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# African Art Safari

Newsletter from SEMEA

Southern E Media Education & Arts/ 0114 2437899

## SOUNDING OUT ZIMBABWE



*The rocks rise like obelisk Monuments in Matopos National Park*

Our principal artists, Mandla Sibanda and Simon Banda spent a hectic summer in Zimbabwe working with Sunduza Dance Theatre and the Zimbabwe International Book fair. The Book fair has always supported the arts but this was the first time a really large production had to be mounted.

*Voices from the Rocks* is the story of the Matopos National Park which became a UNESCO World heritage site in July 2003. It is based on a well researched book of the same title by *Professor T Ranger*, Emeritus Professor of race relations and history at St Anthony's College, Oxford University. The book has been largely adapted for

the stage by Mandla Sibanda with choreography and brilliant original songs by Simon Banda. It is published by James Curry publishers in Oxford.

The book traces the history of the changing landscape as different cultures came to have control over what is only now a national park. What was a rich agricultural area owing to the many streams and pools was also the site of the Njelele Shrine a sacred area of both the Shona and later Ndebele peoples.

The burial place of Cecil John Rhodes and various shrines to WW2 veterans saw the establishment of the Park

## Beautiful Matopos

Matopos has captured the imagination of many people for its wild beauty but only recently have people been allowed to return some of the region to traditional land use allowing the Park and the people to benefit from the natural resources.

The story of how different people see the landscape is told through original archive material collected by Professor Ranger. It is thought that the production is the first time an academic book had been adapted for the stage in Southern Africa and it received a warm reception from many of the delegates. Those people who came from Bulawayo included the famous Ndebele Historian, *Pathisa Nyathi* who commended the group on bringing so much history to life

for local people to appreciate.

The photos for the multi-media production show the extraordinary landscape and historical sites and were collected over several visits by Philip Weiss.

### ZIBF makes South-South links.

The Book Fair supports literacy development across the continent and in 2004 achieved a record 400 exhibitors from the Pan African and large Black Caribbean diaspora. European publishers were markedly absent. The fair was opened by *Delano Franklin* a Jamaican writer and Jamaica's Foreign Minister supported by the well known *Mutabaruka*- Jamaica's "rasta" poet.



*The huge tors surround the burial site of Cecil John Rhodes in the Matopos. The ancient granite landscape has been weathered into weird formations like those above over millions of years.*



## SOSA-XA! gets a Peak invitation



*"SOSA-XA! Award winning team performs in Bolsover castle at the Children's Festival"*

SOSA-XA! *Sounds of Southern Africa* continues to thrive led mainly by Mandla Sibanda who took over from Simon Banda to allow Simon more time to work on new projects.

SOSA-XA! performed at Sheffield's Chance to Dance and the Bolsover Childrens' Festival. SOSA-XA! continue to raise funds for a variety of African charities. A successful concert supported the Bughoko rural development centre in Uganda at Christchurch in Pitsmoor. SOSA-XA! also gave an outdoor concert as part of Chesterfield Markets celebrations.

SOSA-XA visited Harpur Hill Primary in Buxton. The project also involved Buxton Infant, Buxton Junior and Fairfield Infant schools. Their support has been tremendous.

Funds were raised for the young people of Pumula in Bulawayo who work in the *Es'phakeni* Youth Arts Centre. Funds raised will support a project to rebuild the toilets, reconnect the electricity and to ultimately create a quality learning centre.

The *Es'phakeni* is leased by the local youth trust from the city of Bulawayo.



*Lindiwe Mabusa, the South African High Commissioner commends SOSA-XA! for their pronunciation and quality of sound on a recent visit to Sheffield. The visit was organised by members of Black Card hoping to create more business links for Black Business entrepreneurs.*

## Singing for Charity

SOSA-XA! has been an empowering experience not just for members of Sunduza. Sunduza Dance Theatre have really appreciated the hard work the members from many nationalities have done over the past few years.

As well as working in multiple Southern languages it is easy to forget that several members have English as a second language apart from the Zimbabwean members. We have people from Greece, France, Portugal, Germany, South Africa and the USA.

The choir is an intercultural exploration

of Southern African performance styles and recognises the immense complexity of traditions over the last 400 years that have influenced music making in that region. Influences include diverse music traditions from the American music hall, jazz, Welsh competitive male voice choirs, the church and multiple Southern African languages.

At the time of going to press the choir is to perform at Sheffield Cathedral for a World Aids Day celebration created by SHIELD, a Sheffield organisation supporting people living with HIV in South Yorkshire.



## Kutamba Kids!

SEMEA started *The Kutamba School of Contemporary African Dance* in May 2003 but which saw its first funding arrive in January 2004.

Set up to create a performance project for the youth to integrate with members of Sunduza it seems to have taken on a wider appeal.

Kutamba Kids! meet at the Burngreave Ashram Dance Studio, for ages 5-11 yrs, at 10.30a.m, Saturdays. Kutamba School

of Contemporary dance raises the stakes for adults and includes an active drumming group. They meet at the Central Victoria Methodist Church opposite the Crucible Theatre in Norfolk Row in Sheffield at 7.15p.m. Thursday evenings.

A group is being established for older youth interested in doing more theatre. Meanwhile Kutamba continues to perform at festivals and family days.



## Kutamba Creative!

*Kutamba!* which means to dance or to play in Zimbabwe's main language, *Shona*, will enable children, youth and adults to explore Africa's dance heritage. It will explore positive images of Africa through discussion, the use of the internet and African theatre.

We hope SEMEA's outreach programme will bring Kutamba to a centre near you and to this end the group has embarked on a programme in Maltby, and will expand in Chesterfield and Buxton from January 2005.

Kutamba School is led by Simon Banda and Mandla Sibanda leads Kutamba Kids. They have been supported by Owen Ncube, Godfrey Pambalipe, Cynthia Phiri and Tsungai Tsikirai on various occasions.

### Cajones

These unusual drums made from a variety of soft wood and African hardwoods and snares originated on the slave ships that went to Brazil and Peru.

The packing crates now have much sophistication. If you want more information or to purchase some contact us as the UK distributor on 0114 2437899 and support the dance team!



*So you think drums are round? Ours are SQUARE! Kutamba Kids! Meets Saturday morning from 10.30a.m. at the Burngreave Ashram*

## Mandla works at Cedar Special School

*Report by Lynn Jones, deputy head teacher*

**"Two-gether Singing in the Afro-American Tradition"** - Reorganisation of Special Schools in Doncaster will mean that two schools, Cedar and Fernbank will amalgamate into one new school.

To begin the process through singing together, Lyn Jones, Acting Deputy Head at Cedar school, successfully applied for funding from Youth Music. The new choir would combine pupils from both schools and be called 'Two-gether' The project runs for 20 weeks, moving from African chanting through spirituals and gospel to rap and reggae. Having worked with artists from *Southern E Media* before, we invited Mandla Sibanda to deliver the first section.

Mandla built up a great relationship with the pupils, who all have severe difficulties in communication and learning, and he enabled them to develop their singing through his energetic and fun delivery.

The Youth Music project continues into spring, with Janet Woods, Jacqui McKoy-Lewins from Temple Rhythms Gospel Choir and Chad Chabvonga (rap artist), from Doncaster. In April, all the artists will lead the "Two-gether" choir, supported by Jacqui's Gospel choir, in a performance for family and friends.



*"Voices from the Rocks at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair Simon Banda (centre), Misheck Moyo (left), Simba Sagide (right-narrator) at Alliance Francaise (Harare)*





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## We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.southern-edia.net](http://www.southern-edia.net)

[www.semea.org.uk](http://www.semea.org.uk)

[www.kutamba.org.uk](http://www.kutamba.org.uk)

[www.sunduza.org](http://www.sunduza.org)

[www.sosa-xa.org.uk](http://www.sosa-xa.org.uk)



### Trustees

Rosalind Harrison

Robin Raily

Rod Douglas

### Project Director:

Philip Weiss

### Av Director

Mandla Sibanda

Director of Music

Simon Banda

Associate Producer

Vernon Williams

Inter-cultural arts space,  
knowledge and  
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## Over the Edge Theatre



*Over the Edge Theatre* from Zimbabwe touring *Twelfth Night* sold out at the Crucible Theatre last September raising the stakes of quality Zimbabwean theatre in the Yorkshire area.

Wiina Msamati, Craig Peter, Michael Pearce, Zane Lucas and Kevin Hanssen brought the house down with their small team in *Twelfth Night* combining Mbira sounds to Shakespeare's lyrics and setting Illyria in Africa. Msamati's

*Wiina this time as Feste, Zane as Cesario and Craig as Sir Toby Belch in the style of a Hippo!*

rendition of Malvolio in a beautiful bird mask portrayed as an African stork really shows the tremendous humour that the cast created.

The tour was organised by SEMEA and supported by the Arts Council and Creative Burngreave

## Great Photos from the archive!



*The Sunduza team in Harare recently supporting the Book Fair*



## About Our Organization...

*Southern E Media Education and Arts (SEMEA)* was created to support knowledge exchange between people and community spaces in the "North" and Southern Africa. It adds value to what artists from the South bring to Europe as an empowerment programme; and to develop collaborative exchange using digital technologies and the performance arts.

It creates value by adding skills and knowledge through training programmes in the UK and Africa. It offers arts management skills, and multimedia skills to reduce the knowledge gap; and capacity build community projects.

SEMEA helps to raise funds for development projects that use the arts to educate and create employment.