KWASUKASUKELA:

A Practical Exploration of The Impact of Nguni Oral Storytelling Traditions on Contemporary Physical Forms of Storytelling for Theatre.

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this dissertation from the works of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

The present study is a written explication of the production Kwasukasukela created and staged by the author in September 2001. The production involved a practical exploration of the impact of the Nguni storytelling tradition on contemporary physical form of storytelling for theatre.

In the introduction, the terms of the study: the Nguni storytelling tradition and contemporary physical forms of storytelling, are defined. The theoretical proposal is then laid out, followed by a performance historical context for the study focusing on the works of Herbert Dhlomo, Mbongeni Ngema and Gcina Mhlophe. The final section provides a discussion of the creative methods employed and the discoveries made through the process of creating and staging Kwasukasukela. The study concludes that the bringing together of the Nguni storytelling tradition and contemporary physical forms of storytelling, in the context of a theatrical production, causes changes in both forms, giving rise to a hybrid third form which provides opportunities for the creation of new subject position in theatre practice in South Africa for more critical representations of identity and history.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The research topic which lays the foundation for my work is:

> *Kwasukasukela:* A practical exploration of the impact of Nguni oral storytelling traditions on contemporary physical forms of storytelling for theatre.

This topic is inspired on the one hand by my origins as a Zulu person and my love and enjoyment of storytelling, a tradition which my generation has inherited from generations and generations of our forebears and which I intend to pass on to my children, who are a generation to come. On the other hand, it is inspired by my fascination with the physical movements of the body on stage: physical gesture, mime, dance, which can be used to create meaning in the theatre with or without the simultaneous presence of the spoken word.

Kwasukasukela, is a Zulu term for the English equivalent: 'once upon a time'. Traditionally within the Zulu culture it is used as the opening to a storytelling session whereby the storyteller signifies to her audience that she is about to begin and gains their attention. Nyembezi (1970) defines *-suka-* as follows; to set off/to originate/to grow quickly. He also defines *-sukela* as to spring at or attack/to act without due thought. The suffix *-ela* is used here in place of the final vowel and it means doing something for (somebody else) or on behalf of (234-239). Thus the term *Kwasukasukela* encompasses or signifies an application of energy, spontaneity, practical activity in an attempt to achieve something or to communicate something; from the one who sets it off or originates it, to the one who receives the thing enacted. In the current study *Kwasukasukela* is used:

a) to contextualise the exploration within the boundaries of storytelling, but also within the boundaries of the Zulu culture from which the term originates;

and

b) to suggest the beginning of a process: practical, interactive, exciting and mysterious, perhaps even spontaneous.

In the remainder of this introduction I will briefly define what is meant by the 'Nguni oral storytelling tradition' and by 'contemporary physical forms of storytelling'. The introduction will be followed by an outline of the theoretical proposal for the current study; a presentation of its performance historical context; and a discussion of the creative methods employed and the discoveries made through the practical exploration.

The Nguni Oral Storytelling Tradition

The Nguni are a large group of races who 'migrated from the equatorial rain forest ... towards the South, about 2000 years ago' (Canonici 1996:1). They are divided into two large segments: North and South. The Zulu form part of the northern segment together with the Swazi and the Ndebele. The southern segment consists of the Xhosa, the Mpondo and the Thembu people of the Eastern Cape, all generally regarded as Xhosa.

In this study particular attention is paid to the Zulu and, to a lesser extent the Xhosa peoples. I focus on the Zulu because it is the Nguni segment into which I was born and which forms part of my foundational identity within the South African context. I focus on the Xhosa because they are so closely related to the Zulu in linguistic sound and geographical position in South Africa, and because their traditions of storytelling strongly resemble each other as the studies of N. N. Canonici (Zulu Oral Tradition, 1996) and Harold Scheub (The Xhosa Iintsomi, 1975) have revealed. Canonici's study is of the Zulu traditional stories called *izinganekwane* and Scheub's is mostly of the Xhosa stories called *iintsomi*.

Much of Africa's literature is rooted in orality as opposed to the written literature of the Western world. Nguni storytelling is part of that oral tradition. Canonici (1996) states that 'oral comes from the Latin word *os*, *oris,* which signifies the mouth' (2). But Canonici also says that the oral represents 'the face, the expression and the attitude of the whole person.' Therefore oral communication is not only what is spoken in words, but also what is shown through the body, 'one's presence' as Canonici puts it. He goes on to say that oral communication 'goes beyond the words of the message – one speaks or makes gestures – or performs – to communicate something to others', therefore in order to be performed, oral literature needs an audience just like 'the spoken word needs a listener' (2). Three things stand out for me here: speaking, presence and audience. The oral performer does not operate in isolation, her creative experience is a very public one which involves communicating something creatively to a present audience, in the here and now.

To the above it is important to add a further feature of orality, which is vital to an understanding of how oral creativity operates: memory. Oral literature is a living reality as it is created while being performed in front of an audience. In oral culture there is no system of notation to store information for future use. Oral narratives result from the interaction that exists between the performer of a story, the present audience and the performer's memory. Memory, in oral narratives, becomes an important tool for storing and recalling information in a way not necessary for written narratives. Ong (1982) says that the oral performer remembers in a 'curiously public way' remembering not a memorised text, for that does not exist, but the 'themes and formulas' that she will have encountered before and which she remembers always differently (145). From this we can gather that orality requires no stability of text and no exact repetition of stories, but a recollection of themes and images which the

performer delivers in her own words, spontaneously weaving them together in a creative and original manner as determined by the immediate situation of each performance.

However, despite its improvisatory nature, storytelling amongst the Nguni is a tradition and not a once-off phenomenon. According to Canonoci (1996) tradition comes from a Latin word *tradere,* which means 'to hand down, to pass on, to entrust' (2). From this we gather that something is passed on (the stories), which means that they already exist, otherwise there would not be a handing down. The Zulu understand tradition as *usiko* which refers to a way of life, a certain way in which things are understood and done within any particular grouping of people. *Usiko* is a cultural practice which can be repeated over and over again and thus passed down from older generations to younger ones. And thus *izinganekwane* are *usiko lwamaZulu* (a tradition of the Zulus); stories which have been passed down from generation to generation over centuries.

My encounter with this tradition has been a very practical and vibrant one, in the rural outskirts of KwaZulu Natal in the 1980's. At the feet of my grandmother around the fire, in front of our coal stove or outside on the grass I encountered this exciting and highly entertaining theatrical experience. Growing up, I have met numerous of my peers who have had the same experience in the context of their homes or communities. In this context, the Nguni storyteller, primarily *ugogo,* the grandmother, tells her often well known story to her audience (traditionally children) and her art is at the mercy of their responses and their interests. The more interested and interactive they are, the more creative she can be in her spontaneous delivery. Morris (1989) calls this audience 'fellow artists, participants in the action, audience and critics' indicating the multiplicity of roles the audience plays (92).

The Nguni storyteller requires no formal training. She learns to perform the stories by observing other storytellers perform over and over again. It does not matter how many times the story has been told to the same audience. What matters is the freshness and creativity with which it is told every time they witness it. Audiences even develop a certain favouritism towards certain stories, and could at any time influence *ugogo* to tell their choice of story instead of the one that she wants to tell. From the above one understands that this storytelling tradition is a 'family affair'. Stories are generally told at night before or after supper, once all the daily chores have been completed. Thus they are a good way of uniting the family after a hard day's work. They teach historical, traditional and moral principles in a light and entertaining manner, as the family gathers around the fire, on a hillside or under a tree.

However it is important to note that tradition is not a static concept. It is constantly changing in response to changes in the context in which it exists.

> It is something dynamic, in constant flux or change, that allows for both something ancient and something new and creative on the part of the one who hands it over.
> (Canonici 1996: 3)

And as such the Nguni oral storytelling tradition has been changing over the years. My experience of it is different from my grandmother's and hers was undoubtedly different from the experience of generations before her. Over time the tradition has been sifted through and added onto as the society from which the tradition originated, has come under pressure and experienced changes of values, principles and ways of living. And the shifts happen on the levels of content, context and function within society. For example in the 1960's Harold Scheub visited the rural areas of KwaZulu Natal and the Eastern Cape to study this oral tradition. He found the tradition still ripe in those areas, though an interesting development was apparent in the thematic content of some of the stories performed. Some of the oral narratives he encountered contained themes of apartheid and racism, over and above the traditional themes of

respecting fellow humans, honouring your parents, being weary of strangers (Scheub 1996: xix). One of the storytellers said to him:

> It is the truths embodied in the images of the stories that helped us to endure, all these years before apartheid, during, and they will continue to cause us to endure even after the reign of apartheid.
> (Scheub 1996: xv)

However despite such changes there is an increasing perception and reality that this tradition, as we know it, is dying out. As increasing numbers of black South Africans become urbanised, it is becoming more and more difficult to continue practising the tradition. Television is becoming more influential and young people seem to be more interested in cultures other than their own. There are, however, numerous attempts to preserve the tradition. One example is Gcina Mhlophe's *Zanendaba* storytelling company, whose commitment is to 'promoting the ancient art form of storytelling (Perkins 1999: 80).

The company is also committed to spreading storytelling across the cultures of South Africa and even recording it in print so that people can have a way of referring to it outside its traditionally oral context. For example *Zanendaba* performs and runs workshops in schools, and church groups, and develops books and produces tapes for children. Thus, argues Perkins (1999), 'Gcina has elevated storytelling to a national art form' instead of an exclusively Nguni one (80).

But more interesting to me are attempts to develop the tradition: shaping and channelling it to work hand in hand with other traditions like the Western one. In this sense my production of Kwasukasukela can in many ways be seen as a further development of the tradition of Nguni oral storytelling.

Contemporary Physical Forms of Storytelling for Theatre

The Western tradition of heavily worded, predominantly realist, 'well-made' plays introduced into South Africa through colonisation has come under increasing pressure and challenge in the latter half of the 20th Century. This challenge has resulted in far reaching changes to the way in which theatre is understood and constructed not only in South Africa but world-wide. The trend has been towards a more dynamic, less 'wordy' and more physical, image-based theatre. This image-based approach is what I am referring to as contemporary physical forms of storytelling for theatre, the second stream of inspiration for my research topic.

This style of image theatre or physical theatre encompasses a cluster of physical body languages that are created to communicate meaning to the viewers. Generally it can be 'identified as an eclectic production commonly understood to be one which focuses on the unfolding of the narrative through physicalised events and which relegates verbal narrative – if at all present – to a subordinate position' (Sanchez-Colberg 1996: 40). Hence the focus is mainly on the body and not the spoken text. Fleishman (1996) argues that 'the physical body in South African theatre is a source of primary meaning which constantly challenges the hegemony of the written word in the meaning making process.' He goes on to identify the body as a site of transformation and he identifies two kinds of transformation that occur. The first kind of transformation is where the 'body of the performer begins as neutral and changes in front of the spectator into a multiplicity of characters and images'. Here the actors transform through simple pieces of clothing but most importantly through their bodies to suggest age, build and the essential quality of the character. The second transformation 'involves a physical action or gesture which begins as one thing and metamorphoses into something else passing through a range of possibilities in

between'. In this sense each image is 'dialogical: a play of open ended possibilities interacting between two fixed poles which exist in some form of dialogue with each other' This, he argues, leads to 'a proliferation of meaning which demands an imaginative response from the spectator'(201-205).

My theatrical studies at the University of Cape Town have introduced me to 20th Century theatre innovators like Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski, Augusto Boal and Bertolt Brecht, who have contributed towards the development of this image-based work. Hauptfleisch (1996) calls South African work based on the models of the above practitioners: indigenous, 'alternative western performance form', and he mentions plays like Orestes, Randlords and Rotgut, and Woza Albert as examples of this form (49)[1].

One of the ways of accommodating and equipping this shift in theatre practice, is by teaching techniques which promote this physical image-based style of theatre. An example of such teaching which I have been personally exposed to is the movement courses taught at the University of Cape Town's Drama Department by Jennie Reznek, particularly the 'mime storyteller' project taught to second years. Reznek is a renowned South African actress and a graduate of the Lecoq School of mime and movement in Paris. Her teaching is largely influenced by the teaching she received at that school.

Lecoq (1997) says that storyteller mimes, apply pantomime, figurative mime, and cartoon mime to the telling of stories. With its origins partly in fairground theatre, where actors had to make themselves understood in a very noisy environment, pantomime involves finding gestures in the place of words. Here the hand gestures are supported by the attitude of the body (100-101). In figurative the body is used 'to represent not words but objects, architecture, furnishings', and in cartoon mime

gesture is used 'to release the dynamic force contained within images, (e.g. the actors can represent both the flame and the smoke, the shadows on the wall and the steps in the staircase)' (101). In the mime storyteller project at UCT all of the above elements come into play as the students present their stories in solo performances. However, according to Lecoq this alternating between different gestural languages and the tale being told can be done in a group as well (101).

I would like to note however, that this physical, image-based form is not entirely divorced from the Nguni traditional form which encompasses an aspect of physicality through its use of image, gesture and characterisation. As Lecoq points out 'this work is part of a great tradition of storytelling which exists in many countries in China, or in Africa, where the telling of a tale is accompanied by the gestural evocation of images' (103). And so the divide is not as clear as I might imply it to be.

For me the difference is that Nguni storytelling comes from an oral narrative base to which gesture and physical images are added, whereas the contemporary physical performance forms are reactions to the dominance of the verbal text and can exist without the spoken word. In fact words are used only when it is absolutely necessary. In most cases, the physical embodiment of images takes priority.

THE THEORETICAL PROPOSAL

My intention with Kwasukasukela was to bring together the two forms discussed above in order to explore their interaction. I was interested in finding out what happens when one puts them together in the creation of a theatrical production, using a group of actors as opposed to the single performer of the Nguni tradition.

My first proposal is that these forms impact on each other in such a way as to change both. Although the title points to the impact of Nguni storytelling on contemporary forms, the actual impacting happens both ways as the two forms negotiate with each other in the process of creation. The two forms take on qualities of each other and discard qualities of themselves and in the process give rise to a new and dynamic third form. Hauptfleisch (1997), in talking about the development of theatre traditions in South Africa talks about two distinct but entrenched traditions. The one is the **African** tradition, a performance tradition than evolved from Africa itself and the other is the **European** tradition which can be traced back to the Greeks and Aristotle and was imported to Africa in the past two and half centuries (29). In addition to these he talks about a '**hybrid** tradition, a distinctive new tradition' which has in part developed from the two traditions above but is generically distinct from them (32). This hybrid tradition and its development is what interested me in the making of Kwasukasukela.

My second proposal is that the introduction of the Nguni storytelling tradition in contemporary practice and in relation to contemporary forms, and the resultant hybrid formation, creates opportunities for the development of new subject positions in the discourse of theatre in South Africa. According to Peirce(1989) when a particular individual or group cannot find a subject position for themselves within a particular

discourse, which delimits a particular area of concern or practice, they may be silenced or they may attempt to contest or challenge the dominant discourse (405). Amkpa (2000), in his study of theatre as a space of translations, suggests that 'colonised subjects are historically coerced into a cosmopolitanism and globalism within which their subjectivity is limited to at most mimicry and at worst subject-less-ness' (119). They find themselves wedged uncomfortably between the values of their traditional cultures and those of the West, through which they experience a dualism of forms of life in attempting a process of change (118). In post-colonial societies, a process of hybridisation gives rise to a third space, a space of translations, a space where what is local becomes foreign and what is foreign becomes local, making theatre a space for translating and enunciating anti-colonial subjectivity (116-119). This third space is then a space through which practitioners like myself, contest contemporary South African theatre discourse. It is a space where we try and make sense of the traditional and the Western worlds which we are caught between. Having been politically, economically and culturally silenced historically, practitioners in my position are now opening up new topics and subjectivities in theatre discourse. Kwasukasukela is then a journey of claiming a space for myself in the context of contemporary South African theatre practice and its defining discourse, which is currently, though rapidly changing, dominated by white males. This I try to do through the marriage of the African and the European forms mentioned above and my choice of story, which is not a traditional *inganekwane* but an epic history of Shaka Zulu, one of the most important figures of South African history and most certainly of the history of the Zulu people.

Finally, my third proposal is that the hybridisation process outlined above, and my choice of content, provide an opportunity to challenge dominant representations of history and identity in theatre practice in South Africa.

To put my own work into context I will now examine the work of three theatre practitioners: Herbert Dhlomo, Mbongeni Ngema and Gcina Mhlophe. I have chosen these practitioners because of their contribution towards the development of South African theatre particularly from a black perspective, but also because they are all Zulu by birth and two of them have written plays about Zulu kings. In the next section I will look at their strategies of claiming space within theatre practice in South Africa.

PERFORMANCE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

H.I.E. Dhlomo (1903-1956) is one of the few black writers who did participate in early South African theatre discourse, though in order to do so he needed to adopt an essentially European perspective and approach. Herbert Dhlomo was 'the pioneer in the development of black theatre' in South Africa and 'the father of black drama' (Visser and Couzens 1985). He authored heroic plays about the past, dealing with Zulu chiefs Shaka, Dingana, Cetshwayo and Mfolozi. He also wrote 'biting plays' about the contemporary political and social scene; short stories and poems; and is well known for his long autobiographical poem Valley of a Thousand Hills[2]. It is a pity that researchers of his works have found no records of his play on Shaka Zulu, but I would suggest that a focus on his other works will be sufficient to reveal his approach towards theatre and towards the representation of the history of the Zulu people.

Many of Dhlomo's earlier plays deal with the past reflecting his 'belief that he lived in a time when men (sic) suddenly became conscious of the wealth of their old threatened cultures, the glories of their forefathers, the richness of their tradition

(Visser and Couzens 1985: xiii). Through these historical plays Dhlomo attempts to find role models for his black contemporaries, he turns to figures from the Zulu history who might create a sense of a meaningful identity in the context of a colonised South Africa.

Cetshwayo, a play that Dhlomo wrote in 1936, reveals something of the general form and content of his work. Couzens (1985) says that Cetshwayo was written to defend the 'new African' under threat and to find in the past a legitimising ancestry (201). The play covers themes which range from the concept of love and marriage, to the power and presence of ancestors in the present world, to contemporary political issues like the traditional role of chiefs and kings. For example, with regards to love and marriage, Dhlomo attacks the polygamous form of marriage saying that it should be replaced by a new form of love, 'an individual form of love that can only be found outside of marriage' (Couzens 1985: 199). This to me seems contrary to the Christian ethics that he had encountered through his colonial education, but for him it was a way of creating a counter identifying discourse within cultural practice.

In this play, Cetshwayo is treated as a hero triumphing over white government officials like Shepstone. This historical relationship seems to be a challenge to the political conditions of Dhlomo's own time. It seems that in Cetshwayo (and most of his other writings) Dhlomo challenges the status quo, the government injustices towards black people, particularly educated black people. In his writing Dhlomo fights for a recognition of the status of educated blacks over other 'natives' and alongside white Europeans in South Africa:

> PARK: It seems your policy seeks to distinguish races and not to recognise individuals... Sir that the genius, the soul the aspirations and progress of a race depend largely on the and find the best outlet and the highest expression in the individual – in the most talented of its sons and daughters.
> (Couzens 1985: 129)

'Talented sons and daughters' refers to the educated black elite and not the uneducated indigenous black people, 'the petty chiefs, who will have no real power but will be responsible to the (white) government' (Couzens 1985: 129-30).

It seems quite obvious to me from a reading of his plays that Shaka was a hero to Dhlomo. In his plays he constantly refers to Shaka and his spiritual presence, treating him as some kind of god-figure. For example in the play Cetshwayo:

> DABULA: I rise to thank the king for calling us together. He only is the risen spirit of Shaka. We thank thee, O King, for breathing into the lifeless body of the nation the fiery soul of Shaka. (Couzens 1985: 131)

In Dingana, though Shaka appears for a short time only, 'his spirit dominates the play' (Couzens 1985: 319). Dhlomo's treatment of Shaka is indicative of his tendency towards a glorification of Zulu chiefs and an uncritical approach towards their practices and character.

The form of Dhlomo's writing for the theatre seems more geared towards literature than 'playfulness'. His statement that African playwrights should attempt to write 'literary drama' rather than 'acting plays' seems to emphasise 'the magnitude and thematic seriousness of a play rather than its effectiveness as a vehicle for the stage' (Visser and Couzens 1985: xiii). As Visser and Couzens point out, his plays, particularly those dealing with African heroes, move from:

> ..a play like presentation towards a novelising mode with long set pieces and the kind of plenitude and gradual development of character and action which slow down the rapid, forward-moving rendering of conflict typical of drama.
> (1985: xiii).

As such they seem more appropriate for reading than for theatrical staging.

This literary approach was apparently a trend amongst his contemporaries. It seems, in part at least, to have been the result of black writers having to prove themselves as competent English writers within a progressively Europeanised system. These writers used the English language in a highly literary way to claim space and power within a

European dominated theatre discourse, which limited the practice of theatre for black people.

> Access to participation was limited by the fact that theatre practice was controlled by writing, a 'specialised technique' requiring specific training and not just rudimentary, competent writing but a sophisticated literary writing
> (Fleishman 1991: 52)

Despite his limitations, Dhlomo made a major contribution towards the participation of black people in theatre practice in South Africa in the early part of the 20th century.

Mbongeni Ngema is a proud Zulu who, like me, grew up in the rural outskirts of KwaZulu Natal where he was exposed to the storytelling tradition. He later moved on to Johannesburg where he was introduced to the Western concept of theatre. He has since established a theatre company called *Committed Artists* and is currently the musical director at the Natal Playhouse. Ngema was a central figure in the development of workshop theatre in South Africa in the 1980's. Workshop theatre was a significant shift in theatre practice because it meant experimenting with a merging of traditions that had been historically isolated.

> This experimentation with forms combined explorations of African oral performance style and aesthetics with explorations of the ideas of European writers like Grotowski and Artaud.
> (Fleishman 1991: 61)

Ngema came to prominence as an actor in Woza Albert, a play he created with Percy Mtwa and Barney Simon at the Market Theatre, and which was first performed in 1981. He then confirmed his talents with Asinamali, a play he created and directed with his own company, *Committed Artists*.

Fleishman (1991) argues that workshop plays produced in the 1980's, plays such as Woza Albert and Asinamali, reflect many influences from the oral storytelling tradition (116). They have a strong narrator function with a 'clear distinction between narrative voice and narrative action' (117). They include a variety of performance

forms in the context of a single performance including song and dance and praise poems. Their structure is very reminiscent of the structure of oral storytelling forms, and they are built around stable, repeatable core-images which recur in many workshop plays of the period and begin to resemble a new tradition. But most importantly, workshop plays such as Woza Albert and Asinamali, exhibit a strong physical text, 'a pronounced gestural component which runs alongside and interweaves with the words of the "text", at once informing and adding to their meaning' (Fleishman 1991: 130); and a high level of performance energy very similar to that of the oral tradition. It is this combination of physical imagery, high performance energy and a seemingly spontaneous, improvisational style which makes Ngema's plays so much more watchable than the plays of Dhlomo before him. The spoken text uses Zulu, English, Afrikaans and Tsostitaal in an informal and colloquial register unlike Dhomo's plays which are entirely in English and in a highly formal register of that language.

Soon after Asinamali, Ngema returned to his 'first love', the African musical pioneered by Gibson Kente in the 1960's. Ngema had performed with Kente prior to the making of Woza Albert and it was on a tour with Kente that the idea for Woza Albert was born. With the intention of developing the musical form and reaching the world with South African stories, Ngema went on to direct and produce Sarafina, Township Fever, Magic at 4am and most recently The Zulu.

It is this latter play, The Zulu, which is of particular interest to me in this study. Like Dhlomo's play before, it is a play about the Zulu king Cetshwayo, who led the Zulu regiments in a successful battle against the British at Isandlwana in the late 1800's. The Zulu is presented primarily through traditional Zulu song and dance, performed with a highly charged energy typical of oral performances. The narration is

mainly in a poetic English language and is delivered with pace and attack, similar to the style of traditional epic poems or praise songs.

As a song and dance exercise I found The Zulu extremely successful. But as a storytelling exercise, The Zulu is less satisfactory. Ngema brings oral aesthetics into the theatre, making it more physical and image-based, but his narratives are very weak and unsophisticated. He seems to rely too heavily on song and dance as though they were *the* way of communicating stories. He is also very uncritical in his presentation of partriachal discourses of power within the Zulu culture. From my perception of his plays it seems automatic to him that males are the heroes of society, Sarafina being a notable exception in this regard. In this respect Ngema is very similar to Dhlomo but his writing has none of the intellectual scope and literary sophistication of Dhlomo's.

What we have seen above is a reflection of the male dominance in theatre practice in South Africa, both on the level of content and on the level of who gets to practise. However my next candidate, represents the female perspective creating an even greater counter identifying discourse through her work. Gcina Mhlophe is a Zulu woman who grew up in rural Transkei, speaking Xhosa, who was also exposed to *ugogo's* storytelling in her early childhood. She is a poet, actress, storyteller, writer, director, a mother and apparently a lover of language. I have already indicated her ongoing attempts to preserve the oral storytelling tradition through her company *Zanendaba*. Amongst her other writings are the plays Have You Seen Zandile and Love Child, both of which reflect her interest in, and understanding and mastery of the traditional storytelling form.

Love Child is a play that points towards the healing power of art. It is about a person born between two language groups. It also involves a love relationship between two young people who come from different cultures: Zulu and Xhosa. Together by the river they find a drum with magic powers and they take it to the battlefield where the warriors lay down their spears and shields, hold hands and dance to the music of the drum. Her earlier play Zandile focuses on domestic issues and is an autobiographical play, tracing her life's journey from childhood to her early teens. Perkins (1999) says that this play is an attempt to adapt to new environments created through colonialism where women were uprooted from their original homes (2).

Perkins suggests that domestic responsibilities play an important role for women as theatre practitioners (2). However Mhlophe says that it is not a conscious thing that she works on:

> If things sound like it's a woman talking it's only natural...if a man fascinates me, then I write about a man. If a woman fascinates me then I write about a woman. I write what comes into my mind and impresses me.
> (Mhlophe in Gunner 2000: 276)

But Mhlophe does acknowledge the need in women to tell stories from their point of view and in her work we do see a shift from national political issues to issues of family and education. These issues hardly featured in the male authored protest plays of the 1980's which focused primarily on the oppression of black men by whites, and Mhlophe was criticised by political minded people for writing Zandile in the 1980's and not a play about the struggle.

However she seems to be very clear about where she stands in this regard when she says 'I am not a writer because of apartheid. Whether I was born under apartheid or after apartheid I was destined to be a writer'(Mhlophe in Perkins 1999: 136). Whilst Ngema emphasises the importance of music in the theatre, Mhlophe emphasises language. She says that the script must be strong to make the actors feel

responsible for their characters. As a result her work has a stronger narrative with more nuance and sophistication than that of Ngema. But although she focuses strongly on the use of language, her plays are not nearly as literary as those of Dhlomo. Her playwriting is clearly for the stage, presenting strong possibilities for song, dance, storytelling and action, over and above a strong spoken text.

With this context in mind I will now proceed to my own practice in Kwasukasukela which is both similar and different to the above practitioners, but is clearly a continuation of their work of forging a hybrid space in which people like myself can operate in South African theatre post-apartheid. I shall divide the discussion into two sections: first that of the impacting process, through which the Nguni tradition and contemporary forms are brought together, causing a hybrid form to emerge, and second the opportunity this creates to challenge dominant representations of identity and history in the resulting product.

KWASUKASUKELA: a process of discovery

The process of creating Kwasukasukela lasted for roughly seven weeks during which we (the cast and I) wrestled with how we could tell the story through the marriage of the two forms as proposed. Like most workshop processes, it began with a series of games and exercises through which the group learned how to play together and developed an identity. The group consisted of nine actors: 6 Xhosa speakers, 2 English speakers and 1 Zulu speaker. This called for some measures to familiarise the actors with Zulu gestures and customs. I was required to teach, explain and demonstrate continually. I also invited Vusi Ngema, a person who strongly upholds and practises his Zulu customs, to spend some time with the actors. The way that he speaks Zulu, and his typically Zulu gestures which all come out naturally and boldly as soon as he starts speaking about his Zulu identity or singing Zulu songs, influenced the group enormously. He is also a teacher of African dance at the UCT School of Dance and helped us a great deal with the choreography.

The actual exploration began with the cast researching different versions of the story in pairs and then reporting back to the whole group, a process through which we were able to extract what we considered to be the major events in Shaka's life. Examples of sources for our story include Thomas Mofolo's Chaka; Mazisi Kunene's Emperor Shaka the Great; orally transmitted stories from some of our childhoods; history books, Joshua Sinclair and William Faure's film Shaka Zulu. From these sources we developed a basic understanding of the story and could now start the exploration as intended.

My overall creative strategy was to first tell the story in both forms separately, to observe their differences, before bringing them together to examine how they might

co-exist. And so we began by telling the story in groups of three, using Nguni storytelling forms. What we discovered from this exercise was that:

a) the narration tended to dominate the storytelling even though there were moments of physical embodiment of characters and images;
b) the space was used fluidly including the auditorium;
c) there was active audience interaction (asking them questions about the story or asking them to join in the singing).

But since they were telling the story in groups, with the view to performing it in a Western theatre space, new tactics emerged such as, the introduction of multiple storytellers (sharing the narration and interchanging roles of narrator and character); or the creation of images in the background while the narration continued in the foreground. Storytelling took on a new shape as authority was taken away from *ugogo* as the central storyteller and as multiple narrators emerged.

The next stage was to tell the story using contemporary physical forms of storytelling telling for theatre. We had spent some time experimenting with different ways of telling a story using the body and the voice. Most of the actors were also engaged in mime storyteller and contact improvisation classes as part of their coursework, and were encouraged to draw from them. The main focus here was learning to communicate meaning with the body, not relying primarily on the spoken word for the telling of the story. Some presented a physical narrative with sounds, others created abstract images that captured the atmospheric essence of the scene. However, physical images were sometimes too abstract and the sense of the story was lost, even though the images might have looked interesting in themselves.

From then on we started improvising based on the combination of the two forms of exploration, and this is when the forms began impacting on each other as predicted. I did not dictate how the actors should do this, I just allowed the marriage to happen and to develop naturally through improvisation. There was no specific model that I followed. I simply observed what the process presented, embraced it, and then worked from that point on. For example the dialogue and the narration were sometimes too excessive alongside physical images. Some images needed narration to contextualise them and to facilitate understanding for the audience, while other images could exist alone quite successfully and eloquently.

The process also revealed a very strong relationship between written and oral forms of theatre in our present age. Fleishman's study of workshop theatre indicates that workshop plays are created orally on the floor through a process of improvisation (1991: 83-92). Sources of material for improvisation vary. In our case they were primarily taken from books. The actors extracted information from written sources and transmitted it orally through improvisation to the rest of the group. In the process they put their own words, actions and images to the story thus taking ownership of it.

However, their actions and words were different each time they told the story. Like traditional storytellers, they remembered core images and perhaps songs but not the details of action. Therefore the recording of actions and some dialogue became necessary during the process, and it was done with writing. The actors could visit this writing whenever they needed to retrieve information. As such the retrieval was not the same as that of traditional storytellers. Firstly, the actors were working as a group, as opposed to solo performers of the Nguni tradition and secondly they were not as familiar with the story as a traditional storyteller would be with her traditional stories. In the end we needed to create a fixed text that would allow for these multiple

narrators to work together in performance, even though the physical making process was primarily improvisatory and spontaneous in nature.

Scripting was a process of selection: making choices, trying them out on the floor, then selecting further based on the trials. Formal writing and structuring was done by myself in collaboration with the stage manager. I went back to the original story sources while she brought lists of images created through the improvisation process. We scripted dialogue, narration and physical action, adding images and action where necessary in order to fill in the gaps and to channel the story in the direction that I wanted it to go. However, when we brought the script to the actors in rehearsal, a good deal of dialogue and narration fell by the wayside as the physical embodiment of images took precedence over the spoken word.

During the process and during the selection I never intended for one form to dominate the other but rather for a marriage of the two forms to occur, through which some things of the past fall away and new features of the present emerge. The process then revealed, in its practical way, what to incorporate and what not to incorporate. And as predicted, a third form did begin to emerge, a new and unique product of mixed origins:

> The best of the hybrid work is a complex fusion of a variety of traditions, conventions and theatre techniques drawn from various times and cultures. Thus it is at times difficult to separate out the provenance of the individual techniques used, because the new hybrid work constitutes a gestalt of its own.
> (Hauptfleisch 1997: 61)

As such, Kwasukasukela cannot be placed comfortably in any one of the two traditions, 'it is a gestalt of its own'. The Nguni tradition was in the process deliberately made foreign to its traditional context, experiencing changes and developments. Firstly it was brought into a designated performance space which called for a stage design and a fixed relationship to the audience, something foreign to the Nguni tradition. The performance space was decorated, the storytellers were all

dressed up in special costumes, and made use of special props even though minimalist.

Secondly, the role of the narration shifted from single narrator to multiple narrators. Although there was a character who played the 'narrator' in Kwasukasukela, her verbal narration tended simply to move the story forward, without describing actions or assuming the physique of characters as *ugogo* might do in her performance. In a significant sense the rest of the actors had also taken on the role of *ugogo* through their characterisations, dialogue and physical narrative.

Thirdly, the nature of the audience also shifted. Whereas traditionally the audience would be Zulu children, the audience for Kwasukasukela was a multicultural and multiracial adult audience, mostly students from UCT. Their role as the central community who knows the story and the cultural forms of presentation and who participates actively in the telling, also shifted. They were a more distanced audience who had come to sit back relax and watch the action of the play unfolding on the stage. They were, to a far lesser degree, fellow artists and full participants in the action than would normally be the case in the traditional context.

Finally the language had to change from Zulu or Xhosa to a combination of English, Zulu and Xhosa. English to facilitate understanding for our audience; Zulu because that is my language, the language *ugogo* uses to tell *izinganekwane* and the language of Shaka; Xhosa because the majority of the actors were Xhosa and it was not always possible for them to think of Zulu words during improvisations.

On the other hand, as elements of the Nguni storytelling form began to occupy space and claim a presence within the practice, the contemporary Western theatre form was made more local. The space of Shakespeare was infiltrated by Shaka Zulu, bringing with him ritual and the processional quality of traditional ceremonies.

Elements of song and dance, prominent in Ngema's work and the progressive, traditionally structured narrative of Mhlophe were utilised. The Nguni tradition brought with it fluidity of character changes, the use of a fairly open space for performance, a strong narrative thrust directed to the audience and physical imagery as a way of telling the story. There was also a prominent repetition of phrases and images to emphasise the points that were being made. All these were exciting dynamics through which the nature of both the Nguni tradition and the contemporary physical forms of storytelling for theatre were changed.

In the theoretical proposal I argued that the emerging hybrid form:

a) is a space within which subjects like myself find a voice within contemporary South African theatre discourse as argued above and
b) provides an opportunity to challenge dominant representations of history and identity in theatre practice in South Africa.

This is done in Kwasukasukela, by bringing the storytelling form into the theatre but it is also influenced by the choice of content. Choosing to tell the story of Shaka was a continuation of the trend set by Dhlomo and Ngema, of telling stories about Zulu kings. However my approach is different from theirs in the sense that I choose to tell Shaka's epic story in the form of an *inganekwane,* a form usually reserved for fantastical stories aimed at children. This was a conscious choice for the following reasons. First, Shaka exists for us not as a tangible reality, but as an historical myth, one who existed 'once-upon-a-time' in our past. We have no way of knowing in absolute truth the historical facts that surround his life. We can only make sense of the man and his life through what we are told. And what we are told is changeable. Second, the choice of form humanises the historical epic. It allows for the deconstruction of Shaka's heroic image and its reconstruction into a more down-to-

earth image of human weakness and emotion, a man just like us. Third, I believe it also brings lightness to a story that carries quite a heavy subject matter making it more bearable to watch.

The casting of two actors for the character of Shaka is an extension of this deconstruction. It reinforces the idea that Shaka exists to us as a concept rather that a real person, 'Ishaka: a disease, which invades the mind with madness.' In the second half of the play there are moments when the two Shaka's are together but function as one character. On the broader level this keeps Shaka functioning as a concept, but within the play specifically, it is a way of connecting Shaka's present to his past. His actions in the present are largely influenced by his childhood experiences. Though he is now played by a new actor, symbolic of a new season in his life, he is not entirely a new person. What he is and what he does in his present state is conditioned by the hatred and bitterness of his past, particularly the fact of the exile of his mother and himself causing him to lose his position as heir to the Zulu throne. I would like to note, however, that in Kwasukasukela I am not setting out to be disrespectful or even judgmental to the character of Shaka, what I am doing is challenging the upholding of violence as an heroic deed, a way of solving problems.

Not only was the character of Shaka played by two actors but one was black and one was white. This was quite disturbing for some people, both black and white. For me the casting suggests that Shaka could have been anybody, his actions were not because of his race but because of the condition of his heart, shaped by his childhood experiences. And so this deconstruction results in an ambiguous representation of race in Kwasukasukela. For me the white actors in the play exist as human beings rather than representatives of a racial group. The colour of their skin does not make them

incapable of playing black characters, just as black actors can play the role of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

However the segregating history of South Africa makes it difficult to ignore the presence of white skin within a predominantly black cast on stage. Shaka is often seen as a symbol of black power and as such, many would argue that he should only ever be represented by a black actor. But we live in an age where racial integration is highly desirable and encouraged and there is a need for creating a common history as we forge our way into the future. Therefore on the one hand I am ignoring the racial issue but on the other I am challenging perceptions and laws of the past that separate human beings on the basis of race.

To take this idea further when Shaka dies, a black actor playing Shaka falls on the back of a white actress playing Nandi and stays there until it is time for his burial. While maintaining this image the black actor recites Shaka's curse on the Zulu nation: 'You shall never rule this land, the white swallows will rule instead'. It is an ambiguous image which opens up possibilities for meaning. I have two possible ways of interpreting this image. First that he is exerting his power over white people by landing on Nandi in this way, even though Nandi is his mother. Which in itself is a comment on his gender attitudes and his relationship with her. In other words it is an image of weight, burden, load and oppression. Second, that he is supported by her in order not to fall to the ground, an image of co-existence which seemingly contradicts and disqualifies what he is saying.

In the play, I have chosen to focus on the relationship between Shaka and his mother, Nandi. This suggests a deviance from the tendency in earlier plays, by Dhlomo and Ngema for example, to ignore the female perspective. Like Mhlophe I did not set out to create a feminist play, but I cannot ignore the fact that I am a woman

and that I come from a culture where women are seen and treated as inferior. I believe that I bring a female perspective to Kwasukasukela which in the context of the story is challenging to and critical of the patriarchal discourses of power. However this is not the major focus of my exploration with this work which has more to do with Christian morality and cultural identity which I turn my attention to now.

My choice of content represents a choice to confront the history of the Zulu nation in order to make sense of my Zulu identity. This confrontation is informed by my personal identities as a Christian, Zulu woman, educated for contemporary society. On researching the history of Shaka, I was confronted with the massive cycle of blood, hatred and revenge within the history of the Zulu nation, particularly centred around Shaka. Initially I thought I would depict Shaka's spiritual downfall as he forges his way into power and authority. The central question in my head at the time was: 'what benefits a man to gain the whole world but lose his soul'. I was hoping that this question, would be a way of making the story relevant for our current audience. This was because of my perception that we as humans tend to pursue positions of power and authority at the expense of other aspects of our lives, for example, the spiritual and the social. However, this approach changed through the creative process. What became increasingly important to me was the need to make connections between the past and the present. Digging into the past was not about Shaka anymore, but about us here and now. It was about how the past forms and shapes our perceptions of ourselves in the present.

My hypothesis, that perceptions of the Zulu people as aggressive and violent are directly connected to the character of Shaka, was increasingly confirmed as I discovered more of his life story. As a contemporary, educated Zulu, I was angered by the way in which multitudes of Zulu people, such as Bakhece Dlamini and Simphiwe

Jili in my rural community of KwaZulu-Natal, suffer inferiority and a negative self-image because of their nation's historical past which centres around Shaka Zulu. I also felt ashamed, defiled and violated by that history, it was sitting like a heavy burden on my shoulders, which I needed to shrug off, to get rid of in some way.

The exploration that ensued centred around something which Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi once said, which is now a line in the play: 'We must make his memory meaningful to us in the lives we are living today' [4]. Following this advice, we workshopped different possible ways of making his memory meaningful to us, of making a connection between the past and the present. Examples of potential strategies included a court case in which Shaka was asked questions by the people of the present and made to account for his actions. There was also a museum tour in which pictures in the museum came to life during the tour. These strategies had great potential but they eventually fell by the wayside and the role of the contemporary person, the character from Durban, emerged instead.

On the one hand this character, called Contempo, represents me and the struggles I have been through on being confronted with my history and my resultant need to find some sort of cleansing. On the other hand, he represents people of the present and their struggles with the past, from whatever perspective they come. Through him, Kwasukasukela is now a journey of confronting history, dealing with it in order to be free from its bondage. Contempo is now the central driving force behind the narrative. The play is not therefore about Shaka but about Contempo/me/people of the present.

The journey begins with Contempo looking to literature in an attempt to discover his Zulu identity. Hence at the beginning of the play, we see him carrying a huge history book which is surprisingly heavy since it carries a heavy subject matter. This book has a life of its own, it breathes, speaks, flies. This he discovers when his

laid-back literature search is abruptly cut short by the arrival of the spirits from the past who have come to tell him the story of 'the greatest king that ever lived' and to instil in him a pride in being Zulu. Through his journey he discovers that his Zulu identity is a constructed identity. If Shaka had not shed so much blood in an attempt to build the Zulu nation, Contempo might not have been called a Zulu today. Perhaps a Qwabe, a Ndwandwe, or a Mthethwa, all tribes that Shaka incorporated into the Zulu nation. A Zulu nation might not be in existence at all for that matter. This for me challenges the sovereignty and permanence of this Zulu identity which I have inherited.

In his journey Contempo is faced with two challenges: the one is of bloodshed and family destruction in the name of nation building; the other is the issue of what to do with Shaka, with this history. Towards the end of the play Contempo is left alone with Shaka's dead body which begins speaking Shaka's curse on the Zulu nation mentioned earlier. This image is tied to my belief that the spirit of Shaka, who is long dead, is hovering around us deceiving people and binding them to a hateful, bloody and vengeful history; preventing them from realising their full potential in life:

> This sacred bond between the living and the dead was a powerful factor in Bantu society ... the dead ruled over the living with a rod of iron. What they did no one could undo. Thus they held people in bondage, physically, morally and spiritually.
> (Selope in Couzens 1985: 203).

This is supported by a trend in Dhlomo's plays:

> The dead must be remembered and offerings made to them. As they remember they must be remembered and as they give they must be given. The dead live!
> (Couzens; 1985:203)

And yes, Shaka's spirit is alive today, in people's minds, hearts, in history books and maybe even in the air, and it needs to be silenced, I believe, because it is not a peaceful spirit. Attempting to do this in Kwasukasukela, Contempo then responds: 'Shut up! I am not your own! Let the curses of the dead be buried with the dead' and

he then buries the body, symbolic of burying the past. This response is not a denial of my Zulu identity which I will always cherish, but an attempt to place our God-given identity above our human constructed identities:

> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
> (Genesis 1:27)

Another attempt at silencing Shaka's spirit is the use of the jazz song played at the end of the play, while Contempo dances an image of empowerment and freedom. This song is a prophetic call for healing and cleansing on Zululand. This is evident in some of the words of the song:

> Come rain of God, come gentle rain
> Soften our hearts, wash away our shame
> Come cleansing flood, come holy storm
> We'll be renewed, we'll be transformed...
> Let your raging river, your pressing tide
> Break through the walls of fear and pride
> Come shake our lives right to the core
> Let us see and taste and know You
> (Erasmus: 1999)

As such I understand that, through Christ Jesus I have been set free from such bondage and can enjoy the abundance of life and creation as is set before me in the present age.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I would like to return to Canonici's quote:

> It (tradition) is something dynamic, in constant flux or change, that allows for both something ancient and something new and creative on the part of the one who hands it over.
> (Canonici 1997: 3)

In Kwasukasukela, I have attempted to creatively combine something ancient and something new in order to bring change to both; to find a voice for myself in the theatre which is in tune with my background and tradition; and to free myself from the burden of an identity forced on me by history. Though I arrived at a point of staging, it by no means signifies the end, this is only a beginning. The process was instrumental in helping me identify important questions that need constant answers. I, alongside other theatre practitioners in South Africa, will continue searching for the answers, experimenting, challenging perceptions and redefining identities through a reconstruction of traditional forms of theatre, in the process defining new traditions which we feel more comfortable with. This third space and the voice it gives to people like myself needs to be celebrated and used constructively.

> While the evolutionary process has certainly not been completed yet, it is beginning to constitute something like a separate tradition, one in which we see writers and performers still struggling to find and refine really specific forms and styles of their own, but which has already established itself as a force within the larger theatrical system
> (Hauptflesch 1997: 32)

NOTES

[1] Orestes was created and presented in 1971 by Athol Fugard for the Experimental Theatre Laboratory. Randlords and Rotgut was created by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company and first performed on 2 February 1978 in the Nunnery Theatre, Johannesburg. Woza Albert was created by Mbongeni Ngema, Percy Mtwa and Barney Simon and was first performed in 1981 at the Market Theatre.

[2] A forty-one page poem published in 1941. It is a mixture of personal pain and a depiction of the misery that surrounded Dhlomo. See Couzens 1985: 125-155.

[3] A public speech delivered on King Shaka Memorial Day, 24 September 1974.

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KWASUKASUKELA

DIRECTED BY : Ntokozo Madlala

CREATED WITH THE CAST

SEPTEMBER 2001

University of Cape Town, Arena Theatre

KWASUKASUKELA

This play, created through a workshop process, was first performed on the 12th of September 2001 at the U.C.T.'s Arena theatre. The cast list is as follows:

CONTEMPO: Thando Mthi

CHORUS: Zolani Mahola – *Narrator, Mkabayi*
Lulama Masimini - *Shaka Zulu and Senzangakhona*
Peter Heaney - *Shaka Zulu*
Karen Logan - *Nandi*
Vivian Lehanya - *Gxekazi*
Nceba Mpiliswana - *umholi, induna kaJama, Gendeyane, Dingiswayo, and Mhlangana*
Sakhumzi Mathi – *Jama, Zwide, Dingana*
Stephen Radebe – *Mudli*

The main character is a Contemporary person (Contempo) who is on a mission to find out about his roots as a Zulu person. The rest of the actors form a chorus of ancestral spirits who emerge from an unknown world to tell him the story of Shaka Zulu. They play different characters in the story ranging from Shaka Zulu, his family, other Zulu kings the Zulu nation, etc.

PRESET:

The audience comes in to a preset which is simple and minimal in props and furniture. The stage section is generally painted cream. The painting on the wall is done in curved shape so that it gives a sense of a circular space. At the center of the stage is a circle dermacated by writings on the floor. The writings are quotes of different perceptions of Shaka Zulu who built the Zulu nation in the early 1800's. On the edge of this circle, facing the audience are 3 boxes which symbolize a table and a chair. Upstage in the middle is a big rostrum, sectionally covered and the middle section of it closed so that actors can stand, walk or sit on it but also hide inside of it and behind it. Because it is so high, it has two steps on either side if it. On either side of the rostrum a two pillars. The two middle pillars are covered in red wool and have a set of horns attached to them at the top of each pillar. The two side pillars have pieces of costume hanging on them. The side walls (left and right) also have historical quotations written on them.

THE PLAY:

BLACKOUT. The chorus comes and takes positions along the edges of the stage, behind the pillars. Together they start breathing, softly. When the lights come up, focussing on the space between the two middle pillars, Contempo walks in as if from a distance or through a tunnel. He is carrying an enormous history book and is visibly struggling under its weight. While complaining about the weight of the book he continues walking down towards his table and chair.

Contempo Hhawu! Yaze yasinda lencwadi madoda. Kodwa kwakwenzenjani, incwadi esinda kangaka? Kodwa angisafiki nakulelitafula?

He continues walking forward and is sometimes taken off balance because of the weight of the book. Behind him, the chorus continues breathing and watching him. Contempo is unaware of their presence, merely concerned with getting the book to the table in order to read it. Finally he gets to the table and though with a lot of struggle he manages to place the book on the table. As the book lands on the table a loud sound bursts from the chorus as the altogether say: " UShaka!". Contempo thinks he might have heard something but he doesn't know what it is or if the really did hear something so he sits down. As he opens the book the breathing starts again and this time slightly stronger than before. This time he hears the breathing and out of uncertainty he closes the book. He wonders what that was about but although he is apprehensive he proceeds to open the book. Again the breathing comes back and as the cover page lands on the table the chorus shout "UShaka". He flips through the empty first page and then reads the cover page:

Contempo The history of AmaZulu in memory of our founder king: Shaka Zulu. *He now pages through to the first page of the history.* To him we owe a huge debt, a debt we can never repay. *He responds to what he has just read.*

Peter (chorus member 1) The Zoolas are a tall, athletic, good looking race, extremely cleanly and very respectful. *As he speaks he comes forward and stands on the edges of the circle, behind Contempo, left.*

Contempo Some historians have described Shaka as a tyrant, a monster, an inhuman beast. *Again he reacts as if something is biting him, at different stages of his speech. By the end of this a chorus member has come up to him and pinches him. He jumps up and away from his chair while demonic laughter fills the air. This person now stands on his char and starts to speak:*

Vivian (chorus member2) He is our Father, we love him for he gave us his name Zulu, and amalgamated us into one nation.

During her speech he returns to his chair eager to continue reading. At this stage the chorus's breath and sounds of " Ushaka" start building up to a climax and Contempo is becoming more and more aware of them. The chorus is also progressively invading his space. One of them pulls Contempo's book off the table, while he is reading it.

Contempo — MY book? *He grabs it back by force and manages to keep it.*

Nceba (chorus member 3) — One of the most powerful and ruthless savages in history.

Stephen (chorus member 4) — Shaka, king of the Zoola nation, one of the most extraordinary barbarians in modern times. *He stands on the big rostrum as he speaks and then moves forward to where most of the chorus are now gathering around Contempo.*

Sakhumzi (chorus member 5) — A savage chief, despotic and cruel monster. *Also moving in.*

Contempo — It should be remembered that life in Shaka's time was not like ours today. A harsh land called for harsh measures and Shaka was quick to use them. He ruled his kingdom fairly and in many cases with compassion. *Now standing up.*

Karen (chorus member 6) — But those who disobeyed him met with harsh almost inhuman punishment, usually resulting in death.

Thando quickly snaps the book shut. The whole chorus acclaim "Ushaka". There is a brief moment of silence as Contempo ifs feeling weighed down by all this information.

Lulama (chorus member 7) — We must make his memory meaningful to us in the lives we are living today.

Chorus — Ushaka! *This call and response is repeated once more. Contempo can now hear the sounds of the chorus clearly but when he looks around he sees nothing and nobody. When chorus member 7 repeats his line for the 3rd time Contempo is pinched by one of the chorus members, he jumps up and runs to the front and starts praying:*

Contempo — "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name..."

The chorus echoes his prayer word for word. He realizes that his prayer is being echoed by an unknown 'force'. He turns around and sees his table and book flying away. .

Contempo, now very desperate, runs to grab the only remaining article in the room: his chair. He swings it around wildly, like a matador fighting a raging bull. A chorus member snatches his hat from his head. In an attempt to retrieve it, he drops the chair. The chair does not reach the floor however, as two people catch it before it hits the ground. The scene freezes as Contempo realizes he has not heard the chair hit the floor, he turns around to find it dangling in the air. In fear and confusion he reaches to touch it. Before he can however, the scene unfreezes and the chair is also 'flown' out of the room, and the chorus starts singing:

Chorus	Onomatopolo, Bayeza kusasa, bayeza.

Contempo follows the chair, but bumps into a 'spirit' and is suddenly lifted off the ground and carried off into the land of the past. The chorus members now transform into village members going about their daily tasks. A contact movement sequence ensues which transports Contempo from group to group so that he can view the land of the past with it people and activities. He is eventually placed down on the ground, now facing the chorus for the first time.

A horrible roar sounds from the chorus, abruptly stopping the singing. The chorus leader, the chief narrator, emerges, sitting on the shoulders of one of the chorus members.

Narrator	UDlungwana kaNdaba!
Chorus	UDlungwana woMbelebele, Odlung' emanxulumeni, Kwaze kwas' amanzulum' esibikelana.
Lulama	USishaka kasishayeki kanjengamanzi, Ilemb' eleq' amany' amalembe ngokukhalipha; UShaka ngiyesab' ukuthi nguShaka, UShaka kuyinkosi yasemaShobeni.
Nceba	UNomakhwelo ingonyama; UMahlom' ehlathini onjengohlanya, Uhlany' olusemehlwen' amadoda.
Karen &Stephen	UDabaz' ithafa ebeliya kuMfene; UNomashovushovu kaSenzangakhona, UGaqa libomvu nasekuphatheni.
Vivian & Sakhumzi	The joke of the women of Nomgabhi, Joking as they sat in a sheltered spot,

Saying that Shaka would not rule, he would not become chief,
Whereas it was the year in which Shaka was about to prosper.

From behind the chorus the Narrator lets out a terrifying scream. The chorus splits up on either side of her and she appears carrying a bowl of cold water. She looks at Contempo with deceitful eyes and mysterious smile and starts walking towards him. The chorus then bunches up again, behind and watch the scene from there, leaning forward as a group. Contempo reaches out to see what is in the bowl and as he does so the Narrator throws the water to his face. Once again the chorus roars in laughter as they jump around in satisfaction and spread themselves throughout the stage facing the audience and Contempo.

Narrator — Kwasukasukela! *Looking at Contempo who does not respond, so she gets the chorus to speak with her.*

Chorus — Kwasukasukela! *Repeated while Thando responds: Cosi!*
The greatest king that ever lived!

Th Narrator starts a song while the rest of the chorus disperse into villagers:
Khilikithi! *While the song is sung the women position themselves stage right acting as if fetching water from the river, and the men on the left as if carving pieces of wood. Two of the chorus members put on pieces of costume that are to identify them as Nandi and Senzangakhona (Shaka's parents). Contempo is wrapped in a blanket so he could get warm while the Narrator begins to tell him the story:*

Narrator — *(speaking to Thando)* Shaka Zulu, the founder – king of the Zulu nation, the son of Nandi, *(points to Nandi)* son of Senzangakhona *(points to Senzangakhona)* born under mysterious circumstances. He promised her princes could do no wrong.

She now grabs Contempo to come stand with her behind the men who are now showing a degree of interest towards the women. Senzangakhona now comes out of his hiding place and proceeds to propose to Nandi.

Senzangakhona — Gegelagege Ntombi
Nandi omuhle wase Malangeni
Ntombi emhlophe sengathi igeza ngobisi Qhezu!

She turns around to look at him, moves closer to examine him in a semi-circular movement,

Nandi — Hhayibo! *Returning to the river*

Undeterred Senzangakhona tries again, after consulting with the other boys. This time he tries to woe her by demonstrating his ability to dance, calling out her name as he does so. Nandi looks at him from the corner of her eye and then responds with a bigger rejection then before:

Nandi Hhayibo!

Again Senzangakhona consults the boys and tries again.

Senzangakhona I will marry you princess of Elangeni.

Nandi What? *She drops her water pot and looks at him intently.*

Senzangakhona I will make you the queen of Zulu!

Nandi What?

Senzangakhona Ngizokulobola ngazo zonke izinkomo zikababa!

This brings her to accepting the proposal and they immediately transform into a symbolic image of lovemaking (behind the bushes).The chorus and Contempo watch this and respond by making the required sounds. At the peak of this one of the chorus members jumps up and goes through Senzangakhona's legs, thus becoming a sperm that travels from him to her.

Narrator *(To Contempo)* Behold! A great life was conceived.

The actor transforms into a foetus inside Nandi's womb. She is helped by the other woman to create an image of a pregnant stomach.

Narrator *(To Contempo* Nandi's family presented the stomach to the family of Senzangakhona.

The image of the stomach moves forward quickly, approaching the men who now symbolise the Zulu royal family except for Senzangakhona..

Image Your son has made our daughter pregnant!

Jama *Senzangakhona's father consults with his advisers. They all make symbolic image of embarrassment and anger through their faces* She is just suffering from a disease called "ishaka."

Pregnant image What!

Jama — She is suffering from a disease called "ishaka". Hambani!

Dissatisfied they go back to Elangeni to await the birth.

Narrator — *(To Contempo)* Disgraced by this conception out of wedlock they said she suffered from intestinal beetles, ishaka, a disease which invades your mind with madness.

The Narrator and Contempo are now sitting center stage, she makes big eyes and presses his face as she tells him about ishaka,.

Narrator — But behold in due time Nandi gave birth to a boy.

The pregnant image is broken and the baby comes out. Symbolic of birth the baby comes out crying. The women altogether shout "Ushaka", naming the child. The two women, the Narrator and Shaka now go back to the Zulu royal family to report Shaka's birth. The following happens in quick succession:

Women — Bayede! We bring you a king! *Pushing Shaka forward toward Jama and his councilors*

Jama and Councilors — My son knows no one by the name of Nandi, the daughter of Bhebhe.

This is accompanied by a physical gesture of rejection which they all do as they speak. To this Shaka bounces back to his mother who determinantly pushes him back

Women — Bayede! We bring you the son of Zulu!

Family of Senzan. — My son knows no one by the name of Nandi, the daughter of Bhebhe.

Women — Bayede! We bring you the royal spear of Ndaba!

Family of Senzan. — My son knows no one by the name of Nandi, the daughter of Bhebhe.

Senzangakhona is seen begging to his family, on behalf of his son.

Narrator — *(To Contempo)* After considerable negotiations between the two royal families, they agreed that the couple should be married.

Nandi and Senzangakhona embrace. A Zulu wedding song is sung thus starting the wedding celebrations:

SONG

Bhayi lam', bhayi lami'
Ndinosan' olubomvu
Bhayi lam', bhayi lam'
Ndaliphiwa ngumama.

The wedding procession goes as follows: two men sweep the ground in which the bride and the groom are going to walk, the bride and the groom are covered with a blanket, symbolic of tying the knot. The rest of the chorus sing and dance behind them. Baby Shaka chooses to jump onto to Contempo's back who is obviously attracted to the child and wants to play with it.

At the end of the procession Nandi and Senzangakhona lay the blanket on the floor so they could sit on it. Narrator tries to take Shaka away from Contempo, but Shaka refuses so Contempo takes Shaka to his mother and then he goes on to join the chorus. Narrator brings pieces of costume which Nandi is going to put on Shaka during the course of the next scene.

Nandi starts playing with Shaka, Senzangakhona grabs a chair and positions himself opposite Nandi and Shaka, the chorus with Contempo bunch around the big rostrum watching the scene. Narrator continues the story thus ending the wedding celebrations.

Narrator — Senzangakhona's senior wives were seething with jealousy and hatred.

The chorus who now form a community of gossips watches the following scene with malicious interest. They physically bubble and mumble amongst each other, like a pot of boiling water. One of them pulls Contempo out of the chorus so he could gossip to him:

Chorus 1 — You know what? The other wives of Senzangakhona were jealous of Shaka because he was strong and focussed. *As he speaks he points to the objects of his gossip.*

Senzangakhona — Nandi!

Nandi — Yebo?

Senzangakhona — Come here my wife.

Nandi — Not now, I am busy with Shaka!

At this the chorus reacts with amazement. Another wife comes in immediately to continue the gossip and the previous one goes back:

Chorus 2	Yo! Yo! Yo! Uzozwa ke, lomfazi asimfuni tu lapha kwaZulu. Yizwa uyiphendula kanjani indoda, ucabang' ukuthi ungubani yena. Mamela apha, yinjakazi yomfazi lena, rha.
Senzangakhona	*His patience tested.* Nandi! Come here my wife.
Nandi	Please give me five minutes I'm busy with Shaka!
Chorus	Hhawu, hhawu, hhawu!
Chorus 3	You know what, the two royal families have fought just because of this child. I wonder iyawuzala nkomoni na?
Senzangakhona	*getting angry* We Nandi ngithi woza la nkosikazi.
Nandi	Please! I said I'll be there I am just busy with our son!

Chorus reacts. A chorus member turns to the Boy and tells him the following:

Chorus 4	I hear of people talking about nothing but that revered son of Senzangakhona. Mmhh, mmhh, uleth' inkinga lapha kwaZulu.
Nceba	That child was born out of wedlock, he can't possibly be heir to the throne. Hhayi suka mfazi, asihambe.

They go back to the chorus pulling Contempo with the them. The narrator is pushed out of the chorus as Senzangakhona's aunt Mkabayi. Soon after her another chorus member separates himself from the action to overhear the following conversation, thus taking on the role of Mudli, Shaka's uncle.

Narrator	My brother, the community is seething, my brother. It is about that wife of yours, she is no wife at all my brother. All she knows is that child: uShaka! uShaka! You must kill that child! Only this can bring peace to Zululand.

Senzangakhona reacts to this by pushing Mkabayi away and then pacing up and down. Mudli who has set his mind on helping Nandi escape paces the opposite direction from Senzangakhona. This happens three times and stops when Mudli goes to Nandi to warn her of the approaching danger.

Mudli	Nandi! Senzangakhona is planning to kill your child. Come quickly, you must escape. *Nandi sits still, confused.* Hurry up!

Nandi What?

Mudli Don't ask.

Nandi Hhayibo Mudli! What are you talking about?

Mudli takes the child on his back and walks around the back of the stage with Nandi following him. At some point in the journey they go on separate ways. Mudli continues his journey forward with Shaka on his back. This is when Senzagakhona sees him and stops him. Contempo is still with the chorus watching the scene with them, they all watch anxiously to see what is going to happen.

Senzagakhona Mudli! What are you carrying in the bag?

Mudli Umm....It is a dead pig Nkosi. *There is slight laughter from the chorus.*

Senzagakhona Put it down and let me practice my spear throwing.

Chorus *As if begging for mercy* Hhawu shwele baba, shwele.

Senzangakhona mimes throwing a spear at the 'bag'. The chorus looks at the spear as it travels from Senzangakhona's hand to its destination. By the quality of their vocal reaction we are able to tell whether the spear missed or not. They now show their relief, but it is short lived as Senzangakhona gets ready to try again.

Senzangakhona *Throws spear for a second time.*

Chorus cheers, but it appears that Senzangakhona wants to try again, so their joy is not made complete.

Senzangakhona Mudli! Bring me that spear!

Mudli brings the spear in a humble fashion.

Senzangakhona *He pretends as if he is going to stab Mudli but then retreats,* Enough now, before I embarrass myself. Hamba! Hamba!

Mudli who is obviously relieved takes Shaka on his back and continues with the journey. He meets up with Nandi from behind the scenes to hand over the baby. The chorus moves stage left, where they become the people of abasemaLangeni.

Narrator — Having escaped with the young uShaka, Nandi went back home to Elangeni. *The chorus watches her and Shaka, who is protected by her arms, as they move towards them.* The tension between the two families resulted in war which the Zulu won and so Shaka and his mother were expelled from Elangeni. *The whole chorus does a gesture of expulsion, as representatives of the Langeni people.*

From here on Nandi and Shaka embark on a journey of wondering from place to place. Each of the different villages they travel to, is represented by individual chorus members who position themselves in different positions on stage. The journey to each village has its own texture which it represented by Nandi and Shaka's physical movements but also by the sounds of the chorus which emphasize those movements. The first movement is a journey down a steep hill.

Village rep.1 — Asinandawo yenu lapha. *To this the wanderers respond with disappointment through the body and sound. The chorus also assist in this. The next journey is stumbling through a mud pool.*

Village rep2 — Asinandawo yenu lapha. *Accompanied by a physical gesture of rejection.*

They now move as if travelling through a desert with a strong wind coming against them. Nandi uses her shawl to protect them against the strong wind. The chorus now moves to the front of the big rostrum as they imitate the travelling actions. The Narrator stands on top of the rostrum. One chorus member (Gendeyana) approaches Contempo who has been sitting in a chair watching the travelling sequence:

Gendeyana — Hheyi! Suka la. *Bullying him to move from the chair which he takes center stage and sits on it*

Narrator — Finally they found love and shelter with Gendeyana of the Qwabe's who had always wanted to take Nandi for a wife. *There is a physical image of welcoming them into the family*

Gendeyana — Namukelekile.

Narrator — Prince Shaka grew to be a strong young man. *Nandi holds Shaka and pulls him up slowly to symbolize his stage of growth.*

Narrator — When it was time for prince Shaka to be initiated, they sent him back to KwaZulu to ask his father for a cloth of

manhood. *Gendeyana and Nandi stand on either side of him showing their support for this idea.*

Shaka stands facing the audience, his gaze fixed at a distance. He starts the song to which everybody joins in:

SONG

Yahamb'intwenkulu
Yahamb'intwenkulu
Inkosi yamakhosi

The chorus separates into men and women. The women go and stand in a rostrum upstage left, and make physical gestures as if waiting anxiously for the return of the initiates. The men run in slow motion towards the audience and we understand that they are on their way to initiation. They mime running till it seems that they are going to run into the audience, but in fact, they only bend to pick up Contempo who has been sitting in there, watching. The forcefully grab him and throw him onto the stage. He looks very lost and wonders what to do next but before he could say anything the leader of the initiation school starts speaking and Shaka pulls Contempo into the line.

Umholi

Welcome bafana bami
Namukelekile egqwetheni
Isikhathi enizosichitha lapha sizonifundisa ubudoda.
Kodwa lokho akuzukwenziwa ngokudlala,
kuyasetshenzwa. Siyezwana? Hambani ke niyozingela
izinyamazane. Come and get your hunting spears. Wozani!
Look after your spear, Don't loose it. Use it well.

Initiates come in one by one, receiving a hunting spear. They are dismissed and sent to hunt. What follows is a stylized representation of the hunting pairs, with Contempo standing around looking nervous, prodded every now and then by the chorus leader to join in the action. Some excitement ensues as a pair of hunters spot a leopard, but it is too late, Shaka has already managed to kill it and is in fact picking it up to carry it back to the initiation site. Shaka places the imaginary leopard on the ground in front of Umholi. Everyone including the initiation leader are in awe of him.

Umholi

Hawu inyamazane engaka! Phela nina? Benenzani nabuya
ningaphethe lutho? Yihlinzeni...! *They start skinning it slowly, Contempo is working with them though he does not have a clue as to what is going on.* Sheshisani!

Shaka starts to push everyone out of the way and skins the animal expertly and very quickly, all by himself. The leader is visibly impressed. Shaka cuts off the head of the animal and before he hands it to the leader, he makes contact with Contempo. Contempo reacts in fear. Now Contempo also wants to give the leader something, but unfortunately picks up the entrails.

Contempo — Nang' amathumbu.

Umholi — Hheyi wena, a man does not eat intestines, uyahlanya yini? Lahla! *Contempo quickly runs and throws the entrails away. Shaka directs him for the next stage of the initiation to which the other young men join in. They all squat.*

Nceba — Today is your last day at initiation school. You must now come to receive your spears of manhood.

They come to get their spears of manhood and some kind of water splash ritual.

Nceba — *As they each come he says such things to them.:* Never leave your spear behind. You must be friends with your spear. Usuyindoda manje.

It is now the turn of Contempo, but he is too afraid to go forward and makes a run for it. However, Shaka throws his spear into the wall ahead of Contempo, comes forward to take it back while the Contempo watches him in terror. Shaka uses his imaginary spear to force him back to the initiator.

Umholi — Ucabanga ukuthi wenzani wena? Hhe! Masimb'akho, uyanginyanyisa! Uzongimoshel'isikhathi.

Contempo takes the spear with the wrong hand and gets scorned for that. During his speech Umholi repeatedly splashes water onto Contempo's face. As the water hits his face, he furiously wipes it with his hat, causing the leader to give him another splash, which he again wipes dry. One of the boys steps up to take his hat and he is splashed for a third time. Resigned to the water hitting his face, he turns rather to retrieve his hat.

Thando — Ngicela isigcoko sami.

Repeating his cry to give his hat back, it is thrown around from person to person, till finally it reaches the leader who steps on it challengingly, starting a song:

Umholi — Ayiyoyoyoyo… Hhayiya…..
Contempo clicks his tongue in annoyance.
Ayiyo weyiye hayiya
Woyiyo, hayiya. Iyabaleka

Thando — I will buy another one! *Giving up on his hat he moves to sit down with the audience. The initiator forces him back into the scene.*

SONG

Chini madoda iyabaleka X3
Webaba naz' inkomo
Jiyela, Jiyela yela, yela

The initiates, including Contempo now stand behind each other and start walking anticlockwise as if travelling back to the village. A celebration follows with much singing and dancing, the boys now recognized as men. The actors form a semi-circle around Shaka who is standing still, focussed. Inkundla is opened for the initiates to demonstrate their dancing ability. Senzangakhona and Nandi move in to the scene and position themselves opposite each other. Nandi gets up to praise Shaka when his turn to dance comes..

Nandi

Shaka my dear son whom I have raised with my own hands. Listen to the voices calling you, shouting the names of your forefathers. You shall learn and follow their heroic paths. You shall have no fear. You shall take your weapons and sharpen their points. One day you shall grow in fame beyond the stars.

She ulalates as if showing off to Senzangakhona. As Nandi sits down, Senzangakhona steps into the circle to face Shaka.

Senzangakhona

Shaka my son, you have come home to fetch your ceremonial gift of manhood. *Struggling to look him in the eye.*

Shaka

Taking the imaginative cloth, I am already a man but if my mother is not a royal queen, then I know no man by the name of Senzangakhona, son of Jama! *He throws the cloth on the ground to which the chorus acclaims "Hhawu".*

Senzangakhona slaps him. The chorus clap simultaneously as well to emphasize this, Shaka starts running away followed by Nandi.

Senzangakhona

Mbambeni!

The chorus gets into a huddle behind Senzangakhona, run in different directions on the stage looking for Shaka. Shaka runs ahead of them hiding and gliding. He meets Contempo on the way and gets him to hide with him.

Narrator

Shaka ran like a mad bull, escaping the raging spear of his father's rage. Soon afterwards he decided to go to KwaMthethwa the Kingdom of King Dingiswayo.

Narrator — It was only when he reached kwaMthethwa the kingdom of King Dingiswayo that Shaka was able to settle down. It was there that Shaka's life was never to be the same again.

The chorus now become Dingiswayo's regiments in practice. On arrival Shaka and his friend, Contempo, bow before the king.

Dingiswayo — Welcome my son, you can join my regiments.

Shaka — Thank you Nkosi!

Shaka joins the practicing regiments and Contempo sits down to watch. The regiments all go through a co-ordinated sequence of gestures and sounds that symbolize the action of throwing their long spears. Contempo approaches Shaka with a request:

Contempo — Hey? Can I try one?

Shaka gives him one spear. He tries it but the spear lands a very short distance away from him and throws him off balance. The chorus and Dingiswayo who have been watching, all laugh at him

Dingiswayo — Hhawu mfana wami awuvele uhlale phansi nje ubukele.

The regiments continue practicing but Shaka is visibly contemplating something.

Shaka — *(to his neighbor)* What happens if we run out of Spears?

Warrior — We wait for the enemy to throw theirs back at us.

Shaka — But that is such a waste of time. *Turning to Dingiswayo* Why must we continue war in the ways of our forefathers? They who used to flee from the enemy when they had exhausted their supplies. We go to battle so many times and returned without victory.

Dingiswayo — My son you are just young and full of ideas, just continue with the training.

Shaka breaks his spear and attempts to demonstrate his strategy. To this he beckons Contempo who runs to join the chorus for safety. One of the regiments approaches Shaka Courageously, so he can be used for the demonstration.

Dingiswayo — This would be an open gate to bloodshed. Such violent attacks would cause more brutal battles.

Shaka	No! It will prevent the enemy from returning again and again.
Messenger	King Zwide is attacking! King Zwide is attacking! *Comes in running in slow motion, frantically waving her hands.*
Chorus	King Zwide!? *They all look at each other in terror*

Everyone runs and hides, clinging to the feet of the king. Contempo, however, just stands there, indifferent and asks the narrator to tell him who Zwide is. In panic she pulls him in to hide with everybody else.

Dingiswayo	Hlaselani!

The fearful warriors run forward thrusting their spears. The action continues eventually moving into a stylized motion, accompanied by sound. Shaka breaks his spear, runs forward and faces the enemy head on, killing several. This causes the enemy to retreat. The rest of the chorus break from their stylization to celebrate this victory. They move back to the king who congratulates Shaka. Contempo emerges from behind the king and congratulates Shaka as well, by clapping for him. Out of joy Dingiswayo starts a song, to which everybody joins in while one of the regiments praises Shaka:

SONG	Waphuma wabalek' uMahlathini Wayengakhali, Wayengakhalli Wayehlabelela
Dingiswayo	Well done, my son. I now give you the Izichwe regiment to train in your new strategies.
Shaka	Bayede! *(now raises his spear)* From this weapon shall come a plan that shall be a parent to all my strategies. With my black shield I shall cover and hook my enemies! Take your spear. Break it in half. *Showing the movement:* Vula! Vala! Hlabinhlizweni! (close, open, stab in the heart)

He repeats the motion until everyone joins in. Dingiswayo continues the song: Wayengakhali. *During this, Senzangakhona comes in and witnesses the scene. The two kings greet and embrace:*

Dingiswayo	Senzangakhona mfana wami, ninjani kodwa?
Senzangakhona	Sikhona baba. Who is that young man? *Pointing to Shaka.*

Dingiswayo — He is the mystery of this capital. One who possesses all gifts. *Senzangakhona starts getting off the rostrum and walks downstage continually admiring Shaka but not knowing it is his son.*

Dingiswayo — *(To Shaka)* Shaka my son, I have invited your father so you could be reconciled. Do what you have to do.

Shaka — Bayede!

Shaka steps forward to join his father who is by the river washing himself. The regiments squat at Shaka's order.

Shaka — I am of Zulu blood. My name is Shaka. Shaka Zulu. *Kneeling next to him.*

Senzangakhona — *Visibly shocked and embarrassed he bends down to wash his face. He doesn't know what to say.* Where is your mother?

Shaka — She has found a home with prince Gendeyane of the Qwabe's.

Senzangakhon — She must hate me?

Shaka — Nkosi. *Avoiding to answer the question.*

There is awkward silence as Shaka comes forward and Senzangaknona, thinking he wants to hurt him, moves away. Senzangakhona wanting to break the awkward silence starts splashing Shaka with water. Shaka buys the game and they start playing together. This game grows into a light playfulness at the peak of which Shaka asks his father for a favor.

Shaka — *(As the playing subsides, Senzangakhona now sitting on top of him)* Nkosi, can I have your spear? The one you carried at the festival?

Senzangakhona — I have given it away to my son Sigujana on attaining manhood.

Shaka pushes him away so that he falls to the ground.. Shaka turns away from his father and growls for his regiment to stand up and continue training.

Narrator — That night Senzangakhona had a dream. He was haunted by images of his son Shaka.

Shaka and his regiments start gravitating towards Senzangakhona doing the vula, vala action. Opposite them Senzangakhona is crawling on the ground towards Shaka, looking at him. The regiments don't look at him but they sing a haunting song and their action has a very creepy feeling to it.

Narrator — It was soon after his visit to KwaMthethwa that Senzangaskhona died. *Senzangakhona dies.*

Shaka turns around to face his dead father. As he gets closer to him, both actors get into a kneeling position facing each other and looking straight into each others' eyes. Soon they start breathing into each other, giving and taking life from each other. Eventually they rise up, continuing to look at each other. Now standing they take their characters' costumes off and pass them on to each other. Old Senzangakhona puts on old Shaka's costume, who holds old Senzangakhona's costume in his hand. Still looking at each other they raise their arms to shoulder level. New Shaka turns around to go stand at the raised skip as if ascending the seat of the throne. Old Shaka stands in the middle of the circle his physicality resembling that of the new Shaka as much as possible.

Shaka 1 & 2 — I have come back to my father's kingdom. My travels have taught me all I need to know for my task. From today on, let all of Nguni know… *(Shaka 1 steps down, and Shaka 2 continues)*

Shaka 2 — …there shall be one king. Whoever violates the law of the nation endorsed by me shall die. Whoever flees from the enemy causing shame to the Zulu nation shall die. None shall be without the knowledge of fighting. From the ruins, from endless wars, shall emerge the great nation of Zululand.

Nandi — Bayede, Wena weZulu! *Echoed by the nation*

Shaka — But for now let us celebrate.

Song — Ubuyile uShaka wamaZulu
Kuzolunga, ubuyile. *Sung in celebration of his return.*

The chorus dance a symbolic version of bayede. Nandi and the Narrator dress Shaka in his kingship outfit. Shaka soon jumps down from the rostrum and the nation cries out "Bayede".

Narrator — *(as Shaka steps down)* King Shaka abruptly ended the celebrations and gave orders for the most courageous fighters of the land to be assembled.

Chorus comes forward as warriors, standing in two lines, on either side of Shaka, to be examined. Contempo is put in the line as well.

Shaka — Abeze! *The narrator pulling them to the front, one by one.*

Shaka — *(men1)* Too old!
(men2) Too short! *Narrator is ordered to kill him. To this Contempo cries "Hhawu", and removes himself from the line.*

Shaka — *(men3)* Ngiyamufuna.

Shaka notices Contempo who is now crawling up a wall looking for an escape root.

Shaka — Hheyi wena ndoda, woza la. Uphumaphi wena.

Thando — I am from Durban. *Shaka starts walking around Contempo, examining him.*

Shaka — Kuyini lokhu? *Referring to his clothes.*
Umuhle nsizwa!

Thando — Ngiyabonga..

Shaka — Kodwa angikuthandi lokhu okusemanyathelweni.
Khumula! *Contempo refuses.*

Shaka — Mkhumule nsizwa ende!

The men tries but Contempo resists him. The whole group now helps to take his shoes off him.

Contempo — Will I get them back?

Shaka — No.

Contempo — Why?

Shaka — You are one of my warriors now! *(Pointing to the front of the queue)* Yima la!

Thando tries to speak, but Shaka tells him to shut up.

Shaka — *(He touches their shoulders as he speaks which prompts them to assume their positions as regiments)* Here are the laws for the regiments. I give them to you now, and never

again. Those who flee from battle shall be sentenced to death by this act. No one should have scars on their back. Each man shall carry to battle a short spear. The enemy shall be pursued to the end. Commanders; you are the voice of all in your regiment. You are the eyes of the whole nation. No more initiation school. From today on our regiments must harden their feet and throw away their softening sandals.

Shaka starts a chant which he uses in training his regiments : NANG' ETHINT' AMASHINGA. *Action slows down and becomes silent while the following is narrated:*

Narrator — All through these changes King Shaka's heart was restless and he was itching to avenge his childhood enemies. He spoke to his army about the unhappy events of his past. All those condemned for past crimes against King Shaka were led to a place of execution where they were knocked senseless with a gigantic club.

The two Shaka's stand back to back, miming swinging a club while the chorus cringes around them crying for mercy. Each line is accompanied by a clubbing action to which the chorus responds by swinging their heads as if they had been hit.

Shaka 1 — Humbu who humiliated me before a group of young women. *(swings club)* A clansman who denied me shelter as a refugee. *(swings club)* My cousins who scorned me, spreading scandalous rumors about my mother Nandi. *(swings club)* AbasemaLangeni who exiled me and my mother as a young boy.

Actors, keeping body contact, begs for mercy

Shaka 1&2 — Why did I deserve such cruelty? You bunch of cowards! For this and all else you shall die! *(One last swing of the club and the whole chorus falls to the ground)*

Shaka 2 steps forward, smiling contentedly.

Shaka 2 — Let's now have a cleansing feast, I command that of grudges be forgotten.

Nandi ululates and a song starts:

Song — Wezinsizw' azophelela
Ji-emu, ayemu

Wemolo
Ayemu
Ayelelemama
Ji-emu, ayelelema.

To this song is a choreographed dance which Shaka leads

Narrator — All these activities took him away from his mother who now felt isolated and wanted him to settle down and start a family. Nandi soon demanded his presence at her royal house, Mkhindini.

The song continues in the background during the following scene. Shaka does not even look at his mother.

Shaka — I only came here because you asked me to. Otherwise I would not have come.

Nandi — My son, Somlilo sikaNdaba. I want to tell you my heart's secrets, for in truth I am getting old. I hear no voice heralding the future of Zulu. My son, may I be made human with the warmth of your child!

Shaka — So long as I am building this nation I must prolong the joys of my domestic life. Men weaken after having children.

Nandi — Our children are our hope for the future.

Shaka — Children are dangerous.

Nandi — Shaka!

Shaka — Like some other kings I don't want to be in constant fear of my own children.

He turns around and commands the chorus to raise the volume of the song and thus continuing the celebrations.

Messenger — King Dingiswayo is dead! Killed by Zwide!

The chorus takes a collective breath of shock/horror, including Shaka. Shaka falls in shock and the chorus catches him before he hits the ground.

Shaka — Ngimfunge udadewethu kababa!
I shall avenge my father. Zwide, son of Langa, shall not live for long!

He calls his regiments standing in the chorus to come with him, thus separating the group into the Zulu and the Ndwandwe army of king Zwide. Shaka pulls Contempo with him, as part of his army.

Shaka — Amabutho aweze. We must fight like a family – this must be the greatest war ever fought by any two armies. There is only one way for us to survive: be strong, stand your ground, do not yield.

Zwide — I shall destroy that Shaka, stubborn son of Senzangakhona! Ikhalaphi! *Starting a war cry to which his regiments respond.*

Zwide's Regiments — Ikhalaphi inkunz' yethu
Sizwa ngothi ikhalaphi...

Zwide's armies approach the battlefield (center stage). As they get there, Shaka's smaller army starts to encircle them.

Shaka — Niyabesaba Na?

Shaka's Regiments — Hhayi asibesabi siyabafuna!

An exchange of insults and warfare takes place as the two armies get into battle. Zwide's army intimidated by the Zulu army's tactics, start to retreat. The Zulu's break the encirclement and run ahead of Zwide's armies burning the crops at Ndwandwe – thus destroying their source of food, which will bring starvation for Zwide's regiments. Zwide's armies, blocked by the fires turn and look for a separate route. Two of his regiments are captured by Shaka.

Shaka — Now you, are part of Zulu!

He starts a chant through which he teaches them his fighting strategies. They progress to face the rest of the chorus who now represent a different enemy. In fear of Shaka's mighty strategies, they get down on their knees and surrender.

Shaka — Now you too, are part of Zulu.
Shosholoz' ushayise. *Continuing the chant as they shuffle doing the vula vala action symbolic of ongoing wars. Nandi and Gxekazi are left center stage carrying a baby.*

Narrator — *(Simultaneous to the previous action)* Meanwhile king Shaka's favourite woman had given birth to a baby boy.

Shaka — Sholoz' ushayise. *The wars continue (stylised gesture of the vula-vala action).*

Nandi — My grandson, beautiful grandson! He shall grow to be a mighty king. He shall continue the name of Zulu for generations to come.

Gxekazi — Ndlovukazi, I want to tell Shaka about the baby.

Nandi — Hhayi! (*repeatedly*) Angeke kulunge. Phela, you know that he doesn't want any children. Remember how he expelled the daughter of Cele when she got pregnant!

Shaka progresses to yet another war. Through all this Contempo has withdrawn from the wars, joined Nandi and Gxekazi, and started playing with the baby. He gets excited and goes on to tell the king.

Contempo — Bayede Nkosi! I have good news for you! A son of your own blood has been born! Come and see!

Shaka suppresses his anger and goes over to where his mother is. The chorus starts singing a lullaby. Shaka enters center stage to see the baby.

Nandi — *(in terror)* Shaka!

Shaka — A child, supposedly mine, has been kept away from me.

Shaka stretches his arms so Nandi can give him the baby. He starts playing with the baby, and all seem well, but then he suddenly kills it. Nandi reaches out to him, but he pushes her away and leaves. Shaka returns to the image of continued warfare while his mother is dying. She starts singing a song accompanied by physical gestures symbolic of her process of dying.

Song — Ye, yewuye, yewu mamama
Yewuyewu
Indlovukaz' iwile makulilwe
Yewuyewu…

Contempo watches Nandi as she dies. When she is dead he turns and speaks to Shaka.

Contempo — Bayede umkhulu wena. Indlovukazi isisishiyile baba.

The chorus stops the song and look at the body of Nandi lying dead on the floor. Shaka

1&2 walk over to where Nandi's body is.

Shaka 1&2 — Mama, mama. *The two Shaka's undertake a processional procedure of wrapping Nandi in a blanket and carrying her to her grave. One by one the chorus come in on the action looking at them sympathetically. Nandi's dying song starts again.*

Shaka — Why aren't you mourning my mother's death? *The chorus seem confused by what he is saying* I declare a national mourning, now! Now, now… *Unsure of what this means they continue singing and circling.*

Shaka — There shall be no ploughing, no reaping. No cows should be milked throughout the land. No man shall sleep with his wife in the year of mourning. All pregnant women must be killed.

During the above speech the nation dies one by one. By the end of it they all but one lie dead around Shaka and his dead mother, Nandi. Shaka1 who has been anointing Nandi with oil now gets up and gives this oil to Contempo who anoints himself with it. Shaka 1 kills the remaining chorus member and they both fall on the ground to join the rest of the dead bodies. Shaka 1 actor is no longer Shaka but one of the chorus members for the rest of the play now.

Contempo — Oh, please stop it now nkosi, you are killing the nation.

Shaka — Thula wena siphukuphuku. Ngithi thula, uhambe la!

At the end of this two actors who symbolize Shaka's step-brothers get up from among the dead bodies and start a physical language of plotting to kill Shaka. Shaka remains standing with Nandi at his feet. The brothers invite Contempo to kill Shaka. They give him a spear which he takes, courageously moves forward as if to kill Shaka. But just before he could stab him, he retreats.

Contempo — Enough, enough!

One of the angry brothers pushes Contempo away. They then proceed to kill him themselves.

Shaka — (*During the second stab and while dying*) You kill me my brothers. You shall never rule this land, the white swallows will rule!

Seeing this the chorus run away in terror. They hide behind the pillars not looking at the

action. The brothers start shaking as they see the blood in their hands. The spear drops from their hands and they also flee to join the chorus. Contempo realizes that he is now left alone with the dead bodies. He gets up from the corner and starts calling for the people to come and bury Shaka's body.

Contempo — Abantu? Baphi abantu, bantu wozani… *Looking around.*

One of the chorus members starts shuffling the pages of the history book which has been standing in the background throughout the play.

Voice of dead Shaka — You shall never rule this land the white swallows will rule instead, x2. Angeke nilibuse liyobuswa zinkonjane…

Contempo tries to close his ears so as not to hear this voice, but it persists and grows to a point where he cannot take it anymore.

Contempo — Shut up. I don't belong to you. Angiyena owakho mina! Let the curses of the dead be buried with the dead.

Shaka's voice stops and Contempo decides to bury Shaka's body himself. The chorus starts the breathing sound from the beginning again. During the burial his table and chair are flown back into their original position. Contempo is now standing over the grave with Shaka's body already in it.

Contempo — Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Uthuli othulini. Umlotha emlotheni.

He takes the history book standing behind him and carries it around his arms. It is now much lighter than it was at the beginning. He writes on it, he speaks out what he is writing.

Contempo — Shaka Zulu, king of the Zulu nation. Born 1896, died 1828. May his soul rest in peace.

He then makes the book stand like a gravestone on Shaka's grave. Relieved he steps down from the rostrum, thus returning to the present. The chorus leave the stage completely.

Contempo — Hey, I'm home!

He looks around touches his desk and chair. Out of feeling joyful and victorious he stands on the table. A song is heard from the technical sound. He dances to it for a while before the lights start coming down for blackout.

THE END!