



**STORIES READY TO SHOOT
IN KZN – MEET THE KZN
FILMMAKERS**



DURBAN FILM OFFICE DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Durban Film Office Development Fund supports intermediate to experienced producers based in Durban who need to develop feature fiction or documentary projects for the local and/or international market. The programme provides grant funding for 2 Durban film projects per annum, to a maximum of R250 000 per project towards the development of the project.

ILEMBE STORY LAB

Ilembe Story Lab is a screenwriting training and development platform for emerging filmmakers living in the Ilembe district. 8 participants are selected for basic screenwriting training and a chance to write a short film script with dedicated mentor support as an introduction to the screenwriting profession. Each of the writers are given a one-year membership to the Writers Guild of South Africa, allowing them to connect with the screenwriting community. The best script from the programme earns the writer a 2-month internship with Stained Glass Productions, where they work in the writers' room of the South African telenovela, Uzalo.

ZINDELA Pictures.

GREATNESS IS WITHIN YOU

A girl from the deep rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal endures severe abuse, but her inner strength and perseverance help her overcome these

challenges until she discovers her talent for music.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER STATEMENT

Set in a Zulu film scrubland habitat where life is unfair in many ways, human rights are violated under the umbrella of cultural cleansing ceremonies, a reality known to few. Hlalumi, an innocent girl, is traumatized by memories of rape, disturbed and confused without any form of support from her family.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER PROFILE

Senzo Zindela is passionate about community development and recently received the SAFTA 2016 Special Recognition Award for his outstanding work as the best Provincial Development Initiator. His film credits include notable works such as *Paladin Resurrection*, *Treasure Fellowship*, *The Foggy Mountain*, *Red Cargo*, *The Right*, *Problems Are Everywhere*, and *Finding Joy*. For more details, his IMDb profile can be found [here](#).

COMPANY DETAILS

Zindela Pictures Group is a South African fiction filmmaking firm established in 2007 to produce entertaining stories with high impact to upgrade the local industry.



Siya Sityana
DIRECTOR



Senzo Zindela
PRODUCER

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Type: Fiction Feature Length

Country: South Africa

Production Company: Zindela Pictures Group

Running Time: 90 minutes

FINANCING PLAN

Total Budget: 1 500 000 USD

Finances Committed: 200 000 USD

GOALS AT DFM

- Funding
- Co-Production



LOVE CHASE

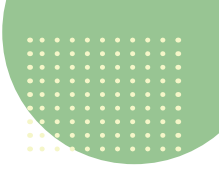
Beatrice (40s) is a widow who seems to have it all: great kids, a successful business, and a house in a small suburban beach town. One thing amiss is the control her mother-in-law, Christina (70s), enforces upon her life by announcing that the family has decided to put her in a levirate marriage.

The levirate marriage is a no-no for Beatrice. While fighting to break free, she unexpectedly falls in love with someone else: a charming single dad, Mel (50s), which complicates the situation further.

Beatrice secretly starts dating Mel, while dodging her grown-up daughters, her Kenyan half-sister Naima, and her business manager, Irumba. However, her mother-in-law catches her on a romantic date and tells Mel that Beatrice is a cheating wife, driving a wedge between these two lovers.

Beatrice must find her voice, pursue her dreams, and secure her freedom to live her life on her own terms.

Love wins in the end.



DIRECTOR/PRODUCER STATEMENT

Growing up in a traditional extended family, every time an elder brother or sister got engaged or married, I would hear my siblings and parents say, "Getting married to a man means you have gotten married to his entire family." I thought this was a great thing, but later learned that it treated a woman as more than just a wife to a man, but rather as a property of the man's family.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER PROFILE

Happiness Mpase is a Durban-based film producer who has managed more than ten movie projects for local broadcaster M-Net/Mzansi Magic, and has produced two made-for-TV films in her own production company. One of those films was distributed worldwide by Trace Studios after being selected in the DFM Content Shop. Both her films are broadcast locally, one on M-Net/Mzansi Magic and one on SABC. Her production company HD N3twork won Best Upcoming Filmmaker in the Durban Tourism Business Awards in 2023.

COMPANY DETAILS

HD N3twork is a film production company based in Durban. We are passionate about women's stories, exploring love, relationships, family dynamics, culture, tradition, and legal rights.



Kizito Samuel Saviour
DIRECTOR



Happiness Mpase
PRODUCER

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Type: Fiction Feature length

Country: South Africa

Production Company: HD N3twork

Running Time: 90 minutes

FINANCING PLAN

Total Budget: 214 058.28 USD

Finances Committed: 0 USD

GOALS AT DFM

- Raising Production Finance for Love Chase
- Networking with International Filmmakers
- Seeking Film Business Opportunities





LOVE ME A LITTLE, BUT LOVE ME LONG

Love Me a Little, But Love Me Long is a riveting and true tragic romance set in 2004 in the East Coast city of Durban, South Africa, and Hartford, Connecticut, US. It follows the charming yet self-destructive playboy-politician and gifted writer, George Sithole (53), as he makes a spirited shot at a second chance in love with his one true love, his ex-wife, Nomathemba Sheppard (51).

In 1982, while he is imprisoned on an island political prison, George is the go-to guy for his fellow inmates who need love letters for their partners on the mainland. George writes love-soaked letters for others while his first marriage to Nomathemba falls apart. At the time, Nomathemba flees South Africa for the US and leaves George and their three children behind.

When the film opens, it is December 2003. George is not only a free man but also a man-about-town. Nomathemba still swears never to reconcile with George until hell freezes over. She is happily married and lives in Hartford, Connecticut (US) with her American husband, Earl Sheppard (52). Nomathemba is now back in town (Durban) for the wedding of her daughter with George. Nomathemba and George come face-to-face for the first time in years. Sparks fly. Nomathemba is overwhelmed and runs back to her loving husband, Earl. But George is relentless. George records their dreamy yet salacious reconciliation in his 2004 burgundy diary. As George and Nomathemba race into a future filled with nostalgic dreams of their once young love, will love thwarted survive?

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER STATEMENT

I am drawn to stories of deep passion, eternal love, and melancholy. George and his reckless eccentrics remind me of my father. It is a story of our own love lives, a story heard or read about once in a while. It is a story of love found, lost, and found again. I want the audience to be teary, to yearn for love again, or stay in love, because love is lovely.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER PROFILE

Gugu Kunene is a writer, producer, and director who provides art department services, particularly for made-for-television projects. She has developed two feature films, both currently in the financing phase. Gugu writes scripts, including for animation, catering to independent producers. She participated in the NFVF Female Filmmakers Project (2019), where she wrote and directed her first project – a short film. Gugu has also served as a panelist on a funding programme for Micro Budget films. Additionally, she is a DFM Access Alumni (2020) and has been selected for an Italian film lab.

COMPANY DETAILS

Noontalk provides scriptwriting services to independent producers, script coaching for new writers, and an art department and buying service for independent producers.



Gugu Kunene
DIRECTOR/PRODUCER



Mpho Ramathuthu,
PRODUCER

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Type: Fiction Feature Length

Country: South Africa, United States

Production Company: Noontalk Publishing

Running Time: 110 minutes

FINANCING PLAN

Total Budget: 803 595 USD

Finances Committed: TBC

GOALS AT DFM

- My goal, with my producer at the DFM, is to pitch our project to sales agents and distributors, and to promote the film and network.





MAHLATHINI, THE EXPLOITED ZULU ARTIST

In the racially charged South Africa of the 1960s, a time when dark politics cast long shadows, emerged a voice that would defy the odds. Simon Nkabinde, armed with unparalleled work ethic and unmatched discipline, joined the ranks of Gallo Records. Under the wing of the controversial producer Rupert Bopape, he was determined to carve his name into the annals of music history.

Nkabinde's innovative song style, tailored to his distinctive rough, gruff voice, quickly became his signature, propelling him to dominate the South African music charts. His sound, authentic and captivating, caught the attention of a French promoter, leading to negotiations that would catapult him onto the international stage.

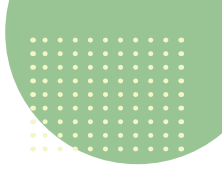
As Nkabinde opened for icons like Michael Jackson and Malcolm McLaren and collaborated with stars such as Paul Simon, his star seemed to burn ever brighter. Yet, as the 1990s dawned, bringing with it illness and hardship, the once-celebrated musician faced a dire financial crisis,

ultimately passing away unable to afford his medical bills, dying a pauper.

This investigatory film peels back the layers of Nkabinde's life, probing the archives to unearth the truth behind his meteoric rise and sudden fall. Was his downfall a result of personal excesses, or were there elements of exploitation and foul play at work within the industry he once dominated?

Through interviews with contemporaries, analysis by music historians, and insights from those who knew him best, *Mahlathini, The Exploited Zulu Artist* seeks to unravel the mystery. Did Nkabinde's fortunes evaporate through a series of misfortunes and missteps, or was he betrayed by the very industry he helped to shape?

Join us on a journey of discovery as we attempt to piece together the fragmented legacy of a man whose music transcended boundaries, but whose story remains shrouded in speculation and sorrow.



DIRECTOR/PRODUCER STATEMENT

Our film, *Mahlathini, The Exploited Zulu Artist*, will draw upon a diverse array of sources, meticulously piecing together the narrative. A key voice in our film will be Hilda Tloubatla, the venerable 81-year-old surviving member of *Mahlathini* and the *Mahotella Queens*.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER PROFILE

Sibongile Nene has made her mark as a producer, director, and writer. Her debut project titled *Insila ka Shaka*, a compelling story based on a servant of the illustrious King Shaka, is in production with Known Associates. Her short film, *'Iyeza Medicine Biopiracy'*, a critical piece that raises profound questions about cultural appropriation and ethics, earned an International Film Award at the prestigious Bermuda International Film Festival.

COMPANY DETAILS

Founded on the principles of cultural preservation and cinematic excellence, 'Zulu Heritage Films' delves deep into the heart of South Africa's rich history and diverse narratives.



Sibongile Nene
PRODUCER/DIRECTOR

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Type: Documentary Feature Length

Country: South Africa

Production Company: Zulu Heritage Films

Running Time: 90 minutes

FINANCING PLAN

Total Budget: 1 000 000 USD

Finances Committed: 10 000 USD

GOALS AT DFM

- Funding



A DEAD FLOWER CAN STILL BLOOM

Nhlanhlo Zulu is a young, beautiful teenager who lives with her grandparents in a rural area in Mandeni. Her grandmother has always emphasized that being a virgin is honourable. Nhlanhlo attends virginity testing every month to prove her virginity status. Nhlanhlo is also an average student who wishes to pass her matric with distinctions so she can further her studies.

On her way to school, she meets a boy and falls in love. She sometimes skips school so she can spend time with him. Having no experience in relationships, she is badly influenced by him to the extent that he breaks her virginity the night before her scheduled virginity test.

A call from her Aunt, who normally performs the testing, bursts Nhlanhlo's love bubble as she informs her that the test is scheduled for the next morning. Nhlanhlo makes an excuse of being sick to her grandmother to avoid getting tested. However, her grandmother, who has noticed her behaviour, insists that she goes.



Lulama Sithole
WRITER

Nhlanhlo realises that for her to pass well, she needs to come clean to her grandparents as this situation is weighing on her. A disappointed face from her grandparents says it all. Nhlanhlo deeply apologises to her grandparents and her apology is fully accepted as she passes her matric with distinctions.

AYIKHO IMPUNGA YEHLATHI

Detective Zwane is a dedicated but emotionally distant police detective with a strained relationship with his son, Sfiso. Zwane is a hardworking officer who prioritises his work over his family, often dismissing his son's attempts to connect with him. The story begins with Sfiso trying to spend time with his father at the police station, only to be dismissed.

At home, Zwane's wife, Nozimanga, tries to maintain a loving household despite Zwane's frequent absences. Sfiso seeks his father's attention again, wanting to watch a soccer match together, but is turned down. Nozimanga comforts Sfiso, attempting to fill the void left by Zwane's neglect.

The plot thickens when Zwane learns about a new case involving a boy who stabbed another during an attempted hijacking. As Zwane delves into the case, he is shocked to discover that his own son, Sfiso, is implicated. In a tense scene at the police station, Zwane bribes an officer to avoid recording the interrogation, attempting to understand his son's involvement.

Sfiso insists on his innocence, claiming he tried to help the victim rather than harm him. However, Mthethwa, a rival officer, seizes the opportunity to undermine Zwane, pushing for Sfiso's guilt. Zwane secretly investigates further, enlisting the help of a friend to obtain CCTV footage, which ultimately proves Sfiso's



Bongani Makhathini
WRITER

innocence but also reveals his son's involvement in drug distribution.

Confronting the evidence, Zwane is torn between his duty and his love for his son. He presents the footage to his superior, leading to Mthethwa's arrest for a separate crime captured on the mistakenly switched USB drives. Zwane's son's charges are dropped, and Mthethwa is taken into custody.

In the end, Zwane realises the importance of being present for his family. He apologises to Sfiso, acknowledging his shortcomings as a father, and they reconcile, promising to spend more time together and rebuild their relationship.

DENYING SPIRITUAL GIFT

Nosiphiwo is an independent woman in her late twenties, who is unexpectedly promoted to chief surgeon at her hospital. The story begins with Nosiphiwo waking up to this exciting news, as conveyed by her colleague, Robert. She eagerly prepares for her first day in the new role, exuding confidence and sophistication.

Upon arriving at work, Nosiphiwo's presence commands admiration from her colleagues. Her best friend, Thando, congratulates her, and they plan to celebrate later. Nosiphiwo's first day as chief surgeon is challenging; she encounters a tense situation in the operating room where she decides to remove a traditional bracelet from a patient, believing it could interfere with the surgery. This decision causes friction with the nursing staff, highlighting the cultural and professional conflicts she faces.

After an exhausting day, Nosiphiwo drives home but falls asleep at the wheel, crashing into a tree. She dreams of her ancestors performing traditional dances, indicating a deep connection to her heritage. She awakens in the hospital, confused and injured, only to be visited by Mamakhumalo, a traditional healer, who tells her that the accident was no coincidence but a sign of her spiritual gift.



Nosiphiwo initially rejects this notion but is later forced to confront her heritage when strange occurrences and physical symptoms push her to seek Mamakhumalo's help. Through traditional rituals, Nosiphiwo embraces her spiritual calling, reconciling her modern career with her ancestral roots. The story concludes with Nosiphiwo finding balance and peace, acknowledging her role as a bridge between the spiritual and the contemporary worlds.

IMPILO

Musa, a determined 16-year-old matric student, faces the daily challenge of struggling to read fluently at his local high school. Despite his difficulties, Musa harbours a deep passion for poetry, a talent that offers him a glimmer of hope amidst his struggles.

The situation intensifies when Mrs Mdluli, the strict isiZulu teacher, announces that the students will be reading aloud for marks. This news puts everyone on edge, especially Musa. When Mrs Mdluli calls on him, Musa stumbles after just one word, drawing laughter from his classmates. In an attempt to salvage his dignity, Musa switches to reciting poetry, earning applause, but Mrs Mdluli remains firm that he must read for marks the following day.

Among his peers, Nhlanhla is particularly harsh, taunting Musa and expressing doubt in his ability to succeed. The ridicule Musa faces weighs heavily on him, exacerbated by his cousin's awareness of the situation. Despite this, Musa is determined to improve. He practises reading in secret, but the echo of his classmates' laughter haunts him, making progress difficult.

In a moment of vulnerability, Musa confides in his cousin about his reading difficulties. This



Ayanda Mbatha
WRITER

revelation transforms their strained relationship as his cousin decides to help. They spend the entire night practising together, focusing on pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. This intense session not only prepares Musa for his reading task but also fosters a newfound bond between the two.

On the day of the reading, Musa faces the class with sweaty palms and a pounding heart. To the surprise of his classmates, he successfully navigates the long paragraph. Impressed by his determination and improvement, they smile at him, acknowledging his capability and resilience.

STAND OUT OF FEAR

Samke, a young woman who has only ever known life in the village, faces challenges at her first job in a call centre while trying to deal with personal struggles back home.

The story begins with Samke starting her first day at the Metropolitan Insurance Company. She is introduced to her new environment by Calvin, the manager, who explains the company's rules and regulations and introduces her to her colleagues. Calvin also announces a cash incentive for the first sale of the day, creating a competitive atmosphere.

Samke struggles initially, as her calls to customers either go unanswered or are abruptly disconnected. She receives a distressing message that her grandmother is sick and needs medication for epilepsy, adding to her stress. In the restroom, she confides in Nokubonga, a cleaner and old schoolmate, who advises her to be herself when speaking to customers.

Taking Nokubonga's advice, Samke finally manages to engage a customer and successfully makes a sale. However, when she tries to submit it, she finds that the sale has already been recorded by Sandiso, the top agent known for his ruthless behaviour. This realisation devastates Samke, who feels cheated out of her hard-earned sale.

Samke confronts Sandiso, who denies any wrongdoing. When she reports the issue to



Bonisiwe N. Nxumalo
WRITER

Calvin, he dismisses her concerns, leaving her feeling unsupported and defeated. Samke's frustration peaks when she receives another message about her grandmother's worsening condition.

Nokubonga suggests Samke ask Calvin to review the call recordings, as all customer interactions are recorded. In Calvin's office, they listen to the recordings, which clearly show that Samke made the sale. Sandiso is forced to apologise publicly and return the incentive money to Samke.

The story ends with Samke using the incentive money to buy the necessary medication for her grandmother.

THE COME UP

This is an observational documentary that follows Simphiwe “Alpha” Mahlangu, a young DJ and sound engineer from Melville Stanger, as he strives to establish himself in the music industry. The story highlights themes of self-belief, goal-setting, and perseverance.

Simphiwe lives with his grandmother and cousin, balancing household responsibilities, studying to improve his matric grades, and pursuing his passion for music. He spends his days trading Forex and creating music in his bedroom studio, using programmes like Reason, Fruity Loops, and Ableton. Simphiwe performs at local taverns and clubs to make money, relying on public transport or his father’s help for transportation.

Despite the challenges, Simphiwe remains focused on his goals. He networks with local DJs like MeloBee, sharing ideas and holding listening sessions. He also takes care of his grandmother by handling household expenses and running errands.

The documentary culminates in Simphiwe’s participation in the Ballito Pro competition, held at KwaDukuza Town Hall. The competition is a significant opportunity for him to showcase his skills and potentially advance to the main event at Salt Rock. Winning the competition could propel Simphiwe’s career, offering him a chance to move beyond his small town and into larger music markets in cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town.



Sandiselwe Mjali
WRITER

Throughout the documentary, the audience witnesses Simphiwe’s dedication and the sacrifices he must make, including the potential separation from his supportive grandmother. The story underscores the importance of creating opportunities, overcoming mental health challenges, and the necessity of mentorship and training for young artists.

Simphiwe’s journey is a testament to the power of resilience and the pursuit of dreams, serving as an inspiration to others facing similar struggles. The documentary aims to shed light on the struggles and triumphs of emerging artists in small towns, emphasising the need for community support and recognition.

THE MATURITY TWIST

Zukiswa Mlaba, an 18-year-old girl with dreams of becoming a fashion designer, immerses herself in sketching eye-catching dresses in her room. Despite her pride in completing a one-year fashion design course, Zukiswa faces the harsh reality of a rejected art funding request. Zukiswa's world takes a turn when her stepmother and her friend, Miss Mbhele, enter her room with news of a job opportunity – cleaning roads for the Ndwedwe municipality. Reluctant and ashamed of the prospect of being a public cleaner, Zukiswa agrees fictitiously to attend an interview to avoid disappointing her stepmother.

Intentionally avoiding setting an alarm, Zukiswa oversleeps on the day of the interview. As she heads to the kitchen for breakfast, Zukiswa attempts to forget about the cleaning job by singing and preparing a delicious meal for herself. However, her stepmother, Mrs Mlaba, expresses frustration about being the sole provider for the household. Zukiswa justifies her reluctance for the cleaning job, claiming it is not suitable for someone as pretty as her who spent time learning art at school. In response, her stepmother instructs her to leave and return only when she has a concrete job plan.



Mbali Nobuhle Vezi
WRITER

Desperate and seeking money to attend the interview, Zukiswa eventually decides to walk to the job location. Upon arrival, she discovers that her spot has been filled. Overwhelmed by desperation, Zukiswa confesses her misjudgment and genuine need for the cleaning job. Moved by her sincerity, Miss Mbhele grants her a new interview opportunity. The interview goes well, providing Zukiswa with a chance to turn her situation around.

TROUBLED

Buhle is a troubled girl who is expelled from her school for violent behaviour. The story begins in the principal's office where Mr Sibisi, the principal, informs Buhle's grandmother, Mama Mzobe, that Buhle has been repeatedly beating other children, leading to her expulsion. Buhle insists that she was provoked, but the damage is done.

With no other options, Buhle is sent to live with her mother, Nokuzola, who works as a domestic worker in a wealthy area. Nokuzola is surprised and disappointed by Buhle's arrival and the news of her expulsion. Despite the challenges, Mrs Smith, Nokuzola's employer, agrees to enrol Buhle in a new school, provided Buhle behaves and performs well.

At the new school, Buhle struggles to fit in and is mocked by her classmates for her poor English. She befriends Kamogelo (Kamo), a confident and talkative girl, who shows her the ropes of life in the affluent suburb. Kamo's influence leads Buhle astray as they engage in shoplifting, resulting in their arrest. Kamo's boyfriend bails her out, leaving Buhle alone in custody. Buhle is forced to call her mother for help, leading to a heartfelt confrontation.



Zinhle P. Sotshange
WRITER

Nokuzola bails Buhle out, using borrowed money, and the two have an emotional conversation about their strained relationship. Buhle feels neglected and unloved, while Nokuzola explains that she has been trying her best to provide a better life for her. They both apologise and promise to work on their relationship. The story ends on a hopeful note, with Buhle committing to focusing on her education and making her family proud, and Nokuzola promising to be more present in Buhle's life. This emotional reconciliation sets the stage for a fresh start.