

Action-packed political thriller opens TUT's theatrical season

by Gerrit Bester

Known for breaking new ground, the Department of Performing Arts, Faculty of Arts and Design, will open its theatrical season at the Breytenbach Theatre with the action-packed political thriller ASKARI on 25 May (Africa Day). TUT is the first university in Africa to stage the play.

The multiple Naledi Theatre Award-nominated and winning play, which premiered in 2021, tells the story of freedom fighters who were double agents, informers, intelligence analysts and deadly assassins for the Vlakplaas counterinsurgency unit that specialised in executing and torturing anti-apartheid activists.

The playwrights are Sello Maseko and Mduduzi Nhlapo, who doubles as a choreographer. This creative duo has received several accolades for the play, the latest one being a Humanities and Social Sciences Award in the Public Performance category.

Directed by Maseko, ASKARI follows men and women who infiltrate organised civic movements and student organisations to recruit unsuspecting youth and influential leaders. It interrogates their choice to turn from insurgencies to counterinsurgencies, from community activists to mass killers.

ASKARI delves deep into the personal accounts of these individuals who administered pain, fear and death. These stories of betrayal, death, redemption and forgiveness are captured through music, dance and powerful storytelling.

"TUT always strives to be a university of the people and walk the journey from good to great," says Dr Rostislava Pashkevitch-Ngobeni, Head of the Department of Performing Arts and producer of the TUT production of ASKARI. "TUT is the first university in Africa to participate in the journey of this ground-breaking production," she adds.

With this production, Dr Pashkevitch-Ngobeni took the very brave step to delve into the history of South Africa and the many opportunities it presents for storytelling. It was also an opportunity to expose her students to the history of this country.

Dr Pashkevitch-Ngobeni emphasises that her Department is proud to tackle this pilot edition of revolutionary work and to bring industry and higher learning together to produce future-ready graduates.

The production is also the first to cater to the Faculty's vision of addressing social ills through Activism, a portmanteau of art and activism.

ASKARI, which features a cast of TUT Performing Arts students, will be staged at the Breytenbach Theatre (137 Gerard Moerdyk Street, Sunnyside) as follows:

25 – 27 May @ 19:00

28 May @ 15:00

30 May – 1 June @ 19:00

Tickets: R50

For more information and bookings, please contact 012 382 2562, or send an email to breytie@tut.ac.za