

Love in a time of war in the DRC

Wits Theatre and the Wits School of Arts Theatre and Performance Studies are presenting the Pulitzer award-winning play *Ruined* written by Lynn Nottage and directed Megan Willson, about the civil war in the DRC.



The play is the result of interviews conducted by the playwright about the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is a complex drama about the inhumanity of war where women are the soft targets, whose lives are “ruined”. While the subject matter is dark and intense, it is also a play about hope and survival amidst the most dire of circumstances.

Set in a rural whorehouse, where sex is the currency and money the salvation, the story is both a romance and thriller. The goodies and baddies are intertwined in a chaotic war-torn world of music, fear and celebration.

Director Megan Willson says, “On the surface it *Ruined* may appear to be a story of devastation, but in fact it is one of the most magnificent love stories ever written. I believe the characters Mama and Christian will win the audiences over with their poetry, chocolate, food, wine, music and money which all form the tapestry of their relationship and their exquisite story of compassion, love, truth and their ultimate survival against a harsh background.”

Ruined launches the 2016 Student Drama programme and was chosen because it offers students the opportunity to grapple with issues facing our country including their role as artists in reflecting and questioning societal values. It deals with the very worst of human atrocity yet also reminds of how resilient the human spirit is, confronting the audience with tough questions that demand answers.

Willson is a South African playwright and director. For a number of years she worked solely as an actress with some of South Africa's best known directors including Barney Simon, Claire Stopford, Craig Freimond, Lara Foot and Mark Graham. She stepped into the director's role in 1991.

She has won numerous awards and over a nine-year period has conceived, written and directed more than 300 theatre shows for both the corporate, educational and private sectors in her scripting-cum-directing partnership with Graham Hopkins. Her directing credits include television shows like the *Big Brother* and *Project Fame* series.

Currently she, Hopkins and Elton Hesketh run a live event and experiential marketing agency, 360 Degrees Production House. She remains committed to the theatre industry and continues to write and direct theatre productions while running the business.

This ultimately led to Wilson receiving the Top Woman Entrepreneur Award with 360 making it onto the list of Top 300 Black Empowered Companies in the country.

"South Africa is going through troubled times and collectively we are questioning concepts related to liberty, freedom, power, democracy. Crime against women has reached unprecedented levels. *Ruined* allows our acting students to enter that dialogue and to wrestle with telling a painful story without lapsing into stereotypes or oversimplification. It is provocative theatre at its best," said Gita Pather, director of Wits Theatre

Ruined will run at the Wits Theatre from 10 to 14 May 2016.04.29

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