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MLUNGU WAM



Directed by Jenna Cato Bass

92 min / South Africa / isiXhosa, English / Horror

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mlungu wam

Colloquial South African term for 'my employer'. Literally, 'my white person'.

Short Synopsis

MLUNGU WAM is an eerie psychological thriller about Tsidi, a single mother who is forced to move in with her estranged mother Mavis, a live-in domestic worker caring obsessively for her catatonic white 'Madam.' As Tsidi tries to heal her family however, the sinister spectre of 'Madam' begins to stir.

Long Synopsis

Still mourning the loss of the beloved grandmother, who raised her, single mother Tsidi is forced to leave her home in Gugulethu, after an irreconcilable feud with her relatives, who have plans for the family house. With nowhere else to stay and her 9-year-old-daughter Winnie in tow, Tsidi has no choice but to contact her estranged mother Mavis, who has worked as a live-in domestic for the same white 'Madam' for the past 30 years. Tsidi blames her mother for never being around for her or her brother, as Mavis was always obsessively devoted to Madam's white family. Even now, with Madam bed-ridden and her sons overseas, Mavis continues doggedly slaving away in the big suburban house. Mavis welcomes her daughter and granddaughter with reluctance. The house brings back alienating childhood memories for Tsidi, but Winnie is overjoyed with their comfortable new space. Mavis insists that Tsidi and Winnie stay together in the cramped maid's quarters, despite the house's many rooms remaining unused. When Tsidi learns that Madam is not only bed-ridden but helplessly catatonic, she resolves to make the house a home on her own terms, but soon meets disturbing, supernatural resistance. She starts to suspect that Madam is not as helpless as she seems and is conducting a campaign of terror against her. Mavis won't hear it, remaining loyal to Madam and reminding Tsidi how grateful they should all be for Madam's generosity. As Tsidi becomes more frightened for her own and her daughter's safety, a visitor surprises them - Stuart, Mavis's only son and favourite child who was adopted by Madam, descends on the house with his own ideas of what's best for 'the family'. With Tsidi's already troubled bond with Mavis on the brink of self-destruction and her relationship with her own daughter deteriorating, Tsidi turns to her grandmother's spirit to help her uncover the dark truth about Madam's horrifying heritage.

Director's Statement

While recently watching a lot of horror movies, I was struck by how few films in the genre touch on the ordinary everyday horrors in our society. What's more, the vicarious brand of horror that does occur seldom happens to people who actually experience these fears and experience them frequently enough that they can become somewhat immune. I'm referring to the horrors of poverty, disease, homelessness, landlessness, racism, disempowerment and oppression. The horror genre can be an immensely powerful tool for both social critique and thought-provoking entertainment. No matter how you look at it, our political reality is a horror story. Nothing encapsulates this better, or more personally, for me than race relations in South Africa, in which I am implicated. And nothing symbolises this toxicity more than the Maid-Madam dynamic, which has certainly affected my life and the lives of all my contemporaries, across race and class. If there is still any doubt whether our past haunts the present South Africa, look no further than the burden of generational trauma which clings to our backs like a night terror - no matter how many democratic elections or nation-building exercises we go through. *MLUNGU WAM* is an attempt at exorcism, a "*Get Out!*" not to the victims, but to their oppressors.

Another concept that is currently shaping South Africa is that of land expropriation without the compensation that would allow Black South Africans to regain the economic freedom, which has for so long been exclusive to whites, and later to a select black elite. The idea of the tables being turned has become the nation's single most nightmarish or utopian dream, depending on your racial demographic. It's a subject that seems so taboo that very little fiction has tackled it.

Perhaps we've been waiting for a genre to tell a story that would otherwise be too heavy in drama and too distasteful in comedy. Perhaps, strangely, psychological horror may be the most uplifting way of reaching a much-needed catharsis. While so many genre stories feature a 'Monster In the House' - either one who predates the human residents or an external threat trying to get in, *MLUNGU WAM* brings these ideas together in a way that reflects the South African complex, using the opportunity to showcase black women overcoming great odds to find eventual peace... another all-too rare occurrence on screen.

Director's Filmography

Mlungu Wam (2021)

Sizohlala (2019)

Flatland (2019)

High Fantasy (2017)

Love The One You Love (2014)

The Tunnel (2010)

Note From Babalwa Baartman (Co-Writer-Producer)

We chose to use genre to highlight the ongoing inequality in South Africa and the impact it has on our family structures. The story follows Tsidi's point of view and her conscious efforts at breaking cycles of generational traumas while carving a better future for her daughter, using the small amount of access that she has. Through all her efforts, Tsidi feels stuck, as though she is falling into the same cycle, despite her knowledge, consciousness and plan of action. Finding herself in a vulnerable situation, she is forced to tackle these issues head on at the potential cost of her own mental health and survival.

This narrative is dissected via the relationship dynamic between all three generations and the healing that needs to take place in order to move forward. Tsidi and Mavis together confront the role that 'Madam' has played and continues to play in their lives, as well as the power which they subconsciously give this white woman.

This story is an allegory for inequality, expressing the uncomfortable truths of our rainbow nation, while remaining rooted in the essential step of healing. The collaboration between Jenna and I, along with our cast members, has given the film the necessary layers to express the narrative's characters. Through challenging ourselves as a new generation of creatives, we have been able to vocalise much that is crucial to the transformation South Africa needs.

Why This Story?

Though domestic workers are predictable stock characters in the average South African film, "they're usually supporting, in the background," explains Jenna. "I just felt like the life of a domestic worker in South Africa encapsulated a lot about what is wrong with the country, and madams and maids were the ultimate toxic representation. Everyone I know was a child or relative of domestic workers or was brought up to some extent by a domestic worker, or their parents were. Everyone has been touched by them in some way." Sanda Shandu (Stuart) agrees, "I think in the South African context, a lot of households that have domestic workers, they're so much a part of their lives, that they forget they actually have their own lives."

As Jenna and Babalwa started exploring the story, they realised that telling the story of domestic work involved multiple generations, the past, present and future. As Babalwa explains, "It was very easy for me to relate to Tsidi's journey. The idea of this young woman who has been given those "so called" better opportunities than her mother, but finds herself feeling that she's falling into the same trap. There is just absolutely no way of escaping the cycle, while also trying not to pass that onto her child. It's a conversation we have a lot - we may have taken a step forward but we all still feel like we are in servitude of this thing in the past, that we have experienced in this country."

Collaborating on the film was an opportunity to work through this lingering trauma and for the cast especially to connect with their characters. As Chumisa Cosa (Tsidi) experiences it, "A lot of times we get told to get over the past, like everything that happened in Apartheid is in the past. Yes, it did happen in the past, however we still today feel the effects of it and this story, although fiction, shows some of the effects of that system."

It was a subject deeply relevant to the whole crew. On-set chaperone, Lebo Ramokoena, suggests, "I think it's time that we actually sat down and talked about these issues and how they affect us as people whether black or white. Just realizing how much damage has been done and how much we can fix, if we can fix anything, which I'm hoping we can." Luba Bozo, location sound recordist, agrees, "This film is taking part in the conversation and leading the struggle to fight."

The Writing Process

MLUNGU WAM followed a collaborative process without a traditional script, a process which Jenna has developed from her first feature LOVE THE ONE YOU LOVE to HIGH FANTASY and later to SIZOHLALA, where she began to work closely with Babalwa. Jenna explains, “I had tried working in the way I was taught in film school and it just felt wrong. Not just in the result, but in the process, having to communicate with the actors on set and getting them to say things and do things.” Inspired by the methods of British director Mike Leigh, she stepped back from traditional scriptwriting, focusing instead on a process that involves workshopping the characters with the cast, drawing from real life experience where possible, and finally, improvising dialogue around a narrative outline or ‘scriptment’. Jenna continues, “Especially as a white South African, I just realized I was kidding myself if I thought I knew everything. The only way I was ever going to do anything that would maybe even approach authenticity was if I invited other people to take more ownership of the roles they were playing.”

Chumisa comments, “I have never been through a process like this, where we were working as if it is theatre. It is very liberating. We rehearse beforehand, so we know the characters inside and out. So, when we start the improvisation, it is very structured and we’re all talking about things that we know.”

This process allows the cast to hold the characters to their own experiences. As Babalwa expands, “Everyone has some experience of the truth of these characters’ situation and what it represents, so it hits home. You can’t escape those raw emotions just coming out.”

Sanda identified with Stuart’s journey as one of self-discovery, “I relate to him in the sense of being brought up around a lot of whiteness, going to a private school, and seeing how the world treats and perceives people of colour... Sometimes you are in that constant push and pull around white people growing up feeling like I am not white enough for them and they will go back home and then you find out you are not black enough for home and there is just a lot of cultural differences that you are trying to wrap your mind around.”

The character that posed the biggest challenge to Jenna and Babalwa was that of ‘Madam’, who despite spending most of the film off-screen, was always intended to be a constant presence. Babalwa remembers, “We would go back and forth on Madam’s character, and I had to let go. I found myself wanting to vilify her, but it wouldn’t have served the story. We needed to give her the same attention that we have given to the other characters because there is a complexity you know, layers to that level of white supremacy.” She continues, “I think that is the beauty of working with Jenna and for us to trust each other in allowing each other to let go when we need to and getting the other person to take that character to a place they know. At times I even called her the Madam Expert! But in the same way with Tsidi and how I know that character, Jenna also knows when to take a pause and realize that there are certain things with that character that she wouldn’t understand.”

Approach to Genre

Jenna describes her approach to genre storytelling as follows: “For me, genre is the gift-wrapping, it’s the box your story comes in, it’s what the audience sees first and the story is about unpacking that, bit by bit.” For Babalwa, it was her first time exploring the genre, “For me it was understanding how we as South Africans approach trauma and pain. We laugh things down a lot. It’s become a coping mechanism to the point where once again we’re not moving forward, you know, everyone just feels like they are stuck. It’s just really important to push that envelope, because we’ve become

numb to this 'normal' that we have. Everything around us is not normal, it's not okay." This process was far from easy, she continues, "There were a lot of triggers. There was a lot of hesitancy from my side to giving the story the shock and extremeness that it needs, because it is a sensitive subject for young black women in South Africa." Fortunately, the experience was ultimately cathartic, as she explains, "Just through unpacking Tsidi as a character for me was amazing."

Lebo agrees, "It makes sense because the effect that [the past] had on the nation and on our grandparents is not a comic one, and it's definitely not an adventure. Horror is the only way to actually display the feeling of what being black in a suburb means. If you see a black person in the suburbs, you know that person probably works there." Sanda agrees "the scary thing is that a lot of these issues are true. They are reality."

Chumisa observes, "I think using genre helps because we are not confined by reality. The actual story is very real, compelling, and true. However, the medium for telling it is boundless, so we could go wherever we want."

Jenna highlights the important contribution played by fellow producers Samantha Jennings and Kristina Ceyton of Causeway Films, whose genre expertise she relied on, "Especially as producers of *THE BABADOOK*, having that guidance was just really great. They know what is 'scary' is and know how to make sure that is rooted in character and what the story is trying to say."

Samantha and Kristina add, "We have been admiring Jenna's talent and work for years and were very excited when she approached us with a new idea for a socially driven genre film set in contemporary South Africa. This is a perspective rarely seen on screen, exploring the lasting imprint of Apartheid, in an entertaining and moving way. We immediately saw a way to develop and finance it, knowing how resourceful Jenna is and how evolved she is as a directorial voice."

Shooting a Low-Budget Film during a Global Pandemic

MLUNGU WAM was originally set for production in April 2020, just after South Africa went into a nation-wide, Level 5 lockdown due to COVID-19. Forced to delay the shoot, the producing team spent this uncertain time planning how to proceed with the project as soon as it would be safe to do so. Jenna remembers, "We realised that Covid was here to stay. If we wanted to create work, create jobs, we needed to move forward, even if it meant finding new ways to do things."

The first decision was to isolate the cast and crew together for the duration of the shoot, which on a limited budget, meant having everyone stay on the Constantia shooting location, or at Jenna's house. Luckily, the confined nature of the story lent itself to this way of working. Jenna explains, "We were in a fortunate position, being such a small production, that when it all happened, we could relatively easily adapt."

Such an atmosphere of uncertainty isn't ideal for making films, as the set's cleaner Lukhanyiso Khumalo remembers, "It's very scary. You just never knew what's gonna happen." After isolating in their own homes for two weeks, the production team was allowed onto set in August 2020 - where they would remain quarantined together for the following 5-7 weeks. "It was a real *Big Brother* experience," recalls on-set chef, Amanda Manyatshe.

But despite the difficulties, quarantining the production produced many benefits. "Everyone must be a jack of all trades," says Chumisa, "No one really has one job." Babalwa continues, "I liked the fact that Covid took us out of the comfort of doing things the traditional way... I loved that as a team we were in one space, where you could see the level of investment from everyone. It is important to me to create a space of work for people to be themselves and give their all."

This sense of intimacy was appreciated across the team. Lebo comments, "We became this little family. We trusted each other, relied on each other for stuff. The whole feeling of being in the middle of a pandemic but also being safe, with this little group of people. It's a great honor and there is a lot of love in it."

The female-driven crew also defied many expectations, as Chumisa adds, "People have the perception that if you have women working together there are going to be battles, bickering and all of that. We have had the very opposite, because it has been a very peaceful, a very Zen, a very welcoming, a very family space." Luba continues, "You would probably expect from people with different backgrounds put in one house, we would have differences. But we flow so well around each other and the energy is always positive. You wake up in the same house, you bathe in the same house and you are also on set. It is so strange, very different, but it is working."

Beyond safety, staying full-time on location played another important role. Jenna's similar experience making *HIGH FANTASY* had inspired her to do this again, even before Covid became a more pressing issue. Jenna explains, "Staying on location forced us to really deal with the issues of the film. I think you see that in a kind of magical and undefinable way on screen. Of course, there's the pure convenience of, 'no can be late because they are all living here', you know? But then also I think it is something about allowing people to focus and not have to worry about the outside world, especially for a film like this, which is so much about a very specific space, to really be intimate with it and haunted by it and know all the ghosts... that being a part of the process as much as the camera work or something."

Casting

Throughout her films, Jenna has cast performers with a range of acting experience - or none at all; "I really enjoy working with all kinds of people. I love working with trained actors with a lot of experience and I also love working with people who have never acted before. It can create an amazing energy on screen." *MLUNGU WAM* was no exception. Soon after auditioning, Chumisa Cosa, a highly experienced actor, was cast as Tsidi, and was joined by Sanda Shandu as Stuart. Sanda comes from a theatre and improv background, and describes how the process opened his eyes to a different way of making film, "Jenna really pushes us to try different things. She is not stuck in one way so that is a relief for me, thinking that if I am improvising, I don't need find something and then stick to it. She just says alright, found that. Let us do something else."

For the role of Winnie, both Jenna and Babalwa agreed that Babalwa's young niece, Kamvalethu Jonas Raziya, had exactly the right charisma for the role. At the time, Kamva was 9 years old and had hardly any acting experience but, as she remembers, "It was exciting. I was scared, shy... and I just did it. My character, Winnie, is basically like me. We do the same kind of stuff. We have the same favourite colour and we like playing and colouring... She's an inquisitive girl, she likes to ask questions and always wants to know things."

When discussing the role of Mavis, Jenna told Babalwa that her preference was to cast someone who had actually been a domestic worker, rather than a professional actor. "The job is just so physical and so misunderstood, I wanted someone who was intimately acquainted with that, who wasn't performing the work, but had lived that experience." Early in the writing process, Babalwa and Jenna held a workshop in Babalwa's home-neighbourhood of Langa, where they invited domestic workers to share their experiences of the present and past. This greatly influenced the story, and allowed them to canvas for potential Mavis'. Speaking about Nosipho Mtebe, known as 'Lati', Babalwa shares, "She is a good friend of my mother and she is just one of those individuals where, in the context of this country, you can't help but wonder who she could have been, if things had been different. She is just a 'get the job done' kind of person, she is never afraid to get better or

express when she does not get something.... But even I did not expect her to get there so quickly, to channel these emotions. It has just been amazing to watch her take it on and become a pro overnight.

Recalling her experience, Lati comments, "I have never thought in my wildest dreams that one day I will be taking part in a movie. When Babalwa and Jenna approached me, I was scared because I have never acted before. They managed to convince me to take part in the film and my family also encouraged me to take part in the film. I was so nervous when we were about to start shooting, I would have stomach aches. They managed to calm me down and as we progressed, I got used to acting. I do not get nervous that much anymore when I must remember my line or what I am going to say now. I have learnt that anyone can do anything they want, your age does not matter. I am grateful and very proud of the opportunity I got to play in this film. I am also grateful for Jenna and Babalwa for seeing something in me and giving me the opportunity to take part."

When asked what advice she could give to others who are new to or intimidated by acting, Lati suggests, "I would tell them trust and love yourself. Do not put yourself down by saying I cannot do this, think positive and there is nothing you cannot do."

Voices of the Past: Creating the original score for "MLUNGU WAM" with Simon 'Fuzzy' Ratcliffe

When Jenna initially discussed MLUNGU WAM with Simon Ratcliffe of Cape Town's Sound & Motion Studios, they didn't imagine they'd have the resources to give the film any score at all. But, as Simon recalls: "As the concept developed my conversations with Jenna turned towards giving the house a "voice" as such, whispers using the surround sound field to catch the audience's attention and challenge their space, and it pretty much snowballed from there!"

Despite being a veteran of the South African music scene, Simon didn't consider himself a film composer. But when it became clear that this would not be a typical horror score, relying instead on a combination of musical sound design and manipulated vocals, along with an innovative approach to surround engineering and mixing, Simon accepted the challenge.

"We were very strict about keeping a limited palate, which actually made it quite challenging in some ways. For example, creating a feeling of melancholy with strings or piano is quite common, but then to create that same feeling with stripped back Indigenous instruments or designed voice is quite different, and a lot of fun!

"The central element to the score became acapella, female vocals, and so the choice of collaborators was very important. 'Umam'Madosini, or rather Dr. Madosini, is an Indigenous music legend. Having her in studio meant we were able to get performances of traditional songs, *umrhube* (mouth bow) and *uhadi* (bow), as well as recordings of her spoken voice which is just so rich with gravitas."

Madosini was joined by acclaimed isiXhosa rapper, Kanya Mavi, known for her rapid-fire delivery. The collaboration between these musical generations perfectly captured the interplay between Mavis and Tsidi, so central to the narrative.

The final piece of the vocal puzzle was theatre-maker, Nasfa Ncanywa who translates the film's scenes into eerie performances, interpreting *umgqokolo* (traditional overtone singing), as well as an interpretation of traditional church hymn, "Mandihambe Nawe Yesu" for the film's opening credits.

Simon himself performed instruments such as percussion, Mbira, traditional flutes and a lot of heavily warped bowed upright bass to create subtle strings to echo 'Madam' in certain scenes. Jenna

explains, “Babalwa and I agreed that Madam’s presence in the house is already deeply felt and we wanted to give the aural space over to the generations of black people who had worked there, along with Mavis and her family. At the same time, whenever Tsidi approaches Madam’s room, we wanted to build a sense of her more strongly - embodied by violin-like strings.”

Lastly, Simon added real location recordings - such as drawers opening, knives being sharpened, an ominous wind blowing through the windows - to found sounds sourced by editor, Jacques de Villiers, and recorded Foleys with contact mics, such as creaking water basins and bow scrapes.

Being a highly sound design-driven score, the crew at Sound & Motion decided to mix the film in Dolby Atmos. Simon elaborates; “Coming from a score mix background, that was really fascinating. Here I was composing music based on how it makes you *feel by where it is placed*, how close it is to you, how it might be a distant aura or having something jump out at you, or whispered next to your ear, and so on. So not only the sounds and the music, but where you sit *inside* the music.”

The film left its mark on Simon, months later, there are still images that pop into his head at random - still thrilled with what Jenna, Babalwa, and the team have accomplished together.



BIOS CREW

Jenna Bass

Jenna Cato Bass is a South African writer, filmmaker and former magician. Her award-winning films include the short, *THE TUNNEL* (2010), and the collaboratively-created features *LOVE THE ONE YOU LOVE* (2014) and *HIGH FANTASY* (2017), which have screened around the world, including at the Sundance, Berlinale and Toronto Film Festivals. Together with Wanuri Kahiu, Jenna co-wrote the coming-of-age romance, *RAFIKI*, which premiered in Cannes Un Certain Regard in 2018. Her third feature as director and writer, *FLATLAND*, was the opening film of the 2019 Berlinale Panorama. In 2019, Jenna directed the short film *SIZOHLALA* which was Executive Produced by acclaimed filmmaker Jia Zhangke. Her fourth feature film, horror-satire, *MLUNGU WAM*, co-written with Babalwa Baartman, will premiere in 2021. Jenna also teaches Directing and Screenwriting at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and is a founding member of the Free Film School collective.

Babalwa Baartman

Babalwa Baartman is a social entrepreneur and Alumni at the Raymond Ackerman Academy, who uses storytelling as a medium to assess and affect social change for African people. Babalwa is the founder of Sanusi Chronicles, a start-up animation company. She is currently engaged in developing Sanusi's first feature-length animation, *AZANIA*, in collaboration with the National Film & Video Foundation.

Causeway Films

Causeway Films is an Australian film production company, founded by producers Kristina Ceyton and Samantha Jennings, focused on the development and production of entertaining, socially relevant stories that allow original voices to achieve international success. Causeway's first feature film, award-winning psychological thriller *THE BABADOOK* by writer/director Jennifer Kent premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival to great critical and cultural success. The film went on to win many Best Film and Screenplay Awards, including three Australian Academy Awards (AACTAs), the 2014 New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best First Film, and receiving a British Independent Film Awards Nomination.

In 2018, Causeway launched two features, Jennifer Kent's highly anticipated second feature, period drama *THE NIGHTINGALE*, co-produced with Made Up Stories 'Bruna Papandrea. *THE NIGHTINGALE* had its World Premiere at the prestigious Venice Film Festival, where it won two awards, including the Special Jury Prize. Feature film *CARGO*, starring Martin Freeman, was released as Australia's first Netflix Original feature film in May 2018, after premiering at Tribeca, and receiving five AACTA award nominations including Best Film.

With a passion for fostering exceptional new talent, Cambodian-shot feature debut by Rodd Rathjen, *BUOYANCY*, had its World Premiere at the 2019 Berlin Film Festival, winning the Ecumenical Jury Prize, and its Australian Premiere at the Melbourne International Film Festival. The film won Best Youth Feature Film at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards, Best Indie Film at the 2019 AACTAs, the 2019 Mumbai Film Festival Silver Gateway Award, the Grand Jury Prize at the 2019 Political Film Festival Porto-Vecchio and was the Australian submission for Best International Feature Film at the 2020 Academy Awards®.

In 2020, Causeway successfully completed principal photography for three new features: Goran Stolevski's *YOU WON'T BE ALONE* with Focus Features, starring Noomi Rapace, *BLAZE* by Archibald-winner Del Kathryn Barton, starring Simon Baker, and *MLUNGU WAM* by acclaimed South African filmmaker Jenna Cato Bass.

Jacques de Villiers

Born and based in Cape Town, South Africa, Jacques has edited both fiction and documentary features and shorts, as well as numerous music videos, which have played at major festivals around

the world. He has frequently collaborated with Jenna Bass. Prior to MLUNGU WAM he edited FLATLAND, SIZOHLALA, and co-edited (with Bass) LOVE THE ONE YOU LOVE. He is also a documentary director, having co-directed and co-edited THE CREATORS with Laura Gamse, which won the Best Documentary award at the National Geographic All Roads Film Festival. De Villiers has also taught film theory and practice at the University of Cape Town, and was a participant at the 2020 Berlinale Talents programme. He is currently directing and editing a feature film set on five continents, THIS IS NOT MY BEAUTIFUL HOUSE.

Simon Ratcliffe

Simon Ratcliffe is a sound engineer and occasional co-producer. He specialises in film score mixing, is the owner of Sound & Motion Studios and a performing artist.

Simon's career began in music studios and as a recording artist specialising in "world instruments" before focusing on audio post production, and he toured internationally both in music acts, mainly award winning SA group Lark, and as a studio engineer.

He first worked with Jenna Bass on Love The One You Love in 2014 as a film mixer, with Mlungu Wam being their fifth project working together.

While he has worked on over 50 film projects, Mlungu Wam is his first foray as a feature composer, and Africa's first soundtrack mixed in ATMOS.

BIOS CAST

Chumisa Cosa

Chumisa Cosa is a classically trained actress with more than 15 years of experience and over 30 credits under her name. For television, she has played the lively Innocentia in the well-known comic-turned-series MADAM AND EVE, Grace in South Africa's favorite hit drama RHYTHM CITY, and the mischievous Gcobisa in SESTOP LA. Chumisa's ability to smoothly fall into any character has landed her diverse feature roles in MAMA JACK, HOW TO STEAL 2 MILLION, SNIPER: RELOADED. Chumisa studied Media Studies at Boston Media House, took Acting for Stage at the Waterfront Theatre School, Acting for the camera at Perry Scheneidermanryerson, Story lining and Directing for Multicam at Scandal, Ochre Media. Hailing from the Eastern Cape, Chumisa now lives in Cape Town, pursuing more screen time and refining her writing skills. She will soon appear on the 2nd season of local Netflix hit, BLOOD AND WATER.

Nosipho Mtebe

Nosipho – or Latesi as she's more affectionately known - was born and raised in Upington and has always lived a humble life. In her 20's, she took a leap of faith – to chase the big city life of Cape Town. In her new adopted community of Langa, she has endeared herself to many through her involvement in church and other community initiatives.

Always on a mission to better herself, she is always keen to try new experiences and make new connections. At the age of 60 she took up a new hobby of running – something that she religiously does with her grandkids and friends as a social activity and as a way of keeping her "youth". So, it came as no surprise that when the acting bug bit, she threw herself wholeheartedly in the new project and took on the challenge of bringing the role to life.

A mother; a sister; a friend; a lover of her community; an appreciator of all things beautiful ... and now an actor – there's no role too big (both on and off screen) for Latesi not to conquer.

Kamvalethu Jonas Raziya

Kamva, a young aspiring South African actor has always shown a great affinity for the creative arts. She is currently a student, living in South Africa, showing positive strides in her school work and sport related activities such as swimming and netball. Her love for music, acting and community development has been recognized both at school and within her community. Kamva is a ball of energy that always has the ones around her entertained and joyous. Her interest in acting was also a result of her high energy, she prides herself in aiming to show the world what she can do and use her energy and passion on set. She has demonstrated incredible leadership and independence in her ease and ability to go for what she believes in. She is a young African actress destined for ultimate success.

Sanda Shandu

Born and raised in Newcastle KZN, Sanda Shandu is a Cape Town based actor and musician. Not long after attaining a BSocSci degree from UCT, he landed his first professional role in The Fugard Theatre's **Orpheus in Africa** as 'Richard Collins'. He entered SABC3's Presenter Search the same year and finished as a runner up. In the 2016 December season he joined forces with David Kramer once again playing various roles in The Fugard's **District 6: Kanala** musical. 2017 brought about more work at The Fugard theatre where he landed a role in South Africa's legendary hit musical **King Kong** where he portrayed the role of "Lucky" which earned him his first Fleur du Cap and Naledi awards. He received another Fleur du Cap nomination for his supporting role in, **Richard III**, at Maynardville in 2019. On screen you can see him in local TV series **Skemerdans** as "Charlie".

Khanyiso Kenqa

Khanyiso Kenqa was born in Langa Township in Cape Town, to a taxi boss father and police officer mother. He credits his parents' "odd couple" status with putting him on the path to standup comedy. Through his energetic, fast-paced delivery of gags and stories, Khanyiso has a refreshing take on South African life, from politics and social issues, to observations of the everyday, many with a unique twist inspired by his experience.

Khanyiso performs regularly on the comedy circuit and corporate events in front of diverse audiences, all roaring with laughter. He also has had the opportunity to open for the legendary Nik Rabinowitz on his one man show WHAT THE EFF.

Apart from his standup work Khanyiso has performed in numerous commercials including the Southern Sun "You've Arrived" campaign, the Vodacom "Goes Red" ad, and a Spur Restaurants ad. His corporate campaign experience includes working on a Nokia project. He has also featured in SA sitcoms, Stokvel, Going Up Again, and the drama series, "Interrogation Room".

CREDITS

Fox Fire Films
Sanusi Chronicles
and
Causeway Films
present

in association with
Salmira Productions
and
Strange Charm

starring
Chumisa Cosa
Nosipho Mtebe
Kamvalethu Jonas Raziya
Sanda Shandu
Khanyiso Kenqa
Sizwe Ginger Lubengu
Siya Sikawuti
Peggy Tunyiswa
and
Chris Gxalaba

Directed by
Jenna Cato Bass

Story by
Jenna Cato Bass & Babalwa Baartman

Written by
Babalwa Baartman
Jenna Cato Bass
Chumisa Cosa
Nosipho Mtebe
Kamvalethu Jonas Raziya
Sanda Shandu
Khanyiso Kenqa
Chris Gxalaba
Peggy Tunyiswa
Sizwe Ginger Lubengu
Siya Sikawuti
Steve Larter

Produced by
Babalwa Baartman
Jenna Cato Bass
Kristina Ceyton
Samantha Jennings

Executive Producers

Salman Al-Rashid
Sam Frohman
Richard Mansell
David Bass
Jason Newmark

Associate Producers

Stephen Abbott
Simon Ratcliffe

Cinematographer

Jenna Cato Bass

Lighting Design

Warrick Le Sueur

Editor

Jacques de Villiers

Production & Costume Design

Babalwa Baartman
Jenna Cato Bass

Location Sound

Lubabalo Bozo

Additional Location Sound

Abonga Xatsiywe

SFX Make Up Designer

Michaela Young

VFX Supervisor

Stephen Abbott

Composer

Simon Ratcliffe

Casting

Babalwa Baartman
Jenna Cato Bass

CAST**(in order of appearance)**

Mavis	Nosipho Mtebe
Tsidi	Chumisa Cosa
Winnie	Kamvalethu Jonas Raziya
Luthando	Khanyiso Kenqa
Skiping Girls	Sisipho Nukuna
	Awonke Mgushelwa

Young Madam	Verity Price
Grandmother's Voice	Dr Madosini Latozi Mpahleni
Malume Mthunzi	Chris Gxalaba
Siphenathi	Sizwe Ginger Lubengu
Toto	Siya Sikawuti
Xoliswa's Son	Uzile Bam
Xoliswa	Peggy Tunyiswa
Stuart	Sanda Shandu
Jogger	Francesca Varrie Michel
Madam	Jennifer Boraine
Grant	Steve Larter
Anna	Liza Scholtz

Voice Artists	Sindiwe Magona
	Verity Price
	Babalwa Baartman
	Jacques de Villiers

Background Artists	Anna Telford
	Felix Seuffert
	Maya Seuffert
	Otto Seuffert

Ghost Dog	Charlie Bowowski
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CREW

First Assistant Director

Babalwa Baartman

Production Manager

Zeenat Isaacs

Camera & Lighting Assistants

Sike Qhashane

Eliana Nkembo

Production Assistants

Sike Qhashane

Eliana Nkembo

Acting Coaches

Babalwa Baartman

Lebo Ramokoena

Fabrication

Aninka Möller

Chantell Lungiswa Joe

Jenna Cato Bass

Art Department Assistants

Eliana Nkembo
Sike Quashane

Seamstress

Rugaya Dienie

SFX Make-Up

Michaela Young
Juanette Smuts
Jenna Cato Bass

Make-Up Assistant

Miya Rhodes

Research

Evan Wigdorowitz
Jenna Cato Bass

Child Minder & Stand-In

Lebo Ramokoena

Dog Handler

Adam Kent-Wiest

COVID Officers

Zeenat Isaacs
Eliana Nkembo
Babalwa Baartman

Medical Advisor

Shelley Kibel

Stills Photographer & Behind The Scenes

Gray Kotze

Catering

Amanda Manyatshe

Cleaner

Luke Kumalo

Security

Sazi Nkohla

Accountant

Ursula Genthe

POST-PRODUCTION

Picture Post-Production Services

Stealth Donkey Moving Pictures

First Assistant Editor

Farren Fredericks

Edit Intern

Eliana Nkembo

Translation & Subtitles

Frank Malaba

Babalwa Baartman

Online Editor & Conform

Stephen Abbott

Colourist

Stephen Abbott

Audio Post-Production Services

Sound & Motion Studios

Supervising Sound Editors

Richard West

James Olivier

Simon Ratcliffe

Audio Producer

Jade Hill

Re-Recording Mixers

Richard West

James Olivier

Sound Design

James Olivier

Additional Sound Design

Jacques de Villiers

Foley Artist

Jade Hill

Foley Recordist

Carl Roberts

Dialogue Editor

Jack Van Wyk

ADR Recordist

Jade Hill

Sound Effects Editors

Jade Hill

Jack Van Wyk

Post-Production Interns

Thabiso Mabula

Malwande Menelisi

Jané van der Lith

Axolile Ncanywa

Dale Bunding

MUSIC**Original Score Composer**

Simon Ratcliffe

Featured Artists

Nasfa Ncanywa

Dr Latozi Madosini Mpahleni

Kanyi Mavi

Umhrube and Uhadi

Dr Latozi Madosini Mpahleni

All Other Instruments

Simon “Fuzzy” Ratcliffe

Music Editors

Jaques de Villiers

Simon Ratcliffe

MUSIC CREDITS**“Mandihambe Nowe Yesu”**

Traditional Hymn

Performed and Arranged by Nasfa Ncanywa

Produced by Simon Ratcliffe

“Die Zauberflöte - O Isis Und Osiris”

Written by Emanuel Schikaneder, Ludwig Giesecke, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Performed by Arturo Toscanini

Published by Play

“Vukani”

Composed by Mantombi Matotiyana

Performed by Mantombi Matotiyana

Produced by AOI Editions

“Mandihambe Ringtone”

Traditional Hymn

Performed by David Bass

Technical Details

Country of Production: South Africa

Completion Date: 2021

Running Time: 1hr 32min

Language: isiXhosa, English

Finished Format: DCP

Ratio: 2.39:1

Sound: 5.1 / Dolby ATMOS

Logos

Causeway

Salmira

Stealth Donkey

Sound & Motion

NFVF