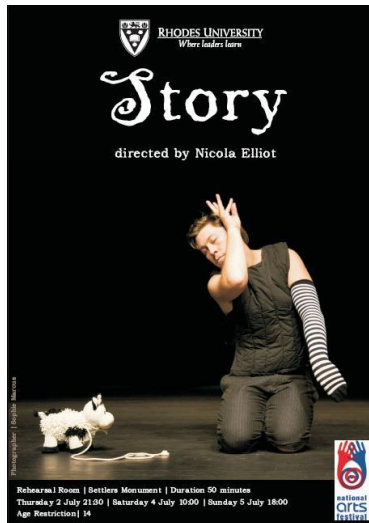


Rhodes University DramaDept presents



Story

A story about stories. About how we make sense.
About how we make.

By Nicola Elliott and the cast

Rehearsal Room | Settlers Monument

Duration | 50 minutes

Thursday 2 July 21:30

Saturday 4 July 10:00

Sunday 5 July 18:00

Age Restriction | 14

www.ru.ac.za/drama

About Nicola Elliott

Through participating in school theatre productions, Nicola Elliott developed a love and appreciation for theatre. In 2003, she enrolled at Rhodes University to train in physical theatre and, quite soon, was drawn to choreographic practice.

She has performed in various university and semi-professional theatre productions, including *A Great Year*, devised and directed by Lindy Matshikiza and Dani Marais (NAF Student Production, 2004); *The Marat/Sade* by Peter Weiss, directed by Brink Scholtz (2005); *Expeditions to a Baobab Tree* directed by Heike Gehring (NAF, 2006); *Crumbs* directed by Dani Marais (NAF, 2007), and *Medea-M/other House* directed by Ingrid Wylde (NAF, 2007). She has also performed in dance productions, including Alan Parker's *Major/Minor* (FNB Dance Umbrella, 2009).

Her choreographed works have been seen at Rhodes as well as on the national platforms of the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, the FNB Dance Umbrella and the Klein Karoo Nationale Kunstefees. These works include *Shades* (2006); *Judi Dench told me this in confidence – now I'm telling you!* (2007); *Ballad* (2008) featuring Acty Tang and Alan Parker; *Quartet in fast and sparse* (2008), and *This part should be uncomfortable* (2008-9). She is currently working on a Rhodes production for the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, entitled *Story*.

Nicola is affiliated with the Grahamstown-based, The First Physical Theatre Company and teaches open Pilates classes for their Body Forms programme. She tutors for Rhodes Drama and is also currently reading towards her MA in Choreography.

About The Work

Nicola Elliot's influences include formalist choreography, relying on language and structure in the dance form, apparent in her meticulous attention to detail which lends her work a certain subtlety. Her pieces, while holding to a tight structure, incorporating repetition and rhythm, are infinitely tender. The cast become a part of the choreography, providing a glimpse into their personalities and therefore softening, humanising the particular movements.

Nicola's themes revolve around the theatre. She is interested in the process of performance, and the masks which performing seem to enforce. In her work she tries to break down these constructions. By looking through, or behind the mask she forces the charade to the surface, this is what makes Nicola's work so fascinating. There is a certain humour in denying the performer his or her performance. Instead of becoming a character, they remain themselves. Instead of acting on a stage, they are themselves on stage, moving in a way that they have discovered, with the help of the choreographer.

In order to understand the theatre, Nicola feels, one must experience as many aspects as possible. She encourages herself to work for and with other theatre practitioners as much as possible.

About *Story*

Imagine a room filled with potential stories, a myriad of worlds waiting to be opened and explored. How to begin? How to even attempt one when the others are waiting? This is one of the quandaries raised in *Story*.

Judi Dench told me this in confidence – now I'm telling you! was produced in 2007 by Nicola. *Story* stems from that seed: a continuation of the theme of theatrical performance. How does one exist on stage? Theatre has so many different layers to peel away, and the core layer is the stage presence. It is a matter of identity, the tension that arises between self and stage presence.

In order to pick at the layers of performance, Nicola draws from her cast. In *Story*, the cast comes from a number of different backgrounds in theatre, directing, applied theatre, choreography and dance: all at varying stages in their training. This gives Nicola a range of performances which juxtapose and complement each other. By setting the cast various tasks, problems to solve, they reveal their personalities. These personalities become the core of the piece, shaping it and giving it life.

Cast

Lucy Kruger

Joni Barnard

Khaya Mthembu

Mia Arderne

Byron Davis

Tshego Khutsoane

A note from the Cast

1. How do you feel about working on Story?

We have creative freedom, to make our own work, contribute to the piece.

We have to learn to trust ourselves, because Nicola trusts us.

We get to work with a range of people; we are all involved in different disciplines, and all from different years, so it is very exciting.

2. What has been your personal contribution to the piece?

We all come from different backgrounds, so we bring what we know.

We mainly bring ourselves. There aren't any characters, so we are performing as ourselves. There is no sense of hiding behind something.

3. What is it like working with Nicola?

She changes her mind quite often, but always seems to be in control of the performance. She gives very clear instructions.

We make a huge amount of work and then cut it down later.

We also all get on together, Nicola fosters good relationships.

Rhodes University Drama Department

Rhodes University Drama Department offers an integrative approach to drama studies. We emphasise the body as expressive medium in locating and training unique, indigenous performance languages. Most of our teaching staff are practitioners themselves affording students an intensive interface between choreography, performance, theoretical and administrative studies. Our strong undergraduate programme prepares students for a comprehensive selection of eleven Honours papers. Last year (2008) this department saw six MA candidates graduate in contemporary choreography and dance performance.

Each year the Rhodes Drama Department and resident companies Ubom! and First Physical Theatre Company produce at least ten productions at the National Arts Festival with alumni featuring in over thirty. To date, we have produced four Young Artists Award winners, taught four of the six SA performers selected for Cirque du Soleil (2008) and our staff have presented productions and conference papers in more than ten countries. Our alumni stretch from the Hollywood sublime (the Borg Queen) to the Boksburg ridiculous (Twakkie), to five of the ten South African university dance and drama departments. In recent years, graduates have won Arts and Culture Trust awards, Naledi awards, FNB Dance Umbrella awards, Gauteng MEC Dance and Choreography nominations, a SPAT award, a Daimler-Chrysler South African Choreography nomination and a KZN DanceLink nomination.

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