

The Herald



Play tackles dark side of life in the Diaspora

By Jonathan MbiriyaMveka

I had a surprise call from Stanley Makuwe. Yes, that award-winning playwright and author based in Auckland, New Zealand.

A nurse by profession, Makuwe came back home this month and he was in his usual jovial mood. He wanted to tell me how Zimbabwean theatre (or is it African theatre) is doing in New Zealand.

Of course, the Zimbabwean-born is famous for his role in trilogy of a horror movie called Underworld: Rise of the Lycans. In that movie, Makuwe plays Raze, an older Lycan, the right hand man of the Lycan leader Lucian.

According to the synopsis of the movie, in the year 1373, when Raze was in his mid-30s, he was called upon to defend the land from European Lycans and vampires when the war spilled from Europe to Africa.

During a battle, Raze was turned into a Lycan by Lucian who was impressed by his battle prowess and he was shunned by his tribe.

He then joined Lucian and the Lycans in the fight against the vampires. For those who have not yet watched, the flick you might want to do so and see Makuwe.

This was perhaps his major breakthrough in his eventful career as a playwright, actor and producer.

But during the formative years of African theatre in New Zealand Makuwe says they got little support until such a time when Africans got involved in telling their own stories in their own way.

He established what is known as the African Pacific Production, a company that seeks to bridge theatre between Africa and the Pacific.

Their first show was held last year and the company has been steadily churning out plays to critical acclaim. Besides bridging the gap, the company seeks to

preserve the African culture as something the youths living in the diaspora can be proud of.

However, the problem is that the productions do not have professional actors, but feature Africans from across the continent who live in New Zealand.

So far one of the actors who made a huge impact from stage theatre to radio is Andy Brown's daughter Devona Brown, who landed a role in one of the radio plays in New Zealand.

According to Makuwe Zimbabwe is immensely talented unlike in New Zealand where one has to "squeeze the talent out of the small community".

He however, said for theatre to grow, the Government should support the arts.

"My visit here has been an eye opener, but I feel that Government should fully support the arts. In New Zealand, there is the Auckland Theatre Company which is the biggest in size and productions," Makuwe said.

His latest production titled The New Road will be premiere at Theatre in the Park on September 29.

The play tackles the dark side of life in the Diaspora. It also looks at issues of sexual preferences.

And what happens when the darling of 'fat ugly men' in mysterious exotic locations grows old, falls sick and can no longer get cash in abundance to throw parties and get the necessities of life?

Sammy, a Zimbabwean who has spent 20 years enjoying the delights of life in the so-called First World, decides to come back home.

Disconnected from both his motherland and mother in Africa, and unable to relate to his brother James, with whom he lives, Sammy finds himself facing the situation of many diasporans.

Being sick and having no money would be another death sentence . . . The New Road, produced and by Daves Guzha sets out to probe these difficult questions, but without being difficult to digest.

Written by Makuwe, it features an accomplished cast of award winners: Tafadzwa Muzondo and acclaimed stand up comedian Michael Kudakwashe (both fresh from the currently running "Heal The Wounds". The 2007 Nama Best Actress Eunice Tava joins the two.

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