

GIPCA Directors and Directing Weekend to focus on plays playwrights

The Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts (GIPCA) will present Directors and Directing, a weekend event focused on plays and playwrights, from 24-26 August 2012.

Following the popularity of last year's Directors and Directing symposium, GIPCA has acknowledged the need for the existence of such a forum as an annual event: a space for theorists, practitioners and student of the theatre to come together and talk about key issues facing those who work in or watch or write about the theatre. This year, the focus is on playwrights and writing for the theatre.

Playwrights, directors, critics and actors will converge from various parts of the country to address some of the key features of these debates. The symposium goes behind the scenes and gets to the core of theatrical performance: the presence (or absence) of the written text. The scarcity of playwrights writing for the stage is legend in contemporary South African theatre, in stark contrast to the perception of the potential for innumerable stories waiting to be told. In a country of multiple experiences, is there room for the singular voice of the playwright? On the other hand, is this making way for an indulgence of multiple voices as opposed to the authority and craft of the singular playwright? Athol Fugard recently said, "The truth is that the new South Africa needs committed playwrights who are prepared to bear witness to what is going on even if as urgently as the old ones did".

Themed panels

Directors and Directing: Playwrights will include theatre visits, performances, play readings and informal talks, but primarily will comprise a symposium with a variety of panels. Addresses will be made by acclaimed playwrights and directors: esteemed writer Sindiwe Magona, whose play "Mother to Mother" will be presented at the Edinburgh Festival after causing waves at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, the Baxter Theatre's Lara Foot, the provocative and always topical Mike van Graan, Aubrey Sekhabi from the State Theatre and highly respected director James Ncgobo. Theatre visits, which form an integral part of the conference, include Alexandre Marine's adaptation of JM Coetzee's "Waiting for the Barbarians" at the Baxter Theatre and several playreadings.

The conference comprises several themed panels in which writers and directors discuss their different approaches to shaping performance with and without text. Is the rise of genres such as visual performance and workshop theatre a threat to the written text or do they challenge the playwright's innovation and craft? Inside the darkened theatre, one may well ask: Whose text trumps whose? Writer, director, designer, producer, audience or critic?

Writers who will be talking about their work include Juliet Jenkin ("The Boy Who Fell From The Roof"); Nicholas Spagnoletti (London Road), Genna Gardini and UCT's Sabata Sesi. A panel based on the relationship between writers and directors includes Sanjin Muftic and Amy Jephta, while Jacqueline Dommissie talks about her role in directing the work of Peter Hayes. Preceded by an innovative "performance paper" by rising stars Kim Kerfoot and Jason Potgieter, a special panel devoted to ideas around adaptations, ownership and collaborative writing will feature writers Ingrid Wylde and Karen Jeynes, and D Peter Churu from the University of Zimbabwe.

New trends of theatre making

A crucial shift in the symposium proceedings considers the move towards alternate texts. UCT's head of drama and director of Magnet Theatre Mark Fleishman, and acclaimed theatre innovators Brett Bailey and Mandla Mbothwe, lead this discussion. This will be preceded by a special visit to the final rehearsal of Brett Bailey's superbly evocative medEia before its extensive European tour. The discussions will culminate in a panel of innovative theatre makers that talk to new trends of theatre making and text.

Directors and Directing: Playwrights will take place at Hiddingh Hall, University of Cape Town (UCT) Hiddingh Campus, Orange Street, Cape Town from 24 - 26 August 2012. Tickets for this weekend long event are available through Computicket from Monday, 6 August and cost R175. This includes all talks and performances, the opening function, lunches and light suppers. Single day tickets are R100 for Friday, 24 August, R75 for Saturday, 25 Augusts and R50 for Sunday, 26 August. Student tickets are R140 for the entire weekend, R80 for Friday, R60 for Saturday and R40 for Sunday.

The full programme will be available from www.gipca.uct.ac.za from Wednesday, 1 August.

For further information, contact the GIPCA office on +27 (0)21 480 7156 or email fin-gipca@uct.ac.za.

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