

FTH:K announces future plans, new artistic director

Visual theatre company FTH:K heralds some changes as it rolls out plans for the next five years. The organisation, which this year celebrated its sixth birthday, is moving into the next phase of growth with a strong focus on its education programmes including the Artsbridge International Exchange.



In addition, the creative team will enjoy new artistic mentorship under the guidance of company member Jayne Batzofin, who has been with the company since 2009. Batzofin takes over the role of artistic director from founder and current artistic director Rob Murray, who is taking up the position of resident director with Janet Buckland's Ubom! company in Grahamstown.

"The first six years have been an exhilarating roller-coaster ride," says Murray. "We have toured extensively nationally and internationally, won multiple awards and developed a ground-breaking theatre education programme for deaf learners. It is now time to consolidate what has been created and build on that foundation to nurture a sustainable theatre training programme that provides opportunities to deaf learners from all over the country. FTH:K is today an established entity in itself and has at its helm a strong new leadership team to take it into the next five years. "

Working closely with the USA

Murray will be working with Batzofin as part of the handover which will also see Batzofin taking over as South African director of the Artsbridge International Exchange programme. Artsbridge is a two-year skills and cultural exchange project between deaf and hearing communities in South Africa and the USA. It involves workshops, discussions and the creation of a work with Wings Theatre Company from the USA, which will be performed at QuestFest in Washington DC in March, followed by a national tour of South Africa.

Company director Tanya Surtees, who relocated to Washington DC earlier this year, will head up the Artsbridge Exchange from abroad while also working for QuestFest hosts, Quest Visual Theatre. She will remain on with FTH:K in an advisory capacity supporting Ana Lemmer in her new role as company director from 2012.

Tour will be an audition process

"Next year also marks the next phase of our Tell-Tale Signs education programme," continues Murray. "The national tour next year with Artsbridge will include workshops that serve as an audition process for our next intake of trainees. This will be the first time we have been able to potentially offer places to students from outside of Cape Town. I am honoured to be working with Ubom! next year and, as a Rhodes graduate who studied under Andrew Buckland, I feel lucky to be returning to my theatrical roots."

Joining Murray at Ubom! is company member Liezl de Kock who has been with FTH:K since 2006. Fleur du Cap-nominated actress De Kock will continue to perform her acclaimed roles in productions such as Pictures of You, Womb Tide and Benchmarks.

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