

**AN UPDATED
SYLLABUS FOR
THE WOKE**

**SCHOOLS & COLLEGE TOUR
FOR HISTORY / DRAMA STUDENTS**

(Grade 10 and above)

AN UPDATED SYLLABUS FOR THE WOKE

An Updated Syllabus For The Woke is a play on South African history, tracing as far back as possible. That is, *before* the Dutch landed in the Cape in 1652 and all the way up to now. A line is drawn between how history has been taught/represented and the effect that it has on our understanding of the world and our South Africa realities today.

The play does not attempt to recount every detail of South African History - that would be preposterous! Rather, as a critical engagement with history as it is taught, the update refers to an update of the understanding of cause and effect when it comes to those uncomfortable dynamics within our histories, offering these more direct and honest emotional address. Apartheid is not neutral, colonialism's not neutral. Issues of land are not ancient history.

As all good satires do, this play holds a mirror up to the system but also to ourselves as we seek to recognise where and how we lost consciousness, leaving you questioning ... **Are we woke?**

The production premiered in October 2021 at the Market Theatre Lab and was produced in collaboration with the Kwasha Theatre Company and The Windybrow Arts Centre. The production proved massively popular with younger audiences, who are currently experiencing the history curriculum first hand. The production has toured to several schools where we have seen a visible impact on the young students.

Our vision for the next phase of production in 2023 is to reach as many South African schools as possible with this vital engagement, and to gather data through post show discussions, facilitations and audience responses. This data could be used to help update the treatment of the History syllabus as needed, as well as develop a curriculum for Critical Race Theory in South African Schools as part of the Life Orientation curriculum.



ARTISTIC STATEMENT & INTENTION

*'Apartheid and Colonialism cannot be taught from a neutral standpoint. They must be seen for what they are - which is an invasion of the African continent and the maltreatment and devaluing of her people' -
excerpt from Bishop High School for Boys anti-racist manifesto, 2020*

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"The initial idea for this piece was inspired by this excerpt from the Bishop High Schools for Boys anti-racist manifesto in 2020. The excerpt had reminded me to interrogate my own fairly neutral history education, and therefore understanding of history as driven by dates and events. An idea of 'ancient' history that never required me to confront my privilege as a white person living in South Africa. I was already in my late 20s when I realised that I would have been better served in the world to have had a less comforting classroom and curriculum, especially as the conversation around privilege and colonialism entered the mainstream (and social media).

An Updated Syllabus for the Woke is not a critique, but an *engagement* with history as taught. Through our shared memory as a devising group of makers - varied in age, race, gender and experience - we have created a piece that calls for the update that we desired when it comes to context and catharsis in learning about our painful and shameful past. Our hope with this piece is that, by allowing a more nuanced telling of key events in our South African Story, we are able to give learners - and indeed all our audience - a more accurate context for the world and circumstances in which we currently find ourselves. History should be more a teacher than a blueprint : only if we understand the complexities and accurately depict the story of past, can we work toward the brighter future that has been promised to us."

WHY SCHOOLS?

We believe that the story as it is told here is engaging and an important context for ALL learners, whether they choose to further engage with history as a chosen subject. As such, the piece works as a context for Life Orientation learners. When it comes to the piece in relation to various curricula, it is also a perfect fit for History students, as well as drama students as a presentation of satire in context.

As a general rule, we would recommend the piece for Grades 10 and higher (especially when it comes to History students who are encountering the work in their classrooms), though we have performed for entire school groups at once. The piece is a good consideration for commemorative performances, ie : Heritage Day.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

We would like to also use the opportunity given by taking the piece to schools to also continue our research into the teaching of South African History, and as we develop the piece, in turn look to offer options for teaching South African History more accurately and compassionately. In short, gather data in order to create an offer for an updated syllabus for the woke. We believe this data could also be useful when it comes to studies related to including Critical Race Theory thoughtfully in the South African Life Orientation curriculum.

These outcomes can be proposed to schools and boards following a National run.

Depending on the time available and size of the group, we are able to offer :

- The broadly interactive piece (55min)
- A post show group talk back with the makers (additional 30 min) - no additional fee.
- Group facilitation in smaller groups working to understand emotional response to the piece and needs on the learners in terms of how this subject matter can be more thoughtfully taught (1 - 2 hrs) - additional fees may apply.

SCENE BREAKDOWN



SCENE BREAKDOWN / CONTENT

In the 55 min piece, we cover South African History from pre 1652 - now with a focus on contextualising the various colonial acts, giving them content in modern day South Africa. Scene breakdown as follows :

Scene 1: **Introduction** : Traces from memory, questions from the South African History classroom

Scene 2: **In the Beginning** : What do we know about and how do we represent pre-colonial Africa

Scene 3: **Land and Setting (1652)** : The Dutch landing in the Cape

Scene 4: **Settling, Occupying, Advancing, "Negotiating"** : or how to enter where you are not wanted; the coloniser begins to weaponise the advance

Scene 5: **Changing Hungry Hands (early 1800's)** : - More europeans from France, Germany and Britain arrive to take over more land.

Scene 6: **The Scramble for Africa (1881- 1914)** : The arbitrary division of Africa at the Berlin Conference, a dance

Scene 7: **Connecting the Dots from Colonisation to Apartheid (1900's)** : Covering the key laws that institutionalised racism

Scene 8: **Truth or Reconciliation (1990's)** : A look at the failings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Scene 9: **Ubuntu, a performance** : What the 'Rainbow Nation' ideology under rug swept

Scene 10: **Back to current reality (2021-2023)** - Where are we now? Traces of experience



WHO IS INVOLVED?

Written by Hayleigh Evans and Ncumisa Ndimeni, devised in collaboration with the cast.

Facilitated by Hayleigh Evans

Cast: Kgothatso Makwala, Mpho Malesa, Khethukuthula Jele, Martin Grendele and Aalliyah Matintela

Produced by the KwaSha! Theatre Company in collaboration with the Windybrow Arts Centre and POPArt productions

Choreography: Sinenhlanhla Mgeyi

Production design: Toni Morkel

Projection design: Natalie Paneng

Lighting Design: Katlego Dire

Sound Design: Mandisa Hope Vilakazi & Lebogang Rammala

Stage Manager: Siphesihle Fakude

The workshop presentation of this piece was presented as part of the Kwasha Theatre Company and Windybrow Arts Centre (part of the Market Theatre foundation)'s 2021 Season. The piece is currently being produced by POPArt Productions.

POPArt Productions

POPArt productions is a female owned and operated company who have been instrumental in the independent theatre landscape since 2011. In its time as a theatre, from 2011- 2020, POPArt staged over 500 independent productions and continues to provide a support structure for emerging artists and work. Through its various projects, POPArt is committed to investing in the youth with ongoing projects with institutions like the Market Theatre Lab, as well as a work experience project in partnership with Yes4Youth.

POPArt is currently looking for spaces to re-launch as an independent theatre and is kept busy with the company's various touring productions and projects.



COSTS & HOW TO ACCESS A PERFORMANCE

There is a minimum performance fee of R 13000 ex VAT for this production (maximum 100 learners).

An additional per head rate will be negotiated for larger groups or combined schools performances (more than one school at a time).

We currently offer a *"We'll come to you"* option for 2022 and the first quarter of 2023 in Gauteng.

If you would prefer your learners to experience this piece as an excursion in a theatre, please do let us know so we can contact you with appropriate dates ahead of our next performance.

Terms and conditions:

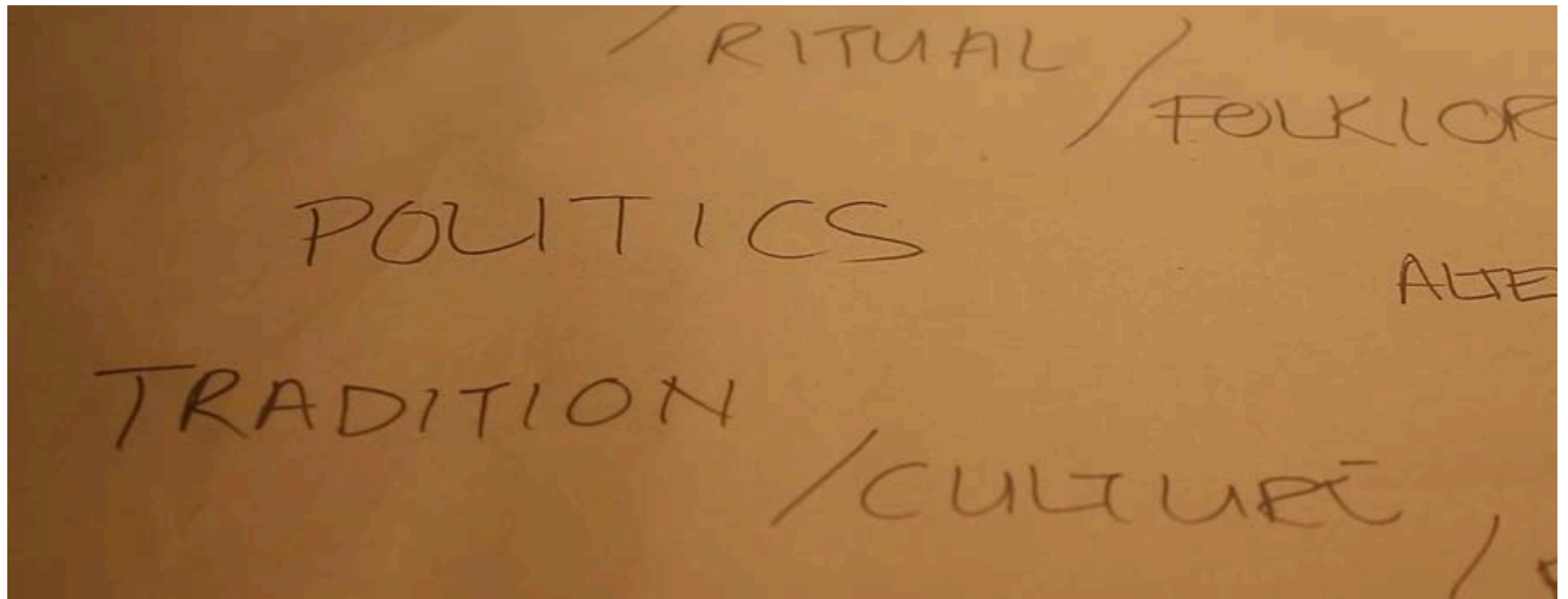
- A minimum of 50% is required upfront, with the balance due the week of the booking. Cancellations will be charged at 50%
- Suppliers/ Concepts are subject to change marginally during development of the pieces. Major changes will be communicated directly with booked parties.
- We are most willing to bring the productions to your school, should the school have a suitable stage and technical equipment. We require a minimum of 1 hour set up time in new theatre spaces.

We do offer a 'Pay it Forward' model that subsidises tours to less privileged schools. For every 10 paid performances, we will offer a discounted performance to a school not in a position to pay in full for the piece.

DIRECT BOOKINGS CONTACT :

POPART is an owner operated small business, so we are fully available for discussion around adapting or customising to your school's needs. Feel free to give us a call to discuss any questions or requests.

For bookings and queries, please contact : Neo Mekgwe at info.popartjhb@gmail.com | +27 66 019 7366



BACKGROUND & PRAISE FOR THE SHOW

'The Syllabus' is a rollercoaster ride of history, decolonialisation, and social media references. From young people, to their parents, the references will keep everyone engaged, and help to build a questioning mind to the piece as it unfolds, as any truly successful syllabus should.' - Eduardo Cachucho, Creative Director of the Faku'gesi African Digital Innovation Festival

For additional context, please feel free to view the following links :

- [3 minute promotional video](#)
- [15 min behind the scenes EPK](#)
- [Process archive](#) (of particular interest to drama teachers)
- Audience responses after the show, October 2021 run at the Ramolao Makhene Theatre : [One](#), [Two](#), [Three](#), [Four](#), [Five](#).

The piece was also shortlisted for the prestigious Berlinspeler Stuktemaark festival 2022 taking place in Berlin, Germany. It has also been selected as part of the Joburg Theatre Heritage month programme for 2022.





THE END