

MEDIA ADVISORY

Can Themba's The Suit -- then and now: A Critical Reflection

ATTENTION: EDITORS, PRODUCERS, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL REPORTERS
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This year marks the 23rd anniversary of freedom, to reflect on effect of inequality imposed by the apartheid system, the College of Human Sciences at UNISA in collaboration with the Market theatre is hosting a panel discussion to interrogate the meaning of the Suit in the present day South Africa (post-apartheid).

The Suit, a famous work by Can Themba is a story of love, commitment, Sophiatown swag all wrapped in the fabric of apartheid imposed poverty. The story set in Sophiatown, has a personal and intimate feel to it. It speaks to a number of issues worthy to be discussed in order to build narratives that remember the forgotten lives of the people of Sophiatown and how their lives were impacted by apartheid and deferred dreams.

The story wraps itself around the feminist narrative, so profoundly built around the character of Matilda, revisited recently by James Ngcobo, who zooms in and is delicately imaginative on Matilda, making her a larger than life personality – whose dreams and a mirrored self can be seen dancing on stage.

This universal and multi layered story with an ability to affirm Africans, was first written in the 1960s, and banned by the South Africa's apartheid government. When 'democracy' was introduced in 1994, the play re-emerge at the Market Theatre through an adaptation into a play by Mthobi Mutlootse and Barney Simon. This multi textual work – film, story, theatre – is symbol and metaphor for life, love, work, and dreams, for black people during apartheid, particularly for a domesticated Matilda who from boredom ends up having an extramarital affair with an old lover.

Like many other similar stories and writers who overtly and covertly challenged apartheid, the success of the Suit and Can Themba were harmed by its banning. This story and its narrative were removed from their audiences' reflective gaze. It is therefore worthy to continue reimagining Can Themba and his work through theatre, academia and popular culture, among other spaces – to keep this important writer as part of a collective memory and celebration of a sterling work of art.



The invited panelists will engage with the play (specifically the current production) as well as critically reflect on some of the themes in the story. Panelists include:

- Mr Sipho Mahala – Writer and Playwright
- Mr James Ngcobo – Artistic Director: Market Theatre
- Professor Puleng Segalo – Head of Research and Graduate Studies Unisa College of Human Science

“Through this panel discussion, we seek to develop a vibrant debate that engages with the overall role of the arts in society in the post-apartheid dispensation. This is a timely conversation necessary not only for the academic platform, but one that highlights the intersection with the arts, as well as the various communities the work is set to engage with” said Professor Puleng Segalo, Head of Research and Graduate Studies Unisa College of Human Science

The event is taking place as follow:

Date : Wednesday, 21st June 2017

Venue: The Market Theatre (Market Photo Workshop Auditorium, Market Square. JHB)

Time : 18H30 for 19H00

“These intersectional spaces are critical in showing the multi-dimensional way in which the Suit and other similar work speak to issues of national consciousness, personal wellbeing as well as scholarly work through which the academy can construct an extended lens” concluded Prof Segalo.

Members of Media are invited to attend the event

END!!

For RSVP please contact Tommy Huma, on 072 218 6197 / 012 429 6390 and Edgar Rathelele on 082 059 9243 / 012 429 6930

ISSUED BY UNISA MEDIA AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE

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