

Invitations open for Network African Talent project

The South African theatre for young audiences community is attracting increasing numbers of opportunities for development, exchange and collaboration through the work of ASSITEJ South Africa, the local centre of ASSITEJ (the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People, working in over 85 countries across the world).

One of the most recent opportunities is a place within the Network African Talent project which is bringing together young African practitioners to make a production in three stages in three countries. The first stage will be at the FATEJ festival in Cameroon in November 2012, the second in Senegal in early 2013 and the third will be the final performance in Ravenna, Italy. Theatre practitioners with a passion for making theatre for young audiences, who are in their 20s, should apply with a letter of motivation, letter of reference and full CV by 17 September 2012.

Out of touch with mainstream

This kind of opportunity is vital for the development of the South African theatre for young audiences' scene. "A key weakness identified by ASSITEJ SA is the fact that most theatre practitioners are currently very out of touch with the mainstream of theatre for young audiences' movement, internationally and on the African continent. South African theatre performances are seldom invited to share an international platform at the many festivals for young audiences that exist, and the work that happens in South Africa is largely invisible outside of its immediate context," says Yvette Hardie, director of ASSITEJ SA and current president of ASSITEJ International.

South Africa is now represented on the International Executive Body of ASSITEJ through the presidency of Hardie, and on the Steering Committee of the African regional network organisation, ACYTA. This has raised the profile of SA theatre considerably.

Opportunities must be used

"We need to make use of the window of opportunity this offers and ensure that South African practitioners are able to present their work and ideas to the world. We are inviting international producers to see our work in South Africa, and we are sending up-and-coming practitioners to festivals and conferences, where they can experience a wide variety of theatrical styles, trends, debates and fresh ideas, as well as explore possibilities for future collaborations and co-productions," says Hardie.

The ASSITEJ Next Generation Placements programme allows emerging practitioners to apply for international collaboration activities as and when these become available. So far this year, Standard Bank Young Artist Award winner Ntshieng Mokgoro attended the TIBA festival in Serbia as a jury member, Catherine Didders was part of the Next Generation

programme at the Kijimuna festival in Okinawa, and Beren Belknap, Francesco Nassimbeni, Lindelwa Kisana, Jon Keey and Pieter Botha were hosted by the Bibu festival. Alison Green will be attending the Performing the World Congress in New York next month.

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