

This interview won't go viral

 By [Johann M. Smith](#)

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How do you start a revolution in an age when a quirky Johannesburg traffic officer gets more press than politics?

QwaQwa-born poet, producer, director, performer, playwright and facilitator Napo Masheane didn't ask it, but she might as well have. Her new theatre production, *A New Song*, is an attempt at bringing us something real - a taste of South Africa before and after apartheid.

And she's not doing it for hits; she's doing it because it matters. I sat down and found out more.

"Don't think that when you talk about deep, real, thought-provoking issues [you] will get a thousand followers let alone make it as a cover girl."

■ Welcome to BizCommunity, Napo Masheane. It's been a year since the unveiling of *A New Song*. How has 2015 treated you?

Thus far it has been a beautiful, affirming, challenging year - from the beginning of the year completing my Masters in Creative Writing with Rhodes University, to the great consistency in terms of different performances featuring my work at the Soweto Theatre, State Theatre, PACOFS, and the Market Theatre. Moreover, I was given the opportunity to expand from poetry and theatre writing into screen writing for Umlilo, Rhythm City and Ya Lla.



■ *A New Song* has already garnered serious kudos. Your play is one of 11 new works for the Royal Court of London's Play Writing Programme and it's the first to grace the John Kani Stage at the Market Theatre. What can we expect when it debuts this October?

I keep reminding myself there must be a good reason for Elyse Dodgson [from Royal Court Theatre] to have pushed me to be part of such collective of playwrights. It's a humbling experience to have someone believe in a seed of a crazy idea that's turned into one of the best plays I've written. When it comes to the John Kani stage, honestly I keep telling myself that there is no pressure. But this is nerve wracking. This means I have to outdo myself.

■ ***You were partly inspired to write A New Song because so much of the arts is dedicated to iconic males, such as Mandela and Bansi Sizwe. Do you feel SA lacks the heroic American charm of someone like Rosa Parks?***

The story of the ordinary woman - told by women for women - has not taken centre stage. This play (inspired by my two grandmothers, who were domestic workers) pages through the memory of revolution created by a woman next door, a woman who will not go down into history books and be celebrated through song by her own people.

■ ***A New Song honours and celebrates those ordinary women - especially those on the other side of 1994 - by taking us from the past and into the present. Would you describe it as a zeitgeist?***

Yes. It captures a political moment in our history through a collective spirit of ordinary women who took a stand against a system that did not serve the needs of the majority. A New Song displays a conversation between two generations about the importance of the struggle journey and how we need not forget the sweat and tears of what was sacrificed for our freedom. And that those who were part of the struggle should also account and pass on the baton.



■ ***Let's admit it, the only headlines regarding women in SA involve Boity Thulo's butt and Zinhle's saucy love life. Do you think the present will one day be a story worth telling?***

No story teller should think that the real essence of revolution will be made a poster face. What I mean is, don't think that when you talk about deep, real, thought-provoking issues that mirror the challenges that ordinary people in our society, one will get followers on social media let alone make it as a cover girl.

■ ***On that note, do you feel that someone is speaking up for young women of today or is social media already taking care of that?***

People on social media find the liberty to say whatever they want to say. There are women activists who are doing phenomenal work when it comes to dealing and talking for that young girl who is being abused, raped or assaulted by others. They use different platforms and opportunities to speak for a girl child. People like Professor Pumla Gola, Simphiwe Dana and many more.

■ ***Napo what a pleasure. To close off, when can we see A New Song, how much are tickets and where can we get them?***

A New Song will be showing from 28 October 'til 1 November, 2015, at The Market Theatre. Tickets are sold for R100 at

ABOUT JOHANN M. SMITH

Johann MSmith is a music journalist turned content hacker. Known as the IDMMAG launch designer, Johann specialises in entertainment, travel and social commentary. Or as he puts it: "I speak as and for companies through social and design."

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