding for the 2012 festival.

Houses:

Houses for the festival shows have been good. Official attendance figures for the shows stand at 780 (excluding complimentary tickets).

Shows:

All shows were rated by audiences on what has traditionally become known as “the smiley scale”, which is a scale that includes the following categories:

J J | J | K | L

For ease of voting, slips of paper were given out with tickets before each show, and audience members tore or marked the appropriate symbol.

Both the winner and the runner up of the popular Audience Favourite Vote went to productions from Pietermaritzburg this year. *Crush Hopper* – a tale of love and identity – performed by Mandisa Haarhof and directed by Ntokozo Madlala won the top prize. The runner up prize went to the opening night production: *From Bush to Country* – a poignant journey through the mad history of Zimbabwe performed by Arifani Moyo and directed by William le Cordeur.

The Suliman family again attended every production of the festival, and repeated their generous donation of prizes and the *Suliman Selection* floating trophy. The Suliman family selected *Men’s Room* by Mary Steward as their winner this year.

The sad passing of Mr Farouk Suliman was recognised at the closing ceremony.

Box-office:

The box-office at the Catalina functioned reasonably well, although there were some nights where seats were double-booked and there were queues at the box office resulting in a late start to the shows. The PANSA committee acted as ushers before the show and afterwards, to collect the audience voting slips.

Technical:

Dhavesan Govender was appointed as the technical director for the festival, and all technical arrangements went off smoothly.

Cash flow and finances:

We have covered the festival costs, and now have to pay the festival staff and performers.

Sponsorship amounted to: R 101 000

Box office takings amounted to: R 16 393.50

Economic Impact:

The Festival provided a direct earning opportunity for 90 theatre professionals (actors, directors and writers, including those involved in the Twist productions). We paid 1 technical director, 1 front-of-house manager, 2 bar staff, 1 publicist, 1 festival co-ordinator and 1 assistant, and 1 usher. A local designer was used to design the brochures, local printers and distributors were used.

Estimating that 400 theatre-goers spent an average of R100 on tickets, refreshments and transport for each performance they attended, and that an additional 500 complimentary ticket receivers spent an estimated R 50 on refreshments and transport, this would have injected a total of R65 000 into the Durban economy over this short week period (excluding the fees paid to suppliers, artists and festival staff).

Musho! Festival 2012:

Based on the continued success and positive feedback from the festival, plans are underway for the 2012 festival, with sponsors being sought.



MUSHO FESTIVAL 2011 WINNERS

(FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)

Themí Ventúras, PANSÁ KZN Chairperson

Mandisa Haarhof, performer of *Crush-hopper*, winner of Audience Favourite Award

William Le cordeur, director of *From Bush To Country*, runner up for Audience Favourite Award

Arifani Moyo, writer and performer of *From Bush To Country*, runner up for Audience Favourite Award

Emma Durden, Festival director

Mary Steward, writer and performer of *Men's Room*, winner of Suliman Selection Trophy

Fiana Suliman, selector for Suliman Selection Trophy

Ntokozi Madlala, director of *Crush-hopper*, winner of Audience Favourite Award