

Rising through the ranks: Q&A with new manager of The Fugard, Lamees Albertus

 By Ruth Cooper

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As of 1 March 2020, Lamees Albertus will assume the role of general manager and producer of the iconic The Fugard Theatre in Cape Town. She will be taking over the role from previous managing director and producer, Daniel Galloway, who steps down after 10 years of running The Fugard to pursue independent producing projects.

Albertus joined The Fugard Theatre nearly 10 years ago as Galloway's office assistant and very first team member. She has risen impressively over the years to establish herself as a formidable and highly respected co-producer and theatre manager.

We go in touch with Albertus to chat about her new promotion, plans for The Fugard and supporting the arts.



Daniel Galloway and Lamees Albertus - © Claude Barnardo

■ ***Congrats on your new position! From office assistant to general manager and producer, can you tell us what inspires and drives you?***

Thank you so much! I am overwhelmed and excited!

I am inspired by enthusiastic and kind people. People who are passionate about what they do and try to always be and want better.

I was raised to always give 100% on whatever I am doing or working on. A good work ethic with trust and dedication was drilled into me from a young age. These lessons still drive me to this day.

And, of course, theatre-making. I love making theatre. Watching an audience watch and react to a show for the first time gives me goosebumps to this day.

■ ***What are some of the main challenges and opportunities that come with this new position?***

One of my big challenges will be creating a new workflow that suits my style and vision, and then to get the team to buy into it.

While my previous job responsibilities included leadership, this change in title and responsibility will need me to gain the confidence of the team in a different capacity. A team that will be looking to me for the direction of the business and productions.

I am incredibly excited by the opportunity to be able to create these systems and in doing so mould and lead The Fugard Theatre to further successes and recognition in the arts in South Africa.



Lamees Albertus - © Claude Barnardo

■ ***How have you seen theatre productions and audiences evolve in your 10 years working at the Fugard?***

Productions and audiences are always evolving. Productions evolve as technology and the team's experience evolves. We have all been learning along the way and each production has been impacted by that growth.

I have often tried to find a pattern with audiences – from show to show, over a year, during seasons but as soon as I think I have figured them out, it changes.

With most productions we have presented, there has been a percentage of the audience who has never been to the theatre before or don't often go, but something about a particular show interests them. I love that the shows we have created over the past 10 years were able to speak to such a diverse and ever-changing/growing audience.

■ ***What are some of your goals with the theatre, any major new developments or strategies in the works?***

My goal is to continue to find ways to make The Fugard Theatre sustainable while at the same time ensuring that the work that we present is world-class and inclusive.

We have spent the past 10 years producing and presenting a wide variety of work. Our central focus moving forward will be on commissioning new writing from South Africans telling our stories. We have a country with a rich history and incredibly talented writers, directors and performers. The next chapter for the Fugard definitely includes championing these stories and artists.



Fugard Theatre's 2020 lineup announced

3 Sep 2019



■ ***How do you feel the arts in South Africa still need to be supported?***

The arts need audiences. The arts need funding. The arts need support.

Eric Abraham's support of the arts and, in particular theatre, in South Africa has been unwavering and unmatched.

The arts can be such an important part of development in South Africa. There have been several studies done on how much the arts can positively impact growth in kids and people in general. While it is entertainment, it also allows really meaningful themes to be addressed and encourages thought and conversation. The arts can only develop and find sustainability if it is supported.



How sweet the sound of Kat and the Kings

Eugene Yiga 16 May 2012



■ ***What have been some of your favourite productions that have been shown at The Fugard?***

There have been so many. Each production has been special to me in its own way. If I had to choose then it would be from first experiences for me.

Kat and the Kings, the first musical. *West Side Story*, our first large-scale production. *A Number*, my first experience with international actors. *The Bird Watchers*, my first production with Athol Fugard himself. *The Rocky Horror Show*, my first experience of a cult audience experience. The list just goes on.

The magic of theatre has definitely not been lost on me yet. :)



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■ ■ ■ What new 2020 productions are you most excited about?

Our artistic director, Greg Karvellas, has put together an incredible season. I am very excited about the various new commissions we will present this year. I am also greatly looking forward to presenting our very first Shakespeare production – *Hamlet*, directed by Neil Coppen.

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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