



BOOK WINGS SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town, South Africa
Iowa City, USA

Book Wings South Africa



Welcome,

The International Writing Program (IWP), in collaboration with the Artscape Theatre Centre, is proud to present *Book Wings South Africa*. This program marks the fourth year of an initiative that began in 2012 with a historic partnership between the IWP and the Moscow Art Theatre. Working in conjunction with the University of Iowa's Department of Theatre Arts, Information Technology Services, UITS, Virtual Writing University, University of Cape Town, and the African Arts Institute, and made possible with grant funds provided by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, *Book Wings South Africa* brings together the worlds of literature, theatrical performance, and new media, uniting two stages to produce a collaborative performance of six new short plays commissioned for the project.

In *Book Wings South Africa*, distinguished playwrights in the United States and South Africa address the theme of release. Keith Josef Adkins, Katori Hall, Mandla Mbothe, Wessel Pretorius, Peter Ullian, and Mike van Graan have created complex and moving works that reflect the diversity of our respective literary traditions. High-definition videoconferencing technologies will allow the audience in Iowa City to see and hear performances held on the Cape Town stage, and the Cape Town audience to see and hear performances held on the Iowa City stage. This dynamic program is a testament to what two artistic communities, nearly 9,000 miles apart, can accomplish through creative collaboration.

We hope *Book Wings South Africa* might inspire you to explore new ways to reach out and connect.

With warm wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Cm", likely representing Christopher Merrill.

Christopher Merrill
Director, International Writing Program

Performance

Iowa City, IA, USA and Cape Town, South Africa
Tuesday, March 10, 2015
12 p.m. CST, 7 p.m. SAST

Introduction

Christopher Merrill – Iowa Stage
Mark Fleishman – Cape Town Stage

Waiting for Marcel

By Peter Ullian
Performed in Cape Town

Sicawa Street

By Katori Hall
Performed in Iowa City

What We Wish For

By Mike van Graan
Performed in Cape Town

The Disappointment

By Keith Josef Adkins
Performed in Iowa City

Invisible Eden

By Mandla Mbothwe
Performed in Cape Town

Blood Pastoral

By Wessel Pretorius
Performed in Iowa City

A question and answer session with the artistic and production teams of *Book Wings* will immediately follow the performance and will be moderated by Christopher Merrill in Iowa City and Mark Fleishman in Cape Town. Questions will be taken from the live audiences as well as from those viewing the event live on the Internet. Off-site viewers are encouraged to use Twitter to tweet their questions using the hashtag #bookw.

Watch the performance online at: <http://www.writinguniversity.org/book-wings-2015>

Credits

Artistic Direction

Christopher Merrill, Director
International Writing Program, University of Iowa

Alan MacVey, Chair
Department of Theatre Arts, University of Iowa

Geoffrey Hyland, Head
Drama Department, University of Cape Town

Playwrights

Keith Josef Adkins, Katori Hall, Mandla Mbothwe, Wessel Pretorius, Peter Ullian,
Mike van Graan

Directors, University of Iowa

Eric Forsythe
Alan MacVey

Directors, Artscape Theatre Centre

Thando Doni
Geoffrey Hyland
Amy Jephtha
Mandla Mbothwe

Performers, University of Iowa

Niki-Charisse Franco, Tisch Jones, Chris Matheson, Skyler Matthias, Damitri Taylor

Performers, Artscape Theatre Centre

Schalk Bezuidenhout, Donna Cormack-Thomson, Thando Doni, Tankiso Mamabolo,
Roberto Meyer, Sizwe Mnisi, Kiroshan Naidoo, Cleo Raatus, Faniswa Yisa

Project Coordination

Samantha Nissen, International Writing Program, University of Iowa
Mike van Graan, African Arts Institute
Thabo Makgolo, Artscape Theatre Centre
Nomthandazo Mlungwana, Artscape Theatre Centre

Translation

Some sections in *Invisible Eden* translated by Thoko Ntshinga

Production Team, University of Cape Town (UCT), Artscape Theatre Centre, and U.S. Consulate General Cape Town

Ricardo Abrahams, Production Manager and Stage Management
Leigh Bishop, Costumes
Luke Ellenbogen, Production Manager UCT and Lighting Design
Anwarie Hoosain, Administration at African Arts Institute
Rob Keith, Administration at UCT
Nicolas Mayer, Set and Staging
Franklin Morta, Video Conferencing and Technical Advisor
Elvis Sibeko, Sound

Production Team, University of Iowa

Leigh'Ann Andrews, Stage Management
Bri Atwood, Sound Design, Live Mix
Rob Bergenstock, Projections Support
Kevin Dudley, Scenic/Properties
Les Finken, Videoconferencing and Livestream Project Lead
Lauren Haldeman, Livestream Management
Ben Hill, Producer, University of Iowa Television
Joshua Hinden, Lighting/Master Electrician
Lucas Ingram, Sound Design, Playback
Cassie Malmquist, Projections Operator/WatchOut
Kristine Moffitt, Stage Management
Hiram Orozco, Wardrobe Assistant
Nick Tomlonovic, Video Producer, UITV
Rebecca Tritten, Stage Management
Lauren Watt, Stage Management
Nic Wilson, Scenic/Properties
Bryon Winn, Production Designer

Talkback Moderation

Christopher Merrill (Iowa City)
International Writing Program, University of Iowa

Mark Fleishman (Cape Town)
University of Cape Town Drama Department

Acknowledgements

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Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

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University of Ghana, Legon

Heidi Pierce
Kirkwood Community College, Iowa City

Juliana Mensah
Centre for Applied Human Rights
University of York



Waiting for Marcel

By Peter Ullian

The work of Peter Ullian for the stage, produced throughout the United States and the UK, includes *Flight of the Lawnchair Man*, *Eliot Ness in Cleveland*, and *Hester Street Hideaway: A Lower East Side Love Story*. He has received awards from the Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays and the Gilman & Gonzalez-Falla Musical Theater Foundation, and commissions for new work from the Iowa Cultural Council, En Garde Arts, the Prince Music Theatre, the Denver Theatre Center, The Directors Company, and Snap Two Productions. He has written screenplays for independent and major motion picture studios; his fiction—*Signs of Life: A Tale of Terez* in among other titles—is widely published. He is a graduate of Oberlin College and the University of Iowa Playwrights Workshop.

Directed by: Geoffrey Hyland

Cast: Schalk Bezuidenhout (Beckett), Donna Cormack-Thomson (Suzanne), Roberto Meyer (Gaston)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Beckett: tall, thin, angular, Irish, soft-spoken, thirty-six years old.

Suzanna: tall, thin, angular, French, passionate, forty-two years old.

Gaston: a Frenchman.

SETTING

A blasted landscape by a country road in wartime France.

HISTORICAL NOTE

During the Nazi occupation, the Irish writer Samuel Beckett and his wife-to-be, Suzanne Déchevaux-Dumesnil, joined the French Resistance. In 1942, they fled Paris just ahead of the Gestapo, after learning their Resistance cell had been betrayed. They travelled, mostly on foot, through the countryside, trying to get to the relative safety of the village of Roussillon in the unoccupied zone.

SCENE: A COUNTRY ROAD. A BLASTED LANDSCAPE. A MOUND OF DIRT. A TREE BEREFT OF ALL BUT ONE LEAF. TWILIGHT.

(Beckett is waiting.) (Suzanne enters.)

BECKETT: Suzanne.

SUZANNE: Sam.

(They embrace, passionately.)

SUZANNE (CONT'D): This is the place, then?

BECKETT: It is.

SUZANNE: You're sure this is the right place?

BECKETT: Assuredly.

SUZANNE: Not some other section of blasted heath?

BECKETT: This is the one.

SUZANNE: Not that section of blasted heath over there?

BECKETT: The section of blasted heath with the barren tree upon it.

SUZANNE: There's barren trees upon other sections of blasted heath.

BECKETT: By the mound of earth.

SUZANNE: There's more than one of those as well, Sam.

BECKETT: The blasted heath with the mound of earth with the barren tree upon it bereft of all but one lone leaf.

(Beat.)

SUZANNE (regarding the tree): Why do you suppose that one lone leaf clings, like that, despite all the discouragement of the weather and the war?

BECKETT (regarding the tree): I couldn't say. Habit, I suppose.

SUZANNE: Do leaves have habits?

BECKETT: As much as men do, I suppose.

SUZANNE (turning back to the leaf): I think you don't give our brave little leaf enough credit, Sam. You are so gloomy. Always seeing the worst in things. And yet, you fight. You struggle. You go on. Like that leaf. Here it clings, our lonely little leaf, while all around is devastation. Habit, you say? Resistance, I say. Resistance is why the leaf clings.

(Beat.)

BECKETT: We are talking about a leaf, you know that, don't you?

(Beat.)

SUZANNE: When will they be here?

BECKETT: Soon.

SUZANNE: How do you know?

BECKETT: They said.

SUZANNE: Can we trust them?

(Beat.)

BECKETT: Have we any other choice?

(Beat.)

SUZANNE: We should never have left. Why did we have to leave?

BECKETT: Well, the Gestapo were certainly a motivating factor.

SUZANNE: Not Paris. Of course we had to leave Paris. Do you think I'm an idiot?

BECKETT: Certainly not.

SUZANNE: You answered the question as if I'm an idiot.

BECKETT: You're not an idiot. Farthest thing from my mind.

SUZANNE: You writers are all alike.

BECKETT: Suzanne.

SUZANNE: Janvry!

BECKETT: It's August.

SUZANNE: Not January! Janvry! The village!

BECKETT: We had overstayed our welcome.

SUZANNE: You had overstayed your welcome! You walked through the kitchen with your chamber pot every day just as everyone was sitting down for lunch!

BECKETT: I'd stayed up late. I was working on Watt.

SUZANNE: You and your novel!

BECKETT: I thought you liked Watt.

SUZANNE: I love Watt! It's genius! That's not the point! The old woman in that house called you a "madman!" In Russian!

BECKETT: You speak Russian?

SUZANNE: Of course I do!

BECKETT: Whatever would I do without you?

SUZANNE: My feet are murdering me!

BECKETT: I begged you to wear sensible shoes.

(Beat.)

SUZANNE: Whatever would you do without me, indeed.

(They embrace.)

(Gaston enters.)

GASTON: Bonsoir!

(Beckett and Suzanne start and turn to face him)

GASTON (CONT'D): Well, I must say, I thought I'd never find you. Upon the blasted heath, said they, you'll find them upon the blasted heath. But which section of blasted heath? The whole landscape is a blasted, bloody heath. By the tree, said they. But which tree? There's more than one. The one that's all scraggly and bare, said they. But they're all scraggly and bare. The tree that yet displays one lone leaf, bravely withstanding the winds of weather and the winds of war, said they. A noble leaf—not in appearance, certainly, shrivelled and dry at it is. But in spirit? The most noblest leaf of all creation, said they. If you go in for that sort of thing. Creation, I mean.

(Beat.)

So. Are you the Irishman, then?

(Beat.)

BECKETT: I cannot deny that I am an Irishman. As to whether or not I am the Irishman... Well, that remains to be seen.

GASTON: Remains to be seen? What remains to be seen?

SUZANNE: Who you may be.

GASTON: Pardon?

SUZANNE: Who you are, Monsieur, is still a mystery.

GASTON: There's no mystery about it at all. I know fully well who I am. It's you two I'm not so sure about.

SUZANNE: You may fully well know who you are but we . . . do not.

GASTON: You do not know who you are?

SUZANNE: Who you are, Monsieur.

GASTON: I'm the man who is supposed to meet the Irishman and his companion.

(To Beckett:)

Are you or are you not the Irishman?

BECKETT: That is the question.

GASTON: This is ridiculous. How many bloody Irishman can there be in this part of France?

BECKETT: Perhaps none. Perhaps I am the only one.

(Beat.)

Or...

(Beat.)

SUZANNE: Perhaps this part of France is lousy with bloody Irishmen.

GASTON: Is that likely?

BECKETT: We live in strange and terrible times, my friend.

GASTON: I am looking for an Irishman who is tall and angular of feature who looks not a little bit like a rooster.

SUZANNE: I always said you look like a rooster.

BECKETT: Suzanne.

GASTON: Traveling with a lady companion who goes by the name Suzanne.

(Beat.)

SUZANNE: Is he a writer?

GASTON: The rooster?

SUZANNE: Your Irishman.

GASTON: He's not my bloody Irishman.

SUZANNE: Is he a writer?

GASTON: Yes, I am told. A failed one.

BECKETT: Well, I must say, that's nervy of you.

SUZANNE: Your Irishman is not a failed writer! He is a published author! *More Pricks than Kicks!*

GASTON: I beg your pardon?

SUZANNE: It's his collection of linked stories! Published in 1934 to great acclaim!

GASTON: Never heard of it.

SUZANNE: *Murphy!*

GASTON: Whose Murphy? Is Murphy the Irishman?

SUZANNE: His novel! Published in 1938 to great acclaim!

GASTON: Never heard of that one, either. So you are the Irishman?

BECKETT: I am the Irishman if you are Marcel.

GASTON: I'm not Marcel. I'm Gaston.

BECKETT: Then perhaps I am not the Irishman.

SUZANNE: Who is Gaston?

GASTON: I am Gaston. At your service.

BECKETT: We were told you would be Marcel.

GASTON: I've never been Marcel. I've always been Gaston.

SUZANNE: Then why didn't they send Marcel?

GASTON: Marcel has been... Indisposed.

(Beat.)

BECKETT: Do you mean...

SUZANNE: Indisposed?

BECKETT: Or—

SUZANNE: Indisposed.

(Beat.)

GASTON: Do you people always talk like this?

BECKETT: You did not say he was indisposed, which would bring to mind a condition of indigestion, or perhaps influenza, or ague, or even dare we imagine, gout, but you said, he has been indisposed, as if the indisposition were an act perpetrated upon him by others.

(Beat.)

GASTON: By which others?

SUZANNE: By the others.

GASTON: But which others are those?

SUZANNE: Ah, well. That depends, does it not?

GASTON: Depends? Depends upon what?

BECKETT: If you are of one, shall we say, persuasion, or perhaps if you prefer, allegiance, or even, shall we say, affiliation, then the other is an entity in opposition to that for which you claim allegiance and affiliation. But if you claim allegiance and affiliation to its opposite, its shadow, its photographic negative, as it were, then the other is quite the reverse.

(Beat.)

GASTON: Does he always talk like this?

SUZANNE: He's a genius.

GASTON: That must be why I can't make head nor tail of a thing he says.

BECKETT: Are you...

SUZANNE (whispering): Gestapo?

GASTON: Gellato?

SUZANNE (whispering): Gestapo.

GASTON: Gepetto?

BECKETT AND SUZANNE: Gestapo!

GASTON (frightened): Gestapo? Where?

BECKETT (pointing to him): There.

GASTON (indignant): Me? Gestapo? How dare you, Monsieur.

BECKETT: Well, you're not Marcel.

GASTON: Just because I'm not Marcel doesn't make me Gestapo. Not every bloody Frenchman who isn't Marcel is a bloody collaborator, you know.

SUZANNE: But how was it that Marcel became indisposed?

GASTON: All I know is that I am to transport the Irishman and his lady friend in the boot of my car past the checkpoint at Chalon-sur-Saône that separates the occupied zone from the unoccupied zone and then onto the village of Roussillon. I am the passeur, Monsieur. Now, are you or are you not the Irishman who in 1938 was stabbed in the chest and nearly killed by a pimp named Prudence?

BECKETT: A pimp named Prudence?

GASTON: Prudence the Pimp.

BECKETT: How do you know about that?

(To Suzanne): How does he know about that?

SUZANNE: Well, it was in all the papers.

BECKETT: But that he should remember. Such a mortifying event. I am nobody. I am a failed writer.

SUZANNE: You are not a failed writer! *More Pricks than Kicks!* *Murphy!*

BECKETT: No one read them.

(indicating Gaston): Gaston didn't read them.

SUZANNE: Gaston doesn't strike me as much of a reader.

GASTON: She's right. I read the racing form. I play the ponies. I love the ponies. Their manes flying in the breeze. The lather on their necks. The muscles rippling in their haunches. The clippety-clippety clop clop of their powerful hooves.

SUZANNE: Sam... The novel you're working on. *Watt*.

GASTON: What?

SUZANNE: Yes.

GASTON: He's working on what?

SUZANNE: Precisely.

GASTON: What is he working on?

SUZANNE: Exactly so.

GASTON: What's the title?

SUZANNE: Yes.

GASTON: "Yes" is the title?

SUZANNE: Of course not. Are you simple? *Watt* is the title.

GASTON: That's what I'm asking you.

SUZANNE: What are you asking me?

GASTON: The title.

SUZANNE: I just told you.

GASTON: You don't know the title?

SUZANNE: Of course I do. It's *Watt*.

GASTON: The title is "What?"

SUZANNE: As I said.

BECKETT: *Watt*. "W-A-T-T."

GASTON: Ah! *Watt*.

(Beat.)

Funny title for a book.

SUZANNE: It's genius. Pure genius.

(to Beckett): It will make you famous.

GASTON: So, you are the Irishman then?

SUZANNE: You must understand—were he the Irishman you speak of—and I his beautiful Gallic travelling companion—we have been on foot, walking at night, sleeping in haystacks during the day, our feet are so swollen we cannot even take off our boots, ever since a Catholic Priest betrayed our Resistance Unit and we had to flee Paris, the rest of our cell either in hiding or undergoing torture at the hands of the Gestapo.

(MORE)

SUZANNE (CONT'D): So you will perhaps forgive us if the fact that you are Gaston and not Marcel has made us a wee bit edgy?

GASTON: And suspicious.

SUZANNE: You are damnably correct, sir.

(Beat.)

BECKETT: Man must take a leap of faith, writes Kierkegaard. But what if a man has no faith?

GASTON: You're an atheist, then? I thought you were a Jew.

SUZANNE: I thought you thought he was an Irishman.

GASTON: Are there no Jews in Ireland?

SUZANNE: No, indeed, there are. Sam's friend wrote a beautiful book about one named *Bloom*. Ulysses. Perhaps you've heard of it.

GASTON: That's the dirty book, yes?

BECKETT: Yes. A beautifully dirty book about an Irish Jew named Bloom.

GASTON: I thought Samuel was a Jewish name.

SUZANNE: It's an Irish name as well.

BECKETT: We exiled peoples have much in common.

GASTON: I wouldn't know about that. I'm a Catholic, myself, although I'd much rather sleep late on Sunday than go to church.

BECKETT: We have that in common.

GASTON: I'm not an intellectual, I'm not a writer, I'm not a genius.

I despise the Nazis. I'm an apothecary. I have an auto.

BECKETT: Ah. An apothecary. "Who calls so loud?"

GASTON: That'd be me, I suppose. So? Which are you, then? Christian, Jew, or atheist?

BECKETT: None of the three.

GASTON: But you don't believe in God?

SUZANNE: It's not that he doesn't believe in God, Monsieur. It's that he isn't convinced that God believes in us.

GASTON: Well, then what do you believe, Irishman? Your country's neutral. The Irish hate the Brits. Why join the Resistance?

(Beat.)

BECKETT: One cannot simply stand by with one's arms folded.

GASTON: Well, then. Unfold your bloody arms and get in the boot of my bloody car.

(Beat.)

(The leaf on the tree breaks free and flutters in the breeze. Suzanne, Beckett, and Gaston all watch as it flutters off-stage.)

BECKETT: Well. Where do you suppose your little leaf de resistance is off to?

(Beat.)

GASTON: Across the border into the unoccupied zone and on to Roussillon, I imagine. There, the little leaf will likely take a room at the widow Escoffier's guest house. The widow is strong of opinion but good of heart, and she does all the cooking for her guests herself. It's peasant fare, not the stuff you Parisian types are used to maybe, but good enough for that leaf, hungry as it is—coq au vin, Pot-au-feu, Ratatouille, and boeuf bourguignon, although the boeuf is a little hard to come by these days.

(MORE)

GASTON (CONT'D): The rooms in the Hôtel Escoffier are drafty and there's mice, but not too many fleas. And the leaf can put its head on a pillow at night instead of on a haystack, and hang up its socks and air out its boots and both will be dry in the morning. And twice a day the leaf can gather with the locals around the stove in the back kitchen and listen to the BBC on the wireless, and find out who is winning the war.

(Beat.)

SUZANNE: You know this is a bloody leaf we're talking about, don't you?

GASTON: There's food and shelter and men and women of the Resistance waiting in Roussillon. The leaf can blow in on the wind. You need me. Shall we?

(Beat.)

BECKETT: Yes.

(He reaches out to Suzanne.): Let's.

(Suzanne takes his hand.)

BECKETT (CONT'D)

(To Gaston): Prudent.

GASTON: Eh?

BECKETT: The pimp's name was Prudent. Not Prudence. What kind of a name is Prudence for a pimp?

(Beat.)

(They do not move.)

END



Sicawa Street

By Katori Hall

Katori Hall is a graduate of Columbia University, the A.R.T. at Harvard, and the Juilliard School. Her plays include *The Mountaintop* (2010 Olivier Award for Best New Play), *Hurt Village* (2011 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Signature Theatre), *Children of Killers* (National Theatre, UK and Castillo Theatre, NYC), *Hoodoo Love* (Cherry Lane Theatre), *Remembrance* (Women's Project), *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning*, *WHADDABLOODCLOT!!!* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *Our Lady of Kibeho*, and *Pussy Valley*. Her awards include, among others, the Lark Play Development Center Playwrights of New York Fellowship, the ARENA Stage American Voices New Play Residency, the Kate Neal Kinley Fellowship, and the Lecomte du Nouy Prize from Lincoln Center. Hall's journalism has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Guardian*, *Essence* and *The Commercial Appeal*. *The Mountaintop* and *Katori Hall: Plays One* were published by Methuen Drama. She is a member of the Residency Five at Signature Theatre Company in New York City.

Directed by: Alan MacVey

Cast: Niki-Charisse Franco (Woman), Tisch Jones (Nomawethu), Damitri Taylor (Busi)

SCENE ONE

Sicawa Street. Township of Langa. April 27, 1994. Election Day. Cape Town, South Africa.

NOMAWETHU (early 50s) is making posho on the stove. Boiling water. She hums to the gospel music spilling from a transistor radio.

Humming, humming, humming until—

NOMAWETHU: Where is that rebel?

She goes to the door. Looks out of it. A world is vibrating outside her open door. She spots someone in the distance.

NOMAWETHU: (yelling) Have you heard?

WOMAN: (O.S) They are still counting the ballots. Won't know until midnight.

Nomawethu jeers (sucks her teeth).

NOMAWETHU: (Cont'd) Who did you vote for?

WOMAN: (O.S.) Nomawethu, what kind of fool do you take me for? The winner, of course.

NOMAWETHU: But neighbor, you've been wrong before.

WOMAN: (O.S.) Yes, because I couldn't vote before.

NOMAWETHU: Felt good didn't it?

WOMAN: (O.S.) Yes... Come out with me. Join us in the celebration. Get on your dancing shoes.

NOMAWETHU: You surely are sure of your pick.

WOMAN: (O.S.) Confidence creates revolution.

NOMAWETHU: I must feed this aching belly of mine first. Fuel for the celebration.

WOMAN: (O.S.) Me, too. My feet. Ehhhhh... Stood in line for voting all morning and stood on them all day till the night at hospital. But I don't care. I don't care. I will dance till my toes crack with blood when I hear the good news.

NOMAWETHU: Madiba, God willing, will win.

WOMAN: (O.S.) Or I shall kill them all.

NOMAWETHU: Come back. You know my door is always open.

Nomawethu gives her neighbor a Black Power salute and watches her neighbor dance off into a sinking night.

She returns back to the stove. She piles a helping of posho and beans onto three plates. She sits them down on the table. She sits in front of one of them. She is waiting for two guests.

RADIO: (A British-accented voice, probably BBC) We interrupt this broadcast for an election update. Nelson Mandela of the African National Congress is now showing a considerable edge in the polls with 55 percent of the vote. However, rumours of violence have kept many South Africans, black and white at home. Corruption is said to be widespread and poorly prepared voting locales have made standing in long lines the norm rather than the exception during South Africa's first democratic election. (a young man's voice) "I had to carry my mother on my back here to Port Elizabeth. We have been standing in line all night. (an old woman's voice) I came by wheelbarrow by night. But before I die. Before I die. I want to see a black president....Signing off with BBC News...

Nomawethu swiftly turns it off.

Silence. Nomawethu is waiting for a change.

BUSI (20s), Nomawethu's son, comes in through the door. He stands there disheveled. Distressed. Breathless.

NOMAWETHU: There is my little rebel. I have been waiting for you.

BUSI: Sorry mum, I didn't mean to cause you worry.

NOMAWETHU: So you know you worry me?

BUSI: Yes, yes, I do.

NOMAWETHU: You did this when you were in my womb—

BUSI: Mama—

NOMAWETHU: Would keep quiet for days then all of a sudden knock on my tummy to make your presence known.

BUSI: Knock? I don't knock.

NOMAWETHU: You are right. You do not knock. You come in uninvited. Unawares. It looks ugly on you.

BUSI: Mama, please I'm hungry.

NOMAWETHU: Eat. Eat. Eat. I won't have you sputtering out on me when Madiba wins. Busi notices the third plate.

BUSI: Who are we waiting for?

NOMAWETHU: You know who. Why do you have to ask such stupid questions?

BUSI: I ask stupid questions to challenge stupid actions.

NOMAWETHU: Your sister needs to eat.

BUSI: Memories do not eat.

NOMAWETHU: Yes, my little rebel they do. They eat dreams, they eat days, sunsets and sunrises. Memories need their posho and beans. Memories have big appetites my dear son. Besides, it's a special occasion

BUSI: Mama, really—

NOMAWETHU: How did it feel?

BUSI: What do you mean?

NOMAWETHU: When you cast your ballot today? Your first time.

Busi eagerly eats the posho and beans.

BUSI: What do you want me to say?

NOMAWETHU: Say how it felt for you.

BUSI: Today felt very different for me than I think for you.

NOMAWETHU: True, it costs more for me. But you will be benefit from the investment of my tears, dear son. You may not know the weight of this momentous occasion. In due time. It will, I promise, reveal. Reveal its consequences. Just give me a tiny morsel. How did it feel?

BUSI: It felt like nothing. I didn't vote.

Silence.

NOMAWETHU: What do you mean, you didn't vote?

BUSI: That's what I said: I didn't vote.

Nomawethu and Busi eat in silence.

NOMAWETHU: I know you did not want to vote for Madiba, but you could have at least—at least—voted for that Bethulizi character you call a hero.

BUSI: Who says I wanted to vote for him?

NOMAWETHU: I have seen those pamphlets. In your room. On those sagging shelves of yours. Stuffed between a rock and a hard place. The Inkatha Party? Sickening. He would drag

this country—

BUSI: Madiba is an abomination!

NOMAWETHU: And you are a disgrace if I ever saw one. A disgrace. A disgrace my child. Here is your one moment to use your hands to change history and you have let that cup slip from your lips like a wet whisper. How can I call you a son?

BUSI: Well, you better call me that, since I am your only son. The only one you have left.

Busi picks up the other plate and begins to eat the posho and beans.

NOMAWETHU: Put that down.

BUSI: Memory is not hungry today. She is satiated.

NOMAWETHU: I said, put that plate down.

Busi continues to eat the other plate. Nomawethu grabs it from him and places it on the counter.

NOMAWETHU: You are hell-bent of crushing the last dream I have. Please. Let's eat before the celebration. I won't tell them you didn't vote—

BUSI: You want me to pretend?

NOMAWETHU: I want to you to forget.

BUSI: Never forget, mama. You never forget why should I?

NOMAWETHU: When Madiba comes to office they will get their due. All of them. He said. He said. All those who have been persecuted will be heard.

BUSI: What about the ones who are not here to speak?

NOMAWETHU: Then we will have to speak for them. Plain and simple.

BUSI: Plain, but not simple.

NOMAWETHU: We will speak for Themba.

BUSI: I already have.

Busi goes into his pocket and he puts a gun on the table. Heavy. The table seems like it will crack beneath the pressure of what it brings into the room.

BUSI: I'm sorry.

NOMAWETHU: What have you done?

BUSI: Mama, I'm sorry.

NOMAWETHU: My poor Busi, what have you done?

BUSI: You always said there would be spills. Mistakes. Blood. Mistakes.

NOMAWETHU: Please... no...

BUSI: Bloodshed. Fighting. Protest. Chants.

NOMAWETHU: No, Busi...

BUSI: I got tired of waiting. Memory got tired of waiting. It needed to be heard. Right then. Right now.

Nomawethu goes to the door, the door that is always open and closes it. Locks it. Leans her feeble body to keep out the sound.

NOMAWETHU: Did anyone see you?

BUSI: No.

NOMAWETHU: How did you know?

BUSI: I made sure. I made sure of it.

NOMAWETHU: You could have made a mistake.

BUSI: They trained me well, mama.

NOMAWETHU: So it's true. You belong to them. The Inkatha? I am going to be sick.

Nomawethu steels herself.

BUSI: I'm no different than Madiba.

NOMAWETHU: Do not say his name! You have no right to say his name!

BUSI: He is a terrorist.

NOMAWETHU: And now he is a hero. What are you?

BUSI: I am justice. I am closure. He has lost himself.

NOMAWETHU: And in that loss he will make a nation great.

BUSI: I will get away with—

NOMAWETHU: Murder.

BUSI: She was only 12 right. Twelve years old. Just a school girl. Didn't know what she was chanting, but chanted the loudest. "No Afrikaans! No Afrikaans!" That was all we wanted.

To speak the tongue we inherited from our mothers and fathers. We were, oh so young.

School girls and boys. Potential on feet. Marching down this very street, Sicawa Street. And then asphalt turned into graveyards as we fell. Hearts sliced by bullets. Dreams disappearing like flour blown through prison bars. It was Van Zyl who ordered it. Ordered the first shot.

He never admitted. But I knew. I knew...

NOMAWETHU: You are not God.

BUSI: Madida is not either.

NOMAWETHU: You will never get away with killing a baas. Baas Van Zyl? He is the police commission of this township. A commissioner for God's sakes! Someone must have seen you.

BUSI: Shhhh!

Busi steps very closely to his mother.

BUSI: (Cont'd) Keep saying that and someone will.

Nomawethu quiets herself.

NOMAWETHU: I hope you are punished for your crimes.

BUSI: There can be no reconciliation for what there was never any truth for.

NOMAWETHU: Someone will have to pay for this.

BUSI: Is that a wish or a promise?

NOMAWETHU: A fact.

BUSI: It's like you want me to get caught?

NOMAWETHU: I don't know what I want.

BUSI: You wanted me to vote, I did something better with these schoolboy hands of mine. Something that will make a difference.

NOMAWETHU: How did you pull it off?

BUSI: I knew he would not vote. I knew he would take that back alley to his car. I knew he would turn the key at 4:00 pm. That's the time he leaves the police station every day. Same time. Same daylight. Broad daylight. Every day. He would never suspect. Never expect a warrior's rage hidden inside this boy's chest. He thought me pitiless. Beneath him. Van Zyl got into his car and I walked up to him. A school boy with gun in hand. "What have I done?" He asked. There was no time to answer him. But he knew. Accepted death with closed eyes. And piss on his leather seats. Coward. Yellow pissy coward.

NOMAWETHU: And what are you, now?

BUSI: Powder. Gone.

Suddenly a LOUD NOISE comes from outside. The VOICE of seemingly millions. Cheering Crying. Ululating.

Nomawethu closes her eyes. She must make a choice. She does.

NOMAWETHU: Hand it to me.

BUSI: Hand you—

NOMAWETHU: Hand it to me.

Busi hands her the gun.

BUSI: This will make you an accessory.

NOMAWETHU: You are my son. I'm already complicit.

She opens her oven and hides it deep in its recesses.

The sound of the toyi toyi shakes Sicawa Street. Nomawethu's neighbor starts banging on the door.

NOMAWETHU: They are here.

WOMAN: (O.S.) (great crying, keening, and wailing) He's president. He's president! Madiba is president. Nomawethu. Open. Let me in. Madiba. Madiba is president.

Nomawethu hugs her son. It will be for the last time.

Busi goes out the back, now on the run.

Nomawethu shuffles to her front door and just as she begins to open—

BLACKOUT

END



What we wish for

By Mike van Graan

Mike van Graan is the executive director of the Cape Town-based African Arts Institute. The founding Secretary General of Arterial Network, a pan-African network of artists, cultural activists, and creative enterprises, he also serves on UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and on the board of directors of Kuns Onbeperk. He is the Associate Playwright of Artscape—a state-subsidized theatre in South Africa—and has garnered a number of awards for his plays that interrogate the post-apartheid condition. He is an Honorary Associate Professor in the Drama Department of the University of Cape Town.

Directed by: Amy Jephtha

Cast: Tankiso Mamabolo (Mother), Cleo Raatus (Father), Kiroshan Naidoo (Son), Sizwe Mnisi (Doctor)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mother: in her late fifties/early sixties

Father: in his late fifties/early sixties

Son: in his early twenties

Doctor: in her/his forties

SETTING

The play is set in two basic locations, a hospital ward and a home. The first part of the play takes place in the hospital ward, and the second part in the family home.

NOTE FOR THE DIRECTOR

Given the circumstances, the atmosphere is tense, full of silences as the characters have their own thoughts, walking on eggshells around each other. At times, there is a mini-explosion, followed by silence, with the characters directed to communicate much in their silences, between each other, and on their own.

SCENE ONE

SON lies in a hospital bed, attached to a ventilator and other machines that keep him alive. He has been in a car accident and is severely injured, the medical staff believing that there is no hope that he will make any kind of recovery. FATHER and MOTHER are at his bedside, distraught. DOCTOR, file in hand, is grim-faced.

DOCTOR: I believe that's the right decision. I'm really sorry.

(Beat)

I'll give you some time alone with him...

DOCTOR walks to the EXIT. As he is about to exit, he turns around.

DOCTOR: If you change your mind about counselling, I'd be happy to arrange it.

FATHER: Thank you, doctor...

DOCTOR looks at FATHER expecting more, and then after one or two beats, exits.

MOTHER and FATHER sit in silence for a bit.

MOTHER: Let's give it one more day, David.

FATHER: That's what we said ten days ago. Let's give it one more week...

(Beat)

MOTHER: This would be like... murdering our own child.

FATHER: You heard what the doctors said, my love...

MOTHER: There was a one-in-eighty chance that he could recover...

FATHER: That was three weeks ago! And every day that passes, the odds stack up more.

MOTHER: I know... I know with my head. But my heart says something else.

FATHER: Even if he recovers, the doctors say he'll be a vegetable.

MOTHER: Then he'll be my spinach! My precious potato! I can't just give up on him...

FATHER: Mary, we discussed this. We agreed...

MOTHER: It's not fair! A drunk driver goes through a red light and smashes into our son... he might get a fine or some jail time if we're lucky! But Thomas...

FATHER holds MOTHER tightly, comforting her.

FATHER: (quietly) No... it's not fair...!

(Beat)

MOTHER: What do you think God is saying to us?

FATHER: (frustrated) Mary... why bring God into this?

MOTHER: God gives... God takes...

FATHER: (resigned but firm) There is no God!

MOTHER: That's why God did this!

FATHER: Did what?

MOTHER: To make you acknowledge him...

FATHER: Your God... the one who killed his own son, is now doing it to ours?

MOTHER: If you turn to God... ask him for a miracle...

FATHER: If you need God to get through this... just leave me out of it.

MOTHER goes onto her knees. She mumbles a prayer. FATHER walks away, shaking his head.

MOTHER stops praying. She sits on the bed again, lovingly strokes SON's face.

FATHER comes up behind her, lovingly takes hold of her shoulders.

FATHER: (quietly) Think again about the good that will come of this. Someone will get Thomas' heart... his kidneys will lengthen the life of another person...

MOTHER: (breaking free from FATHER) Vultures! Waiting for my son to die...

FATHER: Our son...

(Beat)

(Silence)

MOTHER: Just one more day, David.

FATHER: Mary, you're torturing yourself.

MOTHER: Please...!

FATHER: One more day...

MOTHER: I beg you...

FATHER: Another five thousand rand.

MOTHER: (angrily) How much is the life of your child worth?

FATHER: If there were any medical chance of recovery, I would pay anything! But now we're just wasting money... that we don't have!

(Beat)

MOTHER: No parent should have to bury their child.

(Beat)

FATHER: (quietly) We wouldn't be the first.

MOTHER: (angrily) Stop being so rational, David!

(Beat)

(Tense silence)

FATHER goes up to SON, lovingly caresses him, kisses his forehead. He turns away.

FATHER: I'll wait for you outside.

MOTHER goes closer to the bed. As FATHER is about to exit...

MOTHER: (excited) He smiled... David, he smiled!

FATHER rushes to her side.

MOTHER: I'm telling you... he smiled!

FATHER looks closely but all he can see is SON in the same condition he was in before. He turns away, disappointed.

FATHER: I'll be downstairs.

FATHER turns to go, EXITS. MOTHER looks after him.

MOTHER: David...

MOTHER hugs SON, the top of her body lying on top of his. She caresses his face.
DOCTOR enters. MOTHER turns, sees him. She gets up slowly, turns away from SON's bed and exits.

DOCTOR walks to the ventilator. As he is about to turn it off, SON moves, slowly at first and then tries to sit up. DOCTOR is astounded. He steps back from the ventilator, stands at the top of the bed and watches SON. SON makes a sickening, groaning noise.
Lights fade. Music interlude.

SCENE TWO

FATHER, MOTHER and SON (in a wheelchair, terribly deformed and communicating only with sounds, groans, laughter) at the family home. There's a bed on the opposite side to where it was positioned as the hospital bed. MOTHER is being completely worn down by SON and the attention he needs. FATHER shows real concern at what MOTHER's care for SON is doing to her health, her sanity, and their relationship.

MOTHER sits on chair feeding SON sitting in wheelchair. FATHER stands behind SON. SON, almost like a baby, accepts spoonful of food from MOTHER. She smiles. MOTHER feeds SON a second spoonful. SON hits spoon away from his mouth, laughs grotesquely. FATHER wraps his arms around SON so that he cannot move his arms. SON struggles, makes grotesque noises. MOTHER tries again to feed him. He shakes his head vigorously. SON spits at MOTHER. FATHER wheels SON away to a corner. FATHER goes to MOTHER.

FATHER: We should put him in a home.

MOTHER: We can't afford it.

FATHER: You can get a job again if he's in a home. That will help.

MOTHER: He needs me.

FATHER: You can get your life back. Our life...

MOTHER: I'm his mother.

FATHER: That's not our son, Mary...

MOTHER: Don't say that!

FATHER: You didn't give birth to... that.

MOTHER: He's our son!

FATHER: Only in name.

MOTHER: He's your flesh and blood... but you hate him.

FATHER: I hate what he's doing to us. What he's doing to you.

(Beat)

I'm worried about you....

MOTHER turns towards SON. FATHER follows her. They take SON for a walk. FATHER pushes the wheelchair, facing audience, MOTHER walks beside him. They walk on the spot.

FATHER: We can visit him... every day....

MOTHER: Do you remember his first day at school?

FATHER: I've explored a few places...

SON becomes progressively excited.

MOTHER: He was so excited...

FATHER: There's one in Pinelands... they have a place.

MOTHER: He tripped over his shoelaces... scraped his knee

FATHER: They come highly recommended.

MOTHER: I always hoped that would be the worst that would happen to him.

SON falls out of wheelchair.

MOTHER: Thomas!

FATHER picks up SON. MOTHER holds wheelchair. FATHER puts SON back into wheelchair.

FATHER: We should strap him in.

MOTHER: That's cruel.

FATHER: It's for his own good, Mary.

MOTHER: Still...

They walk in silence.

FATHER: What did the doctor say?

MOTHER: He said I'm fine.

(Beat.)

FATHER: He said he wanted you to see a specialist.

MOTHER: (anxious) Did he call you?

FATHER: I saw him at gym. Why didn't you tell me?

MOTHER: It's nothing.

FATHER: Stomach pain for two weeks is not nothing.

MOTHER: I'll make an appointment for next week.

FATHER: I've made one for you in two days' time.

MOTHER looks at FATHER with a mixture of anger and thanks.

They stop, back at home. MOTHER goes to the front of the wheelchair, kneels in front of SON.

FATHER: This is not good for your health.

MOTHER: It won't be forever.

MOTHER hugs SON. SON grabs her hair with one hand. Pulls it hard and won't let go.

MOTHER: Ouch... Thomas...!

FATHER steps in to try to help. The more he tries to have SON let go of MOTHER's hair, the more SON becomes excited, and the tighter he pulls.

FATHER: (holding SON's hand tightly, trying to pull it away from MOTHER's hair) Let

go! Let go, Thomas.

MOTHER: Don't upset him, David.

FATHER: (More agitated) Let go!

FATHER bites SON's hand. SON lets go of MOTHER's hair. SON is highly upset, makes grotesque noises.

FATHER: You okay?

MOTHER: Did you have to do that?

FATHER: He's never done that before...

MOTHER: He doesn't know what he's doing.

MOTHER strokes SON's hair, calms him down.

MOTHER: Will you put him to bed?

FATHER: Sure.

(Beat)

Why don't you run a bath?

MOTHER: I'm not in the mood, David.

FATHER: Just have a bath... relax. I'll take care of Thomas.

MOTHER takes SON's hands into hers to prevent him from pulling her hair. She kisses his forehead. SON makes purring-type noises.

FATHER wheels SON to his bed.

FATHER lifts SON and places him in his bed. FATHER, rubs SON's forehead lovingly.

FATHER hugs SON.

FATHER: (Sings) "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are..."

SON falls asleep.

FATHER gets up, sighs, finds a pillow. FATHER straddles SON and places pillow over SON's face. SON visibly struggles to breathe as FATHER presses pillow down.

SON stops struggling. FATHER gets off the bed, checks to see whether SON still breathes. FATHER is satisfied that he is dead, sits on the bed. FATHER breathes heavily.

FATHER kisses SON on his forehead. EXITS as lights fade slowly.

END



The Disappointment

By Keith Josef Adkins

Keith Josef Adkins' plays include *Pitbulls* (2014, Rattlestick Theater, NYC), *Safe House* (2015 Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, 2014 Cincinnati Playhouse), *The Last Saint On Sugar Hill* (2013 National Black Theatre NYC, 2012 MPAACT Theater, Chicago), *The People Before The Park*, and *Sugar and Needles*, among others. *The Last Saint* earned a 2012 Jeff Nomination for Best New Work in Chicago. Other awards include two NYSCA commissions, the National Black Theatre's Trailblazer Award and the 2013-14 Project Residency at the Lark Playwright Development Center. He is artistic director of The New Black Fest, a festival of new playwriting and discussion from the Diaspora; he has also worked as a writer for the cable TV comedy *Girlfriends*. A former culture blogger for TheRoot.com, Adkins has taught playwriting at Columbia University and blogs regularly for *HowlRound*, an online theater journal. He earned his M.F.A. from the University of Iowa.

Directed by: Eric Forsythe

Cast: Niki-Charisse Franco (Patience), Tisch Jones (Delores), Damitri Taylor (Stony)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Stony: 22 years old, African-American, gamer, nerd

Patience: 20 years old, African-American, coach potato, lesbian

Delores: 50, African-American, their mother, deliciously light-hearted exterior but perhaps a maternally ruthless interior

PLACE

A middle-class American suburb.

TIME

Present.

SETTING

The living room of a middle-class home. There's an entrance for the front door, there's a partial kitchen (we should perhaps see a counter, a fridge and microwave. There's also a closed door upstage center (or perhaps downstage left). But there's a door, and someone is behind that door. This door is central to the play.

[lights rise on STONY and PATIENCE. STONY is standing by a trash can, anxious, as PATIENCE sits in front of the TV with the volume on mute.]

STONY: So he deserves this? He deserves to spend the last week of his life unable to eat, unable to remember his name, his favorite color of socks—

PATIENCE: His favorite color of socks? Oh my God, Stony. What the fuck does his sock have to do with anything?

STONY: No. You're saying you enjoy seeing him suffer. What kind of fucking person are you?

PATIENCE: I haven't said anything. Don't put your thoughts inside my mind. Try the toilet, it's a much better place for them.

STONY: Those are not my thoughts. Those are your pathetic, demented, heartless thoughts. Somebody needs to hire you to create a "pathetic, demented and heartless" app for iPhone. You'd make millions and be the first asshole sister to make the cover of Forbes.

PATIENCE I'm watching TV. I like to watch TV. Shut up.

STONY: You take the one thing that ever meant anything to him and throw it out. You throw it out like it's a celebration. What do you call that?

PATIENCE: I don't know.

STONY: You must call it something. Because the photo is in the trash.

PATIENCE: Don't you and your gamer friends have a circle-jerk session scheduled? I mean, isn't it super-close to nerd hour?

STONY: It's not called circle-jerk. It's circle-combat. Cyber-circle-combat.

PATIENCE: Circle-jerk.

STONY: It's called cyber-circle-combat! Why did you throw out the photo, Patience?

PATIENCE: Because the photo is old. I'm wearing those ridiculous afro-puffs. Your teeth are as big as your face. And he was high on heroine or crack, or eighty-proof. It's not the most appealing family photo. And I'm tired of looking at it.

STONY: He's not tired of it. It's his favorite.

PATIENCE: Well, he doesn't get a lot of choices these days, does he?

STONY: Get it out of this trash, Patience. [crosses to her, grabs wrist and pulls her to bin]

PATIENCE: [pulling away] Get off of me!

STONY: What is wrong with you? He is our brother!

PATIENCE: He's thirteen years older than us; he's practically an uncle.

STONY: He is our brother.

PATIENCE: He is a substance abuser who stole money from us, laptops, iPhones. And every bit of communication he offered was a con or a hustle. That's not a brother. That's a drug addict.

STONY: So you are saying he deserves to be sick? He made us suffer so now he must suffer?

PATIENCE: We're watching this prehistoric flatscreen because he stole our plasma for heroine.

STONY: You didn't answer my question.

PATIENCE: He won't be suffering much longer, will he? Now can I want to watch TV?

This is a really interesting documentary. The 17-year cicada and their death-inducing mating habits. There's a lot to learn here.

[DELORES enters. She's carrying shopping bags from shoe and clothing stores.]

DELORES: Missus Clarke is out of her gourd, I swear. Her gourd! Is she a savant? I told her last week that we appreciate the thought, but we have never been a fan of tuna casseroles.

Tuna casserole is for the birds and I mean it. In fact, I explained to her tuna, in general, upsets our digestives. And what does she do? Offer me another dish of tuna casserole, with toasted bread crumbs. Just now. As I'm walking up the driveway. Like that's going to titillate my culinary interests. She is seriously out of her gourd or is plotting to poison us with the mercury in tuna. Does she not watch NBC Nightly News? Or Discovery Channel? I never liked her. She's relentless and it's embarrassing to the neighborhood.

STONY: She's just being nice, Mom.

DELORES: Nice is a free roundtrip cruise of the Caribbean with stops in Puerto Rico, Antigua and the British Virgin Islands. That would be nice. She is not nice. She is relentlessly embarrassing. [Then, to Patience] Why are you watching TV with no volume? That's very strange behavior, Patience. There was a man at the hospital who stared at the TV all day and night, for a week. We released him from the hospital and he went home and murdered his wife.

PATIENCE: I had it on mute. Stony was talking and I was trying to listen.

DELORES: Well, that's delicious, Honey, but you either turn up the volume or turn off the TV, otherwise I'll suspect you'll have murder on your mind.

PATIENCE: [loaded] I don't have murder on my mind.

STONY: What did you buy, Mom?

DELORES: [pulling items from bag] Another pair of pumps, a bathing suit and a winter jacket. That clearance sale is outrageous. Any purchase of one hundred dollars, you get a same-day fifty-dollar cash voucher. Of course, most people go back into the store and spend it, including me. I'm wearing these pumps to my high school reunion. It's not until next year, but those beauts will still be in fashion. I think they easily make me look like I have the legs of a eighteen year old. Easily. Maybe even seventeen. [then] Turn up the volume on the TV, Patience!

[There's a knock from the other side of the door. Silence. SHE walks to the door. Serious, pointed.]

DELORES: Has he been doing this all day? I'm asking?! Has he been doing this all day!?

PATIENCE: A little. I think he's hungry.

[Another knock. DELORES goes into what looks like a trance. Silence permeates the room.]

STONY: Mom, your nose is bleeding.

[DELORES doesn't move.]

STONY: Mom! Your nose is bleeding!!!

DELORES: [snapping out of it] What?

STONY: Patience, get her a tissue.

PATIENCE: We're out of tissues.

STONY: Then grab a paper towel. Something.

[PATIENCE grabs a paper towel from her plate.]

Not one you just used. Jesus!

[Grabs a tissue from pocket, gives to DELORES.]

Mom, are you okay?

DELORES: Yes, I'm okay! It's just a nose-bleed. Stress-induced, temperature-induced. They happen and you just throw your head back til they stop. Alright? Nothing to it.

[DELORES walks toward kitchen.]

DELORES: What do you two want for dinner? I'm not in the mood to particularly cook anything extravagant. But I have some Quinoa. I can make some of that vegan paella that Amir brought to the hospital Christmas party. Takes about thirty minutes. Wait. I think we have some leftover spaghetti and turkeyballs in the freezer. Throw it in the microwave, we'll be eating in ten minutes. Those turkeyballs had a lot of zest! Much easier than the paella and saves time.

STONY: I'm not hungry. My stomach's still bothering me. Stress, I think.

DELORES: Nothing like a plate of spaghetti and turkeyballs to soothe a belly and stress.

PATIENCE: And I'm going out with Angelica, so...

DELORES: [stepping toward her, pointed again] Going where and to do what, Patience?

PATIENCE: It's a date. She likes me, I like her. We're going out on a date.

DELORES: No, you're not. I forbid it. You are not leaving this house.

STONY: Why are you doing this, Patience?

PATIENCE: Because I like Angelica and we're going out for gluten-free pizza. She has gluten allergies. I promised her.

STONY: You met this chick online.

DELORES: Hey!

PATIENCE: She is not a chick. Chicks are the infants of birds. She's a young woman who I like.

STONY: Who you met online.

DELORES: Hey!

PATIENCE: And now I'm meeting in person. Just because you're an egghead and human interaction isn't paramount, I personally need to get a whiff of their pheromones to make shit meaningful, Mister Cyber-Circle-Jerk Egghead.

STONY: Did you call me a Egghead?

PATIENCE: Did you just call my girlfriend a chick?

DELORES: That's enough! Enough! Enough!!! No one will leave this house until I say you

can leave! A week, a month, a year even. You will stay within the parameters of these rooms until I give you permission to vacate them!

PATIENCE: Mom, I want to go outside --

DELORES: [beat, then noticing missing photo] What happened to our family photo? I'm asking a question. Our family photo was sitting on this shelf for over fifteen years. Me, the two of you, your father, your brother. Happy times, memorable times. Unless it grew wings and flew away, I like to see it returned to its proper home on the shelf, now. Get up and find it. Find it! I will not subscribe to these types of tricks. Do you two need translation?

[A knock from the other side of the door. Silence permeates the room.]

STONY: He wants something.

PATIENCE: What?

STONY: Maybe he wants a drink. Or a smoke.

PATIENCE: He's a substance user. We are not giving him a drink or a smoke.

STONY: He's earned whatever he wants.

[a slight pause, DELORES continues in the kitchen]

DELORES: Gladys Monroe made an interesting comment today at the hospital. I was having my morning coffee and donut in the employee's lounge. A few doctors were there, a half dozen nurses, a receptionist and another office admin like myself. She said, "I like to pose a hypothetical." Gladys always uses big words like that. Hypothetical, conundrum. Intelligent words. She's a master at crossword puzzles. Better than me. We've all encouraged her to audition for Wheel of Fortune or even Jeopardy. She said, "I like to pose a hypothetical. What would you do if someone you worked with was caught on the surveillance cam stealing morphine and a pack of IVs and a medical monitor from engineering?" Isn't that Gladys something? So keen, observant. She said, "I don't know about any of you, as long as they weren't stealing a dead body, I wouldn't give a shit." I love me some Gladys Monroe.

PATIENCE: But that's not a hypothetical.

STONY: Shut up!

DELORES: The turkey meatballs should be ready in a minute! Come grab your plates!

[Someone behind the door, falls, hard. There's silence. Then:]

PATIENCE: He fell.

STONY: We should call 911, Mom.

[DELORES just stares at door.]

Mom?

[a beat, then]

DELORES: The day he was born the temperature was one hundred and five. The sun was unbearable, unnatural. Your father, God rest his soul, drove eighty miles an hour to get me to the Emergency Room. Your brother's head was already crowning and the A.C. wasn't working. As they were walking me to the labor room, he slipped out. I tried catching him with my hands but I was too slow. Not the right type of reflex. I never told you this, but I'm

telling you now. He hit the floor. Hard. His eyes opened, just for a second. He looked at me like I was a disappointment. That I disappointed him. The situation disappointed him. Brand-new to the world and this is what happens. And no matter what I did as a mother, he was never satisfied. Not enough breast milk, not the right school shoes, not enough attention, not enough love...

STONY: Mom, stop.

[DELORES walks to the door.]

DELORES: I left him alone once. One time. And that man came in here, broke through the window. We all knew there was a prowler in the neighborhood, but we were certain that was over, and I only went to the store, down the street, just that one time, and I came back in here, your brother's clothes were on the kitchen floor, his little underwear... I looked all over the house for him. I screamed and screamed his name. He finally walked out from the kitchen pantry. He wasn't crying at all. He just looked disappointed.

STONY: Mom, I'm hungry. I think I'm ready for those turkey meatballs.

DELORES: He turned fourteen and replaced the disappointment with beer, then marijuana, then vodka, cocaine, heroine. Medicating himself, killing himself. The stealing, that armed robbery. Imprisoning us with his disappointment. And this world doesn't help his cause any better!!

PATIENCE: Mommie?

DELORES: Stony, put the meatballs back in the freezer. I'm not in the mood for meatballs.

[HE quickly does so and then returns.]

DELORES: First the addiction, now the cancer. He'll be grateful.

STONY: We can't do this to him. We can't take his life.

DELORES: We're doing this for all of us. I don't want him to be disappointed anymore. It's time.

[SHE attempts to open the door. STONY blocks.]

STONY: We shouldn't be doing this ourselves. He needs a hospital.

DELORES: Patience, the photo is in the trash. I see it from here. Get it. He likes that photo.

STONY: Mom.

DELORES: What?! He's a fragile being incapable of tolerating the world he was forced into. You couldn't help him, your sister couldn't. This world wouldn't do anything for him! And I wasn't provided the natural reflex for him. What other option do I have!?

[She opens door. We hear the monitor. PATIENCE pulls the photo from the trash. The THREE walk in and close the door behind them.]

END



Invisible Eden

By Mandla Mbothwe

A winner of numerous awards, Mandla Mbothwe has for the past two decades been a writer, researcher, stage director, performance teacher, and creative arts practitioner. For eight years he was a lecturer and researcher in the Department of Drama at the University of Cape Town, while also functioning as managing and artistic co-director of Magnet Theatre, where he now serves as a board member. From 2011 to 2013 he was the artistic director for the Steve Biko Centre (King Williamstown); he is currently the Creative Manager for the Artscape Theatre Centre there. He holds a M.A. in Theatre and Performance from University of Cape Town.

Directed by: Mandla Mbothwe, Thando Doni

Cast: Faniswa Yisa (The mother), Thando Doni (The son)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Character one: The mother.

Character two: The son.

SETTING

The day before, in a house.

THE SON: (The son humming a song – “We Are Building Up The Temple” then the violin takes over in a gentle manner-the same tune)

(He comes on stage, with a small bag. He opens it and begins to take out a shoe brush, polish, pantyhose- he opens the polish, takes the lid of the polish and leaves the stage and comes back with water in the polish lid, he comes in carefully avoiding to spill water on the floor-now he starts making the pantyhose into a small tight ball.-and he starts dipping the brush in the polish and begins to polish. Each shoe has a particular character)

Violis plays loud and violently, it sounds like the sound that is used to kill.

THE SON: (imitating someone) “Breathe in and breathe out... exhale and inhale, make sure your shoulders are fully relaxed, don't forget to breathe, now tense yourself and then release yourself, you need to be able to trust so you can fall and be caught...trust and release...jump, fall and roll.... So much tension”

THE MOTHER: So much past...

THE SON: You need to be able to breathe in and out...release the past off your shoulder... you must learn to let go and move on...

THE MOTHER: So much tension...

THE SON: You need to exhale the pain, breathe it out...

THE MOTHER: So much anger, so much hate, so much disappointment...

THE SON: You really need to breathe, it's been twenty years now, you really need to let go, find a way of moving on and let go of the past, the future is promising

THE MOTHER: So I tasted the honey with your needle, I smoothed the thorns with my bare feet for you, rubbed the wound against the dirt of your impatience for healing. You said, “drink, drink from this one you might feel better” and I did, I drank, and drank, and drank while you watched with a great smile of gratification. “Taste, taste you said”... I tasted my own honey with your needle... today I am sick, my eyes, my eyes are dry and not a single drop of wetness. The words at night are the same as in the day and this comes with hope.

They say...

THE SON: Shuuuu.... Shuuu..... shuuuu..... shuuuu be quiet,

THE MOTHER: Shhuuuuu all will be past.... in time all will be better, it will pass in no time. Come, taste and be like us, we have travelled the road, we know...

THE SON: Shuuuu, yeeeeeeeee,

BOTH: Siiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii yeeeeeee siiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii,shuuuuuuu

(She hears a lullaby with the violin and she stops, looks up and there is a slight silence. Then the son starts humming)

THE SON: Rest, silence it, make it stop!!!! (Pause and silent and softly)

THE MOTHER: I beg you please make it break. (Pleading voice)

THE SON: (singing softly with great delight) we are building up the temple, building up the temple, building up the temple, building up the temple of the Lord, where are the boys to

help us, girls to help us building up the temple of the Lord...(continuously he sings)

THE MOTHER: Can hurt be the gift? Can sorrow be the blessing..... These hailstorms of stories make me go through closed doors and forge forward. The winds and the cries will come through while I am still vomiting hallucinations. This gift keeps me awake, this pain has turned me into a friend of disturbed nights, making me familiar with the dark and liberating me from the sounds of a silent night.

THE SON: (singing) We are building up the temple, building up the temple, building up the temple of the Lord where are the boys to help us, girls to help us, building up the temple of the Lord... (sudden stop of singing) They say warnings come packaged like tricks sung by the copper snake, destroying shadows of death. Making way for the bloody juices of the roots... blood that oozed and was ploughed and released into our souls..... our health, so as not to bathe in the pain of a disturbed mind. My elder brother your son (Doing physical demonstrating of the bursting balloon with sound) shuuuuuuuuuu..... yeeeeeeeeeeee..... shuuuuuuuu... siiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii do you remember?

THE MOTHER: ...your father's brother's uncle's friend who married your aunt's mother, his second last born child's wife's sister burst and was released and comforted

THE SON: Discharge of breath, emancipation, a drop, extricate, free, let go, unfasten, undo, turn loose, liberate, unchain, unveil, disengage (he continuous to say these words, in a different order, introducing physical gestures, that are mixed with insults, comfort and squeezing of pain, amidst all that he is physicalizing the flying away of a bird as if it is being freed from a cage. At this point the violin is playing joining the tempo of what is happening)

THE MOTHER: Time has passed me by, eaten by dogs as I got stuck, wrapped, lubricated and sent off on an errand. Death lies deep beneath the notion of not understanding the stories across the fires, shaking consciousness. I am praying for freedom. I will finally get well and free. These dogs, these dogs are not changed, these dogs are hungry (he starts swearing and pointing at the dogs, the finger keeps shifting the heights and directions)

THE MOTHER: You must taste, drink and pass on.

THE SON: That's what they said. Taste but do not drink all. They said this to me. I wash sadly and lose all the hope I have but we will see at the end. I am stuck, abused by the sound of this sob accompanied by deep hurt that resonates below my soul.

THE MOTHER: This is the intention of these results but all is now a wonder like a shadow in the night. Let us conclude here.

THE SON: Hug me and prepare for me.

THE MOTHER: Hug me and promise me.

THE SON: Hug me and lead me, help me cross over.

BOTH: Hold on, hold on, we are turning here. They will all leave, disappear, and I will be all alone in this room, coming and going... so fast they disappeared... shuuuuuuuuuu..... This messenger will never wither, that's what I say. I repeat, it will never fade but...

THE SON: You laid it while it was still smoking hot.

THE MOTHER: He was not finished as yet, not taken the last sip, not sung nor danced the rehearsed. He smoothed the thorns with his bleeding feet. I hunger for a new story and thirst for a holy song. I ask for a seed and water, before it goes dry and perishes, before it sinks into the archives.

Silence

THE MOTHER: The sour harvest is meant for you, they are yours. Take some and understand you are being passed on.

Allow me, allow me my Lord

To go to heaven too.

Allow me, allow me my Lord

To go to heaven too.

THE SON: I thought they were in the box, I thought the incense was...and it is hard for me to be quiet.

You ran away oh great one, from boiling the herbs.

Not even a sound from your feet.

To cleanse by the riverside,

I first stood there, took my time,

Looked at my reflection in the water and my eyelids closed.

My father is dead, he is not breathing,

He is gone, he is not coming back

You want the lessons, we are still moving.

Please wait we are still breaking in, there are no footsteps.

Devil will not take away what is mine,

He will not steal from me.

Don't worry, don't be alarmed. I don't have the gall nor my own bravery.

My patience has withered down to a drop.

I'd be amazed to see him on the side of the road.

Those from the soil,

Your presence makes me feel free.

The false notes,

The traditional dance, deep down.

This is deep and it is overflowing,

THE MOTHER: Can't you see, are your eyes covered with puss?

It is painful to prick a wound, it releases an unbearable pain.

With our relative's blood... We don't know hardships, the filth is a smell from inside.

THE SON: These stories, these predictions are not understandable.

There snaps the swing while they play.

They took his balance

They distorted his time,

They stole his location

His lovely surprises were made to predictions.

He was silent and...so slowly... like stillness

THE MOTHER: It is said... (Silence) well we are told that...so they say, It was long, long ago. When the indestructibility of stillness and silence conquered...The stress came

down when I was... (Silence)... Well... when hope taught me and I learnt the new hymns of my gospel.

THE SON: (he turns to look at the mother) Where did I miss that mark? Please do it again, throw it my way, repeat the procedure, I was not looking... Stupidity is throwing sand in a sack full of holes.

THE MOTHER: They all asked, suspected, in confusion I got misplaced and they came back piercing the stillness exposing all that was stuck, dig, keep on digging, don't give up, dig, dig (her voice going softer as if she is taken back in time)

THE SON: (he begins to sing as if he is calling someone from the past to intervene) Mapiya thunywa malekeleke mapinya thunya malekeleke... (he does this couple of times with silences in between suggesting that he is expecting a response... but no one responds...the musical instrument echoes this calling, the mother joins the song)

THE MOTHER: Speak the truth it helps to heal, expose your lies... break yourself into pieces, lose yourself, your shape, let your heart be soft and small then open it up, listen again.... then sing with me a new hymn. Sing it with me in stillness and silence, let's make a new dream.

THE SON: Let's sing his hymn just for the last time... just once more, I was hurt and my

soul was ripped from inside. I was astounded ... my wisdom became foolishness. I ask for just a little time, my heart is beating like that of a little baby, please give me a little time... I see you, I don't want to forget you.

THE MOTHER: Give me time to correct... this sorrow must pass. In this seemingly abundant grief and you ask for vulnerability...

THE SON: This way please, come this way, the rest is waiting in vain, so they said, and I followed without demands. (He starts singing softly), we are building up the temple, building up the temple, building up the temple for the Lord... where are the boys to help us? Girls to help us, building the temple for the Lord.

THE MOTHER: They are heated up because my consciousness is alive. Where are you? You were just here. So fast and like the blink of an eye you disappeared, you cracked like lightning and you were gone.

THE SON: These stories are hard to follow.

I am still in awe

Many questions and doubts have I.

All of these are lies.

I want to be of the flesh,

The spirit must wait,

Must stand aside.

Belief must surface.

Let us see our reasons from yesterday.

Create change so we can all heal.

We've long been waiting and begging.

Please reveal.

Take note.

We are scraping the last bit of patience,

This is now history.

I am abused by these small spots of poverty,

I am disturbed by the cries of tomorrow,

I cannot finish them,

I am overwhelmed by tears,

They make me wet, the pains, like someone who watches a cow rubbing itself along the wall.

Like watching a swing breaking while a mute child swings.

When you open your mouth he closes his nose.

It can easily become the attraction to our enemies.

They boil, perish and resonate.

This kind of pain leads to healing.

Please

Here

Chief getting lost,

Stop before it sinks.

THE MOTHER: Your father was a man of God. Your Father wished more for freedom than he wished to be white. He loved freedom of self, he was patient..., he always said "self-love is love of others" ... "Judge by grace"

THE SON: He said "Your children's foundation is your highest purpose...(silence)...your reason to wake up is your children.

THE MOTHER: His state is not good at all. Your father is not well...(A sound from the violin interrupts her speech)

THE SON: Shuuuuuu, shuuuuuu, siiiiiiiiiiiiii, siiiiiiiiiiiiii, mhmhmhmhmhmhm, I swallowed even though it was bitter. I ran from being scratched. They shouted "squeeze it out

it will bleed!!! You need the blood!!!! Squeeze, squeeze, you need the blood”.... (The mother joins and together they shout) It bleeds from being squeezed.

THE MOTHER: You will be freed. They will allow you to be free. Now you are here, so brief was the moment, so short was the story and the song is not finished. Don't ignore the rhythm of your heart, sing the hymn with me like before.

THE SON: Shuuuuuuu, shuuuuuuuuu, siiiiitiiiiii....Thuuuuuuuuuulllaaaaaaaa, thuuuuuuuuuuu.....shuuuuuuuuuuu

THE MOTHER: For a short while, just for a short while...for me to go through this discomfort. This pain is; it has no bearing, why is this message not revealed? (He gets more agitated and angry) I am running out of herbs and my knees are bruised from kneeling..... I am through, satisfied; I am rested but his departure left me with doubts, and a lost soul. I was led by doubts all the way, satisfied and careful but your departure left me with sobs and smiles.

THE SON: I am still discontented and I can't close my mouth. I was still...

(The mother finishes his thoughts)

THE MOTHER: ...Tasting, singing, staring and dreaming. (The deep emotion takes over....she mixes her speech with random sounds of pain and despair) No! no!!! Smash me below till you opened these gates of sadness. I felt it down below and learnt to finish off..... I am satisfied and careful- I have had enough of realisations and I have been granted wisdom.

THE SON: Teach me to tie my shoe laces.....We are the blessings we live with. Punishment will come up from beneath the rivers of blood; we swim in the middle of the night, represented by owls, comforted by howls of sadness.

THE MOTHER: They say free him and let him go home, free him and let him go home. Let me succumb so I can be healed.

THE SON: Don't embrace it..., it is not ripe yet, if you squeeze it out now, you will discharge the most pain, the pain that is excruciating.

THE MOTHER: You will scream as if you are dying. You will feel like dying.

THE SON: “Just don't let go now. Hang on.” So they say... “hang in there”.... a taste of honey with needle these flames of fire bring us waves of blood from victims of hate. I was hurt and my breath torn apart and flew away. Oh! You were here! Where are you now? You vanished while we were still admiring and disappeared while we watched. What happened, you appeared sprawled out. Sprawled out there. Where are you now? Please do talk. Where did I miss the sign? With a flash of an eye the spirit bled.

THE MOTHER: Shuuuuuuuu, ...shuuuuuuuu....

THE SON: I was still tasting, singing, staring and dreaming. No! You hit me below the belt till you opened the gates of the river of sadness. I felt it down below and learnt to finish off. I am satisfied and careful. I have had enough of satisfaction and I have been granted wisdom.

(Silence)

THE MOTHER: You must be strong, be strong mother, be strong child of the household, be strong and hold on. I know you, you don't scare easily, not easily amazed. Yours are not easily shaken, not by far. Yours will stagger and not fall; your flames will rise and not be easily extinguished. Just like the flames of a thorn bush. Be strong child of love, pillar of peace, you, the one with the directions of truth.

THE SON: I long for a new story. Sing me the new hymn...helps me to sleep.

THE MOTHER: Because of you we were also strong; because of your existence we never

saw devastation (interlude of the violin) because of you we felt it moving against the wall and never noticed when the wind changed direction. Even when we trampled on the snakes' tail, you protected us by putting your own foot in the way.

THE SON: (with greatest violent anger) this is the intention of these results but all is now a wonder like a shadow in the night. Let us conclude here.

THE MOTHER: Hug me and prepare for me. Hug me and promise me. Hug me and lead me, help me cross over.

THE SON: Hold on... people forget people forget. A preparation of a harvest should be announced

(While mother sings and the violin plays)

THE SON: Hold on we are turning here! Remember the new hymn my son

THE MOTHER: They will all leave, disappear, and I will be all alone in this room, they will disappear like lightning. This messenger will never wither, that's what I say. I repeat it, you will never fade, you stored it while it was still smoking. He was not finished as yet, not taken the last swallow, not sung the hymn. He flattened the spikes with his bleeding feet. I hunger for a new story and thirst for a holy song. I ask for a seed and water, before it goes dry and perish, before it sinks.

THE SON: The heart is sick, this can't be the end. We have not even reached the centre... people forget, people forget, help me, and tell me to heal...

(The violin starts plying softer as if it comes from very far, with great mixture of pain and resilience.)

THE MOTHER: You must be strong...you need to learn to hold on, remember his teaching, because of him; cats have never had home in our fire place. He made it sure that our cave faced away from the strange winds.

THE SON: "A wisdom passed on is the wisdom to be shared" he will say that. "Hold on and be firm in what you believe in, be careful of too much release, of being too accepting...I must find meanings in his idioms.

THE MOTHER: My husband loved growing things, he loved seeing things grows,

THE SON: Today you have turned to be your garden, you have become many things of your garden, you have become what you have watered and I watched you grow, transforming into many shapes, colours and textures, I watched you harvested by many, shared by lots.... you ...

(The mother sings ma piya thunywa malekeleke mapiya thunywa malekeleke, she gradually smiles as if she is realising something.)

THE MOTHER: now you are so calm...and you smile on your face brings me joy. You have held and released so many, you have whispered to so many.

THE SON: I harvested your honey. I drank your fennel herb tea. I must remember not to forget... because people forget. (The son joins the song... the musician)
Please give me a moment

Allow me to say two or three words and then look.

Might just clear up, maybe the eyes will be clean and the smell disappears.

You left while you were still crawling and you disappeared before you appeared.

Made us swallow and made us wash before we were dirty. We comforted painfully.

It is painful to bury your child.

I promised to fetch you wherever you are.

You took your last breath while at home. Your departure has shocked us. We were still Clutching on hope but now we hang onto our spirit, saying your nudging you will glance And see. You will know and trust and still live while healing many others. Even the devil will be surprised while we will be happy.

Those cursed by the father have a problem. I need to win this battle of bitterness. I am not hearing the sounds now.

THE MOTHER: Those cursed by the father have a problem. I need to win this battle of bitterness. I am not hearing the sounds now.

THE SON: I tasted honey through a needle made to smile for a moment, you left without eating but the grave I hate. I am praying for calmness. See myself surrounded by water all sides. Living life and tell stories, many tongues to re-ignite the fires to melt steel.

Prepare all the weapons for me. Your seed you have ploughed and it will never rot. I will bring it back. You will all be smiling. This one is mine, my spiritual father.

I am happy, I am scared my Lord. You loved me, blessed with warmth, missed the wisdom and my mind froze.

This is not magic, you pulled me up and I stood on the mountain. I was on top and he put his on mine and I was also noticed by other nations. You brought me up surrounded by love.

BOTH: Hold on we are turning for the new harvest from his garden.

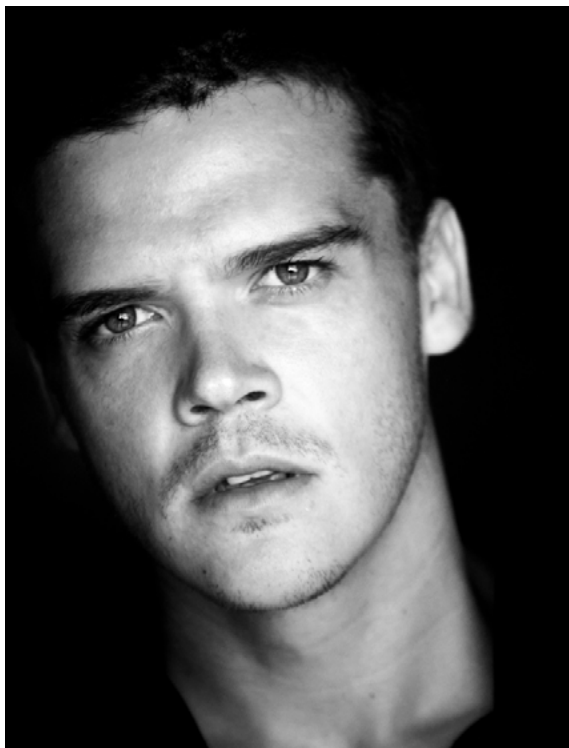
The musician starts playing

THE SON: You smeared mine with a burning journal. To me your deeds are great. My heart will be free. Come back to see what I have done to them. Because of your deeds you were rewarded. Don't be scared, release him, this is a shield blanket. Pull back from your deeds. Remember all your doings. People forget, people forget, people forget What an untimely harvest. It is not ready, not ready yet.

THE MOTHER: Wear your blood, cover up and throw to the holy of the holiest. When all is done, we stand, shout and praise and worship and dance and clap and praise. We must not be scared. We must feel the supremacy.

THE SON: We are seed collectors

END



Blood Pastoral

By Wessel Pretorius

Performer Wessel Pretorius obtained a B.A. in drama at The University of Pretoria and Honors in Acting at The University of Stellenbosch. In 2010, he represented the Stellenbosch Drama Department in Den Haag at De Appel. That year he debuted at Aardklop with *Korte Mette Met die Versamelde Werke Van William Shakespeare*. Other highlights include Yasmina Reza's *Art*; Christiaan Olwagen's '*Politik Trilogie*': *Woza Andries?*, *Vagina Dentata*, and *Ubu and the Secrecy Bill*; P.G. du Plessis' '*n Seder val in Waterkloof*'; *N is vir Neurose* (Olwagen); his self-penned solo show *Ont-*; *Boetie Dis Tyd Vir Bid As 'n Seekoeikoei Op Jou Skoot Kom Sit*; David Greig's *Die Monster In Die Gang*; Saartjie Botha's *Balbesit*; and Albee's *Wie's Bang Vir Virginia Woolf?* He has further appeared in *Richard III* at the Maynardville Open Air Theatre, in *Boesman, My Seun* and in *Waterpas*, which he also wrote. Pretorius is a member of the award-winning theatre collective POLONY.

Directed by: Alan MacVey

Cast: Niki-Charisse Franco (Elizabeth), Chris Matheson (Edward), Skyler Matthias (Dawid)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Dawid: Afrikaans.

Edward: British.

Elizabeth: Sesotho.

SETTING

A woman, ELIZABETH, is standing centre stage wearing a light floral-print dress. She has dark soil gathered in the skirt. She remains standing in one spot throughout—always looking straight—forward into the audience.

In front of her sits DAWID. On either side of him are mounds of soil with bouquets of Proteas in vases on top.

EDWARD sits/stands on the periphery, isolated, with another vase of Proteas in his lap. He is speaking on a cell phone. It is merely suggested. He delivers the monologues without alluding to an imaginary phone.

ELIZABETH will play both the voices of MA and PA as well as her own.

A telephone rings three times.

ELIZABETH: A child needs something to call its own: A pet. A plaything. I saw white children cuddle their puppies, their dolls, their remote control so-and-so's and I thought: yes please how lovely. My father was a foreman on this land. All I had to caress was the soil. From it was born my imagination—a world of dark brown moulds suggesting houses on uneven rocky streets and little clay men with sticks for limbs and pebbles for the mouth and eyes. My father once brought home a stray dog—mixed breed—pregnant. He delivered all seven of her still-born puppies on our kitchen floor. I saw their little carcasses spread across the linoleum and I thought: How lucky for me, then. My soil has nowhere to go. Has no death. They can keep their living things with its ever-present promise of loss. My father was the caretaker of this soil. I have come home to bury him in it.

The telephone rings twice more.

EDWARD: Dawid? It's me again. Are you alright? Please answer. I've been trying to get hold of you all morning. Did you arrive safely? Did you get a window-seat? And how are the folks? I imagine your mother passed out from happiness when she saw you. Listen, the decorator sent me this e-mail. She wants to know something about ottomans. I'm lost here. Ottoman's? Jesus Dawid, don't be cruel. I'm not even sure what an ottoman is. She's getting very aggressive. A lot of the message was in German. Angry German. Answer the goddamned phone, please.

DAWID: (He gets up to stand behind one of the graves) Merry Christmas. I bought Dad a tie. Is that too pedestrian? Dad still wears ties occasionally, right? Once a week, at least, for the Sunday sermon... Oh well, it wasn't very expensive, so if he doesn't like it—give it to... I wanted to say give it to Peter... I forget. It's hard to envision a day on this farm without him. He was a good man, our Peter, wasn't he? How's Elizabeth? Is she still teaching in Johannesburg? I suppose she'll be around to bury the old man. Good man.

(Silence)

Please answer. Please please please answer.

A 'flashback' to Dawid as an eighteen year old man leaving home.

(ELIZABETH as MA): You'll be late.

DAWID: I won't.

MA: Do you have your ID?

DAWID: Yes.

MA: Did you pack the new underwear I bought?

DAWID: Yes, mother.

MA: And what about . . . ?

DAWID: Ma... relax. I'm leaving for university not shipping off to war. Everything is sorted. Sit down before you wear yourself out. I'll make us something to drink.

MA: Let me be nervous Dawid. You've made the rest of it obsolete; let me at least have 'worrying.'

DAWID: I didn't make you obsolete old woman, I grew up.

MA: Old woman? You've never called me that before...

DAWID: It never crossed my mind 'till now.

MA: Shame on you.

DAWID: But I do still love you old woman.

MA: Then don't leave.

DAWID: Fine by me. I'll put my things back in my room.

MA: No. Don't be silly.

DAWID: Oh?

MA: Of course you have to go.

DAWID: And why is that? Why 'of course?' No one else has ever left this farm and they seem perfectly happy?

MA: Do they? We have some gifted actors in our family then.

DAWID: You're happy.

MA: I am.

DAWID: So?

MA: You won't be. You are not me . . . like me, I mean.

DAWID: Am I like my father then, who would never dream of leaving this place?

MA: You are Dawid. And how that happened is one of the dear Lord's tender but mystifying mercies. No, you will leave this farm for good. That I know. You will return to visit us over Christmas once a year and for the rest of it I will receive long prosaic letters and postcards with romantic pictures of lakes and gondolas and Roman statues.

DAWID: You have it all figured out, hey?

MA: You just leave the dreaming to me, my boy. You do all the work and I'll do the dreaming.

DAWID: I see.

MA: Now come here and kiss the old woman before she turns to dust. The wind is picking up.

EDWARD: (Still on the phone) There was a report this morning on the radio of unrest over there. Burning. People are setting fire to the entire country it seems. All along the main roads. Did you see any of it? I just need to know you're out of danger, that's all. I bought an orchid. It died. I killed an orchid Dawid. I had it for one day and I let it die. Is that even possible? You need to come home as quick as you can. Your tropical fish are looking very panicked.

(A flashback to 'the day before')

DAWID: Dad?

(ELIZABETH as PA): My boy?

DAWID: I'm sorry.

PA: For what?

DAWID: The tie.

PA: I like it.

DAWID: You don't, it's okay.

PA: No, really. It's a good tie. A bit extravagant for Sunday service but I'll wear it to a wedding or a black funeral.

DAWID: (Reprimanding) Dad...

PA: Dawid, I beg you—I have taken gigantic strides in my 'personal growth' to accommodate you but don't sour my day with this European PC obsession you've acquired over there.

DAWID: It's not European, Pa. It's common courtesy.

PA: Bullshit. Peter had a sense of humour. I never had to walk on eggshells or explain myself.

DAWID: He was your employee.

PA: He was my friend. And a grown man. I never treated him as anything else.

DAWID: What do you mean 'to accommodate me?'

PA: You know.

DAWID: But for absolute clarity's sake...

PA: Are you looking for a fight? It's Christmas. You haven't been here in ages. I don't want to argue.

DAWID: I'm not arguing. I'm asking.

PA: This was never exactly an environment accustomed to discourse on the topic of sex and all its shades of grey.

DAWID: I'm gay Dad. Pretty simple. Just say it once.

PA: You are looking for a fight.

DAWID: No. I'm teasing. I know. Thank you.

PA: For what?

DAWID: For being open to wearing that tie in public.

PA: It's a good tie.

EDWARD: (Phone) Dawid? I don't know whether to be scared or pissed off. This is voice message number too many. Do they not have signal on that farm? Listen, I'm trying to make a trifle to take to Christmas dinner with Bill and Jessica and I've managed to engineer the atomic bomb. I need some advice. Was soy milk where I went wrong? Also, I bought you the collected works of Armistead Maupin as a present. I'm telling you this because I'm giving it to Bill and Jessica. I forgot to buy them something and this is all I have. I'll get you something else later. Perhaps some tropical fish. These ones are looking a tad suicidal by now. They've been eyeing the rat poison. Are you sure you want to marry me? I seem to inhibit life expectancy. Call me back you bastard.

ELIZABETH: (For the audience. As part of her narration) I left because I had to. It is a well-worn tale. I missed my father every day since I left. I even missed the house. It was cramped and it had a leaky roof. My bed was too small but it had something of the cross about it. On it I could forgive them every night for they know not what they do and every morning I woke up clean. I left to teach. To teach what I had learned outside of school: oak and thorn-bush and the smell of squashed maroelas seeping between the webbing of your toes. The city children made it clear to me soon enough that they had no interest in my quant philosophies. I was being counter-productive. I now teach maths and only maths. One plus one is two and there is no arguing with that. It adds up. Like the future. And that is all that counts.

(A flashback to the 'day before')

DAWID: Welcome home.

ELIZABETH: Thanks. Same to you.

DAWID: You look well.

ELIZABETH: I am well. Is that a ring?

DAWID: Yes. I'm engaged.

ELIZABETH: Congratulations. Is she British?

DAWID: He is...

ELIZABETH: He? You mean...?

DAWID: You can't be too surprised.

ELIZABETH: And to think you broke my heart.

DAWID: I did?

ELIZABETH: I was very much in love with you, yes.

DAWID: You should have said something.

ELIZABETH: I was five.

DAWID: Yes, that would have been too late. I fell in love with Lukas when we were four.

ELIZABETH: Lukas? Really?

DAWID: Out of my league?

ELIZABETH: Most definitely. But then again he is my brother so I might be biased.

DAWID: Is he still around?

ELIZABETH: No, he left shortly after I did.

DAWID: Peter... Your father... was probably not too happy about that.

ELIZABETH: He encouraged it, actually. After I left and wrote to him that I was making enough money to rent a flat, buy my groceries from Woolworths and wear dresses from the cover of a magazine, he thought Lukas ought to have the same benefits.

DAWID: And did he?

ELIZABETH: Lukas found other benefits. They all involve women with hyphenated surnames.

DAWID: Ah. Well, after being cooped up here with only the goats and the geese to talk to...

ELIZABETH: Are you glad you left?

DAWID: I had to.

ELIZABETH: Of course.

DAWID: And you?

ELIZABETH: I always say 'have' but I suppose it wouldn't have killed me to stay. He was alone towards the end.

DAWID: Yes, I'm truly sorry for your loss. He wasn't though... alone. He had friends. My father cherished him dearly. I doubt whether he got around to saying it but take it from me, he has ways of showing it that illuminate themselves in hindsight.

ELIZABETH: Thank you... Well, I'm off... I have a funeral to organize—(With feigned exasperation) a black funeral!

(DAWID laughs uncomfortably)

Who is that? Coming up the road? Are you expecting company?

DAWID: Not that I know of...

ELIZABETH: That car has no number plate...

DAWID: An old farm car, I'm sure. Probably one of the neighbouring farm-kids learning how to drive.

ELIZABETH: Dawid... there are five men in the car... Where are your parents?

DAWID: Inside the house. Why?

ELIZABETH: Go to them. Lock the doors. Hide in the cellar.

DAWID: Don't be silly. Paranoia is supposed to be my people's thing.

ELIZABETH: Please. Just do it. Trust me.

(DAWID stands frozen, gradually realises the gravity of the situation and makes to 'run for the house.' A blackout. A gunshot.)

EDWARD: Hallo? Dawid? (Silence) I bought an ottoman today. It doesn't go with anything... I'm lost here... I keep calling your number. I keep leaving voice messages. I don't know why. There is a very weak part of my brain that wants to delude itself, needs to believe that... you will answer eventually. Also, your voicemail-greeting is the only sound of yours I have left. I listen to it every morning. I fall asleep to it every night. And when I put it on speaker, I swear Dawid, I bloody-well swear, those goddamned tropical fish of yours prick up their ears... or whatever it is they have... Fish have ears, right? See? Useless. How am I ever going to get through this life without you... Dawid—who could even make the fish look up. (He laughs feebly... then cries)

Please please please answer...

DAWID: I left home to be an honest man... to be, pardon the cliché, but to be free. I came home again to be an honest son. To greet the same mornings I did for eighteen years – free. To shake my father's hand with the same hand I used to run my fingers through Edward's hair. Edward, of whom it can be said I loved. Freely. When they pressed the barrel to my head I had the same feeling as when I left here and when I finally came back. Fear. But with the knowledge of an unknowable freedom waiting at the other side. There is no more fear. Just waiting. For an answer. For someone to please please please answer...

ELIZABETH: They stormed the house without much fuss. They entered the front door like guests. They took as much as they could. They left with a trail of red footprints in the ground. This is the story of the farm I grew up on. My father was the foreman of this soil. And I have come home to bury his family in it.

As the final voice-over plays DAWID lies between the mounds of soil, head facing the audience. ELIZABETH tips her skirt full of earth over his body. EDWARD crosses to place the vase of Proteas next to him and exits.

Dawid greeting (V/O): Hallo, you've reached to phone of Dawid Russouw. I'm not available right now. But please feel free to leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as possible. Oh yes... Merry Christmas and a happy new year to us all.

END

Director Biographies

Theatre maker **Thando Doni** learned his craft at the Arts and Media and Access Centre (AMAC) and with Magnet theatre. Productions which he has performed in includes *Trojan Horse Story*, *Looking Inside*, *Inxeba lomphilisi*, *Ingcwaba lendoda lise cankwe ndlela*, and Nicolla Elliot's *Proximity loss and having*. Doni has also worked with Actors Voice Theatre, Masibambisane Youth Theatre Organization, Emlanjeni Theatre Productions, and Manyanani Entertainers. He is a resident actor at Bonfire Theatre Company, won an award for Best director at the Baxter Theatre Zabalaza Festival in 2011 and 2012 for his productions titled *Mhla Salamana* and *Amalanga Awafani*. He was one of the four TAAC Emerging Theatre Director's Bursary recipients for young directors. His credits as director include *Passage*, *Utopia*, *Mhla Salamana*, *Ukhanyo*, and *Amalanga Awafani*.

Eric Forsythe began his professional career as a child actor at the Erie (Pa.) Playhouse, son of actors Henderson Forsythe and Dorothea Carlson, who starred there for years. After earning theatre degrees from Dartmouth (BA) and Carnegie-Mellon (MFA, PhD), and training with Grotowski's Lab Theatre in Poland, he continued to work professionally around the country on stage, screen, radio and TV. He has acted in or directed well over 300 theatre productions, with credits at the Philadelphia Drama Guild, Boston's Charles Playhouse, People's Light & Theatre Co., McCarter Theatre, LaMama ETC., and St. Louis Rep among many others. On television, "Guiding Light," "As the World Turns," the "NBC Movie-of-the-Week," "Hallmark Hall-of-Fame," etc. He currently heads the directing program at the University of Iowa, and is Artistic Director of Iowa Summer Rep Theatre. Plays he has written or translated have been performed in a variety of professional and academic theatres nationally and internationally. He recently taught a first-ever course to professional stage directors in Venezuela and is invited to direct and teach in Sweden. He lives in Iowa City, IA, with wife Kathryn and children Grant and Gwyneth.

Geoffrey Hyland is an Associate Professor and currently head of the University of Cape Town's Drama Department. He has directed in South Africa, Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. His work has also been seen in the USA, Ireland, Germany, and Peru. He has been nominated for several South African national and regional awards for acting and especially directing, receiving, amongst others, the Fleur du Cap Award for Young Directors and also the Standard Bank Young Artist Award. He has directed well over 100 theatre productions in his career, including dance, opera, and cabaret. Some highlights include *Madame de Sade*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Slowly*, *Women Beware Women*, *Opera 5:20*, *Judith-a parting from the body*, *Kissed By Brel*, *Blood Wedding*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *The Cherry Orchard*, as well as *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Twelfth Night*.

Amy Jephtha is a bilingual Cape Town-based playwright, director, and columnist who completed her M.A. in Playwriting at the University of Cape Town. As a director, she was the first national recipient of the Baxter Theatre/TAAC Emerging Theatre Director's Bursary and is an alumni of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab. She has worked as a mentor to community theatre groups based in Kwazulu-Natal as part of the Twist Theatre project, has been part of the South African New Plays Writing Programme at Wits University, and has been a voice and acting lecturer at CityVarsity in Cape Town and the Woodward School for Contemporary Art in Vancouver. As a playwright, her work has been published in South Africa, performed at the Riksteatern in Stockholm, and read at the Bush Theatre

in London and at the Royal Court's Jerwood theatre upstairs. In 2013, she was on the *Mail & Guardian's* list of 200 Top Young South Africans and in 2014, she was listed in *Destiny* magazine's "Top 40 Women Under 40" issue. Jephta currently teaches Afrikaans acting to theatre and performance students at the University of Cape Town, is the conference director for the 2015 Women Playwrights International Conference, and is one of the founding members of PlayRiot, a collective of young South African playwrights.

Alan MacVey is professor and chair of the Theatre Arts Department, and the director of the Division of Performing Arts. He is a fellow in the College of Fellows of the American Theatre and past president of the National Association of Schools of Theatre. Since 1976 he has been on the faculty of the Bread Loaf School of English, a summer graduate program of Middlebury College, where, from 1986 through 2013, he served as Artistic Director of the Acting Ensemble, an Equity company-in-residence. He was on the faculty at Princeton University for fourteen years and for a decade was Director of its Program in Theatre and Dance. He served as Associate Director of the Trinity Repertory Company in Providence Rhode Island, and has directed major productions for the Cleveland Playhouse, Trinity Repertory Company, North Light Theatre in Chicago, TheatreWorks in California, the McCarter Theatre, the Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger, the Theatre of the Riverside Church in New York, and other companies. He is also a playwright whose works have been performed in New York, California, and elsewhere.

Alan is co-chair of the UI Arts Advancement Committee and chair of the Campus Arts Campaign Committee. For four years he led the committee that developed the Public Digital Arts cluster hire initiative, which is now being implemented with the appointment of eight new faculty members in six different units. He is a recipient of the Regents Award for Faculty Excellence and is a Collegiate Fellow in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. In 2014 he delivered the University of Iowa Presidential Lecture.

Mandla Mbothwe is currently the creative manager of ARTSCAPE Theatre Centre and has served various institutions including the Steve Biko Centre (King Williamstown), University of Cape Town Drama Department, Magnet Theatre, Jazzart and presented his work in festivals across the world including Infesting the City (Cape Town), Out of the Box (Cape Town), National Arts Festival and other international festivals. His credits as director include *Isivuno sa maphupha* (Harvesting of dreams), *Ingcwaba le ndoda lise cankwedlela* (The grave of the man is next to the road), *Umyenzo we zandi* (Eden of sounds), *Bafana Republic 3 – Penalty shootout*, *Inxeba lo mphilisi* (The wound of a healer), *Voices of Women with Abelusi of Steve Biko Centre*, *Ukushona ko Mendi productions*, *Biko's Quest*, *Ukuphuthelwa* (Insomnia) co-directed *House of Africa* with Lulamile Nikani, *Nzulu yemfihlakalo* (Sacred of sacreds), *Talking Souls* commissioned by British Council and Artscape Theatre, *Awethu* (Kraal of Dreams), *Giant in Him* (Steve Biko's narrative) with Lulamile Nikani, *Thina so babini* (Us together) and also co-directed *Ukhozi olumaphiko*, *Ezethu*, and *27 Windows/4 doors & 2 taps*. He has won multiple awards such as Handspring Puppetry Award for Best Visual Theatre (2010), Fleur du Cap Award with Mark Fleishman and Jennie Reznick for Innovation in Theatre (2010), Fleur du Cap Award for Innovation in Theatre (2013), and Eastern Cape Arts & Culture Award for Outstanding Contribution in Drama (2013).

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