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'Lady Tshawe'
Nomashawekazi Damasane

Photo: Fusion Media Group

HERE, THERE, NOW: Bulawayo-London

Nhimbe Trust welcomes another exciting artistic collaboration - "HERE, THERE, NOW" – an international storytelling project between young women actors of Bulawayo and West London, in partnership with the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre of London, UK, under Nhimbe's long-running Women in Theatre & Television programme.

The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre said in their announcement on 8 April, "We are delighted to be partnering with Nhimbe Trust Zimbabwe and the British Council on Here, There, Now, a new digital storytelling collaboration that will bring together young Black women, aged 18 – 25, from West London and Bulawayo, Zimbabwe to create work exploring themes of womanhood, identity and race. UK-based theatre director and writer Monique Touko and Zimbabwe based award-winning actor, creative, poet and director 'Lady Tshawe' (Nomashawekazi Damasane) will lead a series of workshops throughout May 2021.

In response to Black Lives Matter and events of 2020 including the ongoing effects of the pandemic, the online collaboration will provide young women the agency, power and platform to share their voice and stories with others who are experiencing the same issues from the other side of the globe. Online workshops will run simultaneously from London and Bulawayo as participants come together to create monologues inspired by their individual experiences yet which will be performed by their counterpart overseas. The monologues created through the workshops will be filmed and shared online and available to watch in July.

Monique Touko said: "Here, There, Now provides a great opportunity for young Black women to not only develop skills in playwriting, creative writing and performance but also to explore their identity

in their home country and empathise with those based in their partner nation. I hope they will feel emboldened through this exchange of ideas and feel a strengthened sense of community. Personally too, Bulawayo is the birthplace of my Mother and a place I hold dear to my heart. The opportunity to make and create cross-culturally particularly at this time is beyond exciting. In addition, being a Black woman is beautiful and complex and exploring it in this way in the shadows of Black Lives Matter feels right and highly nourishing. I'm looking forward to seeing what we create."

Lady Tshawe said: "I am excited and honoured to be given this opportunity to be a part of this project. I am particularly looking forward to seeing how the young ladies interact with the topics and with each other using the 'new normal' format of work being done online. This exchange, I believe, will not only foster working relationships but will inspire the participants to explore and challenge themselves creatively."

Rob Lehmann, Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, Director of Young Lyric, said: "Here, There, Now is a new and exciting opportunity within the Young Lyric offer that connects young people from West London internationally with their peers to acquire a local, national and international perspective on the world through the use of theatre and creativity. We are delighted to be working with both local and international collaborators and look forward to developing a partnership with Nhimbe Trust who have a track record of artistic excellence with young people."

This project is led in partnership by the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre and Nhimbe Trust and is funded by British Council as part of their Digital Collaboration and Storytelling Grants scheme.

The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, London

The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre is one of London's leading producing theatres. For a hundred and twenty five years, they have welcomed some of the world's finest writers, directors, actors and theatre companies to their stage. From Harold Pinter to Tanika Gupta; Sir John Gielgud to Sheila Hancock; Complicite to Frantic Assembly.

Right in the heart of Hammersmith, they **produce bold and relevant world-class theatre**, committed to being vital to, and representative of, their local community and to being a major force in London and UK theatre. They develop and nurture the next generation of talent, and provide opportunities for young people from all backgrounds to discover the power of creativity.

<https://lyric.co.uk/here-there-now-international-digital-storytelling-project-announced/>

Nhimbe Trust, Bulawayo

Based in the city of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, Nhimbe Trust is an arts education organisation and a leader in cultural policy research, training, advocacy and defending freedom of creative expression.

Nhimbe's *Women in Theatre and Television (WITT)* programme provides vocational training and resources to emerging women writers, actresses, directors and producers. WITT regularly presents the work of these women and empowers women's voices on stage. The programme has grown through the support of Africalia, Belgium over a number of years.

www.nhimbe.org

The British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. They build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. Last year they reached over 80 million people directly and 791 million people overall including online, and through broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934 The British Council are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

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