

# MOTHER TO MOTHER

Written by: Sindiwe Magona

Directed by: Janice Honeyman

Performed by: Thembi Mtshali-Jones

**AFRO  
VIBES**  
uk arts  
INTERNATIONAL



***Mother To Mother*** is a tour-de- force performance delivered with dignity, sensitivity and humour bringing together three powerhouse women of the arts in South Africa: writer, Sindiwe Magona; director, Janice Honeyman; and actress, Thembi Mtshali-Jones.

The play is loosely based on the murder of young American Fullbright scholar Amy Biehl in Cape Town's Gugulethu township and recounts the events following the senseless killing. It is staged as a fictional personal testimony from one mother to

another in which Thembi Mtshali- Jones, as the mother of one of the four youths accused of the murder, tries to make sense of the events by recounting them in an imaginary communication with Amy's mother.



**ARTSLINK REVIEW by Fiona Gordon:**

**Based on Sindiwe Magona's book, 'Mother to Mother' explores the circumstances surrounding the death of American Fulbright scholar Amy Biehl.**

When artists expert in their fields collaborate in a way that makes sense, the result can be really moving – as it should be with a story of this nature. With the help of lighting which was subtle and beautiful and extremely effective, in the way that an intimate venue really accommodates; music interwoven throughout maintaining the mood, and a set that tells many stories of its own, the

telling of this story is entrusted to the capable hands of director Janice Honeyman and performer Thembi Mtshali-Jones.

The 'mothers' in question – the mother of the young American woman who was murdered in Gugulethu in 1993 at the hands of an agitated group of youths, and who is present only by implication; and the fictional mother of one of those young men. This is essentially a 'heart-to-heart' conversation, in the true sense of the term, which tries to make sense of the cruelty of the situations they found themselves in.

The language is a lovely combination of South African tongues – if fraught with its own issues. It would be inappropriate to be without the Xhosa, but a story of this nature needs to be available to an international audience, so the use of English as an accessible tongue is significant. I really liked that there wasn't anything said in Xhosa which wasn't also said in English, so that people completely unfamiliar with the indigenous language do not miss out on anything, but some of the sincerity of the other mother tongue remains.



The mother tells of an ordinary day in Gugulethu, in fact, in many households – who face their own versions of the challenges of arranging transport and food, and children who won't get out of bed. And how one unforgiving moment in that ordinary day can have repercussions beyond the imaginable. She tells of the guilt she feels because of the part she played in an event spurred by the 'hurt of a nation trying to rid itself of a terrible curse'; and that another mother is 'without, because of me'.

But the spirit of Ubuntu exists so that we can move forward, past the hurt. A concept resonated wholeheartedly by the Amy Biehl Foundation, and in the message of this profoundly powerful play.

**For further information please contact:**

Michaela Waldram Jones : michaela.waldram.jones@gmail.com  
+44(0)7989 323020