



Photos by Giovanni Sterelli

Nomhle Nkonyeni as Mama (right) and Mzwakhe Mdimba as Tata.

The Return

All families – whether they be in North America, Europe or Asia – have danger zones, areas that are best avoided for the sake of tranquility. In “The Return,” a South African family tears down the barriers of its danger zone to reveal past hurts and new ground that they’d never treaded before.

Written by Fatima Dike and presented by Artscape in association with the Siyasanga Cape Town Theatre Company (both based in South Africa), “The Return” is the only international production at this year’s National Black Theatre Festival. The play revolves around the Somdaka family, which makes its home in Langa, Cape Town, South Africa’s oldest black township. Buntu Somdaka returns to his parent’s modest home after nearly two decades in exile; he brings with him his beautiful African-American wife, Isis. There is tension right away as the traditional African values that Buntu’s parents embrace contradicts the lifestyle of Buntu and Isis, both high-power professionals.

But there is an even bigger can of worms that is opened. The death of Buntu’s younger brother has never really been addressed by the family. Questions remain about whether he truly died a hero in the struggle against apartheid.

The talented cast includes famed veteran actress Nomhle Nkonyeni, as well as Mzwakhe Mdimba,

Pakamisa Zwedala, Astara Mwakalumbwa and Nobuhle Ketelo. Roy Sargeant is the director. Sargeant, a former theatre professor, is well-known as a producer and director of radio shows, films, television shows and stage productions. He is the co-founder of the renowned South Africa’s National Arts Festival. Sargeant also co-founded the Siyasanga Cape Town Theatre Company in 2002 with playwright Dike. Sargeant is the theatre company’s artistic director.

Dike is a legendary playwright, poet, story-teller and teacher in South Africa. Early in her career, she received the 1979 Papillion Rising Star Award, and has since penned 10 plays that have been staged throughout Africa and beyond. Between 2003 and 2004, she was involved in a cultural exchange with the African-American Theatre Project of the University of Louisville. The production “The Middle Passage” emerged from that collaboration. Dike is slated to receive a Living Legend Award at this year’s National Black Theatre Festival.

Dicky Longhurst is “The Return” set and costume designer. The lighting design is by Alfred Rietmann, and the music selection is by Mbulelo Samby. Jerome Chapman is the stage manager.

Aug. 4 at 8 p.m.
Aug. 5 at 3 & 8 p.m.
Aug. 6 at 8 p.m.
at Arts Council Theater
Ticket Price: \$37



Pakamisa Zwedala

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