

SA director spreading local love of theatre in Canada

 By Leigh Andrews

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It's no *Comedy of Errors*: South African director Clive Mathibe was picked by The Market Theatre and NAC to work on two productions featured in the Toronto Theatre in the Park spectacular...

If the name 'Clive Mathibe' doesn't ring any bells, it will do, soon. He's the young local director currently on a two-month mentorship programme in Canada. He's there right now, working on the two Roman classic productions featured in [Shakespeare in High Park](#), namely *Comedy of Errors* and the much-loved tragedy, *Julius Caesar*.

Despite his jam-packed schedule, Mathibe made the time to answer a few of my questions about how this opportunity seemingly fell into his lap...

■ 1. First things first, tell us a little more about your career - is this one of the highlights so far?



Clive Mathibe

Mathibe: After obtaining my B-tech Degree specialising in Directing and Physical Theatre at Tshwane University of Technology, I did some directing work at the State Theatre in Tshwane, where I'm from. I'd say this is where I honed my voice as a director. I got the opportunity to work with very experienced and seasoned theatre and television actors, such as Tipo Thindisa and Brandon Aurret on a production called *10 Ways To Kill A President* - a political satire taking a critical and tongue-in-cheek approach to post-apartheid South Africa.

10 Ways To Kill A President really launched me into the theatre world - the fact that I was a young and new director who touched on sensitive issues such as politics so early in our new democracy gave me a strong presence in the theatre industry. I then started writing and directing work for some SABC TV productions, which was another very significant step in my career, allowing me to diversify. However, it meant I found myself doing more and more television work, rather than work in theatre, which is my first love. But what I have learnt over nine years of being in this cut-throat industry is that it's vital to diversify.

One of my annual projects I am most proud of is Carol Boucher's *Mbokodo Awards*. I have worked as Creative Producer on this project since its inception; so to see it grow and to grow with it has been an absolutely amazing experience. I guess right now, being selected to come and represent my country in this programme initiated by the National Arts Council here in Canada is a highlight!

■ 2. Wonderful to hear. How are you finding Canada? How does it differ from SA?

Mathibe: Canada is absolutely incredible! I'm in Toronto, and I'm told this is the most colourful and mixed (in terms of race) city in Canada. It is, however, interesting how being here has made me feel very proud to be South African. Yes, this is a first-world country - and it being a first-world country means there is less crime; transportation is convenient and reliable; there's free health-care and almost everyone is employed. But after my interactions with Canadian artists, I realised that we all go through the same struggles, especially in the arts and political structures. There are some artists here who were very excited to be working on *Shakespeare in High Park*; not only because it's a great opportunity but also because they have not worked in a long time. And that is a struggle that we all know of as South African artists.

So Toronto is very different from SA in terms of infrastructure and the economic make-up, but there are a lot of things about Toronto and Canada (in the arts industry in particular) that are similar to South Africa.

■ 3. OK then, what went into planning for your two months in the country?

Mathibe: I was in contact with the director of *Julius Caesar*, Estelle Shook, about a month before I came here. Estelle is directing this production as part of her Master's degree study at York University, so she sent me her thesis and her

thoughts and approach to the play. I then studied it carefully and together we emailed back and forth trying to figure out what exactly my contribution would be in the rehearsal room once I was here. Because I come from such a diverse background, having worked in live entertainment, theatre, television, producing, writing, etc, it made it hard for Estelle to know how to use me effectively in the process. But we came to a conclusion that we would leave the process to take its organic form and see what and how I could contribute when I got here.

It was very important for me to learn, grow and become an artist who will use the knowledge gained from this experience when I get back home; especially considering that I start with rehearsals for Barney Simon's *Cincinnati* at The Market Theatre when I return to South Africa. I strongly believe that this opportunity in Canada is not only for me, but that I was chosen as the bucket to collect the water and then return back home with the water for the benefit of my country, so to speak.

■ 4. Interesting. What's the intended outcome of your stay?

Mathibe: The intended outcome is that I work here with the Canadian directors, observing how they work and contributing to their work - which has been the process so far! The other outcome is that we create relations with international theatre companies, producers, directors, writers and actors - so that we can broaden the landscape of theatre in South Africa. So I guess the exciting thing about this programme is not what I'm currently experiencing, but how this seed could blossom into an amazing tree which will bear fruits all artists in SA will get to enjoy beyond this moment.

Here's to Mathibe, hoping he brings back a 'bucket' full of inspiration!

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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