The interrogation of power dynamics and students' cultural beliefs through the performing arts in a university context: The case of *Sisukaphi?*

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Supervised by

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I, Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane (student number 210527161), declare that this is my work, except for the acknowledged citations in Harvard style. It is being submitted in fulfilment of a Master of Arts Degree in the School of Arts, Faculty of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, South Africa. It is submitted as 100% of the degree.

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ABSTRACT

This research is situated within the performing arts scholarly field to examine the workshop theatre approach, a process where a director and a group of performers collaborate to improvise creative performance pieces with explosive energy, sophistication, and eloquence by drawing on their collective memories and perceptions. This research project brings to light the experiences of the participants who participated in the *Sisukaphi?* workshopping process. *AmaZulu* cultural beliefs, norms, and performance conventions were used as the context of reflection for this research to inquire about how the workshopping process can be used as a site for learning and celebrating the cultural heritages, questioning the power dynamics, and transforming the cultural beliefs and identities of the participants involved in the process. The study also reflected on the challenges of workshopping a cultural performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was conducted using performance ethnography and autoethnography. I engaged my teaching experience through my African Music and Dance tuition at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Convenient and purposive sampling enabled all 14 students to participate based on their availability and willingness to do so. Data was gathered through participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and personal reflexivity. Reflexive thematic analysis was then utilised to analyse the data. This study discusses how the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi?* took the shape of theatricalised African storytelling at a temporary and imaginary cultural heritage site. The study discusses how rural areas serve as institutions for preserving culture while influencing the performing arts industry to suppress female performers. This study has politically coined the terms 'female *inyosi*' and 'female *igosa*' as strategies for empowering women during the *AmaZulu* cultural performances. The study further details how 'spoken dance' was used as a strategy to teach dance choreographies during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings indicate a need for extensive research on *AmaZulu* cultural performances that focus on empowering women during the performances. If not, women will continue to be oppressed during *AmaZulu* cultural performances.

KEY TERMS: workshop theatre, *AmaZulu* culture, heritage, cultural performance, power dynamics, gender, identity, transformation, reconceptualisation, recontextualisation, feminism, decoloniality

DEDICATION

To my mother, Gertrude Ntombizonke Ncane,

Ngiyabonga ngokungincelisa emabeleni akho agwanse ngobuciko. Ukube wawungekho ngabe angikho lapha engikhona namhlanje.

Thanks for allowing me to feed into your breasts filled with creativity and artistry. I would not have been here today if you had never existed.

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My acknowledgements go to:

- First, my almighty God and the holy spirit, whom I believe are the foundation of my being.

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  My mother, Ntombizonke Gertrude Ncane. You named me Mfundiseni, allowing society to teach me; look at what I have learnt! Also, without your life experiences, this research would not be a success. Ngiyabonga Salukazi Sami.

  My late father, Mathwala Albert Ndwalane. You named me Victor, prophesying that one day I will conquer. Indeed, I have conquered. May your soul rest in peace.

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CHAPTER ONE
THE PROBLEM AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

Writing this introductory chapter has been the most challenging activity for me. I needed to figure out where to begin. I have browsed through many autoethnographic writings, from online blogs to journal articles and from theses and dissertations to books, trying to find a hint that could help me understand how to structure mine. Still, I was puzzled because my autoethnography is unique from that of other autoethnographers. It is a basket filled with many wonders and explorations as I recount certain life events and assess how they have influenced my love for performing arts and, most importantly, the person I am today—an emerging performing arts practitioner and a scholar. I have carefully selected stories that tell of my home experiences that include my mother's folktales and experiences from my primary and high school extramural activities. Through my experiences, I revisit my history by reflecting on and exploring the value of the community arts projects and their ability to empower the youth, spread drug abuse and teenage pregnancy awareness, and create a space for cultural heritage and celebration.

I narrate this story as a singer, actor, dancer, composer, director, and choreographer—a performing artist—to navigate the relationship between community art projects and performing arts at the university level. I further this narrative with much of what inspired me on my journey to my workshopped musical, theatrical, and cultural performance—*Sisukaphi*?, held in 2021 with university students. *Sisukaphi?* is a questioning title in both the plural form and present tense. Where are we from? Or where do we originate from? It asks. This process and performance led to this inquiry, and this exploration traces the stages of my identity transformation as a result of my involvement in different community art projects and my experiences with other performance productions. I situate myself as an up-and-coming black South African performing arts practitioner and attempt to conceptualise my ideal secure and encouraging space for creating and exploring performances. Through this dissertation, I explore how a creative process can reconnect students with their cultural heritage while examining their perceptions concerning their identity and cultural transformation due to their participation in the workshopping process. The study intersects my empirical observations as an artistic researcher with the existing literature and the responses from the participants to

navigate the discussion. This introductory chapter also fulfils the dissertation's requirements by outlining elements such as motivation and background, the problem statement, the study's objectives, rationale, methodology, ethical considerations, limitations, definition of concepts, and outline research design.

1.2. Personal Motivation/Background

When I was offered an opportunity to work as a contract lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in 2019, I created *Sisukaphi?* —a short cultural and musical production that I wrote, composed, and choreographed as part of my course syllabus. It was a multifaceted production that used African storytelling elements, a fusion of African popular music, and traditional *AmaZulu* dance. This production was related to the formation and history of the *AmaZulu* kingdom. I taught the third-year African Music and Dance (AMD) ensemble class in the music discipline at the Howard College Campus. The course curricula revolved around teaching, learning, and assessing African music, dance, and storytelling. I was excited about the opportunity because I could work with the final-year students, whom I presumed were interested and keen to work. They were all performing arts students.

When the university renewed my contract in 2021, it was a chance to expand *Sisukaphi?* further. While I called for auditions as part of the diagnostic assessment, it was apparent that the idea for the performance would change. For these auditions, the students had to prepare a song, an *AmaZulu* dance, and a recital of their *izithakazelo* (clan praises). During the auditions, I became interested in why the female students did not perform as well as the male students. Although their dancing and singing were exceptional, they could have expressed themselves better regarding their families and cultural backgrounds. Their recitations of their *izithakazelo* were fair compared to those of the male students.

For me, this was a call to create an exploratory opportunity where the students could learn about their cultural backgrounds and family histories. I was concerned about why the female students could not express themselves well regarding their family and cultural backgrounds compared to the male students. Was it due to a lack of exposure to these backgrounds? All these questions and thoughts highlighted the need to create a performance platform where the students could learn about essential aspects of their cultural practices while celebrating their cultural heritage.

I did some self-reflection and realised how the performing arts have moulded and still continue to mould my identity. I have seen how involving myself in community art projects and theatrical productions and pursuing a performing arts career at the university have transformed me from a peri-township boy into a proud young *AmaZulu* man and an up-and-coming black South African performing arts practitioner. This research examines the potential of the performing arts as a platform for learning and celebrating cultural heritage (Adegbite, 2010: 133), and as a tool for transforming identities (Adeniran & Akinlabi, 2011) and cultural beliefs (Alborough, 2004). It also examines the performing arts' potential to reconceptualise power dynamics (Levi Martin & Fuller, 2004) by challenging gender inequality and empowering female students to express themselves fully when expressing their *AmaZulu* beliefs during their cultural performances.

I have negotiated this inquiry by "speaking from the embodied "I" [referring to] [t]he self as the knower and the storyteller and the self-referential conveyer of theory and process; of personal history and memory" (Loots, 2018: 128) to document and analyse the workshopping process, conceptualise the students' (participants') perspectives concerning the process, and record the whole enquiry. This exploration has resulted in this dissertation project: 'The interrogation of power dynamics and students' cultural beliefs through the performing arts in a university context: The case of *Sisukaphi?'*

1.3. Problem Statement

This research explores the workshop theatre approach, where a director and a group of performers collaborate to improvise pieces with explosive energy, sophistication, and eloquence by drawing on their collective memories and perceptions. It is a process of theatre that engages particular communities thoroughly to identify issues of concern, evaluate the circumstances and factors that have led to a scenario, determine transformations, analyse how change could happen, and contribute to the actions implied (Hartnoll, 1983; Prentki & Selman, 2000; Rasmussen & Wright, 2001; Shutt, Martin, & Coetzee, 2023).

The workshop theatre approach is famous for its catalytic powers in exposing racial and power imbalances during the apartheid era (Fugard, 1978; Fleishman, 1991; Orkin, 1991) and questioning social issues in post-apartheid South Africa (Le Cordeur, 2008). In the post-apartheid era, it has been used to create theatrical productions about social issues, HIV and AIDS (Le Cordeur, 2008), and the lives of incarcerated inmates in rehabilitation centres

(Leffler, 2008; Young-Jahangeer, 2014). Analysis of the literature on the workshop theatre approach in the post-apartheid era in South Africa revealed that the following aspects have not yet been explored:

- The literature is silent on the conceptualisation and documentation of the workshop theatre process, and it has yet to be analysed together with the perspectives of the participants and the artist-researchers who have participated in such a process.
- There is a scarcity of documentation and analyses of workshopping processes aimed at learning about cultural backgrounds and the celebration of cultural heritage within a university context.
- To the best of my (artist-researcher) knowledge, following a search of peer-reviewed databases, no previous studies have empirically provided strategies to empower female performers during mixed-gender performances.
- The literature needs to be more active in examining the influence of the workshopping process on the identity and cultural transformation of the performers involved.
- No literature has discussed the clash between cultural beliefs, performance aesthetics, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

While this study has noted the above gaps, it is also worrying that the existing literature concerning *AmaZulu* cultural performances is minimal, causing the perpetuation of power imbalances in these performances. Attention is thus needed to assess the power dynamics in cultural performances and examine how the power is distributed amongst the participants during cultural performances in Africa and around the globe.

1.4. Study Objectives

This dissertation seeks to:

- Explore the performing arts as tools to understand students' beliefs about their cultural heritage and the inherent power dynamics in their culture during a workshopping process within the university context.
- Investigate the reason female students fail to express themselves well regarding their family and cultural backgrounds compared to male students.

- Explore the potency of the performing arts as a space that allows culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during cultural performances.
- Examine the influence of the workshopping process on the identity and cultural transformation of the performers involved in the creative process.
- Highlight the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance that challenges the cultural status quo of a particular culture within the university context during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.5. Study Rationale

This study plans to explore the performing arts as tools to understand students' beliefs about their cultural heritage in the university context. This research also aims to understand why female students fail to express themselves well regarding their family and cultural backgrounds compared to male students. This research seeks to provide strategies that could be used to empower female performers when they participate in a mixed-gendered cultural performance. The study additionally examines the extent of the transformation of identity and cultural beliefs that the performing arts may offer performers via the workshopping theatre process. The study lastly aims to highlight the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance against the backdrop of cultural beliefs, the COVID-19 pandemic, and performance aesthetics. This study's objectives will contribute to the limited discourse on *AmaZulu* cultural performances, the performing arts, feminist outlooks, and decolonialisation of *AmaZulu* cultural performances.

1.6. Methodology: Location, Sampling, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

This section provides a synopsis of the detailed methodology provided in Chapter Three. The current study used the qualitative approach (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000) to adopt an 'autoethnographic performance methodology' through the intersection of performance ethnography (Webster, 2009) and autoethnography (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008). These methodological elements resonated very well with the study, as I (artist-researcher) spent time studying the participants' experiences during and after the workshopping process for *Sisukaphi?*. This study was conducted in the AMD ensemble module's lecturing space in the Shepstone Building at UKZN, Howard College Campus. This study used convenience and purposive sampling to select the participants. Convenience sampling was used because the

participants met specific practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, and willingness to participate in the study (Dörnyei, 2007). The study utilised a purposive sampling technique as the artist-researcher deliberated on participation based on their qualities (Bernard, 2002). As the artist-researcher, I decided what needed to be known and set out to find people with the requisite knowledge and experience who were willing to provide the information sought (Bernard, 2002).

This study collected the data through a workshop process, participant observations, personal reflexivity, interview questionnaires, and focus group interviews (Schlegel, 2014: 20–21). I used reflexive thematic analysis to break down the constituent parts of the data collected to understand them better (Mouton & Marais, 1991). This research recognised the participants' autonomy and married it with their viewpoints, rather than providing absolute answers to the problem.

The findings of this research reflect the aims and objectives set out in this chapter. Participants were carefully selected based on their experience with *AmaZulu* cultural performances and traditions in general. To ensure reliability, I examined the consistency and coherence of the collected data. The reliability of the study was determined by the extent to which the data collected from the participants was checked consistently. It was checked to the point where the data analysis process became self-correcting (Poggenpoel, 1998). In this research, reliability denotes the consistency of the study's findings across several investigations conducted by various investigators about the performing arts, identity, culture, power dynamics, gender, and the generalisability of such findings. Another strategy that ensured the reliability of this study was the use of three data collection tools: participant observations, questionaries, and focus group interviews (Poggenpoel, 1998).

1.7. Ethical Considerations

Universities go to great lengths to preserve the dignity and safety of research participants. Given the importance of ethics in research and the problems associated with research (Hodder, 2000), the Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Faculty of Humanities ensures that ethical standards are followed when doing research. Ethical approval was sought, and the committee found this study to be ethical. The gatekeeper's letter was provided by the Office of the Registrar because the study participants were University of

KwaZulu-Natal students (Appendix Six). Certain ethical factors were considered to guarantee that the study was carried out correctly (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). All participants gave verbal and written agreement to be interviewed and engaged in the research, and this followed the ethical guidelines for conducting research. The participants happily participated after I approached them and described the research goal and process (Neuman, 2000). While it is standard practice to obtain written consent, Hodder (2000) suggests that overly formalised consent methods be eschewed to create relationships in which participants are treated with continuing ethical care.

Appendix Four contains the consent form used as the research/consent process guideline. The participants consented to the recording of their interviews; therefore, the focus group interviews were recorded on audio and video. The participants were also told that their information would be kept private and that the details of the individual interviews would only be reviewed with the supervisor (Dr Patricia Opondo) where necessary. The participants and the supervisor knew each other. The participants' real names were erased from the final report, and pseudonyms were assigned to protect their anonymity and confidentiality. It was essential to highlight the material's secrecy and build trust with the participants early on. I presented the history and my personal experiences linked to my understanding of imbalanced power in a cultural performance when explaining the study's goal to the participants. This helped establish trust and encouraged the participants to share their tales. It was fascinating to note how much the participants loved the process.

1.8. Limitations

The current study notes the factors that limited the collection, analysis, and presentation of the data and findings. One of the factors was that the rehearsal hours were limited to the university’s timetable. If the rehearsal hours had not been limited, the participants would have spent more time rehearsing and connected more with the process, and their perspectives could have differed. Also, the study sample needed to be increased, as the generalisability of the findings was limited to 14 participants. Additionally, the sample was dominated by the participants who had been born and raised in rural areas. The study relied on the participants’ conceptions to negotiate the research questions, and they had to use their workshopping process experience to answer their questions. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic was the principal strain on this research as it necessitated social distancing, which impacted the entire workshopping

process. The pandemic's restrictions greatly limited the creative process, and the findings may have differed if the creative process had been more comprehensive and the workshopping process had not been impacted by the need for isolation following potential exposure to the coronavirus, social distancing, and wearing of facemasks to limit the spread of disease. Lastly, the ethical clearance granted for this study did not allow me to expose the participants' identities. They were meant to be treated anonymously. Therefore, the study was limited in using images of the workshopping process because they contained the participants.

1.9. Definition of Concepts and Acronyms

The following concepts and acronyms might have other meanings in other contexts. However, the following meanings are relevant to this study:

- The ***AmaZulu*** are members of the Nguni group of African people, living mainly in KwaZulu-Natal. It also refers to the Zulu people, their culture, and their traditions. *UmZulu* is the singular form of *AmaZulu* (Dictionary Unit for South African English, 2023).
- **IsiZulu** is the language of the *AmaZulu* (Dictionary Unit for South African English, 2023).
- A **cultural performance** occurs when people reflect upon and define themselves as a culture or society, dramatise their collective myths and histories, present themselves with alternatives, and eventually transform in some ways while remaining the same in others (Auslander, 2003).
- An ***AmaZulu*** **cultural performance** is a performance practice associated with or related to members of the African people of the Nguni group, who live mainly in KwaZulu-Natal (personal observation).
- ***Izithakazelo*** is the way in which a clan of people defines itself. It is the way in which the clan's name, though eventually dispersed from place-to-place, became amalgamated, employing what we call *ukuthakazela* (verb) in isiZulu (Zanoxolo, 2013).
- An ***insizwa*** is a young man, almost an adult. ***Izinsizwa*** *is the plural form* of *insizwa* (Doke & Vilakazi, 1972).
- An ***induna*** is an advisor, great leader, ambassador, headman, or commander of a group of warriors. It can also mean a spokesperson or mediator, as the *iziNduna* often acts as

a bridge between the people and the King. ***Izinduna*** is the plural form of *induna* (Masango, 2006).

- An ***ifolo/ispani*** is an *AmaZulu* ensemble or a group dance (personal observation).
- An ***umemulo*** is a traditional Zulu coming-of-age ceremony for women. This ritual is usually done for females at age 21 but can be done at any stage of a woman's life. It varies and depends on the circumstances (personal observation).
- An ***isidwaba*** is a traditional Zulu leather skirt worn by betrothed and married women (Magwaza, 2001).
- An ***imbatha*** is a chest and shoulder covering made of animal skins such as cow, goat, buck, antelope, and leopard (personal observation).
- ***Isicathamiya*** is a performative vocal style in South Africa, primarily associated with Zulu migrant works. '*Isicathamiya*' translates roughly as 'on tiptoe' or to stalk/walk carefully, which is reflected in some of the signature dance moves used in performances (Yende & Ngema, 2022).
- An ***umakhweyana*** is a musical bow with a wooden stick and a taut cord. The size of the stick can vary from half a metre to three metres in length. It is part of the chordophone bow family and is played mainly in African countries. It is sometimes referred to as an *ugubu or umqangala*, and it originated from the Khoisan people who live in Southern Africa (personal observation).
- ***Mbila/timbila*****:** An *mbila* is a single note on the xylophone of the Chopi people of Mozambique. This instrument or an ensemble of instruments is called a *timbila* (Hugh, 1966: 47-55).
- ***Mbira nyunga nyunga*** and ***mbira dzavadzimu*****:** *Mbira nyunga nyunga* and *mbira dzavadzimu* are traditional pianos played by the Shona people of Zimbabwe. While the *mbira nyunga nyunga* is considered a modern construction, the *mbira dzavadzimu* is considered the juncture between the material world of the living and the spiritual realm of the ancestors (Jones, 2008).
- ***Ukusina/ukugida*** means the act of doing the *AmaZulu* dance. This practice is an expressive and rhythmic movement form with profound cultural importance. It requires the dancers to kick their legs forward up and out and stamp each foot into the ground. This practice is accompanied by singing and handclapping, with or without accompanying drumming (personal observation).

- ***Ingoma yezinsizwa*:** It is an *AmaZulu* song and dance form meant to be performed explicitly by male performers (personal observation).
- ***Ingoma yezintombi*:** It is an *AmaZulu* song and dance form meant to be performed explicitly by female performers (personal observation).
- ***Isishameni/ushameni* dance:** It is an *AmaZulu* dance form usually accompanied by handclapping, chanting, and singing. It is performed predominantly and widely in KwaZulu-Natal province, particularly in Maphumulo and Ulundi (personal observation).
- The ***umzansi* dance** is an *AmaZulu* dance form sometimes called *ingoma yempi* (the war dance). It is accompanied by singing, clapping, and chanting and uses a Salvation Army drum accompaniment as one of its unique characteristics. This dance form is performed predominantly and widely in KwaZulu-Natal, particularly in areas such as Bergville; hence, it is known as the *isi-Bhegvili* (The dance from Bergville) (personal observation).
- ***Imvumo/umvumo*:** This *AmaZulu* call-and-response music is used in conjunction with stylised chants, ululations, and whistling. It is used as a warm-up by the singers who accompany the dancers. *Imvumo* is also introductory music for *AmaZulu* dancing (personal observation).
- An ***igosa*** is the leader, manager, holder, conductor, guardian, and commander of an ensemble group responsible for performing *AmaZulu* cultural performances. Some duties of the *igosa* include starting the songs, kickstarting the dancing part, and selecting the dancers to perform the solo dances during the performance (personal observation).
- The ***inyosi*** is the King's praise singer and the most important person in the Royal *AmaZulu* Kingdom, after the King. Historically, a King will only enter and exit the palace with his *inyosi*. He is the intercessor for the King, and is traditionally the person who cites the traditional prayer. This person also praises the King when he arrives at formal and informal public gatherings. The *inyosi* is a perfect historian because he knows the history behind the King's praises (*Inyosi* Mdletshe, 2017)
- ***Izihasho*** is a sub-genre of the term ‘praises’. It is used specifically to refer to the oral expressions and chants that the ensemble members shout in support of a dancer when they perform a solo dance. It may consist mainly of praise, but it may also contain aspects of criticism or censure (Turner, 2012: 05).

- The ***Umkhosi Womhlanga*** is South Africa's Reed Dance Festival. It is an ancient tradition of the Swazi and *AmaZulu,* known as the *Umkhosi Womhlanga* or the Zulu Reed Dance. It is an annual event held in early September at the Enyokeni Royal Palace in Nongoma, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The festival's name is derived from the riverbed reeds (Nkosi, 2019).
- **COVID-19:** This coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (World Health Organization, 2020).
- **KZN:** KwaZulu-Natal
- **UKZN:** University of KwaZulu-Natal
- **AMD:** African Music and Dance
- **ASCAC:** African Spirit Creative Arts Company
- **SZNPO:** Shaka Zulu Non-Profit Organisation
- **HIV:** Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- **AIDS:** Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- **ICTM:** International Council for Traditional Music
- **AT:** Applied Theatre
- **RTA:** Reflexive Thematic Analysis

1.10. Research Design and Outline

While the current chapter provides an overview of the entire research study, Chapter Two reviews the literature and theoretical framework utilised for the study, focusing on the historical background of workshop theatre and providing an overview of South African workshop theatre during the apartheid era. Post-apartheid South African theatre frames notions of the celebration of heritage and identity, cultural transformation, gender and power dynamics, and feminist and decolonial theories. Chapter Three provides the methodological framework for the study by discussing tools and methods such as qualitative research, performance ethnography, an autoethnographic approach, research participants, research questions, data collection, the limitations of the study, reflexive thematic analysis, validity, and reliability. The methodological nature of this study allows for a further, very personal layer of contemplation and rethinking around the pursuit of a decolonised practice that also addresses the feminist struggles of speaking out and being heard (Loots, 2018). In the fourth chapter, I reflect on the influences that motivated me to become a performing arts practitioner. They include family experiences such as domestic gender-based violence; my mother's folktales; school,

community, and university experiences through extramural activities and community arts centres, and my university education. Chapter Four thus provides a platform for me as an artist-researcher to record, reflect on, and examine my history, identity, cultural beliefs, and artistic choices while trying to figure out my perceptions of society.

The fifth chapter presents the findings by interweaving the creation process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* with the data from participant observations, the focus group interviews, the questionnaire transcripts, and personal reflexivity. These will be used to explore and negotiate the study's objectives. In Chapter Six, the research uses the notions of recontextualisation as the frame to discuss the workshopping process employed for *Sisukaphi? 2021* and the cultural heritage possessed by the performing arts students. During the reconceptualisation, the research explains why female students do not excel in reciting their clan names when compared to male students. The study intends to examine the performing arts' potential as a platform for female artists from marginalised cultures to take on roles traditionally filled by men. The performers' ideas of identity and cultural transformation are explored in this dissertation. This research intends to clarify the parameters for creating a cultural performance that questions the *AmaZulu* cultural status quo during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter Seven provides the final part of this narrative, where the strands of the inquiry are drawn together, and the questions are resolved.

1.11. Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the current study. Firstly, it presented the personal motivation and background of the study. Secondly, the chapter presented the problem statement. Thirdly, it shared the objectives of the study. Fourthly, the chapter furthered itself by presenting the rationale for the study. Fifthly, the chapter outlined the methodology of the study. The definitions of concepts and acronyms were then given. Lastly, the chapter provided the design and outline of the study.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

The current study perceives the performing arts as an umbrella expression for framing and analysing social, personal, and communicative phenomena and as a social and self-reflection process through the dramatisation or embodiment of symbolic forms, the presentation of alternative embodiments, and the possibility for conservation or transformation of both individuals and society (Deriu, 2014). This chapter reviews the literature on workshop theatre and navigates the discourse to situate the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*. It examines how the workshop theatre process can manifest as a site for negotiating multiple politics. This chapter begins with workshop theatre's historical background in Section 2.2. It further provides an overview of South African workshop theatre during the apartheid era in Section 2.3. The chapter then presents post-apartheid South African workshop theatre in Section 2.4 and reviews the literature on the performing arts and cultural heritage in Section 2.4.1. This topic explores the relationship between the performing arts and cultural heritage through the workshop theatre approach. The power dynamics in a cultural performance theme are reviewed in Section 2.4.2. This topic explores how the workshopping process opens the space that enables power sharing in a mixed-gendered cultural performance. The chapter then reviews the literature on identity and cultural belief transformation in Section 2.4.3. Section 2.5 discusses the theoretical frameworks that underpinned the study. This inquiry adopted critical theory as the critical paradigm or theoretical framework and utilised the intersection between feminist theory (hooks, 1981; Butler, 1990) and decolonial theory (Spatz, 2019), two of the theories that fall within this framework. Section 2.6 summarises this chapter.

2.2. Workshop Theatre's Historical Background

The term 'workshop theatre', interchangeable with 'theatre workshop', is organised as several minor experiential and improvisational presentations, creating theatre by combining participants' shared experiences and using their bodies to represent meaning (Fleishman, 1991; Rasmussen & Wright, 2001; Copteros, 2002). It is a process of theatre that deeply engages particular communities in identifying issues of concern, evaluating the circumstances and factors that have led to a scenario, determining transformations, analysing how change could happen, and contributing to the actions implied (Prentki & Selman, 2000). It emerged in the 20th century as a

movement that challenged the purpose and form of theatre in the socio-political context within which it operated, and one of its significant challenges to traditional theatre practice was reconsidering the role of theatre in society (Orkin, 1991). This approach to theatre-making is internationally known as devised theatre or collaborative creation (Hartnoll, 1983: 165), a process by which a team of people collaborate to create a production from its inception to completion, and others use it for educational purposes. For instance, Gaetano (2015) discusses theatrical education, a theatrical workshop as a training model, and expressive and performing arts in Italian education. Also, *The theatre workshop as educational space: How imagined reality is voiced and conceived* (Rasmussen & Wright, 2001) negotiates the concept of education that provides a space for coping with sensual perceptions, analysing information, experiencing disconnections, re-experiencing significant connections, and learning to know. It is a distinct type of education from one in which the focus is solely on the flow of information. Rasmussen and Wright (2001) employed the theatrical workshop approach to help young people build dramatic knowledge in ways that are congruent with ordinary cultural practices. Their work is built on spontaneity, creative improvisation, and the interactive aesthetic processing of individual and cultural experiences. It implies that the participant engages creatively with actual items or props and their projected fantasies. A presented stimulus or pretext could be a story, a dream, an emotional situation, photos, paintings, fiction, or even news and documentary material. This interaction results in participants building new comprehension or knowing in the meaning-embodied forms developed.

On the other hand, Shutt et al. (2023: 378) used a workshop as a case study to approach sexual and gender-based violence in Sierra Leone and investigate the complex dynamics of this area. The scholars demonstrated how frequently ignored factors in development are crucial to comprehending the perceptions and embodiments of what makes and enacts the theatre of development. Their findings investigated how, along with the now-common practice of using interactive theatre techniques to address social and political issues, a dramaturgical lens provides a mode of analysis that clarifies and enriches understanding of the multiple connecting factors—social roles, culturally inscribed performance expectations, audience relations, and relationships within and outside the workshop setting.

The roots of workshop theatre are derived from the theoretician Bertolt Brecht, who affected Western collaborative theatre's evolution by reclaiming it for political and community functions.

Brecht believed that realistic theatre encouraged apathy among bourgeois audiences, discouraging the desire to participate actively in the theatre as in reality. The theorist sought ways to shatter the *fourth wall*[1] between the audience and actors to raise awareness among his audience. To destroy the illusion of reality in the performance, his epic theatre employed an alienation effect[2] within the dramatic action, which included episodic scenes interrupted by narration, songs, parables, and the projection of texts and images. An epic drama focuses on the spectator's thinking rather than their sensations. Instead of sharing the experience, the spectator must come to terms with it (Brecht, 1964: 23). The epic theatre experience instilled a critical sensibility in the audience rather than them being passive, allowing the false reality to manipulate their thoughts.

These philosophies served as foundations for the participatory approach to theatre-making that emerged from the popular education movement in the 1960s and 1970s, with one of its most well-known practitioners being Paulo Freire of Brazil. Freire released *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970, during Brazil's era of harsh political repression. His liberatory literacy education entailed cultivating a critical awareness or conscientisation. A critical consciousness allows people to investigate the roots of their historical and social predicament, read their surroundings, and engage as subjects in constructing their democracy. Like Brecht, Freire also wanted human beings to take an active role in their lives. His education approach commended the participation between the teacher and the pupils. He praised a model he called problem-posing rather than the banking education approach. While the banking education approach treats the instructor as the only knowledgeable person and the students as passive recipients of knowledge, the problem-posing approach allows students to discuss the possibilities of transforming the suppressed elements of their experience. It achieves this through dialogue and reflection, and culminates in collective social action. It involves the dynamic of contemplation and action known as 'praxis' (Freire, 1993), essential to participatory procedures.

[1] The imagined theatrical dividing wall between the audience and actors.

[2] It is also known as the *distancing effect*. It is used by the performers in a manner that prevents the audience from connecting easily with the characters in the play during the performance. Acceptance or rejection of their actions and utterances is meant to take place on a conscious plane instead of, hitherto, in the audience's subconscious (https://www.britannica.com/art/fourth-wall).

Based on Freire's ideas, another Brazilian practitioner named Augusto Boal created a set of theatrical practices known as the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1993). His theatre, like Brecht's, questioned established theatrical traditions. Boal saw commercial or professional theatre as a tool of the ruling class, causing social differences by distancing the actor from the audience. Traditional theatre invites the audience to identify with and empathise with the characters in the story. Ultimately, the play delivers an Aristotelian sense of catharsis, leaving the viewer with a sense of resolution, an essentially passive activity. To create interested audiences, Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* also breaks down the fourth wall and the separation between actor and audience by transforming the spectator into a 'spect-actor' who plays the protagonist's role.

Furthermore, his *forum theatre* approaches include involving the audience in the dramatic action by discussing strategies for change, controlling the action, and experimenting with various solutions using play. For Boal, the *Theatre of the Oppressed'* was a weapon for oppressed people to use to change their social reality; theatre for the people, by the people, was 'a rehearsal of revolution' (Boal, 1979: 155). His *Rainbow of Desire* (1995) takes a more therapeutic or psychodramatic approach based on his notion that revolutionising society involves a critical examination of the history of society and a personal, practical investigation of one's behavioural psychology (Conrad, 2004: 15).

Western theatre practitioners created divisions between the actor and the performer. Augusto Boal highlights that initially, the theatre was a dithyrambic song, with free individuals singing in public. It was a funfair and a banquet, and later, the governing classes seized control of the theatre and constructed their dividing walls. First, they separated the participants into performers and spectators, who act and watch—the celebration is finished. Second, the actors distanced the protagonist from the audience, and the forceful brainwashing began. The walls must be demolished (Boal, 1979: 119). This distortion of power between the art creator, the performers, the audience, the hybrid of ideas from different individuals, and multiple performative elements in one performance makes performance in the African context.

Workshop theatre is based on oral tradition. Hence, it contradicts the Aristotelian dramatic structure and standard Western theatre. From European standards, African performance appears varied and hybrid. It incorporates dramatic and narrative aspects, music, dance, and mimicry (Graver, 1999: 3). Graver considers South African native theatre as emerging from or inspired

by traditional dramatic ritual and performance methods. In addition to Graver, Fletcher recalls a *Khoisan* performance described by a French visitor in the early 1500s. Their musical aptitude was well developed, and they enjoyed mimicry, singing, and dancing using quills, intestines, and gourd instruments (Fletcher, 1994: 11). These findings help this dissertation explore how a workshop process allows for multiple performances and politics in one performance.

In addition to Graver and Fletcher's observation, the researcher attests that a performance comprises many performances in the African context. While the storyteller tells the tale, they sing bird melodies, mimic the walk of baboons, and portray how a gigantic animal ate all the people in the village.[3] The African performances are participatory. There is no way that specific individuals can perform alone if they are with people. Take, for instance, the *AmaZulu izinganekwane* (folktales). The performance structure of *AmaZulu* folktales consists of the teller, who starts the folktale by saying, '*kwasukasukela*' (once upon a time). Then, the listeners respond by saying '*cosu*' (they are interested in listening). After the storyteller has recited the folktale, they conclude by saying, '*cosi, cosi, yaphela*' (little by little, the story ends). The listeners respond by saying, '*siyabonga*' or '*yaze yamnandi inganekwane yakho*' (thank you, your tale was fascinating).[4] This example justifies active participation between the performer and the audience during a South African *AmaZulu* performance of folktales and cultural performances in general. The idea that there is no director and no right or wrong structure makes the workshop theatre an excellent methodological tool for understanding the process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*.

2.3. An Overview of South African Apartheid Workshop Theatre

Although workshop theatre was an accessible way of performing among black South African theatre practitioners during the apartheid era, there are different historical events concerning the utilisation of workshop theatre in South Africa. The first insight concerning the background aligns with challenging Western ideologies in African theatre. Missionary education and colonial discourse marginalised the traditional communities and their oral-based cultures. It was part of a general process of socio-political centralisation or hegemony in which the institutions and culture of Europe asserted themselves as 'naturally' superior to those of Africa (Fleishman, 1991). In order to portray portions of South Africa's past, the workshop theatre dipped into traditional

[3] Artist researcher's observation of G.N. Ncane (his mother) reciting Impempezi Yezulu's tale.
[4]Madlala (2001). *Kwasukasukela*: A practical exploration of Nguni oral storytelling traditions on contemporary physical forms of storytelling for theatre.

African modes of expression by accessing the participants' tales and sharing them. The usage of orality also made it clear that there were actors with roots in the conventional oral base. Stage sets and props were less necessary in the new type of theatre, since they focused more on the performers' bodies as the expression of meaning on stage (Steadman, 1990).

Apartheid is still the most well-documented period in South African theatre history. Workshop theatre emerged as an alternative form during this overt social and political oppression period, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s (Copteros, 2002). It offered an alternative narrative to the state, which enacted apartheid (Orkin, 1991). It developed qualities that are distinctive to the genre and contrast with standard theatre practice. One of the first established theatre practitioners in South Africa to use theatre workshop techniques to generate collaborative work was the well-known South African playwright and director, Athol Fugard. In the 1950s, while working on a joint project in Sophiatown, Fugard became the first to record using theatre workshop techniques. One noteworthy one is a township-hybrid known as township theatre, which has dramatically influenced the development of modern educational theatre (Le Cordeur, 2008). A significant influence on South Africa's understanding of theatre as a potent political aesthetic that commented on and challenged the changing social and political environment was Mark Fleishman's extensive research on South African workshop theatre in the 1980s, which he conducted in 1996. He provides examples of theatre workshops during this period. His work was primarily concerned with social change by raising social consciousness.

The 1980s-built workshop theatre captured the genre's success in South African plays like *Woza Albert! Woza Albert!* is used as a model due to its potential to be South Africa's most famous play on both local and international stages. It was possible to raise awareness of the country's apartheid regime's activities and the oppressed majority's social and political perspectives (Le Cordeur, 2008). Steadman (1990) highlights that *Woza Albert*! and other productions and theatre companies (such as Gibson Kente's 'township musicals' in the 1970s and 1980s, the collaborative work of Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona from 1970 to 1976, and the growing widespread interest in the experimental workshop theatre of Workshop '71) were primarily producing the effectiveness of the style in a way that drew on numerous sources but was crystallised during the rehearsal process. Workshop theatre experimented with and developed form-specific elements to resist the apartheid state and conventional theatre practices. The workshop theatre in South Africa has thrived primarily due to its democratic nature and ability

to express the genuine feelings of the popular class or political elite through popular, instructive, and entertaining media.

2.4. Post-Apartheid South African Workshop Theatre

When Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela woke freely from Robben Island in 1992, it was evident there would be a shift in the focus of the workshop theatre in South Africa. It was clear that the elections would take place and the political terrain would be redefined after 1994. As a result, following the collapse of apartheid, the role of workshop theatre—opposing the established political order—ceased to be relevant. The employment of workshop theatre in post-apartheid South Africa was criticised (Copteros, 2002), and the political shift in power dynamics in the government heralded a positive shift in protest theatre use (Ndwalane, 2013: 16). Workshop theatre therefore became obsolete as a political tool, and there was no more room for monolithic themes.

Workshop theatre's use in South Africa after the end of apartheid began to be questioned, and theatre artists started experimenting with new approaches to reflect the times. Theatre practitioners began exploring new methods to use the workshop theatre form to address new contemporary issues (Steinberg & Purkey, 1995). The technique now allows artists to reflect authentically and openly on South African life (Copteros, 2002: 1). It recognises and comments on the life experiences of a varied group of individuals, delving into their lives within the socio-political environment of South Africa. It is no longer appropriate for theatre to play the role of blatant opposition to the predominant social order since the end of apartheid. For example, Le Cordeur (2008) studied the evolution of workshop theatre in South Africa, concentrating on how it has been used for social change, ranging from anti-apartheid protest theatre to HIV and AIDS awareness plays. The researcher used the scripts as the primary text to examine the importance of workshop theatre in documenting the creation of stories and myths in the context of HIV and AIDS. In the dissertation, *Devising dialogue: Structuring intercultural encounters through the process of workshop theatre*, Leffler (2008) clarifies and contextualises the theoretical argument with a reflection on the processes of participants who consented to participate in personal interviews, the author's experience working with Pollsmoor Prison inmates in late 2007, and first-year University of Cape Town students during the same period (Leffler, 2008). Young-Jahangeer (2014) used the workshopping approach to negotiate discursive power and patriarchy in female prisons and used the Westville Female Correctional Service as a field for exploration.

While the studies above have documented the use of the workshop theatre approach in the post-apartheid era, the literature reviewed thus far in books, journal articles, theses, peer-reviewed journals, and internet blogs has not yet examined the workshop theatre process concerning cultural heritage celebration, power dynamics through gender inequality, identity, and cultural belief transformation in cultural performances.

2.4.1. Performing arts and cultural heritage sites

The term ‘heritage site’ is used little in the performing arts, and it mostly dominates the heritage and tourism study fields. These are ancient locations, architectural designs, or areas with an unspoilt natural environment significant to a country or area's heritage.[5] These heritage sites comprise hundreds of historic buildings, town sites, important archaeological sites, and monumental sculptures or paintings. The fundamental purpose of these cultural sites is to raise awareness of heritage values associated with artistic value, symbolic and aesthetic values, sources of social cohesion, diversity factors, and drivers of creativity, innovation, and urban regeneration (Ahmadreza & Giuseppe, 2019). These sites sustain the legacy of physical artefacts and the intangible attributes of a group or society (Saiz-Jimenez, 2023) inherited from past generations, preserved in the present, and conferred for future generations by being visited and displayed (UNESCO, 2016). The purpose of these sites is to display a work of art of human creativity or an essential exchange of human values (Sonkoly & Vahtikari, 2018) and to show an indication of a tradition or civilisation that is either extinct or still alive (Sethaba & Scholes, 2021). Seemingly, cultural heritage refers to contemporary society's use of the past. It could be any part of the past that a particular community selects in the modern day for specific reasons, be they social, political, economic, cultural, or communal (Ghrab, 1990; Serageldin, 2008; Nilson & Thorell, 2018). Heritage sites have a historical value that denotes the history of a community, which is apparent in a cultural heritage feature that lies in knowledge about the future. The notions of cultural heritage sites as locations for recalling history and motivating preservation assist this study in negotiating the workshop theatre approach in examining how the performing arts create a platform where performers create and perform their family histories as a way of family culture preservation.

In many African communities, heritage represents people's collective memories, folklore, and other oral narratives that maintain group solidarity (Nkosi, 2019). It is a process of the current

[5] South African History Online (n.d.). *Definition of natural and cultural heritage sites*.

society's acceptance of their inheritance from a previous one of their land, language, ecologies, acquaintances, and culture. Ndimande-Hlongwa (1998); and Machaba (2005) emphasise the importance of naming in various African societies and how this carries the notion of the cultural heritage of a specific culture. Shankar and Swamy (2013) advise that for cultural heritage to take shape, the local society to whom it belongs must be conscious of its values, take pride in it, and establish a sense of belonging. It then becomes their responsibility to transmit and preserve their heritage in the form of culture. Ngema (2007) argues that traditional *AmaZulu* dance has become the body of knowledge passed down from generation to generation, and actualisation through performance affects memory recall (Lavanga, 2006). In other scholarly works, it is evident that performances are powerfully relevant to discussions of cultural heritage as they incorporate specific cultural elements, such as artefacts and movement vocabularies, into their practice. Such traditional dance is viewed as a living cultural heritage (Iacono & Brown, 2016: 84). The idea of re-enactment is to simulate life at another time (Agnew, 2007) . These claims about establishing a sense of belonging, transmission, preservation, memory recall, and re-enactment become a valuable interrogation point in this study to negotiate how the workshopping process enables the participants to research, create, and perform their family and cultural heritage aspects.

Adegbite (2010: 133) stresses that the performing arts reflect society truthfully, recreate its styles, codes, attitudes, mannerisms, and cultural traits, and capture them irrespective of people's backgrounds. Another scholar studied the cultural heritage of the Naro of D'Kar. He discusses how the notion of simulation is entrenched in their indigenous songs and dances. The scholar reveals that the Naro songs and dances are closely linked to spiritual and physical healing rituals. These rituals include worship, initiation, social commentary, thanksgiving, recreation, and hunting (Rabatoko, 2017: 11). The first objective of the current research is to record the workshopping process and examine how it evokes participants' cultural memories and gives them a sense of pride and belonging, thus serving as a practical tool to reclaim their cultural heritage. Therefore, this research examines how the performing arts become tools for cultural heritage for students during the workshopping process.

2.4.2. Power dynamics in cultural performance

This section negotiates the notion of power in connection with gender and how this can be mediated through a workshopping process that is culturally oriented. Gender forms power relations at all levels of society. The established roles and behaviours organisations define as

appropriate for men and women may be the most tenacious cause. They may be the mechanism of power relations, from the intimate sphere of the domestic to the highest levels of political decision-making (Matz et al., 2017: 2). Power and gender are terms often used together to explore patriarchy or women's oppression (Levi Martin & Fuller, 2004). Other scholars explored power as a socio-psychological phenomenon and its gender construct, as they assumed that the different types of power used by men and women defined their interpretations and perceptions of power. Levi Martin and Fuller (2004) examined the effect of social context on the gendering of power relations by questioning how gender is related to group-level contextual factors.

Other studies demonstrated that gender is how power interactions are seen, specifically that females tend to emphasise equality in relationships more strongly than males due to their structural position. For instance, Ukaegbu (2007) examined the underrepresentation of women in contemporary African performance, making the case that African theatre minimises women's cultural and historical contributions to their countries. This belief is partly due to the perception in some quarters that women are prone to acting in silence and as supporting cast members in the socio-political system. The second and more aggravating factor is society's social construction of women along the socially limiting roles of daughter, sister, wife, and mother. Although their stories recount events, rituals, and cultural practices supporting male supremacy, female characters rarely achieve the complexity and heroic heights ascribed to men. In *Gender as a Category Entangled in the Matrix of Power and Gender Resistance Potential*, Bielska (2015) argues that gender interactions are constructed to limit gender-related socio-cultural practices. Power is all examples of power through force, disproportionate advantage, uneven access to resources, and control over definitions and interpretations of circumstances. It is on the premises of this research that I negotiate the power dynamics concerning gender inequality in a mixed-gendered *AmaZulu* cultural performance.

In addition, Magwaza (2001) examined how symbolism and dress codes provide women with the means to communicate various social and cultural messages due to the silencing systems of the *AmaZulu* patriarchy. Zondi (2012) explored the *AmaZulu umemulo* (girl's coming-of-age ritual) songs to examine the role of women in inadvertently perpetuating gender inequality. The study interrogated songs composed by older women but sung by young maidens. The scholar makes the case that the foundation of inequality originates in patriarchal social practices, where male power is seen as natural. Women feel obligated to stand with the males of their family in such things and punish other women. Zulu Sofola investigated gender dynamics in his theatrical

production of *King Emene*. The dramatist put women at the story's centre, drawing on traditional African philosophy that values women's contributions to society. The exploration results in a positive outlook on issues of gender and sexuality (Igweonu, 2007: 51). The debates above do not provide details on how this constructive viewpoint between different genders is administered. The fact that the genders are differentiated and are titled points out specific roles associated with the particular gender and imbalanced power.

Chiliza and Masuku (2020) used a gender equality perspective in analysing and examining the selected *AmaZulu* proverbs. The researchers unpack that other *AmaZulu* proverbs, directly or indirectly, suggest perpetuating gender biases and inequality, as they argue that in terms of social behaviours, women frequently assume a subordinate role and are portrayed as such. The essay argues that other proverbs convey that women are subordinated and devalued to the point of submission. Similarly, Mathonsi and Mpungose (2015) explored the subject of gender inequalities as reflected in Zulu proverbs. The researcher focused on the proverbs' role in positioning *AmaZulu* men in patriarchal power by instilling an accepted behaviour for women concerning marriage. These findings highlight that the debates around gender are frequently disregarded in traditional societies to perpetuate gender disparity. These debates help this research find out why female students fail to express themselves well regarding their family and cultural backgrounds compared to male students, as proposed in the second objective of this research. Therefore, using the workshopping method, this dissertation exposes the sustained levels of gender imbalance in performances (MacNeill, Coles, Vincent, Kokkinos, & Robertson, 2018; Kabanda, 2019; Akbar, 2021), specifically in *AmaZulu* cultural performances.

Ross (2010) views storytelling by women as liberating and empowering. The researcher argues that storytelling recognises the power of women as preservers and disseminators of oral traditions, especially in patriarchal societies. The scholar further illustrates that storytelling encourages and provokes solidarity among women and firmly situates women as significant socialising agents in the community. The workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* involved the creation and presentation of each participant's storytelling pieces. Therefore, these arguments by Ross, as proposed in research question three, help this dissertation record and examine how the performing arts provide the space and allow the culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during the performance.

2.4.3. Transformation of identity and cultural beliefs

This section examines the performing arts as having the impact of transforming identity and cultural beliefs. Whether music, dance, storytelling, or theatre, any aspect of performing skills possesses transformational capabilities. Identity and culture are broad terms in their separate realms, and trying to understand them more profoundly differs from this research's premise. This dissertation uses transformation as the foundation to negotiate these terms in conjunction with exploring the creative and workshopping practices of *Sisukaphi? 2021*. For instance, Power (2012: 10) highlights that community arts are essential in transitioning societies, especially for the youth. Other scholars highlight that the performing arts provide the means for transformation through participation, watching, practicing, and writing (Alborough, 2004). Other pieces of literature discuss collective and individual development in art-making. For instance, Murray (2012: 7) suggests that involving people together in the process of art-making can provide a means of personal and collective re-assessment and the development of a new narrative of possibility. Murray (2012) talks about re-assessment and development rather than transformation; however, one associates development with transformation. As a result, to develop something means to "change it and make it more advanced" (definition of 'development' [Cambridge Free English Dictionary, n.d.]). Transformation is a complete change in someone's presence or character, mainly so that they are of better quality (definition of 'transformation' [Cambridge Free English Dictionary, n.d.]). The dictionary definitions point out that change and development are associated with transformation. These ideas about transformation are explored in Section 4.5, where I reflect on my first-hand experience of how community arts institutions assist in community development, cultural preservation, and identity transformation. The research navigates the notion of transformation, as proposed in the fourth objective of this research, to highlight how subjective the study is.

2.4.3.1. Exploring cultural transformation

This section situates the second element of the fourth objective, which is the notion of cultural transformation due to participation in a culturally oriented workshop process. Saearani, Simatupang, Soedarsono, and Kusmayati (2014) differentiate between conversion values—replacing existing cultural values with new ones—and value creation—developing new ideas to be applied in new situations. Scholars attest that the connection values result from a conceptual relationship between phenomena previously assumed to be unrelated or connected differently. For instance, traditional dance bears elements of one's cultural traditions and heritage and passes

them down from generation to generation; however, over time, some traditional elements get lost, while others resist and survive or get transformed and readjust to new emerging circumstances (Georgios, 2018). Other researchers have researched how Yogyakarta-style classical dance plays an essential role in human-life values, both in religious and social functions. The findings indicate that the preservation of this form of dancing happens, given that every generation has an inner spirit of the era that promotes cultural creation. Yogyakarta-style classical dance eventually achieved national and international recognition. Saearani et al. (2014) attest that the interaction of diverse cultures may produce a fresh creation of the existing repertory. Phyfferoen, Stroeken, and Leman (2017) researched the Dagbon region in Northern Ghana, where rapid globalisation and urban development affect a cultural rural music-dance idiom. The study used a framework to demonstrate how idiomatic music shifts might be understood through the perspectives of cultural development and embodied. The results demonstrate the respect with which the musical idiom is reshaping globalism.

Boeskov (2017) presents a conceptual framework based on anthropological and performance theory that allows for a more comprehensive comprehension of the relationship between social music performances and social change processes. The concept of collective music practice as a cultural performance draws upon the intricate connection between the significance and relationships experienced within the musical practice and how these impact and transform the relationships that comprise the participants' broader social and cultural world (ibid.). These findings serve as frames for the current research to expand on the limited discourse around the impacts of reconceptualised cultural performances on participants' cultural beliefs. Therefore, this study documents a workshop theatre process examining how a reconceptualised cultural performance might transform the cultural beliefs of the participants.

2.4.3.2 Exploring identity transformation

When the performing arts are framed purposefully and collectively, they can transform. Putra (2008) accentuates that the performing arts provide a means for transformation through participation. Putra pays more attention to using different production facets other than the performer’s culture and explores how this influences the performer’s identity. The writer argues that the performer's identity transforms as they become influenced by the characters they represent. This notion sets the tone for positioning the participant's perceptions concerning the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* in this study. Fleishman (1991) notes that performance

has been used as a symbol of oneness, culminating in aiding societal and behavioural changes. Adeniran and Akinlabi (2011) outline that any cultural society has a history and a responsibility to ensure the continuity of their evolving common identity. Loots (2018) explores how dance challenges and seeks to transform the identity labels enforced by gender and cultural, colonial, social, political, and economic constructs. Ewing (2010: 204) proposes that drama is a 'corrupting medium' that distorts the certainties of established truths and identities. It shows commonalities and differences that shock people when they are involved in the stories and complicit in their manufacture and performance. Agua (2018) reiterates the above argument when he says that throughout history, drama portrays critical scenes at specific times that impact the transformation of identity, which in turn causes audience members to consider their identity and practices vicariously—drama and theatre mirror society's social, moral, and cultural values. In doing so, drama and theatre also stimulate changes in these values. While the debates above relate to identity transformation through performance, studies still need to negotiate and explore identity transformation aimed at the participants during the process, not at the audience and in the final production.

People can place themselves in imaginative cultural narratives through the direct contributions of the body, time, and space. For instance, Meintjes (2004: 185) negotiates how nicknames create a performer's identity during the *AmaZulu umzansi* dance. The author states that 'the nicknames' carried proudly by individuals are expressed in the personalities of individual dance styles. In this sense, the nicknames specify the collective experience and distinguish one performer's dance identity from another. Krueger (2007: 52) explores how the performing arts negotiate identity-related issues and argues that identity is invented and created in performance. According to the author, the word 'person' is a mask in its first meaning. One is always consciously playing a role. Our faces are living masks that tend to conform to the type they impersonate. The researcher first discusses the enactment of self in terms of performance as a kind of deceit, and then says that all identity descriptions rely on performance representations. The researcher concludes by viewing the performing arts as ideal for investigating cultural negotiations to describe and transform identities.

The performing arts express societal identity through creative, imaginative, aesthetic, and technical skills. It is a part of people's cultural heritage and defines their identity (Frith, 1996; Bauman, 2000; Kemmis, 2010; Lidskog, 2017). Identity undergoes a continuous transformation, and this can also have an influence on a vast array of factors or issues, from globalisation to

urbanisation or education. The debates above record little about using the workshop theatre approach to navigate identity transformation, and the first element of the fourth objective is that the current study documents the workshopping process and examines how participants perceive their identity status after participating in a reconceptualised cultural performance.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The current study is explored within the critical theory framework (Horkheimer, 1982). Critical theory dates back to 1929. The Institute for Social Research at Goethe University, Frankfurt, was affiliated with the Frankfurt School of Social Theory and Critical Philosophy.[6] The most prominent critical theorists associated with the Frankfurt School are Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse. They represented the first systematic effort to employ traditional empirical research techniques to test and refine the Marxist tradition (Sajnan, 2016). They sought to apply Marxist materialism to explore how dominant understandings generated by the ruling class served to justify the hegemony of capitalism and other types of hegemony over people by misrepresenting real-world human relationships (ibid.: 146). Critical Theory's ontological position observes reality as possessing political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values. They therefore serve to democratise the social life conditions controllable by human behaviour.

Horkheimer (1982: 44) accentuates that critical theory is concerned with equal power relations and attempts practical applications to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them. Many scholars agree that critical theory aims to expose the ideas and behaviours that restrict people's ability to change their circumstances by challenging those in positions of authority and exposing the repressive systems that enslave people and foster injustice (Horkheimer, 1982; Scotland, 2012; Sajnan, 2016). This theoretical paradigm contrasts the status quo and strives for a balanced and democratic society. It is mainly concerned with power relations and the interaction between many social institutions that make up a social system, including those related to race, class, gender, education, the economy, and religion. It faces those in powerful positions and exposes the oppressive systems that dominate people and create imbalance. The theories situated within this critical paradigm include Marxism (Lichtheim, 1961), Postmodernism (Lyotard, 1984), feminist theory (hooks, 1981; Butler, 1990), decoloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2011), the critical aesthetic paradigm (Sajnani, 2016), and any other critical scholarly theories. The current research adopted the feminist and decolonial theories to analyse

[6] The Frankfurt School and Critical Theory: https://iep.utm.edu/critical-theory-frankfurt-school/

the workshop theatre process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* and critically examine how it negotiated cultural heritage celebration, power dynamics, and identity and cultural belief transformations.

2.5.1. Feminist theory

Feminist theory contains a variety of views that reflect the range of women's perspectives globally. Feminism challenges traditional philosophy by proposing fresh approaches to issues impacting humanity and arguing for replacing the prevailing patriarchal order with a system prioritising equal rights, justice, and equity. It has impacted almost every structure, institution, and discipline, challenging old ontological and epistemological assumptions about human nature, maleness, and femaleness. The first wave dealt with suffrage, the second centred on equal access, and the current wave is focused on global equality (Tong, 2000). The critical issues in feminist theories are the emphasis on gender inequality, marginalisation of women, and advancement in transforming structural, systematic, and cultural practices.

Contrary to Western perspectives, African feminists view the family as the most valued institution. Although housework activities overburden them, women neither perceive themselves as being oppressed nor see men as the perpetrators of patriarchal practices (Wilkinson, 2002). Achufusi (1994); and Shamase (2017) emphasise that, from the African feminist perspective, women recognise marriage and housewifery as their source of fulfilment. In contrast, Western feminists see a full-time housewife as an invisible role because she earns no income (Tong, 2000). This dissertation argues that the social world of art is gendered and can be understood as a gendered organisation with multiple layers of intentional and unintentional inequality (Acker, 1990). Therefore, it traces how gender roles in households within the *AmaZulu* culture impact the creative spaces for performing arts.

This dissertation borrows the concept of ‘gender performativity’ (Butler, 1994) to explore its meaning when fused with *AmaZulu* cultural performance. Gender performativity as a concept was introduced and popularised by Judith Butler. She defines it as the stylisation of an act and an imitation of the dominant gender conventions. Performativity stresses that people are born into a world in which meaning has already been created. Then, they come to occupy a pre-existing system and be occupied by it. As Lliane Loots argues, it is impossible to impose dance through training and choreography on the body because ‘the body’ enters dance already imprinted by discourses and ideologies, whether racial, gendered, or cultural. Cultural practices, social and

racial conceptions, as well as gendered conditions, encode the visceral body's flesh (Loots, 1995: 53). This study situates the notion of performativity to explore the construct in the *AmaZulu* culture and how this performativity, with its disempowerment towards women, continues during cultural performance practice. The research examines how the workshopping process can be used as a site for the subversion of gender stereotypes in cultural performances associated with characterisation.

From a feminist perspective, it is suggested that cultural standards and practices, including some of the *AmaZulu* proverbs, harm women's lives, deny them culture's role in promoting human rights (Chiliza & Masuku, 2020). The feminist understanding here suggests that women within a particular culture should have the right to question those proverbs denigrating their dignity. The belief and purpose of achieving gender equality are that women should have the same rights as men, which has caused tension in patriarchal society. Mathonsi and Mpungose (2015) assess some *AmaZulu* proverbs and reflect on gender inequality through prescribed restrictive social roles due to patriarchal society. Women continue to experience many sorts of prejudice as humans. This research shows that more has been needed for women in the performing arts over the past decade (Akbar, 2021), and it has been even worse for them in *AmaZulu* cultural performances. Therefore, more research is needed that explores how the workshopping process becomes a feminist awareness tool to raise gender consciousness (Oliveria, Monterio, & Ferreira, 2018) for female performers unaware of their oppression during cultural performances.

Minimal female representation remains an issue in technical roles within the South African performing arts industry, although the overall representation of females in various occupational categories has improved. Therefore, employment in the performing arts entities' core functions remains predominantly male (Nkomo & Saurombe, 2024). While women in some places in Africa have always had roughly equal access to seeing performances and performing publicly, many have only occasionally had the same access to performing publicly. Abah (2021) notes that women's roles in music, theatre, and performance in Africa have frequently been decreased by their reduction to lyrical performances to enliven life's transitions, from birth celebrations to rites-of-passage ceremonies, marriages, and burials. African women have long initiated social and political protests through songs, musical performances, imitations, and significant words. The records and achievements of women as individuals or band-associated public performers have been available since about the middle of the 20th century.

Many African women have broken barriers in music, theatre, and performance through exceptional demonstrations of their crafts and talents (Abah, 2021). For instance, Mulyani's (2022) study examined the binary opposition of the private-public sphere in Western critical literature, focusing on women writers' strategies in gendering and degendering their works. The research argued that women's writings are not inferior and result from patriarchal dominance and power relations. Goodman and de Gay (2002); and Leigh (2012) recorded the exchange of roles during performances, where the female performers take on the roles usually associated with male performers. Through my experience, I question the norm that when an *AmaZulu* cultural performance is performed by a mixed-gendered ensemble, prominent roles are given to male performers as they lead the *imvumo* songs and praise the kings during the coronation ceremony scenes. Therefore, this study critically explores the effects of using female performers as prominent performers during the creation process of *AmaZulu* cultural performances. The current research explores power dynamics through the roles of the *inyosi* and *igosa* to challenge gender inequality during a mixed-gendered *AmaZulu* cultural performance.

Nkomo and Saurombe (2024) explored the representation of females in a performing arts entity using feminist, social dominance, and patriarchy theories to conceptualise the critical research aspects and analyse the findings in their study. However, minimal information has been documented as yet concerning the unequal power relationships that benefit male performers during the *AmaZulu* cultural performances. An unfair burden of care falls on female performers (Akbar, 2021). If cultural performance makers do not address the issue of unequal power, female performers will always suffer from inferiority. If scholars do not make more effort to expose gender inequalities in cultural performances, female performers will suffer continuous oppression. As proposed in the third study objective, the above discussion concerning power dynamics and gender inequality through the lens of feminist theory assists the current dissertation in examining the performing arts as the space that empowers culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during cultural performances.

2.5.2. Decoloniality in performance

Many different critical theories are part of the decolonial movement, and these theories are often expressed by universally liberatory ideas that develop from particular circumstances. Class divisions, ethnic studies, gender studies, and regional studies are all examined in their literary forms. According to some, decoloniality consists of both intellectual options in the semiotics

sense and practical options in confronting and delinking from the colonial matrix of authority (Mignolo, 2011: xxvii) or from a context of modernity rooted in colonialism. It sees colonialism as "the underlying logic of the establishment and unfolding of Western civilisation from the Renaissance to the present", even though this fundamental interconnectedness is sometimes denied (ibid.: 2). These concepts carry the notion of the colonial matrix of power or the coloniality of power, respectively. In this sense, decolonial thinking is a means of responding to, most broadly, social movements in search of new humanity or the search for social liberation from all power organised as inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and dominance.

Decoloniality is synonymous with decolonial thinking and doing, and it questions or problematises the histories of power emerging from Europe (Mignolo, 2011: 2). Many theorists are associated with decolonial theories, and among them is Ngugi wa Thiong'o. The scholar mentioned above popularised 'decoloniality' in a well-known essay, *Decolonise the Mind*, published in 1986. The philosopher argued that writing in one's mother tongue is the best way for African writers to reconnect with their origins and break their everyday alienation from them caused by the ongoing use of foreign imperialist languages. He asserted that language is the most potent instrument of imperialism. Therefore, the scholar abandoning the English language by replacing his native tongue, Kikuyu, is a clear example of decoloniality in his literature.

In other performing arts-related scholarly work, decoloniality has been used to challenge and attempt to alienate the oppressive acts related to that particular performing art form. Banks (2007: 34) refers to the power of dance as a physical canvas for reconstructing identities engaged in decolonisation. For instance, Demerson (2020) investigated black women's choreographic practices and the successes and failures of researchers and activists in South Africa's '#RhodesMustFall' and '#FeesMustFall' campaigns. The researcher presented contemporary dance as a place of decolonisation by creating an assortment of dance images as a process of being in an intertwined time and space, with movement as a political and kinesthetic representation of African feminism and interdependence ideas. The study discovered that black women employ distinctive choreographic and performance strategies to resist the colonial narrative about their bodies and demonstrate a sense of the world beyond colonialism (Demerson, 2020). Loots (2018) has applied decolonial and feminist theories in her writing regarding the politics of the dancing body and the language it creates. She describes how social, cultural, and political discourse infuses examining the body. Thus, while the physicality of race and gender has always defined dancers, there is still a need to decode and deconstruct the dancing

body and the languages it articulates and inscribes to investigate how discourse and ideology pervade the use and reading of this body.

Other performing arts practitioners have employed decoloniality to question African theatre and performance by subverting Western dramaturgical frames (Udengwu, 2018). The purists prefer an approach first theorised by Amilcar Cabral (1974) in *Return to the Sourc'*. In actual practice, this means abandoning Western forms of theatre in favour of the new African forms obtained before the colonisation of Africa. The central preoccupation of these purists is to investigate how those old forms could be used to address today's challenges. The decolonisation of theatre is a strategy that seeks to subvert Western hegemonic forms and can be pursued in two ways.

First, theatre-makers could use a Western theatrical form as a generative matrix, polluted by grafting African indigenous texts onto it. Second, theatre-makers could use an African indigenous text, such as a ritual, as a generative matrix into which other readers can be keyed. The last two strategies are called syncretism (Ravengai, 2018). In *Decoloniality and Contemporary Asian Theatre in New Zealand*, Lam and Hazou (2020) present how a decolonial approach is used by Chinese New Zealander performing arts practitioners to take control of their narratives. The exploration expresses the decolonial political aspirations that circumvent and challenge the hegemony of white settler coloniality by articulating reconfigured relationships between the indigenous Māori and Chinese migrants.

Moreover, Ampka (2003) has employed decoloniality in performance structure and form to challenge the conventions concerning social, political, and social norms indoctrinated in performance. Djebbari (2019) unpacks how dance and percussion remain decolonial tools for eliminating Western influences on African performance perspectives. The scholar explains how Mali used its cultural assets, particularly music and dance, to forge its national identity during decolonisation. The *National Ballet*, performed on stage by choreographers trained in socialist nations amid the more prominent political backdrop of the Cold War, provides an example of the decolonisation process. The academic goal of the *National Ballet* is infused with Negritude and Pan-Africanism and is simultaneously entwined in a discourse on modernity. Ravengai (2018) argues that Zimbabwean independence from Great Britain occurred in 1980 and allowed the cultural producers to take it upon themselves to mainstream the resistance to the Western canon. The scholar witnessed a process of decolonising Zimbabwean theatre by deconstructing Western elements and using indigenous theatrical conventions. As one element of critical paradigms,

decoloniality gives rise to the impulse of resistance. Any exploitative and discriminatory practices can be challenged, reformulated, and remade in the colonised case of any context and time (Rice, 2007). For this context and time, the study views the performance structure of *AmaZulu* cultural performance in general as a performance setting with imbalanced power that favours male performers and oppresses female performers.

This exploration of decoloniality focuses on *imvumo* song, dance, praise poetry, and characterisation. The main focus of this exploration is to decolonise the power dynamics in *AmaZulu* cultural performances. Therefore, through the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*, the study negotiates how decoloniality can be used as an intervention to question the power dynamics associated with gender specificity during performances that are culturally oriented. The study further reconciles how the workshop process provides space and allows culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during the performance.

2.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the workshop theatre's historical background. It further provided an overview of South African workshop theatre during the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. The chapter used the post-apartheid South African theatre era to frame the workshop theatre approach as a foundation for reviewing the literature on the performing arts to navigate the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*. The principal inadequacies have been identified, illustrating the need for further investigation that records and analyses the workshopping process's elusive details and conceptualises the perceptions of the participants concerning their experience using the artist-researcher's experience and existing literature as contexts for reference. The research examines how the performing arts can allow students to learn, celebrate their cultural heritages, and question power dynamics by empowering female performers during a cultural performance negotiated within the feminist and decolonial mindset.

CHAPTER THREE

PERFORMANCE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study's methodology intersects performance ethnography (Fabian, 1990) and autoethnography (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2016). This methodology helps the study navigate the relationship between the research participants, the workshopping process, the self, and the research. The research aims to deepen one's understanding through a workshopping process concerning the construction of cultures and identities communicated to others, contested and authorised (Krüger, 2009), and how these impact power sharing in mixed-gendered cultural performances. Performance ethnography assists the current study in framing practice and observing the participant during the workshopping process. The autoethnographic approach is used in this research to ground the personal stories of the researcher. The qualitative methodology in this chapter is demonstrated with the discussion about the research participants, including their demographics and pseudonyms, as well as the research questions. The chapter further discusses the data collection methods, such as personal reflexivity, participant observations, interview samples, and focus group interviews. This study adopts a reflexive thematic analysis, which will be analysed in different stages and presented as a six-step ladder of analysis. The chapter will further discuss the validity and reliability of the study. This chapter explores a reflexive process that recognises the cultural experiences, memories, and multiple voices—those of the researcher, participants, and the research—as viable content that encourages discussion of complex and contradictory issues, thus creating a new understanding concerning power dynamics, culture, and identity in a workshopped *AmaZulu* cultural performance.

3.2. Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers investigate events in the context of their surroundings, aiming to make sense of them or interpret them in terms of the meanings assigned to them. Many techniques are used in qualitative research, which implies a humanistic perspective in which the events being studied are seen through the eyes and experiences of specific participants (Creswell, 2009). The fundamental presumption of qualitative research is that people's interactions with their surroundings influence and create reality and truth (Hodder, 2000), broaden and deepen our understanding of how things came to be as they are in our social world, evaluate human understanding, and report experiences and interpretations that might lead to developing new concepts or theories (Patton & Cochran, 2002; Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 2007).

However, the postmodern era challenged the notion of 'absolute truth' employing scientific objectivity and rational thought. Since the mid-twentieth century, ethnographers have formed what is known as the postmodern generation, which includes feminist theories, phenomenology, reflexivity, and dialogic ethnography. Other ethnographers have adopted novel approaches to ethnography that include the fieldwork methodology of collecting data to support internal fieldwork goals (Genzuk, 2003). Ethnography recognises the different and equally valid worldviews of different societies, cultures, and subcultures. It celebrates the existence of different kinds of truths as they are constructed and made meaningful by their people. Therefore, ethnography aims to enter people's subjective world and see the world from their points of view (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Goopy & Kassan, 2019). This qualitative approach served as a foundation for evaluating the applied and explored methodologies of the study, which are performance ethnography and autoethnography.

3.2.1. Performance ethnography

Ethnographers who study the performing arts combine cultural participant observation with applied ethno-drama, performance ethnography, or more imaginative, performative participant observation (Krüger, 2009). Humanist researchers frequently hope to obtain profound cultural understandings when participating in participant observations of events, settings, and actions. Performative research, also called performance ethnography, has its roots in performance studies, communication, and anthropology (Turner & Bruner, 1986; Fabian, 1990). Theatrical expression is acknowledged within these domains as a legitimate and ethical approach to conveying cultural data (Fabian, 1990). Performance ethnographers use performances to disseminate their research findings to others and to watch and participate in performances. Performative communication acts, social dramas or dramatic events that occur in daily life and involve conflict, the enactment of social roles about gender, race, status, and age, social gatherings, rituals, games, storytelling, theatre, and dance are a few examples of culturally inclusive performances (Conrad, 2004). Performance extends beyond the theatre into everyday life in performance ethnography because the performances by the participants explore and portray their real-life performances, offering a window into their cultural context and life experiences.

An anthropologist, Fabian (1990), asserts that certain forms of cultural knowledge are only represented by action, enactment, or performance and cannot be brought up and articulated in discursive utterances by informants. Understanding culture or social interactions is more

performative than educational. By accomplishing this, the researcher advances the understanding of performance towards its methodological necessity: performance as both a method and an ethnographic study subject (Fabian, 1990: 86). Performance is an embodied, empathetic method of knowing and profoundly perceiving others, according to performative epistemology (Conquergood, 1985: 3). In this case, ethnography may include engagement in actual performance as a preferred manner of accessing embodiment information and fellow feelings, which can also result in performative consequences.

During the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*, I spent time with university students and accessed the data as a participant observer. As an artist-researcher, I acted with them in their storytelling presentations, directed them on stage blocking, characterisation, composition, singing, choreography, dancing, and played the drums with them. This created a mutual connection between myself and the participants, and it was easy for them to share their experiences during the process because I became part and parcel of their community. This experience demonstrates how performance may awaken the performer to features of creative work that connect or may not connect to it and precipitate a sense of the style and aesthetics of performing arts.

Ethnomusicologists mostly describe this research method as musical participant observation, which can lead the ethnographer towards an intrinsically musical and imaginative experience (Cooley, 1997). In the dance discourse, ethnochoreologists use the term ‘dance in the field’ when referring to an ethnographer’s engagement in actual dance performances, which can provide intriguing insights into the artistic structure, methods, and institutions for transmission and understanding, as well as social benefits in the field (Blacking, 1973). The participants depicted their autobiographical presentations in *Sisukaphi? 2021*. They presented how their backgrounds or histories defined them and how they could keep some characteristics of their family beliefs to celebrate and preserve their cultural heritage. The participants’ performances provided insight into their living experiences and cultural environment by examining and depicting their performances in real life. The performance ethnography approach was pertinent to the research because it involved direct participation in a performance, reflecting the ethnographer’s concern with understanding individuals’ rich and interconnected experiences through participating, observing, and experiencing the participants’ involvement with dance, drama, and music.

Indeed, ethnomusicologists, ethnochoreologists, and others frequently argue that for performance to be essential and practical, it must be experienced by "the individuals whose lives have shared or may share in some way the cultural and personal experiences of its producers" (Blacking 1973: 54). Because practical creative experience fosters a more direct contact between performing artists and the people who perform them (Krüger, 2009), one begins by immersing oneself as a performer while observing and writing about human experience in dance, drama, and music. Here, understanding the creative work became closely tied to cultural understanding through one's performance experiences (Goopy & Kassan, 2019). As discussed above, this method assisted the current discussion, for instance, in chapter four, to locate the researcher's self-identity through the performing arts. The experience served as a background for his reflection and his subjectivity. For this reason, he reflects and argues that understanding individuals' and groups' creativity, expressions, and experiences that lie at the heart of the performing arts is essential. Ethnography is thus an appropriate method when studying and gaining awareness while collecting those of the persons involved and putting them within their more extensive social and cultural settings.

In addition, Denzin (1997: 94) refers to ethno-drama as the most effective method for using ethnography to recover and examine the meanings of lived experiences critically. Praxis in performance ethnography is acting on the world to bring about change (Denzin, 1997: 228). According to Conrad (2004), performance fosters inquiry and expression by allowing for an imaginative interpretation of events and the settings in which they occur. Other ethnographers assert that performance opens a space that allows for a reflexive learning process that recognises the cultural experiences, memories, and perspectives—participants' multiple voices—as viable content that encourages participants' discussions of complex and contradictory issues (Garoian, 1999: 67). As the artist-researcher, I performed the current research and collected the data through the workshopping process by hosting focus group interviews, using questionnaire responses and interpreting them, and interrogating the meanings of the lived experience by imagining and interpreting events and the contexts of their occurrences as a way of acting on the world in order to change it (Denzin, 1997). The intention was to question the power dynamics in *AmaZulu* cultural performances.

Performance ethnography disrupts notions of reality by encouraging the participants to question what they accept as truth and examine how their perspectives shape their truths. The current research allowed for the melding of many authoritative texts and many realities by prodding the

participants to create their own truths as they participated in the workshopping process. Ideally, participants were involved in the research process from beginning to end in attaining, creating, and disseminating knowledge (Conrad, 2004). I stressed the inherent capacity for the participants to create their knowledge based on their experiences from their backgrounds and reflected in the workshopping experience.

The group produced knowledge, which was then taken in, examined, and confirmed or challenged, allowing problems to be fleshed out and understood in context. The combination with post-performance interviews assisted me in gaining insights into the ways that the students who participated in *Sisukaphi? 2021* experienced their lives, particularly their constructions, contestations, and authorisations of culture and identities. This process assisted in describing how and why individuals viewed cultural and identity transformation differently. Performance ethnography also enables one to learn about artistic form and art as culture, and thus the values people hold and express through dance, drama, or music. Here, one's artistic understanding becomes closely tied to cultural understanding through the epistemological status of one's experiences.

3.2.2. Autoethnographic approach

This study is autoethnographic, meaning it is grounded in the personal reflections of the researcher seeking to address the study's objectives. During the 'crisis of representation' period of the mid-1980s (Holman-Jones, 2005), autoethnography emerged due to the calls to place greater emphasis on how the ethnographer interacts with the culture being researched (Holt, 2003: 18). Holman-Jones (2005) defines ethnographic research as the technique of writing and expressing culture through stories about oneself. In performance ethnography, autoethnography focuses on how one's identity is culturally and socially constructed (Holman-Jones, 2005). Thus, autoethnography enables researchers to comprehend a specific phenomenon or culture by drawing from their own experiences. As a collaborative effort by academics conducting ethnographic research worldwide, Adams et al. (2016) produced the *Handbook of Autoethnography*, which is replete with each author's narratives and observations and how they interpreted their surroundings. The questions explore the essence of humanity, concentrating on particular situations and the dissemination, sharing, and communication of this humanity or experience in the face of hardship. The book primarily emphasises storytelling, narration, and metamorphosis via these narratives. The researchers depict people in the process of personal

discovery, decision-making, and social interaction. They shed light on the meaning of their challenges, helping them progress beyond typical writing methods.

An autoethnography is concerned with writing a mixture of research, story, and method that links the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political and involves reflexive investigation of self-observation in the context of ethnographic fieldwork and writing (Holman-Jones, 2005; Spry, 2016). This creative method offered strategies that added a reflexive and autobiographical element to the current study. This creative practice played a significant role in examining the interaction of culture, identity, and power as factors contributing to gender inequality in an African cultural performance entitled to self-exploration and understanding of culture and society.

The creative output was further used to establish a performance space that challenged power dynamics in cultural performances and diversified representations of gender in performative roles, establishing more complex and self-authored formations of exploration within *AmaZulu* cultural performances. This method of writing employed the narrative elements of autobiography and the scientific elements of ethnography to present information or a culturally relevant experience. It favoured experiential knowledge as a means through which broader phenomena could be understood and a methodology that required me as the artist-researcher to treat myself as the subject of study. This study is a conscious reflection of my actions, challenges, and feelings throughout the workshopping of *Sisukaphi? 2021*. It offers an analysis of the workshopped musical and cultural performances. Being part of the process made me reflect on my own always-revolving identity, my view of culture as an *umZulu* (especially regarding creative performance), and my beliefs concerning creating a reflexive performance.

3.3. Participants' Demographics, Pseudonyms, Research Questions and Data Classification Tables

Table 3.3.1: The Participants' Demographics	**Females**	**Males**
Demographics		
Gender	9	5
Born and raised in a peri-urban area	5	0
Born and raised in a rural area	4	5
Home background as the inspiration for performing arts	4	3
School background as the inspiration for performing arts	5	2
Music and Drama and Performance Studies as major subjects	6	0

Music Performance and IsiZulu as major subjects	3	5

Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

Table 3.3.2: The Participants' Pseudonyms				
Participant 1	Xolani		Participant 8	Mbali
Participant 2	Sonke		Participant 9	Elihle
Participant 3	Noma		Participant 10	Nana
Participant 4	Sbani		Participant 11	Thembi
Participant 5	Philile		Participant 12	Thanazi
Participant 6	Jane		Participant 13	Falakhe
Participant 7	Msila		Participant 14	Lolo

Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

Table 3.3.3: Research Questions	
No.	**Questions**
1	How do the performing arts become tools for cultural heritage for students during the workshopping process?
2	Why could the female students not express themselves well regarding their family and cultural backgrounds in comparison to the male students?
3	How do the performing arts provide space and allow culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during a cultural performance?
4	How does a reconceptualised cultural performance transform participants' cultural beliefs and identities?
5	What are the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance that challenges the cultural status quo of that particular culture during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

Table 3.3.4: Data Set Classification		
Sources	**Sub Sources**	**Arrangement**
Primary Data	1. WhatsApp audio responses 2. Focus group interview/seminar transcripts 3. Interview transcripts	1. Participants as the data source
	4. Participant observation diary 5. Focus-group interview/seminar diary 6. Personal reflectivity diary	2. Artist-researcher as the data source
Secondary Data	1. Performing arts discourse 2. Feminist theories 3. Decolonial theories	3. Literature as the data source

Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

3.4. Research Participants

The study sample consisted of 14 students: 9 females and 5 males. Tables 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 above differentiate the participants according to their demographics and outline participant's pseudonyms. All the participants were purposefully and conveniently selected based on their willingness and availability. They all participated in *Sisukaphi? 2021* as part of their degree course; however, their participation in the data collection processes was voluntary. All of the students came from various geopolitical and socio-economic backgrounds. Their demographics were dominated mainly by native IsiZulu speakers, and they all studied the AMD ensemble curriculum. They therefore constituted one united community spatially. The UKZN Howard College Campus offers the AMD ensemble module in the music discipline. It is a required module for AMD students and is part of the undergraduate curriculum.

The study had 14 participants. Five females were raised in peri-urban regions, while four females and five males were raised in the KwaZulu-Natal province's rural areas. Four females and three males were inspired by their home backgrounds in the performing arts, while five females and two males were inspired by their school experiences. Among the study's participants, six females majored in music, drama, and performance studies. The other three females and five males majored in music studies and isiZulu. The demographics presented in Table 3.3.1 helped this study generalise its findings.

The study's participants relied on their conceptions regarding their cultural backgrounds and beliefs and knowledge of *AmaZulu* cultural performances to answer the research questions, and their experience made them the primary sources of data. This study used convenience and purposive sampling to select the participants. Convenience sampling was used because the participants met specific practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or eagerness to contribute to the study (Dörnyei, 2007). The purposive sampling method was applied because the participants decided to participate in the study due to their qualities (Bernard, 2002). As the artist-researcher, I decided what needed to be known and found people willing to provide the information required based on their knowledge and experience (Bernard, 2002). The study protected the participants' identities by using pseudonyms instead of their official names. Table 3.3.2 above outlines how the participants were named.

3.5. Research Questions

The study examined the workshopping performance's capacity to negotiate the students' cultural heritage celebrations, identity and cultural belief transformations, power dynamics, and the exploration of gender inequalities imposed on mixed gender *AmaZulu* cultural performances. The research, therefore, examined how participating in a reconceptualised traditional *AmaZulu* performance featured in a workshopped musical performance could affect its participants' cultural beliefs and identities. Table 3.3.3 above outlines the research questions as they informed the study.

3.6. Data Collection

Angen (2000) postulated that data is collected in such a study as this one by alternating between observing the phenomenon being studied and actively taking part in it, taking on the differing roles of participant and observer at different times during the study. The artist-researcher actively participated in the *Sisukaphi?* 2021 workshopping process, with a specific focus on themes such as cultural heritage, identity, power dynamics, and gender inequality. Throughout the storytelling presentation, all participants assumed leadership roles, fostering a supportive and collaborative environment. The researcher also provided guidance, utilising a mobile phone for audio and video recording and maintaining a reflective diary to document rehearsal moments.

3.6.1. Personal reflexivity

Reflexivity is the researcher's mindfulness of their role in the research practice and how their research object influences it, enabling the researcher to acknowledge how they affect both the research processes and outcomes. It involves awareness that the researcher and the object of study affect each other mutually and continually in the research process (Alvesson & Skoldburg, 2000). As discussed in the autoethnography approach in the section above, reflexivity involves how pre-existing understandings are constantly revised in light of new understandings and how this affects the research process.

Personal reflexivity requires researchers to reflect on and clarify their expectations, assumptions, and conscious and unconscious reactions to contexts, participants, and data (Gentles, Jack, Nicholas, & McKibbon, 2014). The researcher's involvement is a significant aspect of the research process that should be analysed and interpreted. Engaging in personal reflexivity should go beyond disclosing the researcher's background and training. It should incorporate descriptions

of “how the researcher’s prior experiences and motivations might influence the decisions made throughout the project” (Olmos-Vega, Stalmeijer, Varpio, & Kahlke, 2023: 4). Personal reflexivity should occur throughout the investigation and be interwoven with all aspects of the project, including research conception.

Alvesson and Skoldburg (2000) suggest two critical elements embedded within reflexive research: interpretation and reflection. The interpretive element recognises that interpretation is not based on a simple analysis of facts or data, which reflects some ‘reality’. Instead, it is influenced by the researcher’s assumptions, values, political position, or use of language. As part of the reflection on this research, I focused on myself, the participants, and the intellectual and cultural conditions and traditions that informed the research. In this case, reflexivity became a form of interpretation, making the research more reflexive. This dissertation discusses how past experiences shaped my own reflexivity and worldview of the performing arts. I also attempt to make meaning informed by my experience concerning the workshop process and the collected data. In Chapter Four of this dissertation, I detail the different scenarios and experiences that shaped my artistry and general conception of the performing arts. I use personal reflexivity to connect with my artistic and cultural background to understand the participants’ responses concerning the study objectives. See Appendix Three, which presents the outline and formation of my reflexivity.

The questions in Appendix Three enabled me to navigate the process inside and out. The in-and-out navigation process was my acknowledgement of myself as an art creator and researcher. I related how I created the musical performance in collaboration with the students while simultaneously collecting the data, comparing it with the existing literature, and framing it from a theoretical perspective. I explored and validated the existing literature with primary data to make new claims. It is essential to mention that these questions were sub-questions that fed the main research questions.

3.6.2. Participant observation

This study used participant observation as one of the data collection methods. I considered the participant observation approach significant since it allowed for the detection of nonverbal manifestations of feelings, the determination of who engaged with whom, an understanding of how participants communicated with one another, and the determination of how much time was

spent on various tasks. Participant observation also allows a researcher to verify the definitions of the terminology used in interviews and watch the circumstances described by participants, making them aware of any distortions or mistakes in their descriptions (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I used this data collection method because the research problem concerned human meanings and interactions viewed from insiders' perspectives. The investigated phenomenon was observable within an everyday life situation and in a setting that allowed me to gain easy access to it.

Jorgensen (1989: 13) suggests that a phenomenon being investigated must be sufficiently limited in size and location to be studied as a case. The study questions should be appropriate for the case study. The research problem should be addressed by the qualitative data gathered by direct observation of the field setting. In the current study, the research problem concerns the use of workshopped theatre in a university context to debate issues concerning cultural heritage celebration, culture and identity transformation, and power dynamics. I gained access to the field since I was the lecturer for the students who served as the study participants. The sampling was sufficiently limited to the AMD students from the class of 2021 and their lecturer, myself as the artist-researcher. Also, the study questions were relevant because they were based on the participants' experiences concerning their participation in the workshopping process and their experiences concerning *AmaZulu* cultural beliefs and understanding.

I used 'focused observation' and 'selective observation'. The selective observation was systematic, in that I concentrated on different types of events to help delineate the variations in those activities (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000: 677). I observed the participants engaging in the creative process while seeking to conceptualise how they related to the study's objectives. I used the tips for collecting valuable observation data provided by Barbara Kawulich's article, *Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method*, published in 2005. Guided by the tips and processes commended by Kawulich (2005), I entered the field of study. Before collecting data, I made myself familiar with the setting and was honest about my intentions with the study participants. I provided a detailed explanation of what I wanted to achieve with the help of the participants. I perceived events through fresh eyes, paid close attention to the talk by the participants, and tried to recall as many exact words spoken, nonverbal cues, and gestures as possible.

My central role as the artist-researcher in this instance was to collect data, and the group being studied was aware of my observation activities. In this role, I was an observer interested in conducting better observation rather than a group member, and this allowed me to generate a complete understanding of the group's activities as each participant portrayed their stories related to their cultural backgrounds. These stories were then researched, rearranged, and performed, following a particular order, as a musical production comprising music, dance, and storytelling. This experience brought new insights as participants could learn about other participants' cultural backgrounds, music, and dances while they shared theirs. In the observation stage, I was selectively looking for relevant data that would assist in answering the study's questions.

3.6.3. Interview questions

Ethnomusicologists interview people, sometimes formally and sometimes during casual conversations, to provoke oral histories, gather culturally specific insider musical knowledge about musical traditions, and maintain rapport (Rice, 2014). I used individual interviews because they were more effective in extracting the narrative data that permitted me to investigate the participants' views in greater depth. In this study, the interviews helped facilitate direct explanations from the participants through comprehensive spoken interactions. Interviews were advantageous for getting the stories behind the participants' experiences, as they assisted with the pursuit of in-depth information about the topic.

I gained flexibility concerning adding questions or asking for clarification. Semi-structured interviews helped collect personal information from the participants since they felt more at ease and relaxed. This turned the interviews into conversations rather than calculated interrogations, and the questions and replies allowed me to investigate the questions in greater detail. The interview questions were emailed to the participants.

The interview questionnaire contained the same questions for all the participants. The receipt of the responses depended on the manner most suitable for each participant. The interview responses were received mainly through text and audio messages on WhatsApp. The follow-up questions were then communicated via mobile using WhatsApp calls. Appendix One provides a sample of the interview questions that were posed to the participants.

3.6.4. Focus group interviews

In focus groups, the participants are invited to talk about their views, attitudes, and beliefs about a particular subject, concept, or idea. This data gathering method includes questions to guide the informants in a discussion about certain aspects of each subject or sub-topic. The data gathered includes opinions, assertions about beliefs, and expressions of agreement or disagreement with other participants, and this is a process in which individual or group identities are built (Rabiee, 2004). Furthermore, focus groups are facilitated group discussions designed to elicit information on a specific topic from a predetermined population (Kitzinger, 1994). Participants in a focus group discussion must be individuals who are experienced or knowledgeable about the specific matter being researched and who can contribute information on the topic so that a researcher can get the data required. Preplanning and designing the discussion and environment are essential in conducting focus group sessions (Gundumogula & Gundumogula, 2020: 299). Focus group interviews are an extension of the interview process; more specific, in-depth group interviews are accompanied by discussions. The focus group interview questions that were posed and discussed during brief seminars with the participants are outlined in Appendix Two. The seminars were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants.

Below are the dates on which the interview seminars or focus group discussions occurred, the time spent discussing each topic, and the research questions that guided each seminar.

- The first focus group seminar was held on the 18th of November 2021, lasting for 22 minutes and 15 seconds. The first question in Appendix Two guided this seminar.
- The second focus group seminar happened on the 25th of November 2021. The discussion lasted for 25 minutes and 2 seconds. This seminar discussed the second question of the appendix.
- The third interview seminar was framed around the third question of Appendix Two. It happened on the 1st of December 2021, lasting for 27 minutes and 10 seconds.
- The final focus group seminar happened on the 2nd of December 2021. It took 25 minutes and 16 seconds. The fourth question above was the focus of this focus group discussion.

All the data collected during the focus group interviews or seminars is integrated with the other data sourced from the other data collection tools in Chapter Five to meet the study's objectives.

3.7. Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The data analysis process in this study was broken down into its constituent parts for it to be understood better (Mouton & Marais, 1991). In this research, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and understand the conditions behind the politics in the workshopping process of the *AmaZulu* cultural performance with students within the university setting. This research identified aspects of autonomy and marital satisfaction from the participants' viewpoints rather than providing an absolute answer to the research problem. Thematic analysis aims to develop patterns of meaning. These meanings are then interwoven to compose themes across a dataset that address a research question.

A researcher generates patterns through rigorous data familiarisation, data coding, theme development, and theme revision. The method can be applied in different ways to many datasets to address many research questions within a series of theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2021). While thematic analysis branches into different types, I used reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) in the current study. RTA involves a reflexive, recursive engagement with the dataset to produce a robust analysis. It is an analysis situated in a subjective process at the intersection of the researcher, the dataset, and the various contexts of interpretation. It enables the researcher to draw on their previous experiences and critically interrogate the social position (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 5). This analysis tool was relevant to this study as I reflected on the creative process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* and used the participants' experiences and perceptions to question the rules and norms that regulate and govern human behaviour and practices in the Zulu culture.

I applied three approaches when coding and theming the ideas in the data; deductive, semantic, and essentialist (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2021). These helped me focus on the analysis because my study reflected on practice. In brief, I used a deductive approach because I had identified concepts and ideas before the analysis stage. They directed the process of coding and theme development. The deductive analysis started with the selection of a conceptual framework, which was then used as the framework and lens to interpret and extract information from the data set. A *semantic* approach was utilised because part of the current study's coding and theme development reflected the explicit content of the data. I explored the meanings on a surface level, drawing out readily and explicitly identified themes while staying close to the participants'

expressions. An assumption was made that there was an objective reality to be identified and extracted from the data.

3.7.1. Six-step ladder of analysis

This section discusses the use of the six stages of the thematic analysis approach developed and conceptualised by Braun and Clarke (2021) and named the six-step ladder of analysis. These theorists contend that this analytical method needs to be applied within a systematic framework when undertaking qualitative research. Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-stage model was used for data analysis in this study, but I added an additional step to the process just before employing the six-step ladder. This additional step was deemed necessary for the study to acknowledge the six-step analysis process as it unfolded while respecting and attempting to keep to the six phases of the analytical process of the cited authors. I stayed close to the meanings expressed explicitly by the participants, resulting in a more descriptive methodology. I assumed that there was an objective reality to be extracted and noted from the data.

Before beginning with the first step of the data analysis process detailed in the ladder, I had to start the process by retrieving and extracting the data from the different sources. This initial step prepared me by making me familiar with the dataset. This step was a process on its own, and it is therefore worth mentioning and reflecting upon. The data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, so close personal interactions were not possible. I allowed WhatsApp to be another tool for data retrieval to compensate for the lack of such interactions, so most of the participants used the WhatsApp audio function to respond to the interview questions. In a nutshell, this was a transcription process where the audio and typed responses to the interview questions and the focus group interviews or seminars were transcribed verbatim. The responses were then categorised while using the theoretical framework to guide the process before starting familiarisation with the data set.

Table 3.3.4 outlines the initial step of the data retrieval and classification phase. I started by recognising that the data for the current study was drawn from both primary and secondary sources. The sources were classified into primary and secondary sources, and the data was then extracted from the primary sub-sources. These included the WhatsApp and focus group seminar audio responses, my research field notes, and my personal reflections. I transcribed all the data verbatim into a Microsoft Word document. Most of the secondary data sub-sources were explored

during this step. These were in the form of literature reviews that focused mainly on the performing arts and feminist and decolonial theoretical frameworks. When categorising the data, I grouped the data from myself and the participants together as the primary data sources. The secondary data group comprised performing arts literature and literature on feminist and decolonial theories.

3.7.1.1 Step one: familiarisation

This first step is divided into two stages. It entails thoroughly conversing with the data. The primary goal is to become deeply familiar with and intimate with the data. It involves reading and re-reading the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 43-44). In layperson's terms, the level of familiarity should be such that if the data were lost, the researcher would be able to remember and recall the content reasonably well. As I familiarised myself with the literature, I reflected on how the participants understood participation in terms of their personal histories. I explored why they could make sense of things that way and tried to put myself into their contexts socially, identically, and culturally.

Because familiarity was achieved, the research moved on to the next stage, which involved critical engagement and creating distance from the data. In this stage, the researcher's approach progresses from reading and familiarisation to critical and reflexive questioning of the subjective questions that enable and position the self as a fundamental element of the reflective thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 44). At this stage, I used the feminist and decolonial theories as lenses, as I wanted to understand the interview and focus group transcripts. I interwove them with the participant observation notes made during the workshopping process. The process used personal reflexivity to make data claims from a point of subjectivity. In addition, it was at this stage that I relooked at the literature reviewed in the current study and compared it to the dataset to highlight the different meanings found in the dataset.

3.7.1.2 Step two: coding

Coding is an exploratory process that involves methodically reviewing the data and searching for interesting, relevant, and provoking segments. It concerns the research questions and then writing brief descriptions next to them (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 64). Braun and Clarke further attest that without such scrutiny, the researcher obtains ideas and trends that would otherwise go unnoticed at that stage. Coding is an organic and evolving process that connects a researcher's knowledge,

subjectivity, and analytical skills as he or she engages closely and systematically with a dataset and demarcates variations in the dataset to develop robust themes based on clusters of similar meanings applicable to the study (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 69-72).

RTA recognises the use of the self in all process steps and involves the coding phase. For this reason, Braun and Clarke (2021) attest that coding is shaped and enhanced by the researcher's subjectivity and position. It is important to emphasise that the coding in the current research was also deductive, semantic, and essentialist. I observed the data coding and the whole analysis process as an activity where I used reflexivity to activate my intuitions. I gained the power to be highly selective about the data and extracted elements that fit my pre-existing ideas on the research topic. I interwove the information from all the data sources to find pattern similarities and develop the codes.

3.7.1.3 Step three: generating initial themes

Braun and Clarke (2021: 76) argue that "a theme captures the patterning of meaning across the dataset". According to the authors, a theme has historically been referred to as a collective interpretation, a compositional pattern, or a fully developed theme. While all of these terms have been abandoned in favour of 'theme', they capture something of a theme's essence as a pattern of shared meaning organised around a central concept (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 78). There is some shared meaning: the codes that have identified a single idea can be clustered together in the early stages of the process. A theme does not have to be bound by a single thought, as a code might be. Instead, it can contain multiple facets that contain a 'central organising concept' (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 80). The researcher should generate themes deliberately and thoughtfully, drawing on and integrating their position, knowledge, and intellectual interests to aid this process. I examined the text for contradictions, similarities, and vagueness emerging from the participants' constructions.

Furthermore, in this phase, I also identified the research objectives by drawing on the historical background and the participants' contexts to understand the themes better. The analysis found that the participants' meanings of the themes resulted from their historical experiences, current situations, and socio-political and cultural contexts concerning *AmaZulu* cultural performances. I interwove the collected data, examined the key themes, and looked for their relevance to the proposed objectives of the study. The literature was also constantly reviewed to make sense of

the analysis. The data was analysed, collated, and synthesised. The participants were then given feedback for validation.

I followed this by interweaving all the current study's themes and section titles and exploring how they intersected. Those portraying similar meanings and thus aiding in answering the research questions were grouped and retitled under one label. I summarised each theme. After that, each theme was explored, drawing upon extracts from the data. I provided an evidential basis for my analytical claims to allow the reader to evaluate the validity of the research claims based on the source data. I selected extracts from across the dataset and did not rely solely on the participants' information in the dataset. For each theme, I used a variety of quotations, aiming for data that demonstrated the depth and breadth of the central organising concept. I chose excerpts that clearly and succinctly illustrated the claims in my analysis. I interpreted the data effectively and convincingly, as some required contextualising. I interpreted, elaborated, and explained the relevance of the themes to the research question and contextualised the narrative of why they mattered.

3.7.1.4 Step four: developing and reviewing themes

This sequential method facilitates rigour and safeguards against weak, fragmented themes that the data cannot support. This step may entail losing some or adjusting pre-existing themes to account for the re-examination of the data after completing the previous three phases. It may be necessary to lose some aspects of a specific theme to transform it into a distinct theme organised around a single central idea (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This step is an extension of step three. In this step, I reviewed, checked, and adjusted the themes. Reviewing the data set, especially the coded data extracts, allowed me to clarify how closely aligned the themes developed in phase three remained with the data. It enabled me to check that the themes thus identified were tied to the data.

3.7.1.5 Step five: refining, defining, and naming themes

A critical aid in refining, defining, and naming themes is to create an abstract for the themes. Developing an abstract is a test of a theme. A theme should explain the central organising principle, convey the theme's uniqueness, and contribute to the overall analysis at this stage. Even at this late stage, there is still time to revise or, more severely, drop specific themes entirely (Braun & Clarke, 2021). During this stage, I captured the gist of the themes succinctly, and this

process facilitated rigour and identified any further need for refinement. It was up to me to decide whether or not to continue with the refinement process. I kept the last conceptualised themes as they responded best to the research questions, and thus declared this step the final step of the current study's analysis. Chapter Six presents and discusses the themes refined in this step.

3.7.1.6 Step six: writing up

In the writing stage, the researcher describes their journey of exploration and discovery; however, writing this is also explorative and, thus, the final part of their adventurous journey. An opportunity remains to refine and reconceptualise some aspects of your research journey, including the themes. The presentation style should invite readers to stay and eventually reward them for staying—as a thank you for their time and attention (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 118). Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to engage the reader while convincing them of the validity and robustness of the arguments and themes that I have identified.

3.8. Validity and Reliability

This study's validity was established using secondary research data. The claims made in the literature were validated by collecting data from the primary sources, namely the participants and me. The findings of this research reflected the aims and objectives that were set out. The respondents were carefully selected using purposive and convenience sampling based on their participation in the musical workshopping process and general experience with *AmaZulu* cultural performances and traditions. The collected data's consistency and coherence were examined to ensure its reliability. The reliability of the study was also determined by the extent to which the data collected from the participants was consistently checked.

In this research, reliability denotes the consistency of the study's findings with those of several investigations conducted by various investigators on the performing arts, identity, culture, and generalizability of the conclusions (Jeff & Corey, 2020). Qualitative researchers employ synthesis as another form of reliability to ensure a rich, robust, thorough, and well-developed research account (Thurmond, 2001). As an example of synthesis, the artist-researcher used a mixed-methods evaluation approach to increase the validity of the evaluation findings using various data collection techniques. This entailed using several data sources in the investigation (Thurmond, 2001). In qualitative research, reliability concerns whether observations can be repeated during the data collection process (Jeff & Corey, 2020). To guarantee that the data was

reliable, I regularly reflected on the study's objectives and guided the participants to stay within the study's domain. Lastly, another way in which reliability was established was that the ensemble students were shown the study's findings, and their comments led to the creation of the final presentation.

3.9. Chapter Summary

The methodology employed connected the research participants, the workshopping process, the self, and the research. It interrogated power dynamics and students' cultural beliefs using the performing arts in a university context through the workshopping process for *Sisukaphi? 2021*. It aimed to deepen the understanding of using a workshopping process as a setting for the construction of cultures and identities communicated to others, contested, and authorised (Krüger, 2009), and how these impact power sharing in a mixed-gendered-cultural performance. Performance ethnography was used to frame both the practice and the study. The autoethnographic approach was used because the current research was grounded in the personal stories of the artist-researcher. This research documented and analysed the workshopping process that explored the power dynamics within the mixed-gendered *AmaZulu* cultural performance with university students. The qualitative methodology was followed by involving the research participants, including their demographics and pseudonyms, and the research questions in the study. The chapter further discussed the data collection methods, such as personal reflexivity, participant observation, interview questions, and focus group interviews. The reflexive thematic analysis was divided into different stages: dataset extraction and classification, familiarisation, coding, generation of initial themes, development and reviewing of the themes, refining, defining, and naming of the themes, and the final writing up of the research report.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LOCATION OF SELF-IDENTITY THROUGH PERFORMANCE

4.1. Introduction

Among autoethnography's most amazing gifts are the potential for change, the opportunity to understand ourselves better, and the ability to consider our past selves compared to our present selves (Berry, 2006). This chapter explores how my identity has been generated and shifted due to historical, societal, political, cultural, and, most significantly, artistic influences. Memories make up this chapter. A summary of these memories' key phases is provided. I narrate the different stages of my identity transformation. I explore the role of the performing arts in identity transformation by fusing these recollections with my experience in the performing arts sector. The objective of this chapter is to situate readers within the framework of the artist-researcher. It will help them comprehend my subjectivity, which ranges from my creative strategies, reasoning, conceptualisation, and judgments. I present multiple cases to provide meaning and context. This chapter explores my identity as a young black performing arts practitioner from South Africa. I use the first-person narrative to convey to the reader that this data presentation is my personal story. This chapter aims to provide the context of my subjectivity.

4.2. My Mother's Voice and the Folktales: *Ngisukaphi?*

The title of the workshopping process and the case of the current research is *Sisukaphi?*[7] It was the most fitting title I could offer for the workshopping process. It invites us to consider our ancestry as a collective and a society. If we can improve our current identity by remembering who we were in the past, we will cherish our heritage and stay rooted even as the world changes. As a result, reflecting on our origins will aid in developing self-awareness and self-care. All that is left is to treasure our heritage and cling to the things that help us remember who we are. We can cherish our heritage in various ways. It could be through traditional dance, music, language, history, clothing, and other pertinent artefacts.

Sisukaphi? becomes *ngisukaphi?* in the singular form. In other words, where am I from? Or, where do I originate from? This inquiry serves as a valuable springboard for reflecting on my past and navigating it as I reflect on my experience in the performing arts and its developmental phases. I employ the term '*ngisukaphi?'* as a means of navigation to help me remember certain

[7] *Sisukaphi?* is a questioning title in both the plural form and present tense. Where are we from? Or where do we originate from? It asks

historical occurrences. It conveys the notion of reflection. According to an identity theorist's definition, cultural identity is dynamic and subject to change based on a person's background, environment, and circumstances (Hall, 1990: 393). The author claims that identities are the labels we apply to the different ways in which we are positioned and described in the histories of the past. Motivated by this quote, I explore this chapter by revisiting my 'embodied self' (Loots, 2018) as a rising South African performing arts practitioner.

I was born in *Kwenkulu* village, a rural area near *Gamalakhe*, a peri-urban area near the town of Port Shepstone in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). My mother was a housewife. She sometimes served as a domestic worker in the same village where we lived. She offered herself as a servant to other households in exchange for starch food, such as rice or maize meal, so we could eat. My father was a handyman. Painting houses and doing renovations were my father's areas of expertise. His occupation necessitated him working outside of the village. He was primarily stationed in suburban areas, where he performed his duties. When they were working on remodelling houses, white executives would offer him and his team a room in the backyard. They would perform similar duties while relocating from one home to another. On Fridays, when he had collected his pay, he would come home. We waited anxiously for his return on Fridays, wishing he would bring us goodies. Sometimes he did.

Sometimes, we would fall asleep while waiting for him, and we would be woken up by his voice echoing in the distance. He sang his favourite song, '*Ukhona uShobane'* (There was a man called Shobane). The closer he came, the louder the singing was. He would soon enter the door very inebriated and, sadly, empty-handed. He drank all the money! At that point, I felt an abrupt transition as all of my anticipation ended in absolute sadness. He would be violent towards my mother and demand food he did not buy. He would declare angrily:

> "*Kusemzini wami la Mfazi! kukhala esami isicathulo, uyezwa*?"
> (This is my house, woman! I'm the one who rules, do you hear me?).

He would make this declaration as he choked her in front of us. My siblings and I would shake with terror as we saw her in tears, wanting assistance that we were too afraid to give; we were too young. I swear to God, there were many times when I thought about becoming a superhero so I could save my mother! She would sit silently and submit to this customary patriarchal authority as her tradition required, Dworkin's (1981) and Hooks's (1981) writings (as cited in Loots, 2018) resounding in her head. I have always wanted to be her voice. I saw how her cultural

values silenced her. For this reason, a portion of this dissertation speaks on behalf of my mother's silenced voice. I discuss how her own culture and principles have repressed her. Through the workshopping process, I intervene, empower her, and give her a place to exercise her power that has long been and continues to be seized away by her oppressive cultural system.

Hardship taught my mother to be stronger. Against all the odds, her storytelling provided warmth in our home, despite all the challenges. My mother recounted *izinganekwane* (folktales) to us. She told many folktales, but the most beloved was *Impempezi ye Zulu*, about a gigantic, terrifying monster that devoured every hamlet resident. The enormous creature was put to sleep by the hypnotic singing of a brilliant and courageous woman who had travelled from the nation of marriage to visit her relatives in the village. She entered the massive animal's jaws with an axe and food, saving the victims from their stomachs (hunger). Once inside, she began feeding the village's famished residents before using the axe to cut the creature's stomach open and free the captives. The village monarch then bestowed cattle on her for being a heroine. Her persona embodies the undervalued strength and power of women.

I am convinced that my background in the performing arts originates from my rich storytelling heritage. I liked how my mother interpreted the sounds of the animals and the characters involved in the stories, and how she sang and hummed the birds' melodies. Back then, I did not realise that what I was experiencing was the performing arts. Storytelling is mediating and transmitting knowledge and information across generations, conveying information about cultures, worldviews, morals, expectations, norms, and values to younger generations (Adegbite, 2010). I concur with the above statement and reflect on my home experience, where storytelling also served the purpose of entertainment and, more importantly, as a tool to forget hunger while the pumpkin pieces, sweet potatoes, and mealie cobs were still boiling in the three-legged pot.

My mother still likes to remind me of how great she was as a performer in her youth, as she says:

> *"Sasihamba sigida emaceceni. Zazithi uma zime uhla, ziguqile phansi izinsizwa, bese kube yithi ngemuva amantombazane. Angithi phela sizobaqalela ingoma abazosina ngayo. Bese ngisho nge-phimbo elibandayo*." We travelled and performed traditional *AmaZulu* dances during the ceremonies. While the gentlemen were kneeling and forming a straight line, then it was us at the back, the girls. For this reason, we would sing the songs to accompany them while they were dancing. And then I would start with a cold voice. [8]

[8] My mother refers to a soprano voice as *izwi elibandayo* (the cold voice).

She claims she inherited the artistry from her father (my late grandfather, a concertina player). Similarly, I declare that I inherited my performing arts talent from my mother. I am still preserving my grandfather's musical legacy. With such experience, one can argue that creativity is transmissible and peculiar to genetic influences.

However, above all, my mother's speech above reveals how female performers have been subjected to talent suppression. While the male dancers were shining in front of the audience, the female performers were behind them, helping them shine. My African culture, especially my *AmaZulu* culture, is patriarchal. Now is the time when we can all relate to women's screams. We empathise with them and feel their suffering. The journey to empowering them and supporting them must not be sexist. It does not matter whether one is male or female; the aim is to fight against the injustice that still suppresses women and favours males. We expose all the deeds of a cruel man, such as gender-based violence, and we increase public awareness of femicide. We challenge the mindset that men are more powerful than women and collapse all our cultural structures that have produced, supported, and ingrained this belief in us.

I utilise critical theories to empower my mother in Chapter Six, focusing on feminism and decoloniality. I highlight how an African woman has been oppressed using an *AmaZulu* cultural performance and attempt to empower her during the same *AmaZulu* cultural performance. I use *Sisukaphi? 2021* to address gender inequities and situate the meaning of the performance in its cultural context. For the above reasons, I employ the self in exploring the first objective, which is to investigate why female students fail to express themselves well regarding their family and cultural backgrounds compared to male students. The above observation also motivates this study to explore the second objective: to negotiate the potency of the performing arts as a space that allows culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during cultural performances.

4.3. School Experience: The Role of Extra-Mural Activities in Promoting the Performing Arts

In this section, I reflect on my school experiences, looking at the role of extra-mural activities in inspiring my love of the performing arts. I share my experiences from both primary school and secondary school. My primary school was Sondelani Primary, located in the Ntuzuma township. In 1998, I was in grade five, and we were forced to join the school choir. Before this experience,

I do not recall any experiences involving me or singing in a group with a choirmaster. In the previous grades, everyone would sing during the morning prayer in the school assembly. That involved everyone, and learners could sing off-key or in any voice part without supervision by an instructor.

Being involved in the choir allowed me to receive training in choral music. I saw how interesting transitioning from tonic solfege to the actual lyrics of a song was. This kind of music possesses Western art conventions when composing and performing it, and it instructs the performers, whether conductors or singers, on what to do and how to do it. For instance, a song's key is prescribed on its score sheet, and the song's key is provided by a piano or melodica before the musical piece starts. All the commanding rules, such as the dynamics, repeats, articulations, and tempo, are provided on the score sheet. I observed this when performing in our school choir, which consisted of 80 learners. We travelled a little for the schools' singing competition, as we had hoped. We won three rounds of the competition but could not make it to the fourth one, called the provincial round. Had we won the provincial competition, we would have qualified to compete nationally. Because we did not make it through to the next round, the school choir stopped rehearsing as there were no upcoming competitions. The choir members were subsequently invited to audition for the school's gospel music group.

The auditions were mandatory because the group had to be limited to 20 members. What I liked about this music was that it allowed the singers, especially the lead singers, to be creative. The singers were free to express themselves vocally without being controlled by the score sheets. The group members' voice ranges determined the keys of the songs, rather than the keys being prescribed on the score sheets. The soloists could interpret the songs based on their feelings, as long as they were in line with the songs' keys, and the group and the music director agreed.

When I got to secondary school in 2001, I no longer had to walk the 1.2-kilometre distance that I had to when I was in primary school. It was a 50-metre walk. My home was just next to the school's fence. See my home at A, Sondelani Primary School at B, and Siyathuthuka Secondary School at C on the map. As my first and second schools were about a kilometre apart, it was inevitable that I would meet some of the learners that I had attended primary school and sang in the school choir with. Indeed, it happened often. I joined the school's gospel group and the *isicathamiya* group. However, my primary school friends were kept from joining these extra-mural activities.

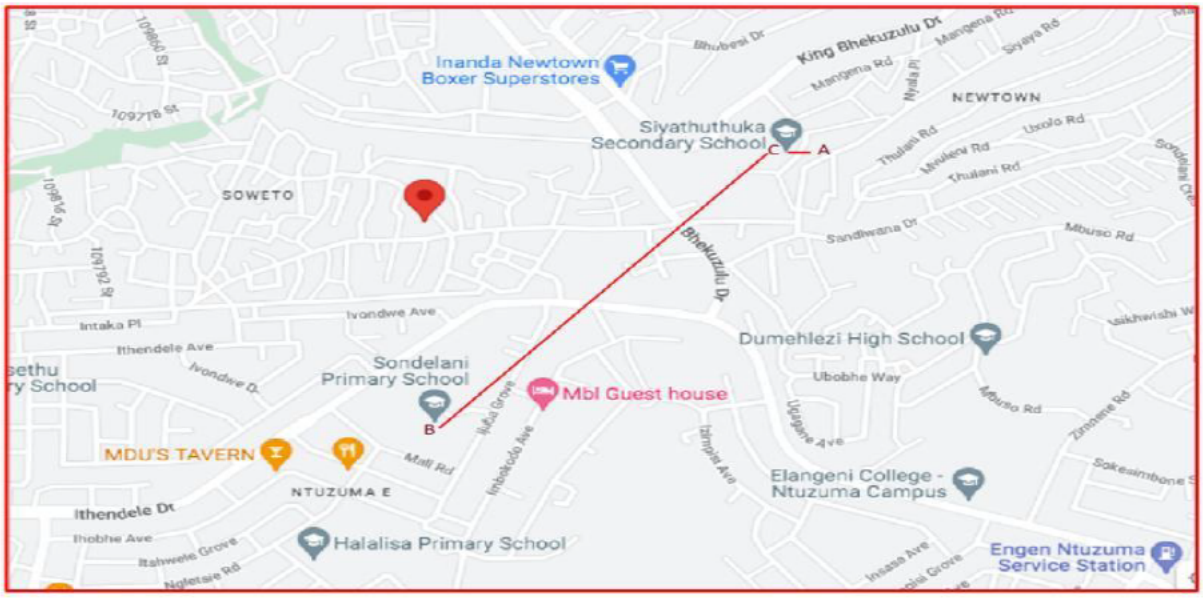


Figure 4.1: Map of the Ntuzuma township showing the location of the two schools attended
Source: Google Maps (2023)

It was now in secondary school that they were interested in other new things. Apart from being involved in the school's gospel and *isicathamiya* groups, I was also a member of a male gospel trio within the school. We were known for entertainment at the school's functions, such as matric farewells and memorial services. Our well-known songs included *Konke Kuvela Kuwe* (All Comes from You), *Dimoni Suka Emvakwani* (Move Away Behind My Back Demon), and *Duduzekani* (Condolences). The experience I gained while studying at this secondary school left me realising what maturity meant in terms of vocal dynamics and public performance. For this reason, I appreciate my primary and secondary school experiences for helping me eliminate stage fright and giving me an aural sense of music keys and vocal harmonies.

4.4. Community Arts Centres

The sustainable functionality of the community arts centres depends on a clear vision of the state's role in cultural development, coherent cultural policies at the sub-national level, practical intergovernmental cooperation, an increased partnership between the state and civil society, and the diversification of community arts services (Hagg, 2010). Indeed, the continuity of these community arts centres in South Africa relies on funding from national funding schemes. This funding helps maintain these centres by paying the expenses related to telecommunications, security, cleaning services, artists, and other related costs.

For instance, the National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC) was established in April 1997 through an Act of Parliament (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Their vision is to promote, through the arts, the free expression of South Africa's cultures and to be a catalyst in the arts, cultural, and creative communities that support free and diverse artistic expressions. Their mission is to be an accessible and responsive funding agency, delivering public value by leveraging partnerships to foster the arts sector's development, promotion, and sustainability. The NAC funds the disciplines of craft, dance, literature, multi-disciplinarity, music, theatre, and visual arts.[9] In this section, I summarise the community arts centres in KwaZulu-Natal to highlight how they operate.

The South African Department of Arts and Culture compiled a database listing each province's community arts centre programmes. I have selected some from the KwaZulu-Natal province, especially those focusing on the performing arts as one of their sectors. Others are registered as NPOs, NGOs, and closed cooperatives. The Stable Theatre is located in the city of Durban. The Ekhaya Multi-Arts Centre is located in the township of KwaMashu. The Sonqoba Arts Centre houses the Victory Sonqoba Theatre Company in Newcastle, in Buhlebomzinyathi. The Umphithi Theatre Project is a community-initiated project situated in Pietermaritzburg. There is a BAT Centre Trust located at the Small Craft Harbour in Durban. The Infusion Arts Centre is situated in Richards Bay. The Mbazwana Art Centre is situated in Mbazwana, in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality. UKUSA is located at UKZN in Durban, and the Wushini Arts Centre in Kwangcolosi, near Inanda Dam.

A few of these arts centres have resident theatre companies or performing arts groups, but most still need to have them. Some of these performing arts centres are funded to host competitions and theatre festivals as a way of community development and arts promotion. In addition, they receive money to maintain the art centres. They mainly provide rental rehearsal space for performing arts groups and companies. For instance, between 2003 and 2014, the Shaka Zulu NPO (SZNPO) was housed at the Stable Theatre in Durban. The SZNPO is one of the performing arts NPO organisations in Durban that focuses on preserving the *AmaZulu* cultural heritage through music, dance, storytelling, and theatre.

[9] National Arts Council of South Africa. (n.d.). Available: https://www.nac.org.za/

4.5. Community Arts for Development, Cultural Preservation and Identity Transformation

Community arts projects provide the platforms where artists join together and create artistic aesthetic pleasure and impact how cultures and society evolve, shaping our sense of identity, exclusivity, and continuity (Van Robbroeck, 2004). As one of the many South African artists from an impoverished background, I can claim that I have greatly benefited from and even depended on community art centres because they are where I launched my artistic career (Ngwenya, 2020). The above insights help me reflect on my experience in the community arts sector as I seek to explore how they serve as tools for community development, cultural preservation, heritage, and identity transformation. Although I participated in several community arts projects and theatre companies, I have focused on the two projects that significantly influenced and exposed me to *AmaZulu* music and dance and paved my path to the performing arts culture. I reflect on the African Spirit Creative Arts Company (ASCAC) and the Shaka Zulu NPO (SZNPO).

I joined the ASCAC in 2003, while in grade ten at Siyathuthuka Secondary. This NPO used the school's premises to conduct rehearsals. It operated in an area comprised of informal settlements beset with a high crime rate, poverty, teenage pregnancies, and HIV/AIDS. I grew up in that demotivated community with youths who were mostly high school dropouts. Most children of my age in this area saw crime as a hobby. Our community arts project served to raise awareness in the community through performance. This community project comprised high school learners from the Ntuzuma and Inanda peri-urban areas. Through this project, I began to experience what was meant by the multi-faceted creative performance piece that incorporated most performative elements, such as music, dance, and drama. Many of our stage plays focused on raising social awareness concerning drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS. All our stories were told through dialogue, monologues, dance, and music. The music and dances we used were a fusion of African contemporary dance and *AmaZulu* dance, *imvumo* song and dance, and gospel music. If a play was intended to raise awareness about crime and teenage pregnancy and schools were the targeted audiences, it would have some *toyi-toyi*, modern dance, and gospel music. Most of these plays carried the moral lesson that wrongdoers would get punished in some way by the community or law enforcement.

These plays were based on the realities that the neighbourhoods faced back then. *Ukube Ngangazi* (If I Knew) was about the criminals who harassed the community with drugs, rapes, hijackings, and other forms of crime and got caught by the community policing forums, got punished, ended up in prison, or died. *Zithande* (Love Yourself) portrayed a teenage girl who did not want to take her parents' advice. Instead, she chose to have relationships with the criminals who harassed the community.

The play ended with her being impregnated and infected with diseases by the criminals. Art projects of this nature are needed in most communities to provide awareness and transform the communities by any means. Although our NPO was struggling to get funding, performing for schools was not our only source of funding. We also catered for functions such as weddings. We eventually got a contract with an initiative started by the eThekwini Municipality. This initiative was called the Masakhane Community Outreach Program. It was an outreach initiative that travelled to the townships in the eThekwini Municipality to listen to the communities' grievances concerning service delivery. The different municipal officials from the electricity, water sanitation, and other departments would be present to answer the questions on behalf of their departments.

Figure 4.2: The African Spirit Creative Arts Company's Performance During the Masakhane Community Outreach Programme in Lindelani Township in 2005
Source: Artist-Researcher (2005).

We were determined young people and wanted the best for their desolate township as ASCAC cast members. We would receive invitations to host more shows after each performance. In summary, the exposure I had from taking part in this community arts initiative prevented me from slipping into the drug addiction and criminality trap that trapped most other young people in my

neighbourhood. I changed and evolved to become unique among other community youths due to my involvement in this community arts initiative. Studies by other academics have shown that community-based art programs positively impact youths' emotional and behavioural issues. Additionally, they support healthy youth development and have some influence on eliminating juvenile delinquency (Wright et al., 2019).

For this reason, all community arts projects have the fact that their art is inspired by community development and awareness in common. Through my experience in the performing arts sector, I realised that being involved in a performance aimed at raising awareness and developing and transforming society also transforms its performers. While spreading awareness to the community, we also spread awareness to ourselves. My identity changed from just being Mfundiseni Ndwalane, as I was now an artist and a social influencer. That is how we refer to ourselves. We were trained to carry ourselves with respect and dignity because if people saw us being reckless outside our rehearsal or performance space, they would lose interest in our group and our performances. After all, we would be preaching what we were not practicing ourselves!

In 2007, two years after I completed high school, I joined another NPO registered as the Shaka Zulu NPO. I am still a member and am serving as its associate artistic director at the time of writing this dissertation. Before being promoted to this position in 2018, I had multiple roles ranging from directing music to physical training of the ensemble cast, leading the ensemble, singing praises, drumming, and acting. As a community-oriented group, SZNPO draws its members from different townships surrounding Durban and hostels such as KwaMashu Hostel, Clermont Hostel, and Dalton Hostel.[10] Some of its members are from the rural areas of Maphumulo, Vryheid, Bergville, Ndwedwe, and Msinga. Its members are between 18 and 55 years old.

[10] In South Africa, the term ‘hostel’ refers to a housing compound developed and designed for black migrant workers in the early days of the country's apartheid history. Tens of thousands of people are still housed in hundreds of hostels throughout South Africa. They can be found in urban areas and near the platinum and gold mines still operating close to Johannesburg. Most of them have been ‘upgraded’ and are no longer only available to male tenants, but their exteriors and interiors still have their original forms. (Nieftagodien, 2017).

Figure 4.3: The Shaka Zulu Musical and Cultural Show Cast Members at the Edegem World Dance Festival in 2012
Source: Artist-Researcher (2012)

This NPO's primary focus is the musical, cultural and theatrical show. The theatrical show follows the character of the late King Shaka Zulu and how he founded the *AmaZulu* kingdom. It is a culturally associated NPO and its cultural codes and practices are linked to the *AmaZulu* cultural beliefs. For instance, during discussions and briefings, the female performers sit on the left-hand side of the rehearsal space while the male performers sit on the right-hand side. The seating style of the cast members is motivated by the conventions associated with the seating style used in rondavel houses in some villages in KZN, such as Maphumulo, Bergville, and Msinga, to name just a few. According to *AmaZulu* cultural beliefs associated with seating arrangements, the left side possesses less power than the right side of the room.

In this NPO's theatrical show, most of the characters are selected based on the performers' real-life statuses. Their costumes are also influenced by their status. For instance, a married woman would not wear the same outfit as an unmarried woman during the performance. Married women wear an *isidwaba*, single women with children wear cloth skirts, and young ladies without children wear beaded skirts, and they all wear other appropriate costume elements. Married men cover their shoulders with an *imbatha* (a furry animal's skin), and the single young men don other suitable attire but remain bare-chested. Another custom about costume and performance participation is that a woman cannot wear the costume or participate in the performance while menstruating.

The group is dominated by individuals from rural areas who understand the *AmaZulu* culture and practice it more than I do and still conform to it, unlike myself, who grew up and lived in urban areas. Some of these gentlemen are serving as *amagosa* (*imvumo* song and dance leaders) from their villages, *izinduna zezinsizwa* (headmen), *izinyanga* (traditional healers), and *abenzi bemvunulo* (traditional attire makers). Some of the women are heading the projects for virginity testing and sex abstinence programs for young girls in their communities. I felt more grounded and rooted in my *AmaZulu* cultural identity when I became a member of this ensemble. I am still involved in this group, and I consider community arts projects as tools for cultural preservation, heritage, and identity transformation. Moreover, I have reclaimed my cultural identity by participating in this community arts project and calling myself *insizwa yomZulu*, a proud young *AmaZulu* man. Being part of this performing arts organisation has not only groomed me artistically but also taught me how to carry myself as someone who represents my culture.

Comparing my experiences with the ASCAC and the SZNPO, I have transformed from a township boy into a proud young *AmaZulu* man. All these experiences have reshaped my personality and identity, and I have been influenced by the roles and characters I have played in all the performances I have participated in. It is essential to note that these experiences have also changed how I see society around me. These experiences will assist in Chapters Five and Six, where I explore the impact of the participants' involvement in the workshopping process and how it has transformed their understanding of their culture and identity. These explorations are framed within the fourth objective. This research aims to examine the influence of the workshopping process on the identity and cultural transformation of the performers involved in the creative process.

4.6. Gender Inequality in Performance: What I have Observed

I begin this part of the reflection by remembering that we are born into a world in which meaning has already been created in an already-existing culture (Butler, 1994). We then come to occupy a pre-existing system and to be occupied by it. We are thus not neutral beings shaped by gender specificity in performance through rehearsals alone. Instead, 'the self' comes to the rehearsal or performance space already inscribed by discourses and ideologies, whether gendered, racial, or cultural. We are often encoded by cultural practices, social and racial constructions, and gendered conditions of use and reception (Loots, 1997). In this section, I negotiate gender inequality in performance by reflecting on the African Spirit Creative Arts Company and Shaka Zulu NPOs. I

negotiate inequality, focusing on performances where the roles were assigned because of the participants' specific genders, even if those of the opposite gender could have taken on the roles. This section is motivated by the third objective of the study, which explores the performing arts as tools to understand students' beliefs about their cultural heritage and the inherent power dynamics in their culture during a workshopping process within the university context. With this and other related sections, I attempt to decolonise power dynamics and push the boundaries and conventions that promote gender specificity during cultural performances.

We had many performances in the ASCAC, as mentioned in Section 4.5. For the ASCAC, I chose to focus on music and dance to compare it with the SZNPO's musical and theatrical show. Although the music and dance in the ASCAC were not part of a theatrical show, they were songs and dances aimed at special events such as wedding ceremonies, municipal events, etc., compared to the whole production of the SZNPO. By making this comparison, I could locate the act of gendered performance in context.

Apart from the acting roles in the ASCAC, I took on roles ranging from drumming and dancing to that of an *igosa* and physical training. Any gender would take on all these roles. All our dance choreographies combined males and females, and we danced together with the girls in the same dances. The exception was acting roles, where a female performer would only play a female character and a male performer would only play a male character. I remember how my *igosa* role was given to a girl because the director felt I was not energetic enough. In the SZNPO, I played the roles of an *inyosi* dancer and an *igosa*. All the roles I mentioned above in the SZNPO are male-specific roles. Even most of the dances we do are gender-specific. For instance, *Kuxabene Izinduna* (The Headmen have Clashed), *Usebenz'seGoli* (He Works in Johannesburg), and *Bulala Abathakathi* (Kill the Wizards) are for male dancers. At the same time, dances like *Thembalami* (My Hope), *Ethekwini* (Durban), and *Siyabonga maZulu* (We Thank You People of KwaZulu) are explicitly choreographed for female performers. The idea of separating genders in terms of seating during briefings, as observed in the SZNPO (see Section 4.5), must also be challenged and questioned. Why must women be seated on the weak side of the house and men on the side that possesses more power? That is one of the problems this dissertation tackles, as it aims to question the power dynamics in *AmaZulu* cultural performances. Sections 5.5 and 5.6. justify the workshopping process' capability to frame a decolonised cultural performance that challenges the conventions associated with power distribution between female and male performers during a mixed cultural performance.

Through this reflection, I consider the ASCAC not to be a gender-preferring type of community art project, as all the group members exchanged roles in the performances. This community art project presented a more 'reconceptualised' idea of the *AmaZulu* cultural idea. On the other hand, the SZNPO's musical and theatrical show is a more gendered performance because most of the specific roles are played by particular genders due to the *AmaZulu* cultural conventions. This NPO presents a 'conceptualised' idea of *AmaZulu* cultural performance as it sticks to the *AmaZulu* cultural conventions. Recontextualisation and reconceptualisation are the terminologies negotiated in Chapter Six of this dissertation to understand how *Sisukaphi? 2021* was reconceptualised and recontextualised by default owing to the context of its performance and the artistic choices used.

4.7. The University Context and the Performing Arts

My academic career started in 2010 when I enrolled at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree. I had two prerequisite subject majors. They were African Music and Dance and Drama and Performance Studies. I had to select additional modules for each level of study, and the modules had to be picked to achieve the credits needed for each level of study. I will discuss the compulsory modules in the following paragraphs, and exclude the optional ones, such as isiZulu and Academic Writing in English.

4.7.1. African Music and Dance

I studied the African Music and Dance module (1A and 1B) in my first year. This program covered music theory and practice, gumboot dancing, *isicathamiya*, and *AmaZulu* dancing. For the *AmaZulu* dancing, the emphasis was on *isishameni*. We studied three songs from the *isicathamiya* repertory. They were *Umuzi Onjani Lona?* (What Type of Household is This?), *Alikho Iqiniso Emhlabeni* (There is No Truth in this World), and *Ingoma Entsha* (The New Song). I composed *Lalelani ma Canadians* (Listen Canadians) for my composition assessment. I also studied music ensembles in 1A and 1B, and practice was the main focus of this module. Practicing Pan-Africanist dance, music, and drumming were the primary focal points. As a prerequisite for the modules, we had to perform one lunch-hour concert every semester. My foundational knowledge of music theory came from the introduction to music fundamentals (A) and (B) courses. A basic understanding was provided of major and minor scales, intervals, triad construction, note names on clefs, score analysis, and other fundamental music-related subjects.

In 2011, I completed my second academic year of study. In music, I studied African Music and Dance (2A) and (2B). This module taught me the construction, technical playing, and music analysis of the *umakhweyana* musical bow and the *mbila* xylophone. I remember one day when one of my teachers shouted at me. He is a *timbila* xylophone teacher. This instrument is among the most sacred among the Chopi people of Mozambique, and I was not aware that I was not respecting the conventions concerning seating when playing the instrument. He was so furious! I sat on the floor and stretched my legs out on either side of the instrument instead of sitting on a small bench. I felt so relaxed when seated on the floor, and I could use my abductor hallucis muscles to prevent the *mbila* from shaking and falling while playing. By doing that, I was unaware that I was being disrespectful to the Chopi culture. My teacher is originally from Mozambique and is working in South Africa, and this experience taught me that culture is mobile and people are the custodians, representatives, and guardians of their cultures. This experience also showed me how indigenous cultures and instruments carry cultural identity and how they serve to preserve cultures.

I also studied Introductory Music Theory and Perception (A) and (B) in the same year. These modules were both advancements in music fundamentals. We explored chord constructions, idiomatic expression, passing and cadential 6/4 progressions, aural perceptions, and other related topics. On the other hand, Music Ensemble (2A) and (2B) focused more on practice. These modules mainly focused on Pan-Africanist dance moves, music, and drumming practices. We staged one free lunch-hour concert per semester as part of the module's requirements. I joined the *Ikusasa Lethu African Music and Dance Touring Ensemble* that year. This ensemble first exposed me to overseas stages when we performed in Canada during the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) conference in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I completed my undergraduate degree in 2012. That year, we learned the *Mbira Nyunga Nyunga*, *Dzava Dzimu*, and *Maskandi* guitars in African Music and Dance (3A) and (3B). We examined these instruments' construction, singing, playing styles, and notation transcriptions. In the first semester, we had to put on free lunchtime concerts and were divided into smaller groups of three members each. As part of the (3A) criteria, these group performances required us to collaborate to produce these concerts. The crafts we had learned so far, namely the *mbira, makhweyana* bow, *timbila* instruments, gumboot dances, *AmaZulu* dances, and *isicathamiya*, were among the things to be performed. We had to do the same again in the second semester (3B) of the module.

At this stage, we had to perform solo concerts rather than collective ones, and these performances were now called recitals. We had to decide how to create our shows by selecting the craft that best fit our concert themes and applying the skills we had learned during the programme's syllabus. The process involved planning our shows and rehearsal schedules, which helped me with my studies and performance as this was the creative aspect of the concert. Publicising of our shows also depended on us, and we used Facebook and hung posters 'illegally' on university buildings. As part of the module, we were also responsible for stage designs and costumes. The focus in Music Ensembles (3A) and (3B) was the continuation of Pan-African drumming, dancing, and music. Instead of depending on the lecturers at this level for help in developing original ideas for our performances, they gave us the freedom to do it ourselves. We also had to perform one lunchtime concert each semester as part of the module. The African Music Outreach: Music Education module was included in the first semester as a required option. I learned about music education during this module, and I learned how to create a lesson and deliver it to students. I finished my in-service training at Carrington Primary School in Umbilo.

For those of us specialising in African Music and Dance, the African Music Outreach: Community Development module was also a requirement in the second semester. I gained knowledge about budgeting and performance framing. The yearly concert towards the end of the year was one of the most challenging requirements for this module. The name of this concert was 'Cultural Calabash'. Initially, we had to work together as a class to create the theme for the event, so teamwork became essential to ensuring the success of the show. We divided into teams, and while one team concentrated on obtaining performers, another divided the tasks and labour. While the module had to prepare these students for a career in public sector ethnomusicology by giving these up-and-coming artists from townships and rural areas a stage on which to perform, those in charge also had to secure the participation of at least one well-known artist as a means of attracting the public to the concert. People would be enticed to attend the concert by the renowned performer, and this, in turn, made the job easier for the team in charge of ticket sales. Another team controlled the stage design and lighting, and another was put in charge of inviting special speakers to the event. Another team oversaw the programs and handled the cooking since the audience would be asked to sample African cuisine in the evening after the theatre performance.

In addition to the essay and presentation writing assignments, students received additional credits for this module based on their willingness to design and execute the Cultural Calabash event. Every module in the African Music and Dance curriculum has been discussed from the

standpoints of music and dance appreciation, creation, performance, analysis, interpretation, and ethnomusicology.

4.7.2. Drama and Performance Studies

Drama and Performance Studies, on the other hand, provided An Introduction (101) to the subject and Theatre: Origins and Forms and Drama (102). The Drama and Performance Studies program's three areas of study, namely Applied Theatre Studies, Theatre Studies, and Dance Studies, were studied to provide a framework for understanding performance studies and drama. We were exposed to these essential components as concepts of 'culture' and 'context'. Group performance projects and physical theatre were among the course's practical components. Module 102 expanded on the three study streams first presented in (101). It concentrated on the history of theatre in the North and South to engage with various performance forms in connection to context. Southern African theatre, which featured narratives, orality, and rituals, was presented to us. The module also helped me understand the beginnings of Greek theatre, the classic Northern example, and the practical components of it, which included narrative projects, Greek messenger speeches, and a 'ritual' dance performance, as they expanded upon the academic study.

The Drama Department provided Drama & Performance Studies (201) and the second semester of the subject (205). An Introduction to Applied Theatre was covered in the 201 module, and through this module, I gained a grasp of Applied Theatre (AT). The definitions and discussions of Applied Theatre, Theatre for Social Change in South Africa, Theatre of the Oppressed, and Locations of Applied Theatre were only a few of the issues it covered. Prison theatre and theatre in educational settings were two examples of experiments in practice. The course combined theory and practice as we had the opportunity to write brief student-performed plays that would be performed on campus and to participate in action-based learning in workshops. I was first introduced to physical performance, the politics of the body, and contemporary dance theatre through the 205 module. This course covered the politics of dance and physical performance from an African and global standpoint. It was divided into multiple sections. It explored the politics of the body in performance, from Artaud and Grotowski to the 20th-century modernist quest to find 'new techniques' to understand theatre and performance and to the emergence of physical theatre, both nationally and globally. The course examined significant debates and practitioners of contemporary African dance in South Africa and beyond the continent. Ultimately, it studied

modernism and dance in 20th-century Europe and America, creating a dance drama based on Rudolph Laban's ideas and theories.

In the first semester of the Drama and Performance Studies program, I studied the 301 and 302 courses. Although the 302 elective course helped me gain a critical understanding of the philosophies of popular participatory theatre, the core 301 module covered the theme of theatre from realism to modernity. My introduction to the significant theories and practitioners of late 19th- and early 20th-century theatre came via the Theatre Studies (301) core module. Investigating influential realist and modernist innovators, I was exposed to the theoretical paradigms in practice while critically analysing literary and theatrical studies in Europe, America, and South Africa. I studied Drama and Performance Studies (304) and (305) in the second semester. The themed Drama and Film Face Postmodernity (304) helped me gain advanced critical and analytical skills to engage with theory and text concerning the performing and visual arts from the late 20th and early 21st centuries. To handle this module, the traditional definitions of 'theatre' and "performance" were expanded to incorporate modern performative contexts such as site-specific performance and performance art. Postcolonial theory was discussed concerning the local South African performance landscape in the contemporary African and Indian contexts. I was given the chance to gain a critical understanding of modern dance through the elective Drama and Performance Studies (305).

I had to design my very first contemporary dance performance as part of the module's practical requirements. *Umbango* (The Conflict) was the name of this ten-minute dance performance. It discussed the arguments and politics between African ancestral beliefs and Christianity. It was performed at the Drama Department's Square Space Theatre, with sound and lighting support. I thought about my contradictory spiritual reality when writing this piece. Discussing good and evil has always been part of my spiritual identity. Since my family has always practiced prayer, evangelism has been our family's preferred method of faith. In front of the pulpit, an African priest who identified himself as a 'born again' Christian spoke of my late father and ancestors. However, I pose this argument. He justified his sermon when he claimed that the Christ spirit was the only pure spirit that one had to seek to reach heaven and that the ancestors were evil and dark spirits because they were 'the dead'. I argue, however, that Christ's spirit is also from 'the dead'. I recall Fanon's (1986) *Black Skin, White Masks* as I think back to how colonialism caused the African population to develop an inferiority complex and dependency on European values. It stripped them of their culture, produced generations of people who fervently pursued white

values, and forced Africans to give up their original languages and cultures. However, as I was taught, I will never stop praising the all-powerful God and the purest spirit of Christ. This spirit gives my heart comfort, hope, and serenity. An ancestral believer, on the other hand, can speak to me solely as an *uMzulu* (an *AmaZulu* man), since they hold that '*Indoda iyaphahla emsamo*', that is, that a man honours his ancestors at the shrine. But what about me, who believes in my ancestors' calling and prayer? I hold these discussions close to my heart as I strive to balance good and evil in my spiritual identity.

My Honours degree in Drama and Performance Studies was awarded to me in 2013. It was a four-module course. The subjects covered were Acting and the Director, History and Aesthetics of Contemporary Dance, Theatre of Debate: Creating Community Dialogue, and I had to prepare an Honours research paper. Acting and the Director concentrated on the theoretical, practical, and critical aspects of acting for various genres and forms, including theatre and film. Study topics included the discourse and background of acting theory, the evolution of a critical aesthetic from which to start theorising performance, and classical and modern performance forms, such as realism, cinema acting, stand-up comedy, and physical theatre. We were introduced to some well-known Durban theatre writers during the course, including Neil Coppen, Roel Twijnstra, Jerry Pooe, and Bheki Mkhwane.

They came to visit us once each, on specific dates. They were required to share their artistic backgrounds, the obstacles encountered in the performing arts sector, and their strategies for overcoming them. They discussed their methods of operation. Each student had to select a director and discuss how their practices overlapped with those of the Western theatre greats, such as Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, and Constantin Stanislavski, among others, in a lengthy essay that we were required to write. In addition to the extensive display of research papers and reflective journals, the experience we gained from it also enabled us to direct two plays in compliance with the requirements of the module. One had to be a main production and the other a pilot project. We were required to perform one scene from the assigned play, Athol Fugard's (1959) *Nongogo*, for our pilot projects. I directed, designed, and adapted August Strindberg's *The Father* (1983) for my major project.

The subject, History and Aesthetics of Contemporary Dance, advanced the 305 elective module's philosophy. I was introduced to the main areas of dance performance and study from postmodern and modern viewpoints, such as aesthetics, dance criticism, discussions about the body as

discourse, and choreography as an art form or process. The local context of dance theatre in South Africa and the global framework of contemporary dance were highlighted. The two performance projects were the module's theatre piece with a site-specific component. I named my site-specific performance as the *White Café*. This eatery is located on the Howard College campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Although this is not the official name of the cafe, some students think it is a better name because it emphasises how elite the establishment is compared to other university cafeterias. Most of the students who can afford this restaurant come from wealthy families. It is distinguished by its pricey fare and drinks, such as carefully made coffee from the beans to the rancheros or omelettes. Others have jokingly named this place *Mugg & Bean*. Because of this, my site-specific performance politicised how the location was linked to power and socio-economic position, without its owners establishing boundaries between these ideas. I named *The Light After Darkness* as my principal theatrical chorographical effort. This contemporary dance choreography, which included live guitar, a *djembe* drum, and vocals, was autobiographical. I narrated the critical milestones in my life using five dancers, myself included, and a musician. My life was recounted in this dance work, from my troubles at home to my attempts to develop myself via university education.

The Theatre of Debate: Creating Community Dialogue course was framed within Applied Theatre Theories. It engaged me in the theory of Prison Theatre, leading to the design and implementation of various modes of performance interventions and the subsequent documentation and analysis of the project. The course's main topics included performance as a research methodology, its effects on society, and the function and significance of culturally particular aesthetics. We went to the Westville Correctional Services at specific times and developed theatre initiatives with female prisoners, mainly using Augusto Boal's (1979) '*Theatre of the Oppressed'* teachings. The prisoners performed all of the plays, and us students served as facilitators. The plays were performed in groups on the last day of our visits to the prison. All productions discussed the problems the prisoners were having, and dialogue was stimulated after each performance. The productions were about the warders' violence and the actions of certain prisoners who betrayed their fellow prisoners. As a result, while all the shows adhered to Boal's concept of *Forum Theatre*, they all produced the same moral lesson—unity among the inmates.
I also had to enrol in the Honours Research Paper module to fulfil the national requirement to complete a research paper for my degree, and I worked on this with a single supervisor. The year-long curriculum introduced me to postgraduate research techniques and methodologies. I had to go to weekly seminars for a while, which served as an introduction to academic research and

helped me come up with a study topic. I also learned about UKZN's ethical code of conduct and proposal writing, which are the cornerstones of any graduate research at a university. Through this process, I wrote my Honours research paper titled 'A 'Cultural Weapon' to Empower the Oppressed: The Quest into Using Protest Theatre in a Shifting South Africa'. Through this paper, I explored how the idea of protest theatre in pre- and post-colonial South Africa has shifted.

4.7.3. Is studying the performing arts at university worthwhile?

Looking back, I smile and ask, "What kept me going?" I don't know, but I appreciate that energy anyway. Although I participated in the ASCAC in my youth (between 2003 and 2006), it was the only community arts project that I knew of then. During our shows, we have not encountered any other groups from our surrounding peri-urban townships, such as Inanda, Ntuzuma, and KwaMashu, known as the INK area. Some members of the ASCAC joined and left, and we never reached our maximum of 20 members. Where were the other youths? What were they busy with while we were rehearsing and performing?

Upon reflection, I have never seen youths from my hometown doing the performing arts. The question remains: what are they doing to protect themselves from our slowly dying country with its many illnesses such as crime, child abuse, women abuse, gender-based violence, drug abuse, and alcohol abuse? I still believe that this calls for an urgent intervention by the community and government stakeholders to encourage the youth, especially the black youth in the peri-urban areas, to join together and form performing arts groups.

The 'how', though, is still puzzling for me, seeing as how I was a laughingstock to others in my youth. Even when I started pursuing my performing arts career at university, some aunties from the church and other mothers from the community criticised me and asked me where I would find a job. To date, others still do not take me seriously as an artist. Nevertheless, I thank God. He turned something that was used to mock me into something to feed me. It has made a living for me.

Upon starting university, I discovered that my ability to connect with people from different cultural backgrounds became particularly valuable, given that most of my peers were non-isiZulu speakers. While a few black African students were participating in rehearsals and performances, the majority were white, with accents resembling those of British and American speakers. At

times, I felt like a black sheep in a white flock. Despite initially struggling to communicate in English due to my previous education in isiZulu-medium schools, I gradually overcame this barrier through my involvement in community arts projects and my pursuit of a career in the performing arts. In the Drama Department, my distinct African accent was well received by both students and lecturers, and I was fortunate to have the opportunity to take part in numerous multi-racial theatrical productions, thanks to my talent and dedication.

Apart from the above experiences, studying the performing arts has taught me how to place theory and conceptuality in the framework of performance practice. In the next section, I will present a critical perspective of the community arts sector and performing arts institutions by reflecting on my experiences in the community arts and academia.

4.8. Community Arts Projects and Performing Arts Academic Institutions

I start this section by referring to any artistic performance in any context. It could be any awareness play about HIV and AIDS or drug abuse, or any traditional performance in any arena or open space and sometimes performed in community halls for fundraising to buy some costume pieces for an unfunded performing arts group in a township. It could be any traditional performance, such as *AmaZulu* dance, praise poetry, or *imvumo,* or conventional performances associated with the *AmaZulu* culture or any other culture performed at any event for recreational purposes. I share my knowledge of being involved in these kinds of performances. I have seen that while some community arts project practitioners have studied performing arts, most of these projects are run by artistically gifted practitioners who have yet to go to school to study the performing arts.

For this reason, the projects produced by these groups need more conceptuality. They are mainly aesthetically focused, from costuming to dancing or other performance aspects. These types of performances are not theoretically linked. For this reason, the performers produced by these projects are artistically skilled but need a more analytical and conceptual understanding of the performance. The experiences gained by these kinds of performers are informal. There is no syllabus to be followed, and participation is voluntary. However, community arts projects are helpful if a person intends to pursue a career in the performing arts because the performing arts comprise practical and theoretical components at the university level. If a person has experience being involved in community arts projects, it makes it easier for them to ace the practical elements

of the course at academic institutions. I found it challenging to cope with academic life at university at first. I did not major in performing arts subjects in secondary school because they were not offered, and instead I studied commerce subjects such as Accounting, Economics, and Business Economics. However, once at university, I was okay with the practical components of the performing arts degree, both in music and drama and performance, because of the experience I gained from the community art projects that I had participated in.

The university's teachings are theoretically linked, so, for example, learning how to play the *mbira* is more than just learning to play the instrument. It also involves obtaining the *mbira's dzavadvimu* and distinguishing it from *nyunganyunga*I realised that most of my African singing is pentatonic. I learned to analyse a theatrical performance by breaking down the roles of the director, choreographer, and actor. I discovered the connections between the psychology of the performers, directors, crew, audience, and theatre genres. I saw first-hand how gender roles did not exist in contemporary dance classes when female dancers hoisted us up. Through these experiences, I claim that performing arts institutions teach theory and practice, while most community projects focus more on training. However, community arts projects are the best feeders for the academic institutions concerned with the performing arts because they produce performers who lack a sense of conceptuality but are good at performance practice. I use the above experience to navigate in and out of self as a performing artist, a lecturer and an upcoming performing arts practitioner seeking to understand the comparison between operating in a community arts setting and a private arts setting such as the university. I use the fifth objective to highlight the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance that challenges the cultural status quo of a particular culture within the university context during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.9. My Theatrical and Musical Production Experience

In this section, I focus on the theatre shows and performing arts ensembles in which I had significant roles. I have travelled the globe for these adventures, appearing in front of crowds and working behind the scenes. I will limit my reflection to the most remarkable and recent theatrical productions and performances, such as *The Working Man* and the *Ikusasa Lethu* African Music and Dance Touring Ensemble, even though I have participated in many more. I reflect on participating, directing, choreographing, composing, and getting exposure on prominent platforms. I am no longer an amateur. I am now a performing arts student, a semi-professional performer, and a creator of art.

Figure 4.4: Mfundiseni Ndwalane Leading an Mzansi Dance Piece During the 45th ICTM World Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, with the Ikusasa Lethu African Music and Dance Touring Ensemble
Source: Mungroo (2019)

Ikusasa Lethu, which means 'Our Future', was founded by UKZN Senior Lecturer Dr Patricia Opondo in 2000 and comprises selected students and staff from the AMD performance program in the School of Arts. The ensemble has a local, national, and international profile and performs and presents workshops at global and regional conferences and special events. *Ikusasa Lethu* performed internationally in Peru in 2011 and at two ICTM World Conferences, in St. Johns, Newfoundland, Canada, in 2011 and in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2019, to name just a few of the ensemble's performances. During the conference in Thailand in 2019, I was part of the teaching staff in the AMD program. At the time of writing this dissertation, I served as one of its choreographers and as a presenter during international workshops. Through this ensemble, I could showcase my talent internationally and be exposed to cultural contexts and identities different from mine. Sharing performance stages and presentation platforms with people from different cultural contexts has taught me to respect and admire other people's cultures. I also reflect on my different theatrical works. I remember my first professional performance in a well-equipped theatre space. It felt like a dream come true as I sang my compositions, such as *Wamuhle Mhlaba* (Beautiful World) during Sifiso Magesh Ngcobo's dance piece titled *Similar Pathways* during the Jomba Contemporary Dance Experience at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre in 2011.

August Strindberg's *The Father* was the first realist theatrical work that I directed. It was for my exam during the Honours degree's directing course in 2013. It was my first experience having the chance to produce and design a theatrical production in a theatrical space with lighting and sound equipment and all the required realistic sets. This adaptation relates to family affairs, witchcraft, and crime. I used IsiZulu and had a cast consisting of six isiZulu speakers and one Indian so that I could relate to my local South African audience.

Figure 4.5: The Cast of *The Working Man* during the Mercury Durban Theatre Awards (3 December 2015). From left to right: Zweli Buthelezi, Mfundiseni Ndwalane, Siboniso Msimango, Brandon Moulder, Nqobile (Mthembu) Msimango and Lindani Phumlomo
Source: Mungroo (2015).

Of all the productions I have directed, choreographed, composed, and participated in, I highlight *The Working Man*. This production helped me get recognition in the theatre industry in Durban, South Africa. This pocket production, written by Sboniso Msimango, choreographed by myself, and directed by Brandon Moulder, featured a percussionist (Lindani Phumlomo), a guitarist (Zweli Buthelezi), and three actors (Sboniso Msimango, Nqobile Mthembu-Msimango, and myself). It centred on Sipho, a young man who was raised in a mining town. Even though he wanted to dance, his father insisted he work in the mines. Sipho's mother battled with her husband's short temper, traditional male dominance, and the unfamiliar world of her son while trying to strike a balance between her love for her son and her obligations to her husband. They resided in a society where the ability to exhibit aggression defined a person's manhood. The production received nine nominations for the 2015 *Mercury Durban Theatre Awards* and won four awards.

I was nominated for the Best New Male Actor and Best Actor awards among Durban's well-known and best actors. I won the Best New Male Actor award, Mboniso Msimango won the Best Supporting Actor award, and Nqobile Mthembu secured the Best New Female Performer award. Brandon Moulder won the Best Upcoming Director award. As we shared our different skills with these young talents, we viewed ourselves as a group of young professionals with a vision. We fulfilled our dream. This experience meant growth in my artistry as we shared our talents. Working with other artists has given me valuable insight into the experience of creating theatre with people from cultural and material backgrounds very different from my own. I commend the effectiveness and importance of collaboration in an artistic work. Collaboration is the approach I prefer as an upcoming performing arts practitioner in South Africa.

4.10. In Search of My Ideal Artistic Directing Approach

I am looking for a gentle instruction method in this area, and I make use of my background in the community arts sector to reflect on this. While some artistic directors treat their artists fairly, most employ an authoritarian style, based on my observations. This method of directing is an oppressive, brutal use of authority. The performers are treated like feelingless people in this setting. The directors will yell, swear, and perhaps hurl chairs at them if they make a mistake during practice. The performers are always on high alert for errors, and their salaries are docked if they make a mistake during a dance, song, or theatre performance. It is the survival of the fittest! One negativity is often shouted at the performers:

> *"Maningi kakhulu ama artists angcono kunawe la ngaphandle, uma ngabe uhluleka phuma!"* (There are many artists better than you outside. If you cannot take the heat, get out!)

The innocent souls will not respond to this. They will toil and sweat while producing lovely harmonies and great dances. I remember this one day when I was participating in one of the community projects. We were visited by a guest artistic director who ran a prominent theatre company in Johannesburg. He drank beer during the rehearsal and would beat you with his fist if you were not alert. I made a mistake by fixing a water leak at home before coming to the rehearsal, so I was late. Though I reported the reason for my late arrival, I got punished. The rehearsal was stopped, and I was punished outside while the whole cast observed. I was forced to do non-stop push-ups. One person held my feet in the air while I pushed up on the rocky surface. I did the push-ups until my arms became numb, and then my face hit the ground. My fists were gushing

blood! I discovered that day that I could not put anything else before the rehearsal and performance.

We were frequently instructed and reminded not to attend family ceremonies (like weddings or funerals) if they conflicted with the performance date. If there was a clash of dates, we were forced to attend and participate in the performance. I am, however, appreciative of the opportunity that I had to work with this director because I learned never to be like this individual, who had acquired so much in life through the performing arts. As a young professional in the performing arts, I am searching for my directing approach. I want my artists to be free from all forms of oppression. A creative space should be comfortable and warm, and we should be able to commiserate with one another when necessary. Everyone must honour their work, the rehearsal area, the show, and their fellow artists. Since we are all humans, I accept that mistakes will happen, and a courteous approach is preferable to yelling when they do occur. With this approach, the artists will be more at ease and free to express themselves in a creative setting. I thus responded to the brutalities that I experienced as an artist by creating a 'warm space' for my performers during the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*.

4.11. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I critically comprehended how I had come to represent particular aspects of my culture, race, and gender through reflection. I discussed my experiences and how the performing arts have moulded my identity at various points in my life. I considered how those earlier encounters helped me develop as an artist. I reflected on how folktales formed the basis of my early understanding of the performing arts. I continued by reflecting on the contribution that extracurricular activities made to my passion for the performing arts. I discussed my experiences with community arts initiatives and how I have seen them as instruments for identity transformation and cultural preservation. In this chapter, I also described a few community arts centres in KwaZulu-Natal and their operations. In this sequence of my recollections, I reflected on my university experience and how I got into the performing arts professionally. I also compared academic institutions and the knowledge I gained from community arts projects. I thought back to the outstanding musical and theatrical productions I once took part in. The final phase of this reflection was my attempt to find an unoppressive artistic directing approach. The purpose of this chapter was to provide the basis for my subjectivity.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings by interweaving my personal reflexivity with the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*, the participant observations, the in-depth interviews, and the focus group interviews. These data tools are integrated to answer the main research questions. The research applied the performance autoethnography method and sampled 14 participants. The nine females and five males were purposively and conveniently selected based on their geo-cultural and personal backgrounds, their perceptions concerning the *Sisukaphi? 2021* workshopping process, their willingness to participate, and their availability for data collection. As proposed in the research objectives, these findings explore how the workshopping process could be framed to celebrate heritage, question the power dynamics and gender inequality in cultural performances, and possibly transform the participants' identities and beliefs during the mixed-gendered cultural performance. This chapter presents the findings using the following themes: the emergence and workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021;* a site for cultural heritage; cultural influences on female disempowerment; empowerment of culturally marginalised female performers; participating for transformation; the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance that challenges the cultural status quo; and the impact of challenging the cultural status quo. The study uses the term 'student' interchangeably with that of 'participant'.

5.2. The Emergence and Workshopping Process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*

It was early February in the year 2019. It was around 15h00, and I was in a mini-bus taxi from Durban to Inanda-Amatikwe.[11] That was where I was living at the time, and I had lived there since 2003. The mini-bus taxi was driving on the M12, which had recently become known as Masabalala Yengwa Ave. (due to the ruling party's strategy to honour the South African heroes who'd died fighting the oppressive apartheid government). It passed by the Moses Mabhida Soccer Stadium. While busy browsing through my Android smartphone, I received a WhatsApp notification. It was a message from Dr Patricia Opondo, my former lecturer from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the African Music and Dance music discipline. In this message, she asked

[11] Inanda, or eNanda is a township in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 21 km northwest of Durban. It forms part of eThekwini, the Greater Durban Metropolitan Municipality. See: Inanda, KwaZulu-Natal (Wikipedia, 2024, April 6). Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inanda,_KwaZulu-Natal

for my contact details, such as my email address, the number on which she could contact me for calls, and the times when I would be available for her to contact me. I texted her and sent her my contact details.

I arrived home about 50 minutes later and she called me, as we had agreed on the WhatsApp message. She asked if I was interested in joining the AMD program and serving as one of the staff members. I said, "Yes!" with great enthusiasm. She confirmed that I agreed to join the team, and I said, "It would be an honour." Anxiously, I asked what I would be teaching, and she responded that it should be a creative work involving African music and dance elements. I had to be able to use it to assess the students in both practical and written assessments. On the same evening, she sent me another WhatsApp message that told me to design the syllabus for a course called African Music and Dance Ensemble 3A (currently known as Performance Skills 3A in the UKZN music discipline's current syllabus). This was the course that I would be teaching, and I had to reply via email. I took my laptop, put it on my tiny desk in the corner of my bedroom, and sat on my chair. Anxiously, I asked myself, "But what to teach?"

Dr Opondo told me that I would be working with final-year students. However, working as a full-time high school teacher since 2015 has consumed much of my time. Though I wanted this exposure, I also did not want to embarrass myself. I thought about what I could do, and it struck me that I could rework *Ubukhosi BakwaZulu* (The *AmaZulu* Kingdom). It was a short musical and theatrical piece that I had written, composed, choreographed, and directed for my school learners for a drama contest at the Ekhaya Multi Art Centre[12] in 2016. The production was related to the formation and history of the *AmaZulu* kingdom.

As I worked on the syllabus, I considered this an excellent opportunity and wanted to take advantage of it. I convinced myself to work on the idea of *Ubukhosi BakwaZulu*, and explored this production more profoundly and passionately. I was so excited! I was about to work with the final-year students who were interested and keen to work. They were all from the School of Arts. Most often, the AMD class is attended by students majoring in Music and isiZulu or Music, Drama, and Performance Studies. It would be an exciting group to work with, unlike the high

[12] The eKhaya Multi Arts Centre (EMAC) is a leading community organisation in SA that successfully contributes towards the creation of a positive and vibrant artistic environment in which the various forms of art are developed and appreciated by the majority, thereby enhancing the quality of life of the youth, artists, and people in the community. Available: https://kcap.co.za/about-us/.

school learners, who usually do performing arts as an extra-mural activity. I smiled, as I was keen to choreograph new dances and compose new music. Although I drew my ideas from the production of *Ubukhosi Bakwa Zulu*, this would now be a new production in a new context. What would I title the project? I decided to name it *Sisukaphi?,* because I would still narrate the emergence and formation of the *AmaZulu* Kingdom.

Figure 5.1: The Cast of *Ubukhosi Bakwa Zulu* and the Artist-Researcher at the eKhaya Multi Arts Centre in 2016
Source: Artist-Researcher (2016)

I replied to Dr Opondo two days later and informed her that I had refined my thoughts. My final reflections and thoughts produced a syllabus assessing the students' practical abilities in prescribed storytelling, drumming, song leading, and dancing, and their academic abilities in a reflective essay aligned with ethnomusicology and theatre studies.

At the beginning of the next week, she invited me to come to campus to meet the class of students that I would be teaching. I arrived at the Howard College Campus' Music Department after 15h00 and asked the receptionist for directions to Dr Opondo. I arrived at one of the small lecture rooms in the Music Department. I knocked on the door and heard her voice from inside, saying, "Come in." I opened the door and went inside, and she welcomed me with a big smile, "Hey, Mfundi! Have a seat." All the students looked at me. Looking at my watch, I said to myself, "She is about to conclude her lecture now." Indeed, she finished a few minutes later and introduced me to the

class. I was humbled by what she said about me to the students. She mentioned some of my productions, including my international tours. I started to blush. I felt more anxious and more pressured, but at the same time, I was encouraged to do my best.

During the first meeting with the students, I unpacked the course syllabus and auditioned them. As the semester progressed, I got to know the students better. We met at seminars and rehearsals and produced the musical production of *Sisukaphi?* At the end of the semester, we staged it at the Howard College Theatre as part of the students' public performance assessment.

In 2021, I was reoffered the opportunity to work as a contract lecturer and assigned to teach the final-year AMD ensemble class. I did not sign the contract in the previous year (2020) for a few reasons. I was now in the second year of my master degree, and the sad part was that I still needed to defend my dissertation. This was because the COVID-19 pandemic's restrictions had done away with all of my efforts towards the degree thus far. I was about to apply for ethical permission to conduct my research that explored the possibility of music as a tool for spreading drug awareness within selected secondary schools in the townships. What was I going to do now in terms of my research?

As part of the semester's syllabus, I called for auditions to assess the students' performance skills. For these auditions, the students were to prepare a song, a dance, and a recital of *izithakazelo*. As I was conducting these auditions, events that took place during the auditions made it apparent that the performance idea needed a change from what I had presented in my syllabus in 2019. When I arrived home, I worked on this syllabus, and while I was doing this, I was struck by the differences between the male and female students' performances. The female students did not perform as well as the male students in every component of the auditions. Both male and female students excelled in the singing component of the audition, but most students' presentations of the *AmaZulu* dance were not convincing and they performed equally well. What was more interesting was that the female students could not express themselves well when they performed their clan's praises. Their recitation of the *izithakazelo* was only fair compared to that of the male students. I pondered this and realised that this could be a call for a workshopping process. Did the female students not have the same exposure to their clan's praises as the males? If so, their lack of exposure could be related to their family histories and cultural backgrounds. These questions inspired me and helped me see the need to create a performance site where the students

(especially the females) could learn about essential aspects of their cultural practices while celebrating their cultural heritage.

I asked the students to research their histories, including the origin of their surnames. It thus seemed relevant to name the syllabus production *Sisukaphi? 2021* to differentiate it from the 2019 project. All the ideas that I gathered helped me to produce a syllabus that assessed the students' ability to recite their clan praises, compose music related to their family's history, improvise drumming, and write an academic reflective journal based on the workshop process. Something came to mind while marking the essays towards the end of the first semester: I started thinking that the workshopping process that I did with the students could be an exceptional idea for situating my study. After finishing marking the essays the following day, I sent my supervisor an email telling her about this idea. She replied and commended the idea. We then agreed that I would have to rework the *Sisukaphi?* workshop process with the students for the next semester.

When the second semester started, I had designed a syllabus that assessed the students' abilities to create and perform autobiographical storytelling that narrated their family backgrounds, beliefs, and praises. They had to link this storytelling with music and dance and submit an academic, reflexive journal based on the workshopping process. I was keen to expand on the project to incorporate a more in-depth inquiry by enhancing the participants' perceptions of the creative process. I started reworking my masters research proposal and applied for ethical clearance during this time.

5.2.1. The creative process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*

In this section, I discuss the beginning and the creation process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*. I start this section by narrating the emergence of *Sisukaphi? 2021* and then present the creative process involved. I present the workshopping steps used to guide the creative process, and a workshop can only be produced with carefully planned steps. Most practitioners concerned with workshopped theatre use steps suitable for their type and style of production. As Fleishman (1991: 74) states, each group has its own way of making plays, but the process can be broken down into four strands: 1) Group work and learning to play; 2) observation; 3) presentation; and 4) selection. These strands are not all included in the work process of every workshop group, nor do they necessarily follow one after the other, but they are interwoven throughout the workshop. Any number of strands may co-exist during any work session (Fleishman, 1991). I used the

following steps to conduct the workshop in the process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*: identification of the issue, observation, warming up the space, inventiveness, selection, linking, polishing, presentation, and recording.

5.2.1.1 First phase: the issue

All workshops happen because of necessity. People participate in workshop production because a particular issue must be exposed or resolved. For instance, during the apartheid era, many practitioners and theatrical companies workshopped their shows as a way of commenting and attempting to challenge the oppressive system that served to suppress the black majority. In the post-apartheid era, the reason for workshopping is primarily related to service delivery and other social issues. *Sisukaphi? 2021* was inspired by my observation that female students could not express themselves well concerning their cultural backgrounds and family histories compared to the male students. As I prepared for my first semester meeting with my students, I convinced myself that I was doing the right thing by thinking of my observation. It was Wednesday, the 4th of August 2021, and the time was 15h10. It was 20 minutes before the class started, and I was alone while waiting for my students in room Shepstone 205, where I conducted my lessons.

I longed to work with the students in person again, and it had been a long time since I had experimented with the performing arts. The first semester's teaching had been done remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions. Although I was nervous because the pandemic was still in effect, we were at Adjusted Alert Level 3 in our country, so in-person teaching was allowed, and I was keen to meet the students. It was now 15h40, 10 minutes after the class was supposed to start, and only one student entered the venue. She greeted me, and I welcomed her back.

I asked her, "*Baphi abanye*?" (Where are the others?)
She replied, "*Angibazi nami thisha. Kodwa ngizwe e gruphini kuthiwa eRes yo [Jane], kwi floor yabo kukhona umfundi o theste phosithivu*" (I do not know, teacher. However, I heard on the WhatsApp group that there is a student on the same floor of the residence where Jane lives, who has tested positive).
I replied, "That is sad [but no one bothered reporting this on our class group chat]."
We waited for another ten minutes, but no one else came, so I dismissed the student. I sent a message on the class's WhatsApp group chat ten minutes after she had left, complaining about

the unreported absences of the students. I told them that I had cancelled the class for the day and that tomorrow's one would be held via Zoom. I locked the venue thereafter.

I was at home the following day, Thursday, the 5th of August 2021, waiting for the students to join my Zoom meeting. It was 15h32, and during the hour that I was online, only three students joined the meeting. The remaining students logged in and then out again, complaining about poor network connectivity. At 16h35, I wrote on the WhatsApp group chat that we would need additional lecture time and that if we continued losing lectures like this, we would fall behind schedule and be unable to cover the course content. I informed them that the next class would be held via Zoom on the following Wednesday, the 11th of August 2021.

The day arrived. It was the 11th of August 2021. Thirteen of the fourteen students joined the class on Zoom between 15h25 and 15h40. It was the first time that I could share my idea concerning the AMD ensemble module with the students, and they all seemed happy about the idea. The students/participants and I then had a question-and-answer session, following which I informed them that our next class would occur on campus the following day.

All 14 students attended the class on the 12th of August 2021, and I conducted unplanned auditions with them. They were asked to recite any folk tale or made-up story, song, or dance piece to the class. I assessed each student's performance and made comments on their weaknesses and strengths. I did not share my comments with the students at the time, as I wanted to prepare myself for the upcoming sessions.

The session concluded with me telling the students to research the production's requirements. They were meant to research their cultural and family backgrounds. There was a reason for doing the workshop, and this issue was familiar to them because it had arisen in the first semester. I explained to the class that the current semester's work was a continuation of the work from the previous semester. However, they would not be examined solely on music and dance as they had been in the first semester. Instead, the focus of the second semester would be the creation of a musical production that would comprise storytelling pieces presented by each of them.

This meant that each student had to come up with their own storytelling piece. The production would thus have 14 storytelling pieces, which would then be linked with music, dance, and praise poetry. The information that would be collected would be related to the student's cultural and

family backgrounds. They were given the task of searching for relevant information that could help them, and that information could come from books, newspapers, internet blogs, and any other readable, viewable, or audible source of information. To acquire this data, the participants were also responsible for interviewing their family elders, such as their grandparents, parents, aunts, and uncles. As an artist-researcher, I encouraged them to look for reliable sources of information about their family histories, clan names, songs, rituals, and beliefs. They were urged to observe these people's habits and learn how they dealt with and endured specific circumstances.

Their observations had to consider the gender and the socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of the individuals that they interviewed, as this would improve their character development work during the workshopping process. I saw this as an opportunity to 'kill three birds with one stone': Since this was the second semester, and I had already applied to attend the ethics program, I had to devise a project that would serve, firstly, as the students' practical examination component and, secondly, as a site to inspire the students to relate to their cultural backgrounds and empower the female performers to challenge the oppressive conventions in *AmaZulu* cultural performances. Thirdly, the project had to provide a case study for the current dissertation.

5.2.1.2 Second phase: observation

Wednesday the 18th of August 2021, Thursday the 19th, and the 25th and 26th of August 2021 were dedicated to collecting all the necessary information for the workshop. During this phase, the students brought in all the information they had collected thus far. I was responsible for advising and assisting the students individually on what could be produced artistically from their observations. I helped them determine if the information gathered fit the project as song lyrics or as part of their storytelling.

Although still waiting for ethical approval for my masters study, given the timing of the project, I prepared to act as a participant observer for my research. I thus had a similar experience to that of my study's participants, as I also had to research my family's history. That was a pivotal approach to grounding me in the study. This two-week observation triggered my spiritual journey, which required more exploration and resolution. Through my observation, I discovered that I was protected and led by my ancestors from my mother's side. I thus had to stop consulting

my ancestors from my father's side when pleading in my ancestral shrine, and had to refrain from using my father's clan names associated with ‘Ndwalane’ anymore. Instead, I had to use my mother's clan name, Ncane. This was because of past disputes between the families concerning his mother’s dowry. This spiritual identity shift caused self-doubt in me, as I felt uncomfortable sometimes when bumping into people who knew me before this. They praised me using my past clan names associated with ‘Ndwalane’. How could I explain this shift?

5.2.1.3 Third phase: warming the space

This phase happened on Wednesday, the 1st and Thursday, the 2nd of September 2021. I introduced the idea of a ‘warm space’. This is my ideal approach to directing, but I am still refining my search for the best approach. I introduced the warm space to the students by demonstrating how to do physical warm-ups, English and isiZulu tongue twisters, and vocal exercises, as follows:

(a) The physical warm-ups were divided into three sections.
- Upper body exercises included side and lateral arm raises, shoulder presses, press ups and floor triceps dips.
- The lower body exercises included squats, calf raises, jump squats, and high kicks to the left and right.
- The stomach exercises included bicycle crunchies, toe reaches, and leg raises.

(b) The English and isiZulu tongue twisters used are presented as follows:
- How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?
- Which witch switched the Swiss wristwatches?
- She sells seashells by the seashore.
- *Baxabana kwaxoxozela amaxoxo bexoxisana ngoxolo* (They quarrelled, the frogs croaked, they talked about peace).
- *UCele ucambalele ocansini ucabanga icebo lokuciba ucilo ngomcibisholo ocijile* (Cele is lying on the mat, thinking of a plan to shoot a bird with a sharp arrow).

These tongue twisters served as facial expression exercises as well. As these twisters were shouted and whispered alternately, the students were also meant to say each word with an exaggerated facial expression, depending on their feelings.

(c) Vocal exercises

A piano was used to accompany the tonic *solfège* as the students sang the following ascending and descending scales:

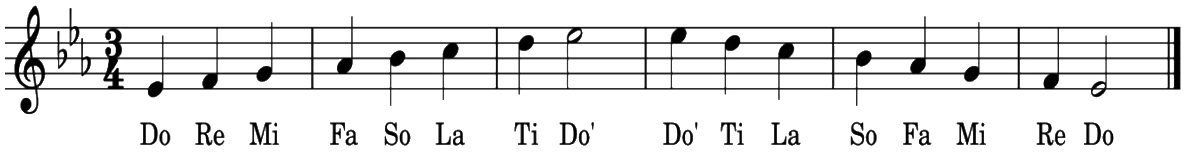


Figure 5.2: Major Scale
Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

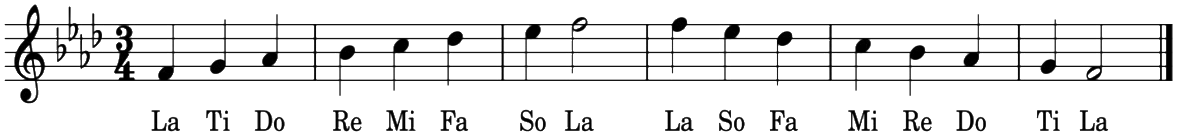


Figure 5.3: Natural Minor Scale
Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

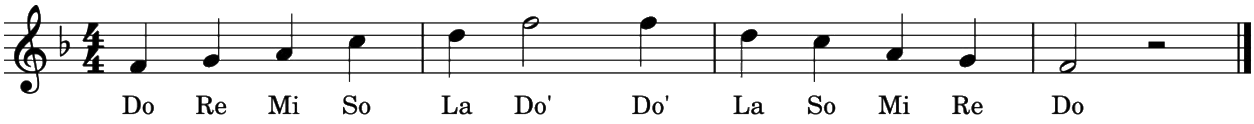


Figure 5.4: Major Pentatonic Scale.
Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

Although the research presents the above scales in the keys of Eb Major, F minor and F major scales, different keys were used during the workshopping process.

The *imvumo* songs used included:

- *Gwala Buyela Ekhaya* (Go Home Coward).
- *Intombi Ziyamemana* (The Maidens are Inviting Each Other). And
- *Sisi Nomvula* (Sister Nomvula).

The *imvumo* songs mentioned above and others were used for the *igosa* activities later in the process (see Figure 5.9). The students were responsible for the warm-ups for the subsequent rehearsals, and I tasked students to lead the warm-ups randomly before each workshop session or seminar started. The students only had to do some of the warm-up activities, and they were

allowed to select which ones they did based on their preferences. They were also allowed to use different warm-ups that served the same purpose if they wanted to use their own. Four students were selected to lead the warm-up activities each time. Twenty minutes were dedicated to the warm-ups during each seminar, and each student was given five minutes to lead their tasks. As an artist-researcher, I enjoyed being led by the students while observing how each one managed the time and the warm-up activities and dealt with discipline during this process. Creating this warm space was an ideal practice and was assessed in terms of its effectiveness. This practice was motivated by my harsh experiences at the hands of a director in the past (see section 4.10). I felt that creating this space was essential when preparing for a critical performance, as it aimed to neutralise the power relations between myself as the artistic creator and the performers, challenge gender inequality, and empower female performers. Such a space would force a director to jump out of their leading position and give the lead to a performance's members; they would then become an actor, a dancer, and a backing vocalist just like the participants. It was thus an act of giving away my power as a director, and empowering my performers. The participants took over the space during the process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* and led me through the vocal and physical activities. This broke the barrier of superiority and enabled the performers to practice their craft holistically. The warm space also aimed to remove the barriers to creativity. Some of these barriers are caused by directors and producers putting too much pressure on performers, causing them stress. Lack of motivation, seeing only the worst in a performance or performer, and demanding too much of a performer are some of the results of this stress and pressure. In the warm space, artists must not feel like they are being judged. This must be where performers are free to raise or suggest creative ideas. This space is like an altar or a shrine where performers can release the tension in their bodies and heal their spiritual beings. As such, it must always be kept warm. Additionally, the warm-up activities helped increase muscle temperature and flexibility, improve range of motion in joints, better blood flow to muscles, reduce risk of injury, enhance focus and mental preparedness, and ultimately, the ability to perform at participants' peak level during the performance itself.

5.2.1.4 Fourth phase: inventiveness

This phase started on Wednesday, the 7th of September 2021. This phase was dedicated to creating the performance. It was aimed at fulfilling the core vision of the workshopping process—the storytelling, theatrical, and musical production. All the creative aspects of the music, storytelling, and dance were initiated in this phase. I kickstarted this phase on the day by

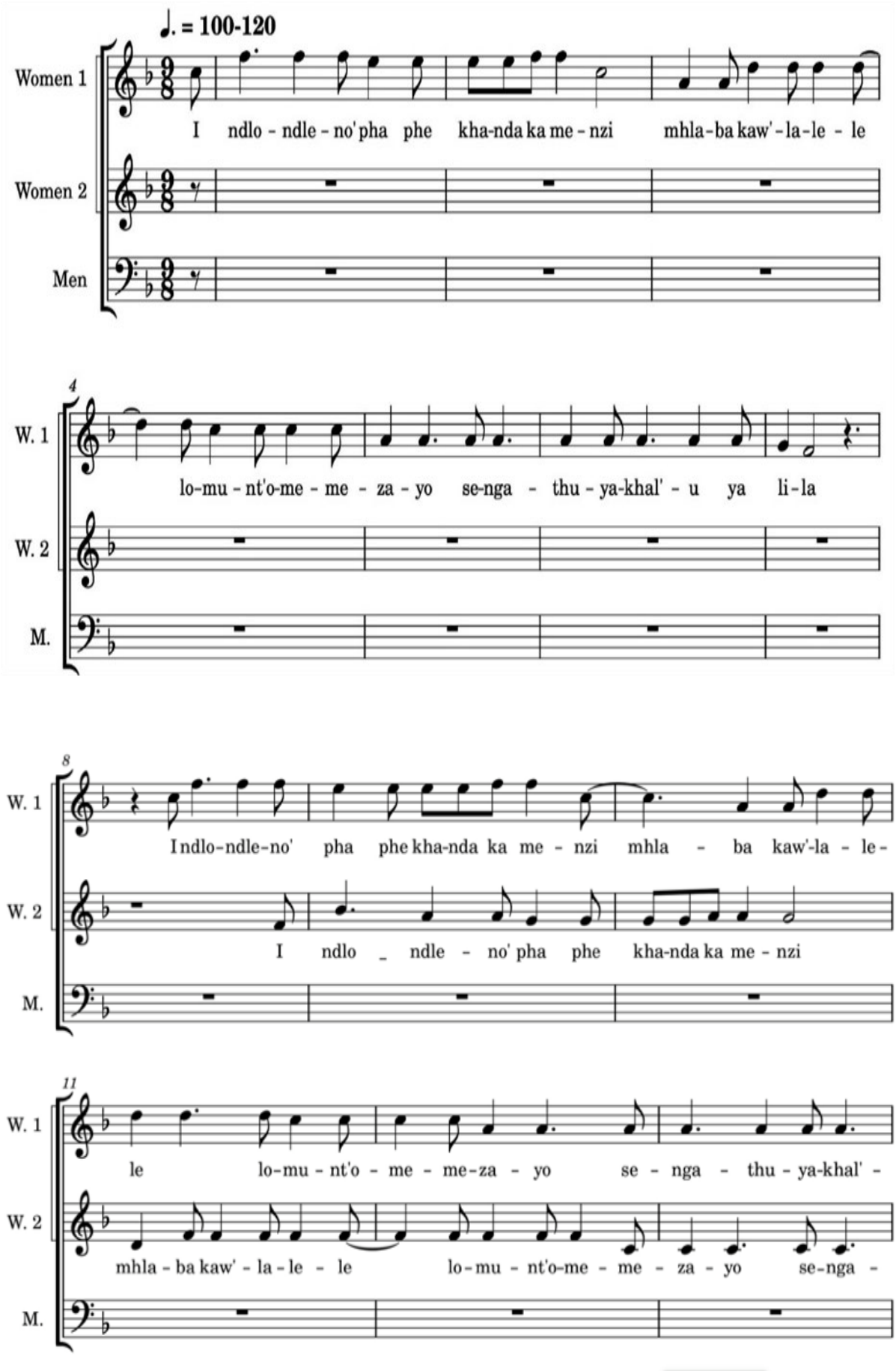
composing music poetry using the praise poetry of the late *AmaZulu* King, Goodwill kaZwelithini Zulu. King Goodwill Zwelithini Zulu's praise poem extract appears below.

Table 5.1: An Extract from King Goodwill Zwelithini Zulu's Praise Poem	
Extract from the Original Praises	**English Translation**
INdlondl'enophaphe'ekhanda	The black mamba with a feather on the head
Ndaba kawulalele lomunt'omemezayo	Ndaba listens to this person who is shouting
Umemeza sengathi uyakhala	He shouts as he cries
Ukhal'isililo	He weeps a cry
Uth'igula likaJama lichithekile	He says the calabash of Jama has split
Lichithwa yiNgwel'endala	The old champion had spilled it
Ngeyakithi kwaMalandela	It belongs to our family of Malandela
Ubesibindi Buthelezi	You are brave, Buthelezi
Ngokukhuthazel'umtakaNdaba	For advocating for the son of Ndaba
Bemthuka bemcokofula	They insulted him and mocked him
Bethi uZwelithini kayikubusa	Saying Zwelithini will not rule
Kayikuba Nkosi	He will not be the King
Kanti bamgcoba ngamafuth'empepho	Yet they anointed him with incense oil
Yakithi kwaMalandela[13]	From my home at Malandela

Source: Nhlapho (2017)

Thursday the 8th was dedicated to learning the composition. The demonstration of the composition showed the students the possible ways to create music. The study presents an extract of the praises translated by me below. It is followed by the musical poetry extract arranged by me as the artist-researcher. The musical poetry extract for King Goodwill Zwelithini Zulu appears below.

[13] See Nhlapho (2017) for the original extract of the praises. Available: https://www.news24.com/news24/izibongo-zesilo-namuhla-sigubha-usuku-lokuzalwa-kwesilo-samabandla-wonke-20170714.


♩. = 100-120
Women 1
I ndlo - ndle - no' pha phe kha-nda ka me - nzi mhla - ba kaw' - la - le - le
Women 2
Men
4
W. 1
lo-mu - nt'o-me - me - za - yo se-nga - thu - ya-khal' - u ya li - la
W. 2
M.
8
W. 1
I ndlo-ndle-no' pha phe kha-nda ka me - nzi mhla - ba kaw'-la - le -
W. 2
I ndlo _ ndle - no' pha phe kha-nda ka me - nzi
M.
11
W. 1
le lo-mu - nt'o - me - me-za - yo se - nga - thu - ya-khal' -
W. 2
mhla - ba kaw' - la - le - le lo-mu - nt'o-me - me - za - yo se-nga -
M.

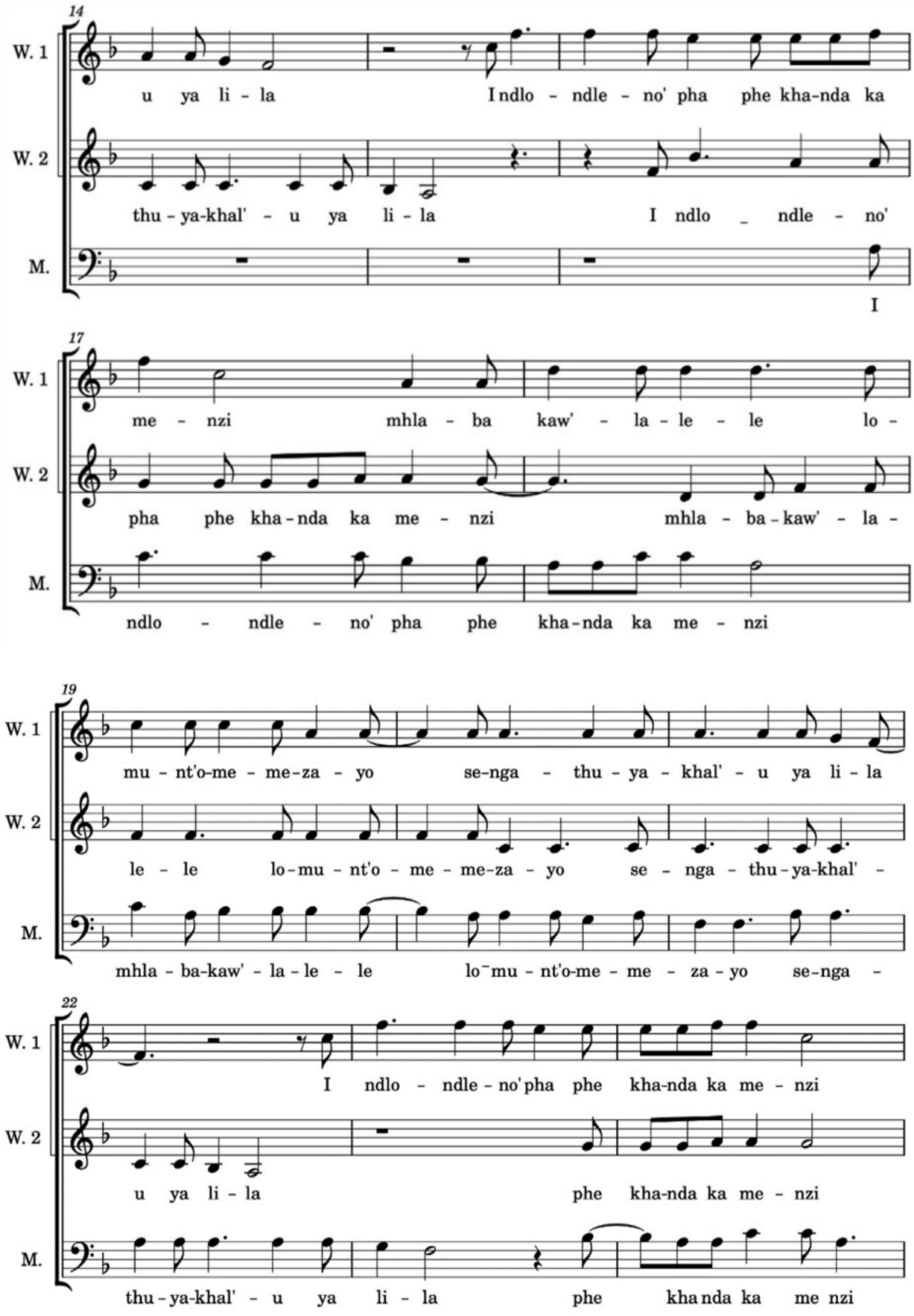


Figure 5.5: 1-24 of 46 Bars of the Transcribed and Rearranged Musical Poetry of King Goodwill Zwelithini Zulu.
Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

The musical notes were notated using computer software called *MuseScore3*. The composition was used as a demonstration of music composition for the students, and it later became a song featured in the final product of the workshop. As the ensemble class recited it, the female and male performers exchanged calls and responses. It looked like a joyful competition as the female performers portrayed feminine moves and gestures while the male performers showed masculine movements. They also sometimes praised each other and sang together to create a pleasing harmony during the piece. It fit perfectly in the opening scene before *Ndlovukazi*[14] came onto the stage. It is important to mention that the song was composed and performed without a score sheet. The score is an audio transcription of the composition. It was prepared during the writing stage of the dissertation to justify the context of my creativity.

The musical transcription begins with an anacrusis and uses repetitive rhythmic patterns for all the voice parts to create a cyclic melody. The song was transcribed based on the participants' voice ranges and was in the F Major key; however, it can be transposed into any major key. During the performance of this piece, an improvised *AmaZulu* bass drum and a djembe drum were used as accompaniments. I did not transcribe the drum beats as they were played by different participants in different rehearsals, and they kept changing because they were improvised. This practice gave the participants a sense of ownership of the craft (see Appendix 8 for the total score and transcription).

In addition, I asked myself the following reflexive question:

- How did I attempt to challenge the conventions concerning the socio-political and cultural norms indoctrinated in the Zulu cultural performer and the Zulu performance structure and form through the performance making of *Sisukaphi?* (See question 1 of Appendix 3).

Although Figure 5.5 does not provide a complete answer to the above reflexive question, it gives the gist of how the workshopping process challenged conventions concerning the socio-political and cultural norms indoctrinated in the Zulu cultural performance's structure and form. Figure 5.5 presents a challenged performance structure in terms of the socio-political and cultural conventions concerning *AmaZulu* praise poetry.

[14] Ndlovukazi is the character of a female king who ruled an imaginary palace called Kwandlovukazi. This musical piece was performed just before she came onto the stage. The character was created during the workshopping process.

When the above transcription is viewed using critical thought, one can say that the creative process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* portrayed a decolonised approach to praise poetry recitation. What is conventionally known concerning the recitation of praise songs is that 'the artist shouts out the praises at the top of his voice as fast as he can, metaphorically speaking' (Kresse, 1998: 175). The observation by Kresse is sexist, owing to the norm that *AmaZulu izibongo/*praise poetry is male-domain art. While the gender norms in *AmaZulu* cultural performances are questioned and challenged in this dissertation, the above extract exemplifies a decolonised context to praise poetry performance. From the context of a performer shouting out praises at the top of their voice as fast as they can, the above extract portrays a recontextualised idea of praise poetry that is musical. The notion of recontextualisation is discussed in section 6.3.

The next workshop took place on Wednesday and Thursday, the 15th and 16th of September 2021. At this point, the participants started exploring everything that they observed during their observation stage. The basic information gathered was used as the baseline for their creativity, unlike in the second phase, where I had one-on-one sessions with the students to help them find meaning and aesthetic ideas concerning their collected information. Here, it was no longer about explanations but more about demonstrations.

The midterm break interrupted the process, as this break started on Monday, the 20th and ended on Friday, the 24th of September 2021. The workshopping process or workshop seminars resumed on the 29th and the 30th of September 2021. The demonstrations were performed openly in class, in front of everyone. As this was the initial phase of the creation process, there was no right or wrong, and many ideas were explored. The participants took turns doing their presentations, sharing what they had observed. As each participant did their performance, the others watched so that they could give feedback and constructive criticism.

The students tried to mimic the gestures, tones, and facial expressions of some of the individuals (elders) they had met during their interviews to collect data on their family histories. Some of the students were not able to gather information from anyone, and instead used other sources, such as the internet or literature, so they had to use their imagination to create their characters. For instance, the character of *Ndlovukazi* (the Queen) was created during the workshop because one student needed help finding relevant information concerning her family history. It was a way of creating characters that they could use to narrate their stories.

At this stage of the process, the participants had to conceptualise an imaginary context in which these characters lived. That was the setting of the story. Since this research was motivated by the university module taught by me (the artist-researcher), the calendar for the fourth term module in 2021 is presented below in Figure 5.6.

On Wednesday the 6th and Thursday the 7th of October 2021, the focus was on developing what had been demonstrated and improvised in the previous seminars. The material developed and recited was *AmaZulu* praise poetry and traditional storytelling using *AmaZulu* surnames and clan names. The workshops held on the 13th, 14th, 20th, 21st, 27th, and 28th of October 2021 focused on characterisation, blocking, and the notion of the fourth wall.

AFRICAN MUSIC AND DANCE ENSEMBLE (MUSC3EBH2) COARSE CALENDAR

LECTURER: MR M.V NDWALANE

OCTOBER 2021						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
			Mid-term Individual Performance			
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			• Zulu praise poetry • Traditional Zulu storytelling • Zulu Surnames			
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
			• Characterization in performance			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
			• Characterization in performance			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31			• Characterization in performance			
NOVEMBER 2021						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
			• The process of selecting and combing the performance components			
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
			• The rehearsal of the whole show			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			• The rehearsal of the whole show • The Zulu cultural Performance Politics			
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
			• Final Theatre Performance and Course Evaluation • Women in praise poetry			
28	29	30				
DECEMBER 2021						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
			• Women as vocal leaders in Zulu cultural Performance			
4	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	29	30	31		

Figure 5.6: 2021 AMD Ensemble Course Calendar

Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

I received the gatekeeper's permission to conduct the research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the 21st of October 2021. This was a very significant moment, as it also transformed the way in which I viewed the students. They were now officially the study's participants.

The action takes place outside an imagined Queen's palace named KwaNdlovukazi. The villagers have been visited by tourists who have come to learn about their cultural background and history. The village people are sitting in a semi-circle resembling a cow's horns. The women sit on the right and the men on the left. The Queen is in the centre, placed between men and women. It is a joyful day as the villagers sing, dance, eat meat, and drink traditional beer. The atmosphere is warm, and everyone is happy.

[The song, Sisukaphi? starts, and an older man named Makhathini appears from among the villagers. He strolls with a stick. When he reaches downstage, he stands, and a few seconds later, someone brings him a bench. He sits. With a husky voice, he calls:]

MAKHATHINI
Bring my guitar here! So, I will play beautiful music for the white people.

[He puts down his walking stick. They offer him a guitar—the opening song fades out. Makhathini does an ear tuning on the guitar, then starts playing and hums a tune. The villagers join in. As the voices start blending, the music becomes loud. He stops playing. He signals the villagers to sing softer and begins his story.]

MAKHATHINI
As for my grandchildren, I am Donda. The Donda are Ntungwa Nguni. In the past, they lived with the people of Sibiya and Elangeni in Mhlongo. At that time, they were led by Donda of Gxabhashe, but not one of the Khumalos. The area where we find the Donda people is between the Mfule and the White Mfolozi rivers, facing the sea. This clan of ours used to live with its neighbours in great peace. However, because King Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa wanted to build his dynasty during these times, he attacked Gxabhashe and his tribe near Mthonjaneni. After all, it was then that Dingiswayo wished to become the King of the whole nation. All the clans he had conquered should serve under him.

(The humming fades out)

MAKHATHINI (Continued)
Our chief, Gxabhashe, fell into the trap of finding the King of Mthethwa wanting to rule with great power that had never been seen before. One night, when my most terrific grandfather, Gxabhashe, was resting without expecting anything, he did not know he would be attacked. When he awoke from his sweet dreams, he was a prisoner of Dingiswayo. The Mthethwa army attacked at night, and everyone was suddenly asleep. When he woke up, Gxabhashe was so angry that he had a heart attack and died. The Xulu warriors were furious at what had happened to their King. All right, grandkids, I hope you heard.

[The villagers praise Makhathini! Donda, Xulu! Ntonga! Nomandla! Gxabhashe! Then, another man from the villagers named Mzilikazi appears. He helps XULU stand up from the bench and hands him the walking stick. Someone picks up the bench. And then NKOSI goes to the centre stage and starts his story.]

Figure 5.7: An Example of the Setting and Characterisation used in the Workshopping Process
Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

Although the country was on Adjusted Alert Level 1 concerning COVID-19 regulations during this phase, the workshop was dedicated to developing everything identified during the improvisation phase. For characterisation, the students had to select props to portray their characters. The selection of these props was motivated by the responsibilities of each character during the process. If the characters had a singing duty, they could use musical instruments to highlight their characters. Others used shields, sticks, clay pots, calabashes, *umakhweyana* string bows, and guitars. The students were challenged to interweave the information they collected with their current state. This included using their imagination, where they had to think and live in the world of the characters they represented while learning about their family and clan histories. As part of the observation process, I witnessed the students become bridges between the past and present of their family heritages. Using their imagination, they had to think like the people who lived in the past to connect with their histories and then perform their histories in the present.

The above extract exemplifies how the characterisation was administered during the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* (see Appendix 7 for an entire script). Apart from exemplifying the setting, the use of storytelling, blocking, characterisation, and the assertion of clan praises during the cultural performance, the opening paragraph also exemplifies a decolonised sitting arrangement as opposed to the conventional one associated with *AmaZulu* culture in the rondavel houses during the ceremonies in the rural areas (see how this idea was negotiated in sections 4.5. and 4.6). This extract exemplifies the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*, where the issues related to gender inequality were addressed during the performance process.

While Figure 5.7 records many elements that situate the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* in decolonial and feminist thinking, the figure also exemplifies how the workshopping process was theatrically influenced. The figure contains few Western theatrical conventions. This will be the focus of the discussion in Chapter Six, and the research will discuss what I have coined as ‘theatricalised African storytelling’.

5.2.1.5 Fifth phase: selection and linking

This session happened on the 3rd and 4th of November 2021. In this phase, the workshop was dedicated to selecting what seemed relevant to the needs of the production, and the focus was on

the content of the storytelling, characterisation, poetry, music, and dances. All that was not doable, actable, or singable was cut out. The linking devices served as the mechanisms that connected the presentations made by each participant. They created a smooth flow between the scenes. The music, praise poetry, and dances were used as the linking devices. This phase was dedicated to ensuring that the storytelling presentations were linked cohesively and placed in order. At this stage, I was also responsible for overseeing the improvisation process by examining how the participants' stories related or connected. The most exciting connections were found through the commonality in the clan names and rituals of the participants. For instance, the people of the Makhathini, Gxabhashe, and Xulu clans were related through their ancestral lineage. So, if the first participant was from the Makhathini clan, this meant that the second participant should be one from the Gxabhashe or Xulu clans.

5.2.1.6 Sixth phase: polishing

On Wednesday and Thursday, the 10th and 11th of November 2021, the process focused on doing an entire run of the show. On the 11th of November, I also received an email with a letter titled *Approval Notification- Expedited Application.* It was the notification that my study had received ethical approval. I thus saw the need to reveal to the students that I had applied for and received ethical approval for my masters study, and I explained that the workshopping for the making of *Sisukaphi? 2021* was being used for the study. I informed the students of this after the rehearsal on the same day. I told the students that I would appreciate it if they agreed to be the study participants since they were the ones participating in the workshopping process. All the students agreed to participate in the study, and I explained that they then had to complete consent forms to indicate as much. I asked them to return the completed consent forms before the end of the 12th of November 2021.

The following week, Wednesday the 17th and Thursday the 18th of November 2021, the workshop focused on doing total dress rehearsals for the show. The first focus group interview was conducted after the dress rehearsal on Thursday the 18th 2021. After this interview, I also explained the exam requirements for the following week, and thanked them for sending the consent forms back on time. I then told the students that they would receive all the documents concerning the study that evening. These documents included the ethical clearance approval letter and a document detailing the research title, the details of the research, the names of the researcher

and the supervisor, the gatekeeper's letter, and their questionnaires for the subsequent interviews to be held/that they had to complete.

5.2.1.7 Seventh phase: presentation

The current study was interested in collecting most of its data during the workshopping process, so this meant that the final production had to be staged; however, the staging also served as the practical component for the students' exams. Wednesday, the 24th of November 2021 therefore marked the final internal practical exam for the students—the presentation/staging was aimed at the students' practical exams. The assessment was based on what the students had practiced throughout the semester. The students were assessed and assigned process marks, which served as their internal marks before they were assessed externally. After this exam, the students were briefed about the external exam requirements. After this briefing, I discussed the questions in the participants' questionnaires. Both the isiZulu and English questions were discussed with the participants.

On Thursday, the 25th of November 2021, the students were invited to evaluate the course. Another focus group seminar was held after the course evaluation session. Friday, the 26th of November 2021, marked the final day of the practical component of the African Music and Dance Ensemble module. On this day, the students were assessed by external examiners from the music school.

After this exam, I sat with the students and discussed the dates for the upcoming focus group interviews. The participants agreed to have them on Wednesdays and Thursdays, as those days and times were already on their schedules. It was agreed that the third and fourth focus group interviews would occur on the 1st and 2nd of December 2021. It was also concluded that these interviews would happen via Zoom meetings since the 26th of November 2021 marked the final date for the university's exam timetable and the campus would be closed (see how the data presented in section 5.5 addresses these focus group interviews).

5.2.1.8 Recording phase

I chose not to number this phase because it was not a separate phase in the workshopping process. Instead, it fit into the other phases, as recording occurred in many of the phases during the workshopping. There are different types of recording, ranging from audio to video recording and

scripting. This study used various types, as the workshopping process was recorded using audio and video. Audio was used to record the music compositions. When someone is creative, ideas come to them anywhere and at any time. An idea might be to visit someone during their spare time outside of the workshopping space. An artist-researcher could get an idea at midnight while waking up from a dream. Ideas can often occur when one is not around their workshopping peers.

This was why many of my musical ideas were recorded as raw audio tapings. Even hummed melodies were recorded. During rehearsals, I recorded unfinished compositions so that they could serve as reminders when the class met again. Video recordings were used for chorographical purposes. When, for instance, I heard a lovely tune at home, I would give my phone to someone around me to make a video recording as I choreographed a few steps. These were then used to add to an existing choreography or to create a new chorographical work.

This means that the process was recorded at different stages using different recording methods. However, the most prominent one was in the form of scriptwriting (see Appendix 7). I started writing the script for the performance during the process for record-keeping purposes and to make it available as a reference to situate the meaning of the content in context. The script was improved as the workshopping process progressed. Volioti and Williamon (2017) explored the recordings as learning and practising resources for performance, aiming to examine music students' and professionals' attitudes and behaviours. For this reason, the data collection process in this research also relied on recordings taken during the workshopping process and during the artist researcher's times when he composed music and choreographed dances to prepare the workshopping seminars. These recordings helped examine the participants' behaviours while intersecting the data with the professional written sources together with the personal experience of the artist-researcher. The whole recording process emphasised the importance of keeping the records in applied ethnomusicology.

5.3. A Site for Cultural Heritage Celebration

This section reflects on how the workshopping process served as a site for allowing the students to celebrate and explore their cultural heritage. This theme presents the data concerning the first question of the study, which reads as follows:

(1) How do the performing arts become tools for cultural heritage for students during the workshopping process?

The question was paraphrased in the sample interviews for the study participants and read as follows:

- **Do you think the performing arts have offered you a space to celebrate your cultural heritage during the workshopping process? Please explain how** (see question 2 of Appendix 1).

The students were to reflect on how participating in the *Sisukaphi? 2021* workshopping process might have influenced and reconnected them with their cultural heritage, since they were at university and far away from their rural or peri-urban areas where they could practice their cultural practices freely without being judged and limited by factors in the university context.

The literature in Chapter Two stated that the performing arts allow for cultural heritage celebration (Ngema, 2007; Adegbite, 2010; Rabatoko, 2017), and I also made this assertion in Chapter Four. All 14 participants in the study similarly proclaimed that the workshopping process had offered them space to celebrate their cultural heritage. I was interested in their justification for their view of the performing arts as tools for cultural heritage and how the performing arts offered them a space to celebrate their cultural heritage during the workshopping process. Samples of the responses to the question are presented below:

> "The process of researching and narrating my background was overwhelming for me.... I could not even clan praise myself. I usually made mistakes and would have hiccups in my recitation, but now I can" (Elihle).

The participant acknowledged the process's potential to help them learn about the performative attributes that could help them pride themselves on their cultural heritage.
Another participant similarly proclaimed:

> “Yes, the workshopping process has offered me a space to celebrate my culture, and I, as a woman, can say it has freely created a platform with no restrictions and boundaries. It has empowered me as a woman. It has empowered the whole class in terms of identity, learning about ourselves, and appreciating ourselves. I... wish that these kinds of performances continue to inspire many to create such" (Mbali).

This participant acknowledged the workshopping process and its potential to help one learn and celebrate one’s cultural heritage. The participant also felt empowered by the process as a woman and wished that the kind of workshopping process that took place with *Sisukaphi? 2021* would

continue to inspire many performing arts practitioners. This perception by the participant pointed out the impermanence of performances.

Another participant proclaimed:

> "I wish the process could have lasted [forever], so I could learn more and more" (Philile).

This perception by Philile resonated with the above statement by Mbali. Notably, the wish that the process could have lasted longer pointed to the temporality of the performance. The participants quoted above appreciated the workshop process's potential to become a cultural heritage site, and the study was inspired by the claims made by Mbali and Philile. Mbali wished that performances such as *Sisukaphi? 2021* could continue to inspire many creators going forward, while Philile wished that the creative process of *Sisukaphi 2021* could have lasted forever. These claims pointed to the temporality and impermanence of the performance. For this reason, this research is interested in discussing how performances are temporal.

Another participant reported that the workshopping process grounded her as it was rooted in her own culture, and this helped her preserve her culture. She stated:

> "I was able to create music and a story piece about my family history. The workshopping process allowed me to imagine my ancestors' past, perform it, and preserve it. Now I can claim that I am proud of my culture" (Lolo).

The workshopping process as a site for cultural heritage helped the participant gain pride in her culture through the creation of music and storytelling, and she could imagine her ancestors' lives.

In addition, another participant stated:

> "*Mina ngingasho ngithi, umdlalo ebesiwenza ungisize kakhulu, ukuthi ngikwazi ukufunda ngomlando wesizwe sakithi KwaZulu nesibongo sami… ngiphefome nangawo futhi*". (I can say that the play we have been doing helped me so much to learn about the history of my *AmaZulu* clan and my surname… and perform about it) (Msila).

The participant applauded the process for helping him learn and perform the history of his clan and surname.

Another participant similarly claimed:

> "*Ngikwaze ukuthi ngenze I research ngomlando wakithi… ebese ngisebenzisa wona ukwakha I character. Ngadlala I character yedlozi lami, kodwa kwaba ikhehla nami*

engingalazi" (I was able to research my family history… and use it to create a character. I played my ancestor's character, but it became an older man I did not know) (Xolani).

In this finding, the participant talked about researching his history and how it had assisted him in portraying the character of his ancestor, an older adult that he had never met.

In her justification, Lolo asserted that the process had allowed her to create music and a story about her family history. The workshopping process allowed her to imagine her ancestors' past, perform it, and preserve it. Msila claimed that the process had helped him learn about and perform his clan and family history. Xolani mentioned the power of imagination in assisting him in performing the part of an older man that he did not know. These claims highlighted the performing arts' capabilities in creating an imaginary cultural heritage site. This dissertation will, therefore, discuss the nature of the performing arts as an imaginary cultural heritage site.

In terms of understanding the performing arts as a tool for cultural heritage during the workshopping process, the discussion will be based on how the performance can be understood as a temporary and imaginary cultural heritage site.

5.4. The Cultural Influences on Female Performers' Disempowerment

This section presents the findings concerning the second study objective relating to the institutions of power that continue preaching, motivating, and suppressing women. The data was sourced through the following objective addressed in this study's research questions.

(2) Why could the female students not express themselves well regarding their family and cultural backgrounds in comparison to the male students?

The influences that led to the female performers' inability to excel in the *AmaZulu* cultural performance in comparison to the male performers were questioned during the focus group interviews. The first seminar, which happened on the 18th of November 2021, lasted for 22 minutes and 15 seconds. The first question guided this seminar.

- **Why did most female students not express themselves as well as the male students regarding their family and cultural backgrounds during our first meeting?** (See question 1 of Appendix 2).

During the discussion in the seminar, it was revealed that female and male children are not raised in the same way in the African culture. See the quote below, for instance:

> "When we are young, women are not encouraged to speak. They are not part of the decision making or the meetings. The males are trained to be heard in the house from the word go. So, that has an impact on women not to be able to express themselves, so it's hard to express ourselves because we were never taught. We have been taught that if you speak with a person, especially a male, you must look down on the ground, you must not look him in the eyes. So, when we get into platforms that encourage women to speak and allow us to speak, we don't know where to start because our backgrounds and upbringing trained us in this manner" (Mbali).

This participant provided the root cause of women's oppression. I argue that the African culture perpetuates the hindering of female capabilities in all aspects of life because they are not taught equally and given similar duties when they are raised. This way of raising children does not offer equal and fair opportunities, and this affects women negatively in the long run.

Another participant provided the following explanation:

> "… *Abafana bafundiswa ngisho ezinto ezinjengo kugiya ngenduku, nokuzibongela*. *Ukuzibongela kuhhenye yendlela yokutshengisa ukuzigqaja kusiko lwamaZulu*" (Boys are taught things like gearing with a stick, and self-praising. Self-praising is another way of showing cultural pride in the *AmaZulu* culture) (Msila).

Males are thus privileged because they are taught these performative attributes as part of their upbringing, while girls are not.

Another participant added:

"… *Yabona ke thina, thisha sisuke kumele sibe sengadini silime, sisinde ezindlini futhi sipheke*" (You see us teacher, we are supposed to be in the garden for ploughing, and in the house polishing the floor with the cattle's dung and cooking) (Lolo). This statement by Lolo explained that cultural values have limited the role of women to gardening and household duties. Conversely, men are free to explore life outside of the household. This highlights that the gender roles practiced in households influence other aspects of life, including the performing arts.

The second focus group seminar held on the 25th of November 2021 lasted for 25 minutes and 2 seconds. This seminar discussed the following question:

> **Do you think the *AmaZulu* culture treats males and females equally during a cultural performance? Please explain why.** (See question 2 of Appendix 2).

The participant quotes from the seminar conducted on the 18th of November 2021 revealed the influence of household and social teachings on unequal gender roles (see Mbali's statement, for instance). However, some participants did not feel that the culture mistreated either gender.
For instance, one participant stated:

> "*Mina ngikholelwa ukuthi ave ngoba abantu besifazane behlukumezekile. Kodwa sinemisebenzi engafani ekumele siyenze ngokubambisana ukuze kungamosheki isikhathi uma kwenziwa into ethize*". (I believe that it is not that women are mistreated. However, we have different duties that we must fulfil through working together to achieve a particular thing) (Thembi).

Another participant expanded on the argument made by Thembi by providing an example of different duties to achieve a common goal:

> "*Akenicabange bafowethu uma kuthiwa kunomsebenzi ekhaya, manje kuchaza ukuthi uma ngabe sipheka inyama, bona bazoxova o flawa benze amadombolo. Ngoba uma kungathiwa umsebenzi wenziwa ubulili obubodwa, kusho ukuthi lingaze lishone abantu bengadlile*". (Think guys, if there is a ceremony at home, now it means that if we cook meat, they [women] will be kneading dough and cooking dumplings. Because if it means all the duties are for one gender, it means the sun will set without the community getting the food) (Sonke).

All the participants quoted stated that different roles were given and taught to people based on their gender. I attest that these duties are thus gender specific. While some participants associated these roles with power, others did not associate the gender roles with any power. These disagreements revealed two differing views, and the participants are grouped according to their understanding of the gender roles of males and females within the *AmaZulu* culture, their viewpoints on whether the *AmaZulu* culture perpetuates gender inequality or not, and their demographics in the table below.

Table 5.2: Perceptions of Gender Roles and Power Dynamics				
	Group A		Group B	
Demographics	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**
Gender	5	1	4	4
Born and raised in a peri-urban area	5	0	0	0
Born and raised in a rural area	0	1	4	4
Home background as inspiration for the performing arts	1	0	2	3
School background as inspiration for the performing arts	4	1	2	1
Drama and Performance Studies and Music as majors	5	0	0	0
Music Performance and IsiZulu as majors	0	1	4	4
Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)				

The participants who associated gender roles with power have been categorised under Group A because they perceived inequality during the cultural performance. There were six in total, constituting 42.85 per cent of the study's participants. They consisted of five females and one male. Five females were born and raised in peri-urban areas, whereas one male was born and raised in rural area. One female was inspired by her home background in her performing arts studies, while four females and one male were inspired by their school experiences. Five females majored in Music and Drama and Performance, while one male majored in Music Performance and isiZulu.

On the other hand, the participants who did not associate gender roles with power have been categorised under Group B because they perceived that there was equality during the cultural performance. There were eight in total, comprising 57.14 per cent of the study participants. Of those, four were females and four were males. They were all born and raised in rural areas. Two females and three males received inspiration for their performing arts studies from their home backgrounds, while two females and one male were inspired by their school experiences. They all majored in Music Performance and isiZulu.

The second study objective was to understand why female students failed to express themselves well regarding their family and cultural backgrounds in comparison to the male students, and this study noted that the reasons for the gendered performances were their home and cultural backgrounds. However, the notions of gendered roles and power dynamics in the performance were perceived differently by the participants from the rural and peri-urban areas. This study has, therefore, discussed the origins of the gendered performances and used the participants' demographics to generalise the findings.

5.5. The Empowerment of Culturally Marginalised Female Performers

While the third study objective has influenced this research theme, this is one section and reflection that closely resonates with my heart in this chapter (as shared in section 4.2). While collecting the data, I reflected on my personal experiences:

I could hear my mother's voice resounding in my ears,
I could hear her screams, crying for help that I could not give;
I was too young to protect her from her abusive husband.
I have been empathic with her for,
She told me how she performed as a young maiden,
She lived in a patriarchal village,
That as young women, they served as objects;

They helped male dancers shine in front of the spectators;
Their duties were limited to kneeling behind,
Singing and clapping for their oppressors.

I could hear her voice humming sweet bird melodies;
She recited a tale about a woman who saved the entire village;
Though she had recited the tale countless times,
She had never realised the strength of a woman,
That she is not limited in any form.

I realise how her cultural norms silenced her;
I promised myself that wherever I get a platform,
I will use it to speak on behalf of her silenced voice.

It was in the interest of the above reflection that the current study posed the third research question.

(3) How do the performing arts provide space and allow culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during a cultural performance?

The above question served as a personal reflexive question for me as the artist-researcher (see question 2 of Appendix 3), and it was also asked in the participants' interview questionnaire (see question 3 of Appendix 1). The study discusses three quotes from the findings due to the similarities in the participants' responses.

One participant had this to say:

> "[Our] workshopping performance was done by using *igosa* as a woman and also *nezibongo*" (Sbani).

The participant was referring to the *imvumo* song and dance leader and *inyosi* roles that were portrayed by female participants during the workshopping process.

Other participants similarly added:

> "It was that the guys did not do praise poetry, but it was the ladies. Even during the video recording for the exam it was Jane who was *igosa*" (Sonke).

> "My other female classmates were playing the roles of being the praise singers" (Falakhe).

Based on their experience participating in *Sisukaphi? 2021*, the participants perceived that the performing arts provided space and allowed culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during the performance by having them play the roles of the *igosa* and the *inyosi* during the mixed-gendered cultural performance (See Figure 5.8 below). The below extract, cited from Appendix 7, exemplifies how the workshopping process allowed female performers to recite the *AmaZulu* praises using the praise poetry of Mkabayi KaJama[15] (Shamase, 2014). The purpose of providing the excerpt below is not to translate and thus conceptualise the meaning carried by these praises, as this is not one of the present study's objectives. Instead, it provides them as they were performed in the workshopping process. Similarly, the extract below gives the gist of how the female performers performed the role of the *igosa* during the workshopping process. Both Figures 5.8 and 5.9 provide the context of the participants' views concerning the empowerment of culturally marginalised female performers.

[15] Mkabayi was a princess who declared herself a regent princess and reigned the *AmaZulu* kingdom after the passing of his father, King Jama-KaNdaba, in 1781. It was a way of protecting the *AmaZulu* throne since his brother Senzangakhona was still young (Shamase, 2014).

(1ST FEMALE starts a Mzansi song titled "Wegwala", then the dance begins. Immediately after the dance finishes, the VILLAGERS form a semicircle shape facing the front. It comprises the Zulu warriors on stage left and maidens on stage right. Then, the song titled "Kuxabene Izinduna" starts. NDLOVUKAZI approaches the upstage centre. Moving slowly with pride, she goes to the centre stage. As She lifts the spear, the female izinyosi starts to acknowledge her with the praises and the singing stops.)

1ST FEMALE INYOSI

Usoqili!
Iqili lakwaHoshoza,
Elidl'umuntu limyenga ngendaba;
Lidl'uBhedu ngasezinyangeni,
Ladl'uMkhongoyiyana ngasemaNgadini,
Ladl' uBheje ngasezanuseni.
Ubhuku lukaMenzi,
Olubamb'abantu lwabenela;

VILLAGERS

Musho!! oQili likamahoshoza!

2ND FEMALE INYOSI

Ngibone ngoNohela kaMlilo,
Umlil' ovuth'intaba zonke,
Ngoba lumbambe wanyamalala.
Inkom'ekhal' eSangoyana,
Yakhal' umlomo wayo wabhoboz'izulu,
Iye yezwiwa nguGwabalanda
Ezalwa nguNdaba wakwaKhumalo.

VILLAGERS

Ndlovukazi, Mama wesizwe!

Figure 5.8: Praise Poetry for the Female *Inyosi*
Source: Shamase (2014)

The third focus group discussion or seminar was framed by the third question. The seminar took place on the 1st of December 2021, and lasted for 27 minutes and 10 seconds. The third group question was presented as follows:

- **How do you feel about seeing female students playing more significant roles than male students during the Zulu cultural performance?** (See question 3 of Appendix 2).

The play begins with the song titled *Bayede*. You can hear the song from the backstage. While singing, the villagers enter the stage and form two diagonal lines from downstage left towards upstage right. When the music is soft, one female begins leading the song. When the song reaches the climax, it transitions to a musical poem titled *Indlondo enophaphe ekhanda likaMenzi*. While the musical poetry is recited, we see NDLOVUKAZI coming from the upstage centre, holding a spear with the right hand. Moving slowly with pride,_While NDLOVUKAZI stands still, the response interjects the singing as 2ND FEMALE calls izihasho.

2nd FEMALE

Babengaphi?

VILLAGERS

Babengapha! Singapha! sahlangana phakathi kwaf'umuntu shunqu!!

2nd FEMALE

Babengaphi?

VILLAGERS

*(They quickly move clockwise while responding...)*Babengapha! Singapha! sahlangana phakathi kwaf'umuntu shunqu!

2nd FEMALE

Watitulatiti ulatiti ulatiti watit'ulatiti!

VILLAGERS

(while moving to form two straight horizontal lines facing front, they respond) Watitulatiti ulatiti ulatiti watit'ulatiti!

Figure 5.9: The Role of the Igosa in a Mixed-Gendered Cultural Performance

Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

The participants had no issues with seeing the female performers play roles such as those of the *inyosi and igosa*. I have quoted a few quotes below from the participants:

> "I feel empowered, not only as a woman, as a human being…, there is a lot in women, there is much life in women that the world has not experienced as yet, especially women of colour. However, again, I am happy that it is happening. Slowly, you see women playing prominent roles in television programmes and movies…. I just appreciate the revolution and being part of it" (Mbali).

The participant attested that the workshopping process empowered her as a woman and that she appreciated participating in such a process.

Another participant proclaimed that the process:

> "Made [her] see a difference…. A bright future of an African continent that is empathic towards women and treating women with respect and dignity" (Philile).

The participant related that the process revealed a bright future for the African continent if women were given support, respect, and dignity.

In addition, another participant claimed:

> "*Kahle kahle kumina, lento ithi, kumele siqale kabusha njengendlu emnyama, sibethembe futhi sibeseke abesifazane*" (Actually, to me, this means we must start afresh as black society. We must trust them and support women) (Msila).

The participant claimed that the process taught him that an African society had to rethink its values to be able to trust and support women. The findings above pointed out that the workshopping process provided space and allowed culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during the performance when they played the roles of an *igosa* and an *inyosi*. The participants were inspired by how the process empowered women.

The final seminar happened on the 2nd of December 2021. It took 25 minutes and 16 seconds. The group interview was held, and the follow-up question was asked as follows:

- **Do you think the performing arts provide the space for culturally marginalised women to express themselves culturally?** (see question 4 of Appendix 2).

Most of the participants agreed that a process such as *Sisukaphi? 2021* posed an excellent example of a performance space that empowered female performers, and it had provided a space to empower female performers. However, the study was interested in another participant's view that had a slightly different shape to those of the rest, as quoted below:

> "I do agree that the performing arts provides the space to emancipate the female performers in a cultural performance. Where? It has only happened here. However, it cannot happen in rural areas and villages where we come from" (Thembi).

The participant argued that a process such as *Sisukaphi? 2021* posed an excellent example of a performance space that empowered female performers but raised concerns about the reality outside in terms of the stays and conventions associated with *AmaZulu* cultural performances.

The *inyosi* and *igosa's* roles served as a means to allow the culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during the performance and to challenge gender specificity in a cultural performance. For this objective, this research will discuss the power possessed by the above roles and examine their impacts when they are played by female performers as opposed to male performers. I coined the terms 'female *inyosi*' and 'female *igosa*' for political reasons to examine the power distribution in a mixed-gendered cultural performance.

5.6. Participating for Transformation

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two pointed out that the performing arts provide a means for transformation (Alborough, 2004; Power, 2012; Murray, 2012). The current study examined the impact of involving oneself in the workshopping process of a reconceptualised *AmaZulu* cultural performance. This study was concerned with how the workshopping process could transform the cultural beliefs and identities of the participants involved. This section presents the findings for the fourth research question, which reads as follows:

(4) How does a reconceptualised cultural performance transform participants' cultural beliefs and identities?

Since the fourth research question is twofold, this section presents the data concerning the notion of the transformation of cultural beliefs and the transformation of identity.

5.6.1. Transformation of cultural beliefs

The notion of cultural belief transformation was explored with the participants via the question presented below:

- **In what ways do you think your participation in a reconceptualised cultural performance has impacted your cultural beliefs?** (See question 4 of Appendix 1).

Regarding the transformation of cultural beliefs, the participants shared their differing views concerning the process. The study sampled four relevant quotes from the participants, who acknowledged that the process had transformed how they viewed their culture. The participants were grouped as group A1, and the group was comprised of four females. They were all born and raised in peri-urban regions. They were all inspired by the university's background in performing

arts. They all majored in Music, and Drama and Performance Studies. Their perceptions are presented as follows:

> "Has impacted beliefs about *AmaZulu* culture; that women must be given enough support as men in all the aspect of living" (Philile).

The participant above associated cultural belief transformation with women's empowerment in all aspects of life.

This participant stated the following:

> "I started to understand that traditional dance and music are generally gender oppressive towards the females" (Thanazi).

This participant related the idea of cultural belief transformation to gender inequality.

Another participant stated:

> "It has impacted my belief in women, their leadership skills, their boldness. It has impacted the way I value people's surnames. Not only mine, [but] now I do not only ask people their names but also their surnames, because they are more important than their names. It has impacted me that way. I am like, if I come across a person, I now think of their clan names" (Mbali).

This participant firstly related the transformation of cultural beliefs to women's leadership, skills, and power. She further stated that the process had impacted her and made her realise the importance of other people's surnames and clan names.

This participant stated:

> "The whole process for me was to ground me and make me remember and cherish my culture." (Jane).

The participant above stated that the workshopping process helped her remember and cherish her culture.

The above-cited participants associated the notion of the transformation of cultural beliefs with the idea of women being given the same level of support as men in all aspects of living and

recognition of their leadership skills. They further associated it with acknowledging and cherishing their cultural attributes, such as the clan names of people.

Table 5.3: The Groups' Perceptions of Cultural Transformation				
	Group A1		Group B1	
Demographics	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**
Gender	4	0	1	4
Born and raised in a peri-urban region	4	0	0	0
Born and raised in a rural area	0	0	1	4
Home background as inspiration for the performing arts	0	0	1	3
School background as inspiration for the performing arts	4	0	0	1
Music, Drama and Performance Studies as major subjects	4	0	0	0
Music Performance and IsiZulu as major subjects	0	0	1	4

Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

While Group A1 comprised female participants who perceived their cultural beliefs to have been transformed, Group B1, on the other hand, comprised one female and four males. They perceived that their cultural beliefs were not transformed due to their participation in the workshopping process. All the participants in this group were born and raised in rural areas, and of those, one female and three males were inspired by their home backgrounds when participating in the workshop as part of their performing arts degree course. The other male in Group B1 was inspired by his school background. All the members of this group majored in Music Performance and isiZulu, and they shared similar sentiments concerning the transformation of their cultural beliefs. Five quotes have been sampled to present the perceptions of the participants:

> "I can't say it had an impact, but I liked the women's support and empowerment part" (Thembi).

The participant did not acknowledge that the workshopping process had transformed her; however, she did like the idea of women's empowerment during the workshop.

Similarly, another participant stated:

> "*Ngiyaqonda ukuthi i-workshop yethu ibimayelana nokuthi sizifune thina izimvelaphi zethu. Nokuthi kuqhakambiseke ukusekwa kwabesifazane. Kodwa, mina, angeke ngithi kukhona umehluko owenzekile ngokwempilo yami*" (I understand that our workshop was about searching for our origins. Moreover, women must be supported. However, I cannot say a difference happened in my life) (Sonke).

Xolani's cultural beliefs were also not transformed:

> "*Ngilibambile iqhaza, kodwa akukho okushintshile kulokhu engikholelwa kukho kwesintu sami*" (I have taken part, but nothing has changed from what I believe about my tradition) (Xolani).

Sonke's cultural beliefs were not transformed either:

> "*Umdlalo ubumnandi, futhi ngiwu enjoyile. Kodwa usiko, usiko, lashiywa obaba mkhulu ngenhloso yokuthi nathi sizuze* and learn from it. Now if *silixukuza, izizikulwane ezizayo zizodideka*" (The play was terrific, and I enjoyed it. Nevertheless, culture is culture. Our great grandfathers left it with an aim for us to gain and learn from it. If we twist it, the upcoming generations will be confused) (Sonke).

Although this participant justified his standpoint, he failed to realise that culture is not static. Instead, it is fluid and evolves over time.

Sbani had this to say:

> "It is not easy to change how I view my culture. It is not easy to change. The teachings of my culture align with the teachings of my church. There is a way that a man must handle himself as a man, and the same for women. What we did in class was not true. It was only a play…. The play cannot just impact on the culture I learnt for years" (Sbani).

The participant quoted above stated that the workshopping process could not change how he understood and viewed his culture. His beliefs were rooted in his church's teachings, which aligned with those of his culture. His perception points out that the church and the *AmaZulu* culture continue to be the institutions of cultural preservation and control of power. Regarding the transformation of cultural beliefs, the study will rely on table 5.3 to generalise the findings during the discussion.

5.6.2. Identity transformation

The fourth research question inspired this theme. The question was also rephrased in the interview questionnaire for the participants and read as follows:

- **Do you think the workshopping process has influenced your identity transformation? Please explain how.** (See question five of Appendix 1).

After involving the students in a production that allowed them to feel pride and praise themselves by using their clan names while singing, dancing, and telling stories about their families and clan histories, I wanted to assess if the process might have influenced their identities. This was because during the literature review in Chapter Two, it was highlighted that the performing arts could serve as a tool for transitioning people's identities (Ewing, 2010; Adeniran & Akinlabi, 2011; Agua, 2018). I similarly asserted that the performing arts had moulded my identity transformation, and I had transformed from a township boy into a proud young *AmaZulu* man (see section 4.5). As the artist-researcher, I used this question to determine if my perception of my transformation intersected with the perceptions of the study participants.

The responses to the theme in the discussion justified the workshopping processes' potential to transform the participants' identities. The study samples four relevant quotes from the participants who replied with a "yes", meaning that their identities were transformed by their participation in the workshopping process. They provided different justifications for how they felt their identities had changed during the process. For instance, one participant stated:

> "It influenced my identity in the form of my day-to-day life. The way I dress now is more culturally symbolic. I plan more and take pride in what I wear and how I wear it. Now, I always try to add the element of the African beads to embellish my culture boldly" (Mbali).

The workshopping process impacted how the participant dressed and she altered her style to show pride in herself and her cultural identity.

Another participant similarly stated:

> "I have learnt value in knowing about my roots as *umZulu* and as my grandparents' descendant. The process helped me gain pride in my cultural identity" (Jane).

This participant acknowledged the value of the workshop in assisting her in acquiring pride in her cultural identity.

Other participants showed commonality in their responses due to their having the same ethnic background. See their perceptions, for instance:

> "My family originates from Eswatini, but I was born and grew up in South Africa in KZN. I have known myself as *umZulu*. However, the workshopping process asked me to search my history. The more I searched about my surname and its origins from Eswatini, the more I reconnected to my Swati identity" (Falakhe).

Another participant from Eswatini stated:

> "I am from Eswatini, but I grew up here in KwaZulu-Natal. However, we occasionally visit my grandparents and uncles at home for Christmas in Eswatini. The process made me realise my mixed cultural identity: A *Swati-AmaZulu* maiden" (Nana).

Both Nana and Falakhe appreciated the workshopping process as it invoked their forgotten and suppressed Swati identities that had been forgotten and suppressed as they conformed to their *AmaZulu* cultural identities.

All the participants who replied to the question with a "yes" related the transformation of their cultural identities. The above participants were grouped into a group called Group A2. The group consisted of three females and one male. The three females were born and raised in peri-urban areas, while the one male was born and raised in a rural area. They were all inspired by their home experiences in their performing arts practices. Three females majored in Music and Drama and Performance Studies, while the one male majored in Music Performance and IsiZulu.

Table 5.4: The Groups' Perceptions of Identity Transformation

	Group A2		Group B2	
Demographics	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**
Gender	3	1	1	1
Born and raised in a peri-urban region	3	0	0	0
Born and raised in a rural area	0	1	1	1
Home background as inspiration for the performing arts	3	1	1	1
School background as inspiration for the performing arts	0	0	0	0
Music, Drama and Performance Studies as major subjects	3	0	0	0
Music Performance and IsiZulu as major subjects	0	1	1	1

Source: Artist-Researcher (2024)

Group B2 was comprised of the participants who replied to the question with a "no", meaning that they did not acknowledge that their identities were transformed due to their participation in the workshop. The study samples two quotes from participants, one female and one male. They were both born and raised in rural areas. They were both inspired by their home experiences in their performing arts practices. They both majored in Music Performance and IsiZulu. Their responses were as follows:

> "The process did not influence anything related to my identity….. The project we did was for exams. Maybe it is because I did not take it too deep and emotionally, I only thought for my exams" (Xolani).

This response by Xolani revealed that for a person to be transformed, they had to be emotionally connected to the performance they were doing. However, detaching themselves emotionally from the performance did not facilitate a transformation.

Another participant also felt no transformation in her identity, as she stated:

> "I am the same person. The workshopping was based on what I grew up doing. At home, we sing and do *AmaZulu* dancing. I am just an *AmaZulu* girl" (Noma).

This statement pointed out that one needed to be engaged in something new that they were not familiar with in order to be transformed. When one gets introduced to something new, they learn new things and thus get transformed.

The study noted different views from the participants concerning the notion of transformation due to participation in a workshopping process. The participants were therefore grouped according to how they perceived the transformation of their cultural beliefs and identities after participating in a reconceptualised cultural performance. Group A1 perceived that they were transformed as a result of their participation in the workshopping process. Group B1 perceived that their cultural beliefs had not been transformed due to their participation. Regarding the notion of identity transformation, the data similarly produced groups A2 and B2. Group A2 acknowledged their identity transformation due to their participation in the workshopping process. However, group B2 felt that their identities had not been transformed. The study noted that the different participants' demographics produced these perspectives.

For this reason, it can be said that a reconceptualised cultural performance impacts its participants differently depending on their demographics. During the discussion, this research will generalise the notion of transformation using the participants' contexts of birth and upbringing (namely in peri-urban regions or rural areas) and their major subjects being studied at university (namely Music and Drama and Performance Studies or Music Performance and IsiZulu) because these demographics produced similar patterns in the participants' views. For this reason, the discussion will conceptualises the impact of socio-cultural and academic backgrounds on transformational performances.

While the study explored the notions of culture and identity transformation, the participants' perspectives revealed some differences. This exploration therefore negotiates the possible influences of the participants' perspectives and differences. The study notes that the variables resulting from the notion of transformation discussed above are from different geo-cultural

settings and academic institutions. Notably, all the participants studied Music Performance as their major subject. This study will therefore focus on the geo-cultural context of peri-urban and rural areas as an influential mechanism for understanding the context of people's thinking. This study also notes isiZulu and Drama and Performance Studies as influential on the participants' perspectives.

5.7. The Cultural Status Quo, Aesthetics, and the COVID-19 Pandemic

This section presents the findings concerning the fifth objective, which was guided by the following research question:

(5) What are the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance that challenges the cultural status quo of that particular culture during the COVID-19 pandemic?

As the artist-researcher, I sourced the data concerning this research question. I relied on my personal reflexive questions to meet the fifth study objective. The following questions were asked:

> **What are the challenges associated with creating an ensemble production with university students?** (See question 3 of Appendix 3).

As discussed in Chapter Four, I have been exposed to theatrical productions, from amateur to semi-professional and professional productions. I thus know what it takes to create a successful theatrical production. However, working with university students meant that there would be many hindrances to having a professional production. For instance, a professional artist working in creative and professional spaces outside of a university setting is okay with allowing the thoughts and ideas of their directors to dictate and control their bodies. For instance, if a choreographer tells a dancer to jump, they will do so. Similarly, if a director tells an actor to fast-pace a particular line in a monologue, the actor will do so. Perhaps the only concern will be to negotiate the height of a jump and the tempo. However, working with the students in the university setting would not involve the same professionalism and commitment as they had not het embarked on their careers. This meant that I had to recognise all the parameters associated with the setting.

The question above helped with documentation of all the parameters and challenges associated with the university context, and they are listed below:

(i) The time spent on rehearsals was limited due to the limited number of hours assigned for them by the university's timetable. This resulted in the process needing more time for rehearsals.

(ii) Some students were unwilling to give their best because they were yet to become professional artists. They were still studying towards their performing arts degrees.

(iii) The students could only dedicate limited time to thinking deeply, searching extensively, and giving more to the project because they also had other university modules to study for. They had to balance the time they spent on the modules.

(iv) I had to consider the students' feelings rather than having the freedom to explore the process more creatively. For instance, I could not force a student to play a particular role if they were uncomfortable with it. The intention was not to infringe on the rights of the students and somehow interfere with the university's policies.

The following personal reflexive question serves as the context for negotiating the mitigative measures outlined above.

- **What strategies could be used to mitigate the challenges experienced in a theatrical production process with students who are not all theatre-trained?** (See question 4 of Appendix 3).

While connected by the AMD Ensemble module, the third-year students who participated in *Sisukaphi? 2021* were differentiated by their significant subjects in their degree courses. Some majored in Drama and Performance Studies, while others majored in isiZulu. While Drama and Performance Studies are physical and theoretical, they offer modules that help develop the psychology of an actor and a performer so that they can separate themselves from the self and a character. In isiZulu, the modules are more literal than practical. For this reason, mixing the students majoring in these modules meant that they would relate differently to the workshopping process.

This meant that devising the production would be very challenging. It is not easy to teach a melody to a person who is not aurally gifted, as they would struggle to hear the tune. Similarly, developing a character with a performer who does not believe in themselves is tricky. This process becomes easier if they can withdraw from their memories and use them to feed into their characters. However, I know that some people feel uneasy about acting and cannot use their memories to connect with the characters they are meant to play.

As all the students were music candidates, it meant that they were okay with music. However, others struggled with the acting component of the production. Therefore, I provided the following strategies to mitigate their acting difficulties:

(i) Auditory learning tools were provided. This was because some people learn more effectively by listening. They prefer listening to a lecture instead of reading a textbook or hearing instructions for a project instead of figuring the project out as they go along.

(ii) I recorded different voices and sent them as voice notes to the students who struggled to find voices for their characters. I recorded different voices for one character, and this helped the students as they could then copy the voice that interested them while they were trying to develop their characters.

(iii) I allowed the participants to take videos of me while demonstrating characters. These videos helped the participants, as they could watch the videos and learn to mimic gestures when developing the gestures for their characters.

The final reflexive question was presented as follows:

- **What are the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance that challenges the cultural status quo of that particular culture?** (See question 5 of Appendix 3)

The current state of *AmaZulu* cultural performances was discussed in the previous sections, and *AmaZulu* cultural beliefs shape the performances. For instance, the culture is patriarchal, and this means that the patriarchal tendencies of the culture also influence the performing arts industry. The participants who participated in the process were predominantly *AmaZulu* speakers. There were nine participants who had been born and raised in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal, and five females had been born and raised in the peri-urban areas of the province. The participants from the rural areas constituted 64 per cent of the sample, and the ones from the peri-urban areas constituted 36 per cent.

As discussed in the previous sections, the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* decolonised many conventions concerning *AmaZulu* cultural performances. This was achieved by twisting the recitation conventions of *AmaZulu* praise poetry. The praises of King Goodwill Zwelithini Zulu were not recited in the 'normal' manner, using a fast-paced and high-pitched voice (Kresse, 1998: 175). Instead, they were turned into a song. The decolonisation was also evident in the exchange of the *inyosi* and *igosa* roles. These roles were played by female performers instead of male performers.

The rural areas were considered to be powerful institutions promoting cultural preservation. The parameters of the performance for the study were therefore considered based on what could be an obstacle when devising a production that twisted the *AmaZulu* culture yet was to be performed by people who were all native isiZulu speakers of that culture. Sixty-four per cent of the participants conformed to the norms of the *AmaZulu* culture because they were born and raised in the rural areas of the province. The main concern was how participants would feel about performing a twisted, challenged, and decolonised version of their cultural performance?
This was a potential problem for me as an artist who likes experimenting with the craft. I like to explore and push the boundaries of the performing arts. For instance, my dance choreographies are not constrained by stylistic dance conventions, and I do what I feel like doing. When choreographing, I usually fuse three dance genres, namely *ushameni*[16], *umzansi*[17], and contemporary dance moves, into one choreography. These are the dances I was exposed to while still involved in the community arts sector and as a student. I can only do a choreography by intertwining these genres, and I feel that a choreography is complete with this fusion.

There was an instance when my choreography triggered conflict. While working on the choreography with the students during the rehearsal on Wednesday, the 15th of September 2021, I demonstrated a dance sequence that included rolling on the floor. Some participants had conflicting ideas about this. One of my strategies when choreographing a dance is talking through the dance sequences before the actual dance begins. This is thus the spoken version of it, and I refer to this as 'spoken dance'. The spoken version narrates the sequence of the dance. During the rehearsal of the choreography on Wednesday, the 15th of September 2021, I said to the class:

> *"Ngiqale ngiyilande kabili engathi ngizodlala ushameni, ebese ngibuya emuva ngishaye izinyawo ezintathu ezisheshayo."* (I start by moving forward as if I will do '*ushameni*' and then move backwards and do three fast kicks).
>
> *"Ebese ngilanda umzansi, ngishaye u-1, ngenze ikhona lomzansi eIijikelezayo*." (And then I do an *'umzansi'* starting move, I do one kick, then an *'umzansi'* turning sequence).

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[16] It is an *AmaZulu* dance form usually accompanied by handclapping, chanting, and singing. It is performed predominantly and widely in KwaZulu-Natal province, particularly in Maphumulo and Ulundi.

[17] *Umzansi* dance is an *AmaZulu* dance form sometimes called *ingoma yempi* (the war dance). It is accompanied by singing, clapping, and chanting and uses a Salvation Army drum accompaniment as one of its unique characteristics. This dance form is performed predominantly and widely in KwaZulu-Natal, particularly in areas such as Bergville; hence, it is known as the *isi-Bhegvili* (The dance from Bergville)

"Ngibuyela phambili engathi ngizodlala ushameni futhi, ngishaye u-1 ebese ngishaya inqimphothwe, ngivuke ngishaye u-3." (I move forward as if I will play *ushameni* again. I do one kick, then the rolling on the floor. Then I wake up and do three kicks).

"Bese ngishaya I barrel jump ngiflathele." (Then, I do a barrel jump and face the opposite side).

I repeated this spoken text in isiZulu until most of the participants could say it by heart. After that, I told them:

"Ok, guys, we will break the sequence down. We will start by moving forward as if we will do *ushameni*, and then move backwards and do three fast kicks. Let us start."

I picked up a djembe drum to provide a beat for the dance and started beating it. Most of the participants attempted the moves, but Lolo stopped. I was concerned, and I asked her:

"*Aw Lolo, yini manje inkinga yakho wama, abanye bebe bedansa*." (Hey Lolo, what is your problem? You are standing while others are dancing).

She replied:

"*Ay nje thisha ukuthi, inzima lento, futhi mina ngishadile, angivumelekile ukuthi ngirolle phansi kulihlazo*." (No, teacher, it is just that this thing is complicated, and I am married. I am not allowed to roll on the floor, it is a humiliation).

No one knew that she was married and did not realise why she would relate her personal life to practical university work. This situation created a debate amongst the students, as some felt that the choreography should continue because they liked it. I realised that this phenomenon was viewed differently by different participants. While the other students liked the dance move, her feelings had to be considered, and I told myself that Lolo's behaviour resulted from her exposure to an alien situation. She was exposed to a performance practice that disobeyed her culture. She was exposed to a decolonised idea of *AmaZulu* cultural performance, and she was conceptually aware that a married woman could not roll on the floor according to her *AmaZulu* culture.

I had no option but to change the dance sequence, as it was not my intention to suppress the student's cultural beliefs. Barz and Cooley (2008: 2) posit that fieldworkers must "respect [their] informants' beliefs and traditions; [they] may object to attitudes or behaviours on a personal level, but [their] role[s] as […] researcher[s] [is to] not pass judgements." I therefore had to find a

different dance move that would ease the discord between the participants. The rolling sequence was changed to allow some dancers to roll on the floor while others made a turn in a standing position. There was a mixture of genders among those who rolled on the floor and those who made the standing turn, and Lola was included in the group that made the standing turn. I suppressed the idea of gendered performance in this instance. This experience taught me that the performing arts could conflict with the *AmaZulu* culture's morals and values. This meant that when working in an environment of this kind, as a performing artist, I had to adapt to the context and not focus only on the aesthetics of a choreography. I also had to consider the performers' feelings concerning their cultural norms. The spoken dance played a significant role because the process took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. There was not enough time for all the rehearsals required, so the participants had to practice on their own as well. They used the spoken dance as a reminder of the dance moves when they worked individually after the rehearsals.

As stated, the workshopping process took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, and South Africa was operating according to the Adjusted Level 3 lockdown regulations published in the Government Gazette at the time (Republic of South Africa, Department of Co-Operative Governance, 2021). The opening and closure of schools, early childhood development centres, and institutions of higher education were regulated to prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19 in all institutions.[18] During this period, university teaching that involved practical teaching was allowed with precautions, including social distancing and mask-wearing. The COVID-19 pandemic posed a major challenge for lessons and this study. Classes for the AMD Ensemble course started online via Zoom meetings, like the one held on the 5th of August 2021.

While the findings have pointed out many aspects that limited the creative process, including the challenges of creating an ensemble production with university students, the findings further provided strategies to help the performers who were not theatrically trained to be able to participate in a theatrical production. In terms of the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance that challenged the cultural status quo of the *AmaZulu* culture during the COVID-19 pandemic, this research will discuss the impact of creating a decolonised cultural performance during the COVID-19 pandemic that was aesthetically acceptable.

[18]Sourced from the South African Government's Information Page. Available: https://www.gov.za/covid-19/alert-level-3-coronavirus-covid-19-lockdown

5.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the current study by interweaving my reflexivity as the artist-researcher with the findings from the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*, the participant observations, the in-depth interviews, and the focus group interviews. This research applied performance autoethnography as the research methodology and sampled 14 participants: 9 females and 5 males. They were purposively and conveniently selected based on their socio-cultural and personal backgrounds, their participation in the *Sisukaphi? 2021* workshopping process, their willingness to participate in the study, and their availability for data collection. This study has presented the findings and been guided by the following themes that were identified in the data:

1) **The emergence and workshopping process of *Sisukaphi?***

   Under this theme, the study provided the background and the influences that led to the emergence of *Sisukaphi?* (see section 5.2). The research narrated the evolution and influence of the workshopping process, which started out as a theatrical production for school learners, became university students' practical exam component, and ended up as a case study. The study further provided the phases used in the creative process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*. The research provided an example of the transition of praise poetry into a harmonious song. The chapter provided how the characterisations in the storytelling were created using the students' family histories, cultural backgrounds, and clan names. This research will discuss the notion of theatricalised African storytelling in due course.

2) **A site for cultural heritage**

   The research discussed the notion of cultural heritage in relation to cultural performance. The research findings pointed to the most expected understanding of the notion of cultural heritage between me as the artist-researcher (see section 4.5), the literature review (see section 2.4.1), and the participants (see section 5.3). This research will, therefore, discuss how the performing arts serve as temporary and imaginary heritage sites.

3) **The cultural influences on female performers' disempowerment**

   Under this theme, the research findings showed how children are raised in the *AmaZulu* culture. The different approaches used in raising children are sexist and promote gender inequality that disempowers women in the long run (see section 5.4). This research will, therefore, discuss the perpetuators of gendered performance.

4) **The empowerment of culturally marginalised female performers**

Under this theme, the data asserted that a process such as *Sisukaphi? 2021* posed an excellent example of a performance space that empowered female performers but raised concerns about the reality outside the stays and the conventions associated with *AmaZulu* cultural performances (see section 5.5). This research will discuss strategies to raise awareness and challenge gender specificity in cultural performances using female *inyosi* and *igosa* roles.

5) **Participating for transformation**

The notion of participating was negotiated within the understanding that the performing arts provide the means for transformation. As the artist-researcher, I reflected on my personal understanding of community arts centres as tools for promoting cultural preservation and motivating identity transformation (see section 4.5). The literature asserts in Chapter Two that the performing arts provide the means for transformation (see section 2.4.3). The study's participants, however, had differing views concerning transformation (see section 5.6). During the discussion, this research will generalise the notion of transformation using the participants' contexts of their birth, upbringing, and their major subjects at university because these demographics provided similar patterns in the participants' views. For this reason, the discussion will negotiate the impact of socio-cultural and academic backgrounds on transformational performance.

6) **The cultural status quo versus performance aesthetics and the COVID-19 pandemic**

The findings have pointed out many aspects that limited the creative process, including the challenges of creating an ensemble production with university students. The findings provided strategies for teaching acting skills to non-acting students, including audio and video recordings (see section 5.7). This research will discuss how performance aesthetics were affected by creating a decolonised cultural performance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHAPTER SIX

RECONTEXTUALISING THE RECONCEPTUALISED CULTURAL PERFORMANCE

6.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings. Chapter Five analysed the workshopping process and the data concerning the participants' perceptions of the impact of participating in the workshopping process about cultural heritage celebration, the debates about power dynamics, and gender stereotypes during a cultural performance. This chapter first presents an overview of the study's findings. Secondly, the chapter negotiates the notion of recontextualisation to situate the discussion around theatricalised African storytelling and temporary and imaginary cultural heritage sites. Thirdly, the chapter uses reconceptualisation as a frame to situate the discussion around the perpetuators of gendered performance, the empowerment of culturally marginalised female performers, and the impact of the performance on the participants' personal transformation. Lastly, this research discusses how the aesthetics of the performance were affected by creating a decolonised cultural performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study's analytical framework reveals and reinforces the complexity of the practice and the participants' geopolitical landscapes and socio-cultural backgrounds. This discussion is negotiated from decolonial and feminist perspectives.

6.2. Overview of the Key Findings

During the emergence and workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021,* the data noted the transition of praise poetry into a harmonious song. The theme demonstrated the creation of storytelling and characterisation and recommended the creation of a 'warm space' as a fundamental location for a successfully workshopped cultural performance project. The study further regarded the process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* as 'theatricalised African storytelling' due to some of the elements used in the creation process.

A theme identified in the data was the notion of the performing arts as a site for cultural heritage. The study adopted the commonest understanding of cultural heritage between me as the artist-researcher, the literature review, and the views of the participants, and this research discussed how the performing arts serve as 'temporary' and 'imaginary' heritage sites.

The study identified the cultural influences on female disempowerment as a theme in the data and showed how the different approaches to raising children in the *AmaZulu* culture are sexist and promote gender inequality that disempowers women in every aspect of life. This research therefore pinpointed this aspect as the perpetuator of gendered performances.

An additional theme identified was the empowerment of culturally marginalised female performers. The data asserted that a process such as *Sisukaphi? 2021* posed an excellent example of a performance space that empowered female performers. The data also cautioned that while this performing arts production empowered female performers, the reality outside of this setting is that women are denied power by their culture. The study further identified the casting of a female *inyosi* and a female *igosa* as a strategy to empower female performers during this *AmaZulu* cultural performance. The study discussed the power associated with these roles.

Another theme identified was that of performance transformation, which concerned the identity and cultural transformation of the self when participating in a cultural performance. The participants had differing views concerning the notion of transformation. This research generalised the notion of transformation using the participants' contexts of birth, upbringing, and their major subjects in their courses at university because similarities in these demographics were associated with similar views by the participants.

The last theme identified was the parameters and the impact of challenging the cultural status quo when producing this cultural performance. The aspects that limited the creative process during the creation of this production included the challenge of creating an ensemble production with university students. The findings provided strategies for teaching acting skills to non-acting students as opposed to professional performing arts practitioners. This research also discussed the impact of creating a decolonised cultural performance on the aesthetics of the performance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.3. Recontextualisation of a Cultural Performance

This section discusses the data concerning the emergence and workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*. The workshopping process was recontextualised by default owing to its location and the creative decisions taken by the participants and me as the artist-researcher. The

study examines the impact of situating the performance in a context different from its original context. This section is framed within recontextualisation.

The workshopping process was based on the recontextualisation of the *AmaZulu* cultural performance. A context, according to Nketia (1981: 81), is any environment—physical, ecological, social, cultural, or intellectual—in which an object or unit of experience is seen to determine its identity or qualities, as well as its relationships with other objects or units of experience. Nketia discusses contextualisation as the process of viewing those aspects in a context in terms of their internal and external relations and relevance (1981: 81).

It is unrewarding to look for meaning in a contextless phenomenon. Therefore, this research draws on the example of the contextualised *AmaZulu* cultural performance to get the idea of a recontextualised performance. Context is essential to one's historical background, experience, and journey in the performing arts, as it provides the background for understanding and analysis. I have learned that the purpose and meaning of any cultural performance change depending on the context in which it is happening, and I have observed that when a cultural performance occurs outside its context, it will never be authentic. Burke (2002) points out that to analyse both present and past situations, it is necessary to re-place the situation in its context. That is, it is crucial to first understand an *AmaZulu* cultural performance within its original and traditional context before negotiating a recontextualised version of one. Therefore, to understand an *AmaZulu* cultural performance, it is best to understand it from its geographic location. The study adopted Cowan and Murdoch's (2006: 5) presentation of the factors of context.

Ability/skills – Attitudes – Behaviours – Beliefs – Culture- History – Identity – Relationships – Knowledge – Motivations – Power relations – Practices/techniques – Social norms – Social structures – Trust – Values
Figure 6.1: The Factors of Context

Source: Cowan and Murdoch (2006)

I observed the contextualised *AmaZulu* cultural performance as a conventional performance aligned with its geographical location. Prescribed people will always perform this kind of performance. Some activities during the *AmaZulu* performances are only assigned to and done by a specific gender. If the performance does not follow the specific rules, it cannot be trusted as authentic, meaning that the culture has been devalued. Therefore, the attitudes and behaviours of

its performers are contained within the specific understanding and conventions of that particular culture.

An excellent example of a contextualised cultural performance that is well known is the *umkhosi womhlanga*, the annual *AmaZulu* maidens' reed dance hosted by the *AmaZulu* royal family. It occurs at the Enyokeni palace in Nongoma, Northern KwaZulu-Natal, in South Africa. This ceremony takes place annually in September. The above example justifies that there is an admired and treasured history here, and the location is crucial for the ritual ceremony. Now, can you imagine changing this location to another one? Can you imagine this cultural practice happening in another place besides the Enyokeni palace? What about the ritual practices that take place before the actual cultural activity? These include *ukushiswa kwempepho kukhulunywa nabaphasi* (the calling of the ancestors in the shrine) and the slaughtering of a cow in a ritual ceremony to inform the ancestors about the event. What about the lead princess, chosen by his majesty the King, who wears an emptied, inflated, dried cow's gall bladder on her head? This activity also includes the activity where the *ibutho* (a group of men or regiment) set off to eHabeni, which is about 30 km west of Empangeni, to harvest thousands of reeds, which are later transported to the Enyokeni Royal Palace (Nkosi, 2019).

What would happen if this performance occurred in a different context? What would it be like, given the beliefs, cultural identity, and social norms associated with the *AmaZulu* culture? This event would be something different. This cultural performance is shaped by gender. For instance, the *ibutho's* activity of harvesting the reeds is assigned to men because they are physically strong. During the event, the maidens dance before the King, a male figure and the most respected person in the ceremony. The masses have to bow before him, and he is praised by a male praise singer before he appears and as he leaves. There is a clear idea of the power relations here. It shows that men occupy a higher social structure and possess more societal power than women.

Overall, a contextualised cultural performance is the kind of performance that cannot exist in a different setting. Of course, I do not intend to say that it cannot happen elsewhere. However, the truth is, if it is relocated, it will never be as authentic as it is supposed to be. It will be different from what is known and believed. The study therefore refers to a relocated cultural performance as a recontextualised performance because, with any art form, there are aspects of the performance in terms of where it is viewed or evaluated that will change when it is taken out of its original context (Mundundu, 2005).

The above definitions serve as the foundation and a vehicle for understanding how *Sisukaphi? 2021* served as a recontextualised *AmaZulu* cultural performance. In this case, recontextualisation can be defined as presenting a performance in a new context. This notion can be applied to any type and category of performance, be it musical theatre, a storytelling performance, or a popular contemporary or traditional performance. Through the years, music scholars have tried to achieve a balance between the richness of art in its context and the richness of the art itself (Kerman, 1985). For example, an art object with a specific cultural value and meaning in its traditional context may have a different value when displayed on a museum shelf (Mundundu, 2005).

The concept behind a recontextualised performance is that in order for it to be acceptable, it needs to be arranged in a particular way or have a better appearance than it did initially (Haywood, 2014). Sometimes, the process of recontextualising a traditional art form is motivated by its aim and purpose and the location where the performance will be taking place. For instance, the recontextualisation of *Sisukaphi? 2021* was motivated by the university setting and the workshopping process intended for the students.

It is important to mention the impact of recontextualisation. It brought a fusion of cultural performance, the transformation of performance conventions, and the performers involved. For instance, in *Sisukaphi? 2021*, *ushameni* and *umzansi* dances were no longer conventional since they were fused with other dances, such as contemporary dance. This fusion transformed the conventions associated with these dances, such as gender specificity. The dances mixed male and female students, unlike the conventional ones, such as *ingoma yezinsizwa* or *ingoma yezintombi* (male or female dance), where the genders are separated according to the dance type. These experiences brought some new insights to some participants in the study.

6.3.1. Theatricalised African storytelling

The participants used storytelling to narrate their autobiographical presentations, and this was also a form of recontextualisation. I examined African storytelling within its contextualised setting. As observed, African people are traditionally rooted in oral cultures and traditions (Thiong'o, 1986). They have used storytelling for decades to preserve their histories, traditional cultures, and ritual ceremonies (Vambe, 2001). And while storytelling is the narration of stories and retelling of tales or narratives to an audience through voice and gestures, using

accompaniments such as singing, drumming, clapping, dancing, and incorporating plays, dramas, and poetry (Thiong'o, 1986; Achebe, 1992), it happens in a particular context.

One must observe the context of African storytelling to understand a recontextualised version of it. Researchers have documented that it stems from the culture of sitting around the fire, where an elder, such as a grandparent, tells stories to the listeners (Achebe, 1992). The listeners also participate in the story by singing along with the storyteller through call-and-response music. They also clap along with the storyteller where necessary. However, these joint participations are not rehearsed ones. The family or village members know all the cues for when to respond or clap along with the storyteller because the songs and stories told are usually typical. These stories are about the great gods and their ancestors, kings, heroes, and heroines (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986; Achebe, 1992). How these works of art are displayed and utilised distinguishes those created in traditional settings from those produced in modern ones. Professional ensembles plan their performances in traditional settings, while the villagers spontaneously display their talent (Mundundu, 2005).

The process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* presented a series of participants' storytelling pieces created through oral tradition, such as praise poetry, clan names, and other elements such as music and dance, accompanied by instruments such as drums, Kudu horns, and a guitar, and recited in an African language. These stories were told subjectively' (Tuwe, 2016), and they took the shape of autobiographical presentations because they were presented as life narratives written by the authors (Pun, 2016). These stories were researched, written, and performed by the participants, and more importantly, they related to the participants' family and cultural backgrounds.

Sisukaphi? 2021 presented African storytelling pieces recontextualised in a theatrical setting and researched, studied, blocked, and directed, as opposed to traditional African ones that are not rehearsed or researched. Instead, they emerged naturally from the experiences of the tellers and listeners discussed above. Most of the understanding and terminologies employed in the workshopping process were Western-influenced, owing to the researchers' educational background. However, it must be noted that these creative decisions endanger the literature that emancipates African performances and literature from Western ideologies (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, as cited in Bhola, 1987). These findings assisted the current study by contributing conceptually to the performing arts' scholarly field by negotiating how I coined the term 'theatricalised African storytelling' to refer to African storytelling that is not conventional and uses theatre features.

6.3.2. A temporary and imaginary cultural heritage site

The first research objective inspires this subsection. The first objective was to explore the performing arts as tools for cultural heritage for students during the workshopping process within the university context. During the literature review in the second chapter, the study negotiated cultural heritage sites, drawing on monuments, parks, and museums. It expanded that the purpose of these sites is to display a work of art of human creativity or an essential exchange of human values and to provide an indication of a tradition or civilisation that is either extinct or still alive (Sonkoly & Vahtikari, 2018). The above examples are contextualised cultural heritage sites.

In terms of the data presentation, the study noted that the performing arts serve as a temporary and imaginary site. This section negotiates how the performing arts form temporary and imaginary sites.

6.3.2.1 Temporary site

A performance is a temporary practice, whether it is a dance theatre or musical performance, traditional or modern, cultural or commercial, and it happens at a particular time for a specific purpose. Solitary Robben Island, nine kilometres offshore from Cape Town in South Africa, the Great Barrier Reef of Australia, the Iguazu National Park of Argentina, and Tsodilo in Botswana[19] are all tangible and permanent sites for cultural heritage. A performance, on the other hand, is only a temporary site for cultural heritage. As Jakovljević (2014: 7) highlights, a performance occurs against a backdrop of certain temporal conventions and expectations because of its spatial localisation. The preceding statement outlines that a performance exceeds what was promised while falling short of an infinite and unexpected set of institutional spaces, production conditions, and a particular audience's prior experiences and built-in expectations.

Some performances are temporary and last for hours, like theatrical shows, or days in the case of festivals. A performance could be in an indoor location, like a theatre, or an outdoor live performance during the Cape Town International Jazz Festival in South Africa. That is a temporary performance site. It could be an open space where community members gather to watch for free and participate in that performance to reflect and come up with solutions to improve the challenges they are facing in their community. Here, the community members become spect-actors (Boal, 1979). Such a temporary site was also evident at the South African

19 UNESCO. (2024). World Heritage List. Available: https://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/.

Playhouse in the City of Durban in December 2013, during Mbongeni Ngema's *The Zulu*.[20] It could be on any proscenium arch stage where you gain entry by purchasing tickets from retailers. A performance could also be given for purposes other than pure entertainment, like the sold-out concert performance of an *isicathamiya* by the *Ladysmith Black Mambazo* group at New York's famed Carnegie Hall in 2006.[21] Another instance of such a performance is the *AmaZulu* traditional *umzansi* dance that was performed by a South African ensemble group called *Ikusasalethu* during the ICTM in Thailand in 2019.[22] These performers could still be performing today if their performances were permanent sites. As a temporary site, a performance does not last forever. It lasts for a specific time, and it could be staged or performed anywhere, depending on the purpose of that performance. In this regard, the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* was an excellent example of a temporary site, as the process lasted for one semester.

6.3.2.2 Imaginary site

Banning (2005) examined a theatrical dance piece, *Dance in the Shadow of Pain*, with three student actors to explore relationships and connections to 'the lived-in world' and construct a fictional world. This section discusses how the performance space is an imaginary cultural heritage site. I observed that any theatrical production, whether a comic show, a musical, or a drama theatre, is only possible through mimicking. During the creation of *Sisukaphi? 2021*, the participants had to mimic the settings and the individuals they interviewed during the observation stage of the workshopping process. While mimicking can also be associated with characterisation, it comes through training and intense rehearsals. For instance, the students who partook in the workshop process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* underwent acting training, and this included training on the use of their imaginations. Constantin Stanislavski, a realist playwright and director, wrote *An Actor Prepares* (1936). This book provides a list of techniques that help actors be true to life when acting. Among these techniques is the use of imagination. He writes as follows: “There is no certainty on the stage. Art is an invention of the imagination, as the work

20 Bipat, J. (2013). *Catch the Zulu at the Playhouse ‘A major event on Durban’s live theatre calendar is Mbongeni Ngema’s heroic storytelling narrative, The Zulu, which continues its South African tour with a season at the Playhouse from 3 to 29 December'*. South Coast Sun, 28 November. Available: https://southcoastsun.co.za/29852/catch-zulu-playhouse/

21 Pareles, J. (2006). Giving pop a little kick with Zulu melodies. *New York Times*, 19 October. Available: https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/19/arts/music/19lady.html

22 Mungroo, M. (2019). *UKZN Students perform at International Council for Traditional Music World Conference*. African Music and Dance Archives. UKZN, School of Arts: Durban. Available: https://soa.ukzn.ac.za/news/ukzn-students-perform-at-international-council-for-traditional-music-world-conference/

of a dramatist should be" (Stanislavski, 2003: 54). An actor must aim to use his technique to turn a play into a theatrical reality, and his imagination will play the most significant part in this process. This statement clarifies that dramatic performance-making is associated with mimicking derived from the performers' imaginations.

Apart from characterisation, realist actors must be dressed in realistic costumes when representing their characters. All this acting should occur in a real-looking space to create the illusion of reality. For example, a set will consist of an actual couch, a coffee table decorated with a small vase on top, and other relevant set pieces if the scene occurs in a sitting room. However, the fact remains that the place is imagined and resembles another site. The actors will imagine the actual location to convince themselves of the characters they represent. The aim is to bring the imagination to life (Stanislavski, 2003). Make-believe is a companion to the imagination, and scholars associate imagination, make-believe, fantasy, pretence, and play as regular components of art and aesthetic theories. Imagination is the central idea, and the others generally appear as forms of imaginative activity or manifestations (Currie, 2005). Blacking (1983: 97) illustrates how the imagination helps to bring new coherence to the sensual, which could affect motivation, commitment, and decision-making in spheres of social life. Even though *Sisukaphi? 2021* was not a realistic production, the above debates offer an explanation of how the participants involved in *Sisukaphi? 2021* used their imaginations for character internalisation. This study explored how imagination aided in transforming the rehearsal space into a desired imagined space. Figure 5.7 shows the setting and characterisation used in the workshopping process. The workshopping site was imagined, and the whole process was set in an imagined palace called *KwaNdlovukazi.*

When attempting to make meaning out of the above, I noted that traditional and contemporary performances undergo a recontextualisation process when performed outside their contexts. Since scholars in many disciplines, including ethnomusicology, anthropology, and sociology, have tried to make sense of something in context for many years, they have agreed to the idea that culture is something that is constantly constructed and reconstructed (Mundundu, 2005).

In terms of the first objective, the current study noted that the performing arts became a temporary and imaginary heritage site for the participants. The workshopping process created a platform where the students could explore and learn about their cultural backgrounds. In exchange, they learned about other students' cultures and histories because every creative aspect (such as storytelling pieces, dances, and music) of the process was created during the process, in front of

everyone. Each participant needed the other participants' support to perform their creative pieces. For instance, each song needed the backers, and each dance needed the drumming and singing. This process forced the participants to pay attention to the other participants while learning their craft. These findings provide a conceptual contribution to the performing arts scholarly field by coining terms such as ‘temporary’ and ‘imaginary heritage’ sites when referring to the heritage experience created by the performing arts.

6.4. Reconceptualisation of a Cultural Performance

While the workshopping process was recontextualised by default, it was similarly reconceptualised due to the rethinking of methods, ways of thinking, and ways of disseminating ideas and concepts while putting on an *AmaZulu* cultural performance. The background for this dissertation was *Sisukaphi? 2021's* creative process. This research disproves assumptions and offers fresh perspectives beyond conceptual limitations regarding cultural performance. This rigorous reconceptualising is the means to disturb widely held beliefs and shake them up so they may settle down again to something unexpected. This dissertation is focused on revitalising old or stagnant notions. According to the online Cambridge Free English Dictionary (n.d.), reconceptualisation is "the act or process of forming a new or different idea or principle in your mind from one you had previously". The word ‘reconceptualisation’ derives from James Macdonald's (1971) research on curriculum. William Pinar popularised it in 1975 in the United States, when he introduced reconceptualisation as rethinking and challenging “atheoretical and ahistorical traditional curricula perspectives” (Haywood, 2014: 37). Reconceptualists from various disciplines began to use reconceptualisation to challenge traditional curricula in their fields of study (ibid.). Reconceptualisation aspires to critique and insists on transforming extant structures. It shares with critical theory the notion that criticism must refrain from reifying what it identifies and explains. It must function to dissolve frozen structures (Pinar, 1979: 96). This research claims that in order to rethink or reconceptualise performance events, there needs to be a shift in approach. This dissertation is based on moving away from thinking about cultural performance in terms of representations that habitually entrench pre-established images and towards thinking about performance in terms of divergence and difference (Tan, 2019). These discussions above serve as a frame to explore the reconceptualisation of power dynamics within an *AmaZulu* cultural performance, as explored during the workshopping process. The study reconceptualised the power dynamics in a cultural performance by questioning the gender imbalance that has long been ignored in practice and the

scholarly field. The upcoming subsections discuss the perpetuators of gendered performance, strategies to challenge gender specificity in cultural performances, and perspectives on cultural performances and transformation.

6.4.1. The perpetuators of gendered performance

While this study was concerned with the reconceptualisation of power dynamics during the cultural performance, it was inspired by the female students, who lacked the self-assurance to convey their family and cultural backgrounds compared to the male students. This theme was guided by the second study objective, which aimed to understand why female students failed to express themselves well regarding their family and cultural backgrounds compared to male students.

The research discovered that the female students could not express themselves well regarding their family and cultural backgrounds compared to male students because males and females are raised and groomed differently in African cultures, especially in the context of the *AmaZulu* culture. These differing ways of raising children are gender specific. For instance, the findings pointed out that while boys are herding cattle in the fields, they are also trained on how to be men by the elders. They are also trained in pride dancing with a stick and self-praising. On the other hand, female children are trained to do household chores, like polishing floors with cattle dunk and cooking. These gender roles are what gender theorist and feminist Judith Butler (1994) calls 'gender performativity'. Butler challenged the gender distinction to argue that sex is not always already gendered. Since existence is social, all bodies are gendered from the moment of their social creation. This implies that a "natural body" does not exist independently of its cultural inscription. This seems to lead to the argument that gender is an act—or, more accurately, a series of acts—rather than something a person is.

Some of the performers recognised the notion of gendered performance, but most of them ignored it. This research based this variable on the participants' different socio-cultural and geographical contexts and found that participants from rural areas dominated the sample. The participants who perceived inequality in the cultural performance were grouped as "A" and constituted 42.85 per cent of the study population. They comprised four participants from peri-urban areas and two from rural areas.

On the other hand, the participants who did not associate gender roles with power were categorised as Group B. They perceived that there was equality in the process of the cultural performance. These participants constituted 57.14 per cent of the population, and they were all born and raised in rural areas.

The study points out that while the participants in Group B were all born and raised in rural areas and four students in Group A were born and raised in peri-urban areas, these differing views point out the rural and urban influences on personal perspectives.

The body of a performer, as feminists have argued in varying ways, is not a neutral site onto which creative performance can be placed through training and rehearsals. A person comes to a performance space already inscribed by discourses and ideologies, whether gendered, racial, or cultural. The performer is often encoded by cultural practices, social and racial constructions, and gendered conditions of use and reception (Loots, 2018: 95), all of which form languages that transmit specific meanings and power operations.

6.4.2. Challenging gender specificity in cultural performance

One of the workshopping process's aims was to empower the female performers during the cultural performance. Empowering female performers during cultural performances means reconceptualising some cultural performance conventions. This theme was inspired by the third study objective, which aimed to explore the potency of the performing arts as a space that allowed culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during the cultural performance. The process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* broke the chains of imbalanced power that favoured men during the cultural performance.

Both the lenses of feminism and decoloniality support this discussion. While feminism is concerned with women's empowerment in any setting, decoloniality has been called a form of epistemic disobedience and reconstruction (Mignolo, 2011). In this sense, decolonial thinking is a response to, most broadly, social movements in search of new humanity or the search for social liberation from all power organised as inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and domination. Similarly, Ampka's (2003) employment of decoloniality in a performance structure and form to challenge the conventions concerning social, political, and social norms indoctrinated in performance serves as a lens to explore how *Sisukaphi? 2021* aimed to challenge gender

inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and male domination in an *AmaZulu* cultural performance. The upcoming subsections discuss the roles of female *inyosi* and female *igosa* to explore the power that these roles possess in empowering female performers.

6.4.2.1 Female inyosi

This research refers to praise poetry as one of the significant elements of a cultural performance. *AmaZulu* praise poems range from traditional to modern praise poetry (Masango, 2006). The process was mainly concerned with the praise poetry for *Amakhosi* (chiefs and kings). Other pieces of literature have proved that no matter how much royal women have asserted their agency and power in royal history during difficult times (Kelly & Timbs, 2022), little research is available concerning the *AmaZulu* praise poetry for royal women. For instance, the praise poems of outstanding royal women have been documented, but there is little to suggest that praise poetry is an art form in which women also participate as a group. The women who possess and compose praise poems are usually traditionalists who do not belong to any of the mission churches, and many are married in polygynous households. To own a praise poem and to be known by it is to strengthen one's sense of belonging to a particular community or cultural group (Gunner, 1984). This shows how a woman is disempowered and minimally valued in her culture.

I recently witnessed an online recording of the coronation of the new *AmaZulu* King, which took place at the Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban, South Africa, on the 29th of October, 2022. Praise singing is powerful, as it is used to welcome the King. In the SABC 2 video podcast on YouTube, titled *'King MisiZulu KaZwelithini Coronation Ceremony*', the praise poetry starts in the background as soon as the King climbs out of the car. A group of bodyguards and warriors accompanies the King. The warriors are chanting *izihasho*. The media personnel, photographers, and videographers are moving up and down, finding their spot from which they can capture the long-awaited moment. This is a big day, and all the national and foreign dignitaries have gathered at the stadium. On the other side of the stadium are various regiments and maidens singing, chanting, dancing, and rejoicing on this special day. The praise singer praises the future King, who is about to be coronated as king-MisiZulu kaZwelithini. The *inyosi* is revealed later. He holds a shield on his left-hand side and a microphone with his right hand. He is accompanied on his right-hand side by another man carrying a spear and a knobkerrie (SABC News, 2022). All the prominent participants in the scenario discussed above are men. Now that the research has

given this scenario, I shed light on the fact that the performers that recite the *AmaZulu* King's praises are always men. In a nutshell, this male dominion also affects creative practice.

There are reasons that have led to this dominion. For instance, the one who praises the King is usually the one who is closest to the King and knows his history, for example, his successes and failures, the good and the bad (Kresse, 1998). He then uses his creativity to write about these incidents in a poetic and hidden manner, requiring the readers and listeners to think deeply to understand. However, the culture, the performance, and the literature should cater for women in the same way that they cater for men. The creation of *Sisukaphi? 2021* and the current dissertation are my attempts to cater to and empower women who have been silenced, disempowered, and dishonoured in the context of *AmaZulu* cultural performances. This study focuses on the power dynamics shared among the performers in *Sisukaphi? 2021* as a process intended to question the value of *AmaZulu* praise poetry and to explore the power and gender dynamics in cultural performances. The workshopping allowed female performers to recite the *AmaZulu* praises from an extract taken from Mkabayi KaJama's[23] praise poetry (Shamase, 2014).

6.4.2.2 Female igosa

The English words synonymous with *igosa* are manager, conductor, guardian, and commander. Indeed, in a cultural performance component such as an *imvumo*, the *igosa* is the prominent leader. This person starts the songs and commands the *ifolo* or *ispani* (group dances) as the dancers perform. They should be very creative. They must be able to connect with the audience and call for songs that will keep the audience interested in the performance. When they connect the audience with the performance activity by calling for well-known songs, this creates a happy atmosphere as the audience sings and claps along with the performers during the dances. This multi-talented individual is at the core of the cultural performance activity of *umemulo* (rite of passage for girls) songs sung by young maidens accompanying their fellow maidens. These highly praised performers are also present during the rehearsals and performances of *ingoma yezinsizwa* or *ingoma yezintombi* (male or female group dances). They are also present in all forms of *AmaZulu* recreational performances, as well as in artistic and musical shows.

[23] Mkabayi was a princess who declared herself a regent princess and reigned over the *AmaZulu* kingdom after the passing of his father, King Jama-KaNdaba, in 1781. This was a way of protecting the *AmaZulu* throne since his brother Senzangakhona was still young. See Shamase (2014).

If a cultural performance involves only female performers, the *igosa* will be female. Similarly, if the cultural performance activity affects males, the *igosa* will be male. However, if the artistic performance is mixed-gendered, the *igosa* will usually be male. This is one of the motivations for the creation of *Sisukaphi? 2021*. This gap in practice mirrors a gap in the literature. It is for this reason that the current study has addressed this gap, both in practice and in literature. While I have seen a mixed-gendered cultural performance led by a female, these are not very common. This is one of the effects of the patriarchal powers that exist in *AmaZulu* households, and they have taken over every aspect of our lives, even our precious arts. *Sisukaphi? 2021* is a performance where a female has power over the performance. This is a democratising and feminist impulse that honours women's multiple capabilities and processes and reveals rather than questions gender specificity (Loots, 2018).

In this study, female *igosa* and *inyosi* roles were applied as strategies to empower female performers during the cultural performances of *Sisukaphi? 2021*. As a critical paradigm, decoloniality supports resistance, and any exploitative and discriminatory practices can be challenged, reformulated, and remade in the colonised case of any context and time (Rice, 2007). For this context and time, the study notes that for a performance to serve as a space that allows culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles, the performance makers must choose for this to happen in both the professional and traditional contexts. A specific purpose must drive this decision and choice. The performing arts are submissive to any situation, and they could be framed to display any form of injustice, depending on the contexts of the creators. This finding helps this research to offer theoretical contributions to the performing arts' scholarly field by negotiating how decolonial feminism can be applied to examine a workshopping process framed within a mixed-gendered cultural performance experience. Also, the findings contribute conceptually to this field by coining the roles of 'female *inyosi'* and 'female *igosa',* as these roles can be used to empower female performers during a mixed-gendered cultural performance.

6.4.3. The perspectives on cultural performance and transformation

In Chapter Four, I reflected on how participating in community arts projects can transform a person's cultural beliefs and identity. The literature review in Chapter Two highlighted how community arts play a valuable and essential role in transitioning societies, especially for youths (Power, 2012). This discussion was triggered by the fourth study objective, which aimed to

examine the influence of the workshopping process on the identity and cultural transformation of the performers involved in the creative process. This section discusses how the performing arts provide the means for transformation through participation, practice, and writing (Madlala, 2001). While it is the nature of the performing arts to transform society, this dissertation discusses the transformation that could be initiated by a reconceptualised cultural performance by performers. As discussed above, the reconceptualisation in this dissertation focused on the power dynamics in cultural performances and the challenge of gender inequality imposed on female performers in favour of male performers. By reconceptualising the gender roles in the performance, I hoped that the participants would encounter the unexpected, the kind of shock that engenders thought. The shock of the new or the untimely brings about a rethinking (Tan, 2019). The following sub-sections discuss the objective of negotiating cultural and identity transformations.

6.4.3.1 Cultural belief transformation

The perceptions were different concerning the idea of performance and the transformation of cultural beliefs. The participants were put into groups A1 and B1. Group A1 comprised female participants who perceived that their cultural beliefs were transformed. They were four females, born and raised in peri-urban regions and majoring in Music, Drama, and Performance Studies. Group B1 was comprised of one female and four males. They believed that the workshopping process had not influenced the way in which they perceived cultural beliefs in the performance. All the participants in this group were born and raised in rural areas and majored in Music Performance and isiZulu.

According to these variables, people born and raised in peri-urban areas and majoring in Music, Drama, and Performance Studies will most likely have their cultural beliefs transformed when they become involved in a cultural performance. However, those born and raised in rural areas, and majoring in Music Performance and isiZulu are not likely to have their cultural beliefs transformed by being involved in a cultural performance.

6.4.3.2 Identity transformation

As discussed in Chapter Four, the performing arts have moulded or shaped my identity. I witnessed my transformation from a peri-urban township youngster into a proud young *AmaZulu*

man after becoming involved in the performing arts. I used this study to interrogate how my perceptions intersected with those of the study participants.

The participants shared different perspectives concerning identity transformation, and they were thus grouped into two categories, A2 and B2. Group A2 consisted of four participants. Three were females born and raised in peri-urban areas, while one was a male born and raised in a rural area. All the females majored in Music Studies, Drama, and Performance Studies, while the male majored in Music Studies and isiZulu. All the participants in Group A2 acknowledged their identity transformation. While some acknowledged a change in cultural identity, one participant acknowledged a form of personal identity transformation. Group A2's findings correlated with my reflections and the existing literature on the performing arts' ability to transform identities. Krueger (2007: 52) explored how the performing arts negotiate identity-related issues and argued that identity is invented and created in a performance.

On the other hand, Group B2 was comprised of participants who perceived that their identities were not transformed due to their participation in the process. The study sampled two quotes from the participants, one female and one male. They were both born and raised in rural areas, and they both majored in Music Performance and IsiZulu. The study assumes that this variation was because the workshopping process did not last longer and the rehearsals were limited by the university's timetable constraints. This means that the participants did not have enough time to internalise the process. They needed to internalise it, as it differed from the reality that they knew. The study also notes that being born and raised in rural areas and studying isiZulu as a subject major at the university level might have influenced their perspectives.

6.4.3.3 Geo-culture and the academic institutions as influences

The study explored the notions of culture and identity transformation, and this subsection negotiates the possible influences on the differences in the participants' perspectives. The study notes that these variables resulted from the participants' different geo-cultural settings and their academic institutions. Notably, all the participants studied Music Performance as one of their subject majors. Therefore, this research focuses on peri-urban and rural areas as influential mechanisms for understanding the context of people's thinking. This study also notes isiZulu and Drama and Performance Studies as influential modules on the participants' perspectives.

I provided empirical evidence in Chapter Four on how the performing arts are an influential tool in shaping one's cultural beliefs and identities, and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two confirmed my evidence. The perspectives of the participants who formed groups A1 and A2 confirmed the performing arts' ability to transform. Most of the groups' participants were born and raised in peri-urban areas and majored in Drama and Performance Studies. The study notes that groups A1 and A2 acknowledged transformation as possible because they studied Drama and Performance Studies and lived in peri-urban areas.

This is because the subjects of Drama and Performance Studies offer a range of teachings and activities concerning acting and transforming them into believing and connecting with life and the world in which they are placed as characters. For instance, Konstantin Stanislavsky developed a style of acting based on internalising characters. An actor would develop their character using personal experiences, feelings, and emotions. They would do this through the recollection of their memories, and it was termed memory recall. This system of acting is called method acting and has its roots in America with Lee Strasberg and *The Actor's Studio* (Gillett, 2014).

Additionally, the peri-urban areas influenced group A1 and A2 participants' perspectives, and the study notes that this is possible because the people in peri-urban areas are not exposed to cultural performances as much as those in rural areas. When a cultural performance is a reconceptualised performance, they do not question the authenticity and originality of the performance. They appreciate it as it is and learn from it.

On the other hand, the participants who formed groups B1 and B2 perceived that the workshopping process did not transform them. All the participants in these groups were born and raised in rural areas and majored in isiZulu. This research notes that these participants' perspectives were influenced by their rural environment's teachings during their upbringing and studying isiZulu as one of their major subjects at university. These participants are rooted in the teachings of their cultural beliefs, just like the members of the SZNPO (as discussed in Chapter Four). These individuals compare their artistic performance with their cultural realities. Therefore, as the workshopping process was not set in its original context and was reconceptualised, it did not mean much to them.

The study notes that the conceptions of these participants might result from the fact that they needed to be theatre-trained. They did not study Drama and Performance Studies since they

majored in isiZulu. This means that the way they perceived performance was different from that of their study's counter group. The course content for isiZulu does not cover topics such as character psychology and development. It focuses on literature rather than the practical aspects of performance. These participants thus did not have theatrical backgrounds and training.

One of the participants stated that the process had not influenced anything related to her identity because the project was done for exam purposes. It is thus possible that she did not view it as profound and her main concern was passing her exams (Noma). This finding indicates that aspects such as 'character internalisation' were alien to these participants.

Additionally, the participants who formed groups B1 and B2 are rooted in the teachings of their cultural beliefs, like the members of the SZNPO (as discussed in Chapter Four). These individuals compare their artistic performance with their cultural realities. Therefore, as the workshopped performance was not set in its original context and was also reconceptualised, it did not mean much to them. For instance, one participant noted,

> "The process did not influence anything related to my identity…. The project we did was for exams. Maybe it is because I did not take it too deep and emotionally; I only thought for my exams" (Xolani).

For this reason, the study assumes that the people from rural areas who majored in isiZulu at the university do not acknowledge transformation due to participating in a reconceptualised cultural performance. Instead, they question its authenticity and originality owing to their cultural backgrounds and the way they conform to and respect their culture. These findings assist this research in providing an empirical contribution to the scholarly field of the performing arts by exploring how participants perceive the notions of transforming identities and cultural beliefs differently within their geo-cultural contexts and major subjects studied at the academic institutions.

These findings relate to the existing studies on the reasons behind regional variations in psychological experiences. For instance, Chen, Lai, He, and Yu (2020) explored the causes of geographical differences in psychological phenomena by looking at how psychological traits become geographically grouped. The study offered the likely reasons for regional variations in psychological occurrences. The three primary mechanisms that the experts have identified are (1) selective migration, (2) ecological influence, and (3) social influence. The study of selective

migration processes examines how people's psychological traits shape their chosen environments. Ecological and social influence examines how outside factors impact psychological processes and developments. Other researchers investigated personality differences across postal districts in the London Metropolitan Area. Their findings revealed that openness to experience is highest in Central London and is inversely correlated to the distance between postal districts and the city area (Jokela, Bleidorn, Lamb, Gosling, & Rentfrow, 2015). The personality studies sourced above have consistently shown notable personality differences across different countries and states, provinces, cities, and tribal and regional communities within different countries.

6.5. When Aesthetics Clashed with Cultural Beliefs Amid the Pandemic

This section discusses the findings concerning the fifth study objective: to highlight the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance that challenged the cultural status quo of that particular culture within a university context during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings were situated in the notion that the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* was recontextualised, reconceptualised, decolonised, and devised in feminist thought during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings highlighted many aspects that limited the creative process, including the challenges of creating an ensemble production with university students. The findings further provided strategies to help performers who were not theatrically trained to participate in a theatrical production. The findings further proposed 'spoken dance' as a method for choreographing a fusion of *ushameni*, *umzansi*, and contemporary dance that could apply to mixed gendered dance ensembles seeking to decolonise certain dance conventions.

The literature stated in the second chapter that cultural beliefs could only be negotiated by placing them in a particular context and time. See, for instance, how other literature links cultural heritage to social values, such as utilising a site for social solidity and identity, and the feelings of connection that social groups derive from the specific heritage and environment (Hassan, as cited in Serageldin, 2008). For the current research, this view suggests how difficult it is to conduct creative work with people who are culturally oriented and rooted in their cultures, because they link creativity with reality and struggle to imagine different scenarios.

I reflected on this as a young and upcoming black South African performing arts practitioner and a perfectionist passionate about performance aesthetics. I also reflected on the pain of censoring some artistic beauty in creative work to harmonise with the participants' cultural values and

beliefs. For instance, I related the pain of removing a particular dance sequence to accommodate one participant's cultural beliefs (see section 5.7).

The study was dominated by individuals who conformed to and believed in the *AmaZulu*'s cultural heritage. This reflection draws the study back to Butler's (1990) gender performativity, where we are born already inscribed into gender roles (Loots, 2018), and that we cannot run away from these cultural confinements because society will judge us and look at us as the perpetrators of immoralities. So, what did it mean to some of the study participants to see their culture altered in a performance practice? What did it mean to me as an artist-researcher and creator with a creative and critical mind? I am someone who believes that while the institutions of power continue to perpetuate gender imbalances in all aspects of life, the performance space can allow for the imagined sharing of equal powers between male and female performers, and can also serve to empower the female performers involved in a cultural performance.

Additionally, the study noted that decolonising a cultural performance triggered some questions of authenticity and originality in some of the participants. Mundundu (2005); and Tan (2019) have examined the issues of authority, authenticity, and meanings through context. They have asserted that meaning changes in light of new events and circumstances that lead creative individuals to make contextual adaptations to their creative performances based on the vision and direction to be pursued. For this reason, the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance that challenged the cultural status quo of a particular culture created a clash between the creator's aesthetic choices and the cultural beliefs of the participants involved in the performance practice. This study refers to these observations as the clash between aesthetics and culture.

Additionally, this discussion negotiates how the abovementioned factors clashed with the production's aesthetic sense but also pays attention to this clash amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Before COVID-19, I would never have considered doing the work of the performing arts online. This type of work needs collaboration through physical gathering, and it helps you as a performer if you are connected spiritually with your fellow performers.

People were restricted from practicing their creative ideas during the pandemic. Before the restrictive measures, I would never have imagined a group of performers being separated by a meter and a half of space between them. This was terrible for every aspect of the performance. It was challenging to arrange harmonies because the voices were scattered and masks had to be

worn. I would have used tabloids—frozen images—to portray the family symbols of each participant, but this could not be done because of the spacing between the performers. What about the lifts and the jumps that I wanted to add to fuse traditional *AmaZulu* dance with contemporary dance? It was challenging to think of scene blocking between two or more characters because of the social distancing requirements. The placement of the performers looked terrible because the social distancing constraints limited creativity. These findings point to a clash between the pandemic with its associated social distancing requirements and the aesthetics of the performance.

These findings contribute to the scholarly research concerning the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the performing arts globally. Dinardi, Wortman, and Muñoz Hernández (2023) also contributed when they suggested that cultural policy could best support the recovery of the performing arts post-pandemic while reflecting on what their findings revealed about the prospects for cultural policy and the future of the performing arts in Argentina and the UK. The study conducted by Polivtseva (2020) examined the status quo of the performing arts during the pandemic and the way forward. Her study undertook a comprehensive review and calculation of the crisis-related financial losses and compensated for as much of the damage as possible. Her study for IETM suggested the provision of emergent support and the creation of hardship funds for everyone working on a freelance basis, including self-employed and freelance artists. It further suggested that these grants be bureaucracy-free and easy to manage, and that culture and the arts be integrated into the country's (Belgium) economic and social regeneration strategies in recognition of their tremendous value for the well-being of citizens and their power to unite people, even in times when it was impossible to commune. The current research noted that 'spoken dance' was a tool for devising a performing arts project during the pandemic.

6.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the workshopping process and the data concerning the significant variations in cultural heritage celebration, power dynamics, and gender stereotypes during a reconceptualised and recontextualised cultural performance. The chapter first presented an overview of the study's findings. Secondly, it negotiated the notion of recontextualisation. It offered a conceptual contribution to the scholarly field of the performing arts by politically coining the terms 'theatricalised African storytelling', and 'temporary and imaginary cultural heritage sites'.

The chapter additionally applied the notion of reconceptualisation as a frame to situate the perpetuators of gendered performance and the empowerment of culturally marginalised female performers. The research findings offered a theoretical contribution to the performing arts' scholarly field by negotiating how decolonial feminism could be applied to examine a workshopping process framed within a mixed-gendered cultural performance experience. The findings further contributed conceptually by coining 'female *inyosi'* and 'female *igosa'* as roles that could be used to empower female performers during a mixed-gendered cultural performance. This research further provided an empirical contribution to the performing arts' scholarly field by exploring how the participants perceived the notions of transforming identities and cultural beliefs differently due to their different geo-cultural contexts and the differences in their subject majors at the academic institutions.

Lastly, this chapter discussed how performance aesthetics were affected by the creation of a decolonised cultural performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings discussed the difficulties posed by the participants' cultural beliefs in terms of their effect on the performance's aesthetics amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The study findings therefore noted the clash between culture, the pandemic, and the performance's aesthetics. The findings contributed to the scholarly research concerning the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the performing arts globally. The findings further coined and contributed the conceptualised choreographic term of 'spoken dance' as a tool to devise a performing arts project during the pandemic. The study's analytical framework revealed and reinforced the complexity of the project, not only in terms of the practice itself but also in terms of the geo-cultural and socio-political backgrounds of the participants. This discussion was negotiated from a decolonial and feminist perspective.

CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION, REFLECTION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction

This dissertation adopted qualitative performance autoethnography that allowed me to reflect primarily on myself and the social, cultural, geographical, political, and artistic influences that I inhabit. The workshop theatre approach was used to explore the credibility of the performing arts in their ability to reconnect the students with their cultural heritages and transform their identities while addressing the power dynamics in a cultural performance. The inquiry was explored using *Sisukaphi? 2021,* a workshopped musical, cultural, and theatrical performance that served as a case study. The workshopping process reconceptualised and recontextualised an *AmaZulu* cultural performance and the context and conventions of such a performance, focusing on a mixed-gendered cultural performance set within the university context and aimed at the students. This dissertation was broken down into seven chapters, linked by the need, as articulated in the study, to find new embodied ways of being and doing as an artist. The thread that wove through most of the chapters was the impulse to decolonise a cultural performance, to "rethink how the object of study itself" was "constituted, and then to reconstruct it and bring about fundamental change" (Loots, 2018: 7).

This dissertation opened with chapter one, which served to provide the outline for this entire research. Chapter Two reviewed the literature and theoretical framework, focusing on the historical background and an overview of the South African performing arts workshops conducted during the apartheid regime. Post-apartheid South African theatre was used to frame the notions of heritage celebration, identity and cultural transformation, gender, power dynamics, and feminist and decolonial theories. Chapter Three provided the methodological framework for the study by discussing the tools and methods used, namely qualitative research methodology, performance ethnography, an autoethnographic approach, the research participants, the research questions, data collection tools, reflexive thematic analysis, and the assurance of the validity and reliability of the findings. The methodological nature of this study, as indicated in the introduction, summed up in the first chapter, framed in the third chapter, applied in context in Chapter Five, and woven throughout, allowed for a further, very personal layer of contemplation and rethinking around the pursuit of a decolonised practice that also addressed the feminist struggles of speaking out and going beyond talking to be heard (Loots, 2018).

In the fourth chapter, I reflected on the influences that motivated me to become a performing arts practitioner. These included family experiences such as exposure to domestic gender-based violence and my mother's folktales, extra mural activities at school, and my community art and university experiences. For this reason, Chapter Four provided a platform for me to record, reflect on, and examine my history, identity, cultural beliefs, and artistic choices while trying to figure out my perceptions of society.

The fifth chapter presented the findings by interweaving the creation process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*, participant observation data, focus group interviews, questionnaire transcripts, and personal reflexivity to explore and negotiate the study's objectives. In the sixth chapter, the research first used the notions of recontextualisation as the frame to discuss the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021* and the cultural heritage possessed by the performing arts. During reconceptualisation, the research contemplated the reasons why the female students did not excel in reciting clan names compared to the male students. The study intended to examine the performing arts' potential as a platform for female artists from marginalised cultures to take on roles traditionally filled by men. The performers' ideas of identity and cultural transformation were explored in this dissertation. This research also intended to clarify the parameters for creating a cultural performance that questioned the *AmaZulu* cultural status quo during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This chapter is the final part of this narrative and is where the strands of the inquiry are drawn together and the research questions are resolved. Therefore, this chapter outlines the findings, the research's contribution to the performing arts discourse, and makes recommendations. The chapter then concludes with a summary.

7.2. The Overall Findings

The overall findings are presented in relation to the research's objectives:

- **Explore the performing arts as tools for cultural heritage for students during the workshopping process within the university context:** The findings indicated how the performing arts served as temporary and imaginary cultural heritage sites for the participants involved.
- **Understand why female students fail to express themselves well regarding their family and cultural backgrounds compared to male students:** The results indicated

that children are raised differently in the *AmaZulu* culture. The different approaches used in raising children are sexist and promote gender inequality, which disempowers women in the long run. The research referred to these approaches as the perpetuators of gendered performance.

- **Explore the potency of the performing arts as a space that allows culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during a cultural performance:** The findings asserted that the *Sisukaphi? 2021* workshopping process posed an excellent example of a performance space that empowered female performers but raised concerns about the reality of the *AmaZulu* culture outside the stays and conventions associated with this culture. The findings further provided strategies to raise awareness and challenge gender specificity in cultural performances through the introduction of the roles of female *inyosi* and *igosa*.
- **Examine the influence of the workshopping process concerning the identity and cultural transformation of the performers involved in the creative process:** The findings noted that the transformation of identities and cultural beliefs as a result of participation in a reconceptualised performance could vary due to differences in the geo-cultural backgrounds and the subject majors of the participants' in their academic institutions. The findings were further related to existing studies on personality and psychology.
- **Highlight the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance that challenges the cultural status quo of that particular culture within a university context during the COVID-19 pandemic:** The findings highlighted many aspects that limited the creative process, including the challenges of creating an ensemble production with university students who were not trained or training actors. A clash was noted between the performance's aesthetics, the participants' cultural beliefs, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings further provided a strategy for teaching dance choreography using the 'spoken dance' approach.

7.3. Research Contributions

The existing studies on using workshop theatre as an approach have primarily focused on apartheid debates, such as racial inequalities and social problems during the apartheid era, its applicability as a tool for raising awareness about HIV and AIDS (Leffler, 2008), personal narratives, and prison plays (Leffler, 2008; Young-Jahangeer, 2014). This study contributes to

the current performing arts literature by framing workshop theatre as an approach to negotiating cultural heritage, transforming the cultural beliefs and identities of university students within the university context, questioning gender imbalances, and empowering female performers during a cultural performance. The current study offers a conceptual contribution to the scholarly field by negotiating how the performing arts serve as temporary and imaginary heritage sites.

Additionally, the literature reviewed pointed to the scarcity of documentation and analysis of a creative process aimed at cultural heritage celebration and seeking to empower female performers with new perspectives of its participants. This research analysed the workshopping process and offered conceptual contributions to the performing arts' scholarly field by coining 'warm space' as a term commending the giving away of power by the performing arts instructors, teachers, directors, choreographers, and composers while aiming to empower their performers involved in collective creation. The findings further contributed conceptually by coining the term 'theatricalised African storytelling', which refers to African storytelling that uses the elements of theatre.

Moreover, to the best of my knowledge and following a search of peer-reviewed databases, no previous study has empirically provided strategies to empower female performers during mixed-gender performances. The current research has focused on raising awareness of women's inequality in cultural performances. I have proposed some feminist and decolonising strategies and interventions with which I have begun to work and explore. These have been—and will continue to be—my 'call to action' when addressing the politics of equality and seeking a democratic artistic process (Loots, 2018: 161). This research contributes practically to the scholarly field of the performing arts by coining the terms 'female *inyosi'* and 'female *igosa'* as roles that can be used in mixed-gendered cultural performances to empower female performers.

The literature needs to be more active in examining the influence of the workshopping process on the identity and cultural transformation of the performers involved. This research provides an empirical contribution to the performing arts' scholarly field by exploring how the workshopping process can transform the identities and cultural beliefs of the participants involved and how the participants perceive the notions of transforming identities and cultural beliefs differently due to their geo-cultural contexts and the subject majors studied at their academic institutions.

7.4. Recommendations

This research recommends some changes for future research. This research was a dialogue between the performed and the written by narrating the creative process and analysing the workshopping process of *Sisukaphi? 2021*, together with my and the participants' perceptions concerning the process. More research should be conducted to document and analyse a creative process while analysing the perspectives of its creators.

The results indicated that children are raised differently in the *AmaZulu* culture. The different approaches used in raising children are sexist and promote gender inequality, which disempowers women in the long run. The study coined and proposed some feminist and decolonial strategies and interventions that could be used to empower female performers in mixed-gendered performances, such as the employment of female *inyosis* and female *igosas* during these performances. It is for these reasons that the study recommends the following:

- The findings recommend urgent decolonial and feminist interventions in rural areas because that is where female gender inequalities are instituted and perpetuated.
- The research recommends that upcoming creative projects and studies create more strategies to empower women during performances.

Furthermore, the findings pointed to the differences between the participants' views owing to their geo-cultural contexts and university education. The study noted that the majority of the participants who were born and raised in rural areas and studied isiZulu at university were not likely to be transformed as their subject major remained within the context of their culture, whereas the ones who were born and raised in peri-urban areas and studied Drama and Performance Studies were exposed to outside influences and thus more likely to be transformed. Future personal, communal, and cultural transformation studies should thus focus more on rural areas to effect transformation.

The research also noted the clash between culture and performance aesthetics. The research thus recommends that practitioners in the performing arts consider the cultural beliefs of the participants involved in the creative process.

7.5. Closing Summary

This chapter is the final chapter of the current inquiry. It has presented the overall findings of the research. It has also discussed the study's contribution to the scarce literature in performing arts discourses on workshop theatre concerning *AmaZulu* cultural performances. There is also a scarcity of such literature on *AmaZulu* cultural performances that presents themes such as cultural heritage, power dynamics, gender inequality, cultural beliefs, and identity transformation negotiated from an autoethnographic point of view. The study further outlined the findings, research contributions, and made recommendations for future research. The study was negotiated from a feminist and decolonial point of view.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDENTS WHO STUDIED THE AFRICAN MUSIC AND DANCE ENSEMBLE IN 2021

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

Name **:** Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane
Student number **:** 210 527 161
Intended degree **:** Master of Arts

Title of the Dissertation: The interrogation of power dynamics and students' cultural beliefs through the performing arts in a university context: The case of *Sisukaphi?*

1. Where were you born and raised?
2. Have the performing arts offered you a space to celebrate your cultural heritage during the workshopping process? Please explain how.
3. Do you think the workshopping process has influenced your identity transformation? Please explain how.
4. In what ways do you think your participation in a reconceptualised cultural performance has impacted your cultural beliefs?
5. How do the performing arts provide space and allow culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during a cultural performance?

ISITHASISELO 1: IMIBUZO YABAFUNDI ABAFUNDE I-AFRICAN MUSIC AND DANCE ENSEMBLE NGO-2021

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

Igama : Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane
Inombolo Yomfundi : 210527161
Iziqu azifundelayo : Ungoti Kwezobuciko
Isihloko socwaningo : Ukuphenyo ngokusetshenziswa kwamandla kanye nezinkolelo zamasiko zabafundi ngobuciko bokwenza endaweni yasenyuvesi: Ucwaningo nge*Sisukaphi?*

1. Wazalelwa kuphi, waphinde wakhulela kuphi?
2. Ngabe ucabanga ukuthi ezobuciko zikunikeze isikhala sokubungaza amasiko akho ngesikhathi senqubo yokusebenzela? Ngicela uchaze kanjani?
3. Ngabe ucabanga ukuthi inqubo yokufundisana ibe nomthelela ekuguqulweni kwe ayidentithi yakho? Ngicela uchaze kanjani?
4. Ucabanga ukuthi ukuzibandakanya kwakho ekusebenzeni ngamasiko okwenziwe kabusha kube nomthelela muni ezinkolelweni zakho?
5. Ngabe ubuciko bokudlala businikeza kanjani isikhala futhi buwavumele amaciko abesifazane abukelwa phansi ngokwesiko ukuthi adlale izindima ezilawulwa ngabesilisa ngesikhathi sokudlala?

APPENDIX 2: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS FOR THE STUDENTS WHO STUDIED THE AFRICAN MUSIC AND DANCE ENSEMBLE IN 2021

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

Name **:** Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane
Student number **:** 210 527 161
Intended degree **:** Master of Arts
Title of the Dissertation: The interrogation of power dynamics and students' cultural beliefs through the performing arts in a university context: The case of *Sisukaphi?*

Welcome:

Hello everyone, and welcome to our session. Thank you for taking the time to join me to discuss with you the role of performing arts as a tool to influence the transformation of identity and cultural heritage celebration within the university context for students. My name is Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane. As your teacher, I am also studying for my master's in arts at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, under the School of arts.

Title of the Dissertation:

The interrogation of power dynamics and students' cultural beliefs through the performing arts in a university context: The case of *Sisukaphi?* Through this title, the study seeks to challenge the inequalities in a Zulu cultural performance that places women on minimal roles than males and to know the results caused by one's participation in a workshopping process and the effects it causes on one's identity, traditional and cultural beliefs.

The reason why you were selected:

You were selected because you participated in the production of *Sisukaphi?* (2021) and through your participation, it means you have perhaps felt more connected to your culture than before. And maybe you have acquired some new knowledge on power dynamics used in a cultural performance and how it creates gender imbalances. I am tape recording the session because I don't wish to miss any of your commentaries. People usually say very useful things in these discussions, and I can't write fast enough to get them all down. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. A compiled discussion will come back to you in three weeks' time before it is written on the dissertation to scrutinise if there have been any misinterpretation. Let us begin introducing ourselves very well by telling our names and where we are original from.

Guidelines:

- No right or wrong responses, only different opinions
- I am tape recording, one person speaking at a time
- You do not have to agree with others, but you must listen to others respectfully while they share their views
- Please turn off mobile phones. If you cannot and if you must respond to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and re-join us as quickly as you can.
- My participation in this session is to guide the discussion

Questions

1. Why did most female students express themselves differently than male students regarding their family and cultural backgrounds during our first meeting?
2. Do you think the Zulu culture treats males and females equally? Please explain why.
3. How do you feel about seeing female students playing more significant roles than male students during a Zulu cultural performance?
4. Do you think the performing arts allow culturally marginalised women to express themselves well culturally?

ISITHASISELO 2: IMIBUZO YEQEMBU EBHEKISWE KWI-ZITSHUDENTI EZANZA ISIFUNDO I-AFRICAN MUSIC AND DANCE ENSEMBLE NGONYAKA WEZI-2021

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

Igama : Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane
Inombolo Yomfundi : 210527161
Iziqu azifundelayo : Ungoti Kwezobuciko
Isihloko socwaningo : Ukuphenyo ngokusetshenziswa kwamandla kanye nezinkolelo zamasiko zabafundi ngobuciko bokwenza endaweni yasenyuvesi: Ucwaningo nge*Sisukaphi?*

Ukwamukela:

Sanibonani, ngiyanamukela kulendima. Ngiyabonga ukuthi nibe nami ngalesi sikhathi. Ngizokhuluma ngomdlalo weshashalazi kanye nomthelela wawo wokushintsha ubuwena nokuthi ugqugquzela kanjani ukugcinwa kwamagugu kumasitshudenti ase Nyuvesi. Igama lami ngingu Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane. Ngengoba nazi ukuthi ngingu thisha wenu, ngokunjalo futhi ngiyisitshudenti ngenza izifundo zobungoti bubu-ciko eNyuvesi yaKwazulu-Natali, ngaphansi kwesikole sobuciko.

Isihloko socwaningo:

Ukuphenyo ngokusetshenziswa kwamandla kanye nezinkolelo zamasiko zabafundi ngobuciko bokwenza endaweni yasenyuvesi: Ucwaningo nge*Sisukaphi?* Ngalesi sihloko, lolu cwaningo luhlose ukuphonsela inselelo ukungalingani ekusebenzeni kwamasiko esiZulu okubeka abesifazane ezingeni eliphansi kunelabesilisa nokwazi imiphumela ebangelwe ukubamba iqhaza

komuntu ohlelweni lokucobelelana ngolwazi kanye nemiphumela edala ukuthi ungubani, izinkolelo zomdabu namasiko akhe.

Imbangela yokukhethwa Kwenu:

Nikhethiwe ngoba, nanizibandakanye kumdlalo i-*Sisukaphi?* Ngenxa yokuzibandakanya kwenu kuchaza ukuthi, kungezeka nizizwe sengathi senixhumene kakhulu namasiko enu kunaphambilini. Kungenzeka futhi kukhona ulwazi enilufundile olunganisiza ukwenza umdlalo ohlanganisa umculo, umdanso kanye nokuxoxwa kwendaba. Ngiyayi qopha inxoxo ngoba angifisi ukweqiwa imibono yenu. Abantu bavamise ukubeka amaphuzu asemqoka kakhulu kwizinxoxo zaloluhlobo, ngokunjalo angikwazi ukuyiloba yonke ngokushesha. Ngiyanithembisa ukuthi konke esizokhuluma ngakho lapha kuyimfihlo ephelele. Izinxoxo ezihlanganisiwe zizobuyiselwa kunina ukuzoqinisekisa ukuthi awenzekanga yini amaphutha ngaphambi kokushicilelwa. Sizoqala ngokuthi sizethule ngokusho amagama ethu nokuthi sidabuka kuphi ngokuhlala.

Imigomo

- Ayikho impendulo embi nenhle, kuhluka ngokwemibono yabantu.
- Lenxoxo iyaqoshwa, kumele kukhulume umuntu oyedwa ngesikhathi.
- Akudingi ukuthi uvemelane nabanye, kodwa kumele ulalele imibono yabanye ngokuhlonipha.
- Wonke umuntu kumele acishe umakhalekhukwini wakhe. Uma kunesimo esiphoqaya ungangalucisha ucingo, futhi uma usulibamba kumele ukwenze ngokuthula ungaphazamisi ebese uzama ukubuya ngokushesha.
- Iqhaza lami kulengosi ukugada inxoxo.

Imibuzo:

1. Kungani abafundi abaningi besifazane bengakwazanga ukuzikhulumela kahle maqondana nemindeni yabo namasiko abo uma kuqhathaniswa nabafundi besilisa ngesikhathi somhlangano wethu wokuqala?
2. Ngabe nicabanga ukuthi isiko lamaZulu liphatha owesilisa nowesifazane ngokulinganayo ngesikhathi sokwenza ubuciko obuphathelene namasiko akwaZulu? Ngicela nichaze ukuthi kungani?

3. Nizizwa kanjani ngokubona abafundi besifazane bedlala indima enkulu uma kuqhathaniswa nabafundi besilisa ngesikhathi sokwenza umdlalo okhuluma ngamasiko akwaZulu?
4. Ngabe nicabanga ukuthi ubuciko bokudlala umdlalo weshashalazi bunika abantu besifazane ababhekelwe phansi ngokwamasiko ukuthi baziveze ngokwamasiko abo? Ngicela uchaze ukuthi kungani.

APPENDIX 3: PERSONAL REFLEXIVE QUESTIONS FOR THE ARTIST-RESEARCHER OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

Name **:** Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane

Student number **:** 210 527 161

Intended degree **:** Master of Arts

Title of the Dissertation: The interrogation of power dynamics and students' cultural beliefs through the performing arts in a university context: The case of *Sisukaphi?*

The reason for reflexive question:

The artist-researcher is doing a reflexive journal because the study is framed within the autoethnographic methodology. The reflection entries of the researcher are key to conducting and formulating this kind of study.

QUESTIONS:

1. How did you attempt to challenge the conventions concerning the socio-political and cultural norms indoctrinated into the Zulu cultural performer and a cultural performance's structure and form while creating the *Sisukaphi?* performance?
2. How do the performing arts provide space and allow culturally marginalised female performers to play male-dominated roles during a cultural performance?
3. What are the challenges associated with creating an ensemble production with university students?

4. What strategies could be used to improve the challenges experienced in a theatrical production process with students who are not all theatre trained?
5. What are the parameters for workshopping a cultural performance that challenges the cultural status quo of a particular culture?

APPENDIX 4: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Date:

Dear Sir Madam

My name is Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane (Student Number: 210 527 161). I am currently a candidate for a Master of Arts degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a dissertation study entitled the, " The interrogation of power dynamics and students' cultural beliefs through the performing arts in a university context: The case of *Sisukaphi?"* The study is supervised by Dr Patricia Opondo, coordinator of African Music and Dance studies and Senior Lecturer at UKZN.

As an African Music and Dance ensemble student and a knowledgeable participant who participated in *Sisukaphi?* you have been cordially selected to participate in an interview. The questions are attached to this information letter. In addition to your responses to the interview questions, you are encouraged to offer your honest comments regarding anything you might find confusing, misleading, or unclear. The duration of the interview will be two hours or less. You are given this consent form before your participation, so you will have enough time to think if you are ready and interested to participate in the study. The interviews will be conducted on the date, time, and place convenient for you between October and November.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics
Committee (approval number_____)
In the event of any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact the researcher at 210527161@stu.ukzn.ac.za, the study supervisor at opondop@ukzn.ac.za or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, with the contact details provided below:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609
E-mail: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Please note that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that you can freely inform the researcher in case you no longer feel comfortable and wish to withdraw. Your information will be kept as confidential as legally as possible. Should you wish, you will not be identified in any way. Please reply at your earliest convenience regarding your interest in participation.

CONSENT

I _____have been informed about the study entitled "The interrogation of power dynamics and students' cultural beliefs through the performing arts in a university context: The case of *Sisukaphi?"* by Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at 210527161@stu.ukzn.ac.za or the study supervisor at opondop@ukzn.ac.za or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
E-mail: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent,

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO
Video-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO
Use of my photographs for research purposes YES / NO

_____ _____

Date **Signature of Participant**

ISITHASISELO 4: IFOMU YOLWAZI NOKUVUMA NGOKUZIKHETHELA UKUBA YINGXENYE YOCWANINGO

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Usuku:……

Mhlonishwa

Igama lami ngingu Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane (Inombolo yomfundi: 210527161). Ngifundela iziqu zobungoti kwezobuciko enyuvesi ya KwaZulu-Natal. Ngenza ucwaningo ngokusetshenziswa kwamandla kanye nezinkolelo zamasiko zabafundi ngobuciko bokwenza endaweni yasenyuvesi. Ucwaningo lubhekwe ngeso elibanzi lika Dokotela u Patricia Opondo, owengamele uphiko lwezomculo nomdanso wesintu nonguMfundisi osemnkantsh'ubomvu eNyuvesi yakwaZulu-Natali.

Njengesitshudenti esenze I-African Music and Dance ensemble, futhi njengomuntu onolwzi olunzulu njengoba kade uzibandakanye emdlalweni i-*Sisukaphi?* uqokiwe ukuba uphawule kwinhlolovo enemibuzo engenzansi kulencwajana. Ezimpendulweni zakho kule mibuzo ngiyothokoza uma ungenaba uphendule nengingakubuzanga, inqobo nje uma ubona ukuthi kuzongisiza ukuthi imiphumela yocwaningo lwami ibe nesisindo. Isikhathi senhlolovo ngeke seqe emahoreni amabili. Ingakho uthola imibuzo lungekafiki usuku lwayo ukuze uzinikeze ithuba loqucabanga ukuthi ukulungele yini ukubamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo. Ucwaningo luyokwenzeka ngelanga nesikhathi esivuna wena, enyangeni maphakathi nezinyanga uMfumfu noLwezi uma uvuma.

Lolucwaningo lucubungulwe lwavunywa isikhungo I UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (_____).

Uma kwenzeka uba nemibuzo ngokungahle kungakucaceli kahle ngicela uthinte umcwaningi ku: 210527161@stu.ukzn.ac.za noma umphathi ku: opondop@ukzn.ac.za KUMBE I- UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

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Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

E-mail: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Ngicela wazi ukuthi ukuzibandakanya kuwukuzikhethela awuphoqiwe, futhi uma unquma ukuhoxa ngenxa yokungakhululeki okuthize angeke unqatshelwe. Uma ufisa igama lakho ligodlwe noma izithombe zakho nangempela ngeke kuvezwe. Ngicela ungazise ngokushesha uma uvuma.

UKUVUMA OKUNGAPHOQIWE

Mina_____ ngazisiwe kabanzi ngocwaningo oluqondene nokuhlolwa Kokuguqulwa kwe ayidentithi nokulondolozwa kwamasiko ngobuciko bokwenza endaweni yase yunivesithi, ngokuka Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane.

Ngiyiqonde kahle inhloso nemigomo ngokwencwajana yolwazi enginikezwe yona.

Nginikeziwe nethuba lokuphendulwa imibuzo ebengingase ngibe nayo mayelana nocwaningo nezinhlelo zalo, nganeliseka.

Ngiyafunga ukuthi ukuba yingxenye kwami kuwukuzivumela angiphoqiwe, futhi angizohola lutho, nanokuthi ngingahoxa noma inini uma ngithanda.

Makwenzeka ngiba nemibuzo ngokungahle kungakucaceli kahle ngizothinta umcwaningi ku: 210527161@stu.ukzn.ac.za noma umphathi ku: opondop@ukzn.ac.za KUMBE I- UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee:

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4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
E-mail: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

OKUNYE,
Ngiyamvumela umcwaningi ukuthi:
Angaqopha inhlolovo / Izinhlolovo YEBO / CHA
Angathwebula inhlolovo / Izinhlolovo YEBO / CHA
Angasebenzisa izithobe zami uma esebika YEBO / CHA

_____ _____

Isigxivizo-mbhalo **Usuku**

APPENDIX 5: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

21 October 2021

Mr Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane (SN 210527161)
School of Arts
College of Humanities
Howard College Campus
UKZN
Email: 210527161@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Dear Mr Ndwalane

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"The interrogation of power dynamics and students' cultural beliefs through the performing arts in a university context: The case of Sisukaphi?"

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews, focus group discussions and/or handing out questionnaires to students in the School of Arts on the Howard College campus (Taking in account the regulations imposed during the lockdown ie restrictions on gatherings, travel, social distancing etc. ZOOM, Skype or telephone interviews recommended).

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance approval letter;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using the 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the PAIA and POPI Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Dr K Cleland
Registrar

APPENDIX 6: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

11 November 2021

Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane (210527161)
School Of Arts
Howard College

Dear MV Ndwalane,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003570/2021
Project title: The interrogation of power dynamics and students' cultural beliefs through the performing arts in a university context: The case of Sisukaphi?
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 27 October 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 11 November 2022.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

APPENDIX 7: *SISUKAPHI? 2021* SCRIPT

SISUKAPHI?

By

Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane

Based on the workshopped theatrical process

By

Mfundiseni Ndwalane and African Music and Dance Students at UKZN Howard College Campus

December 1, 2021

PLACE

The action takes place outside an imagined queen's palace named Kwandlovukazi. The villagers have been visited by tourists who have come to learn about their cultural backgrounds and history.

The play begins with the song titled *Bayede*. You can hear the song from the backstage. While singing, the villagers enter the stage and form two diagonal lines from downstage left towards upstage right. When the music is soft, one female begins leading the song. When the song reaches the climax, it transitions to a musical poem titled *Indlondo enophaphe ekhanda likaMenzi*. While the musical poetry is recited, we see NDLOVUKAZI coming from the upstage centre, holding a spear with the right hand. Moving slowly with pride,_While NDLOVUKAZI stands still, the response interjects the singing as 2ND FEMALE calls izihasho.

2nd FEMALE

Babengaphi?

VILLAGERS

Babengapha! Singapha! sahlangana phakathi kwaf'umuntu shunqu!!

2nd FEMALE

Babengaphi?

VILLAGERS

*(They quickly move clockwise while responding…)*Babengapha! Singapha! sahlangana phakathi kwaf'umuntu shunqu!

2nd FEMALE

Watitulatiti ulatiti ulatiti watit'ulatiti!

VILLAGERS

(while moving to form two straight horizontal lines facing front, they respond) Watitulatiti ulatiti ulatiti watit'ulatiti!

(1ST FEMALE starts a Mzansi song titled "Wegwala", then the dance begins. Immediately after the dance finishes, the VILLAGERS form a semicircle shape facing the front. It comprises the Zulu warriors on stage left and maidens on stage right. Then, the song titled "Kuxabene Izinduna" starts. NDLOVUKAZI approaches the upstage centre. Moving slowly with pride, she goes to the centre stage. As She lifts the spear,_the female izinyosi starts to acknowledge her with the praises and the singing stops.)

1ST FEMALE INYOSI

Usoqili!

Iqili lakwaHoshoza,

Elidl'umuntu limyenga ngendaba;

Lidl'uBhedu ngasezinyangeni,

Ladl'uMkhongoyiyana ngasemaNgadini,

Ladl' uBheje ngasezanuseni.

Ubhuku lukaMenzi,

Olubamb'abantu lwabenela;

VILLAGERS

Musho!! oQili likamahoshoza!

2ND FEMALE INYOSI

Ngibone ngoNohela kaMlilo,

Umlil' ovuth'intaba zonke,

Ngoba lumbambe wanyamalala.

Inkom'ekhal' eSangoyana,

Yakhal' umlomo wayo wabhoboz'izulu,

Iye yezwiwa nguGwabalanda

Ezalwa nguNdaba wakwaKhumalo.

VILLAGERS

Ndlovukazi, Mama wesizwe!

3RD FEMALE INYOSI

Intomb' ethombe yom'umlomo.

Zaze zayihlab'imithanti zawonina.

Umthobela-bantu izinyoni,

Bayazibamba usezibuka ngamehlo.

Uvula-bangene-ngawo-onk'amasango,

VILLAGERS

Qili likamaHoshoza elidlumuntu, limyenga ngendaba!

4TH FEMALE INYOSI

Abanikazimuzi bangene ngezintuba.

Umcindela kaNobiya,

Umhlathuz' uzawugcwal' emini.

Imbibakazan' eyaqamb' imigqa kwaMalandela,

Yathi ngabakwaMalandela,

Ithi yikhona bezoqananaza ngazo zonk'izindlela,

Bayede!

VILLAGERS

Bayede!

4TH FEMALE INYOSI

Bayede!

VILLAGERS

Bayede!

4TH FEMALE INYOSI

Ndlovuvazi! *(she kneels)* Inkosi ayiqedwa.

VILLAGERS

(To Ndlovukazi) Ndabezitha!

NDLOVUKAZI

(Begins addressing everyone present) Sizwe sika Phunga Nomageba namhlanje Usuku olukhulu kakhulu.

TRANSLATOR

People of Phunga and Mageba, it is a big day today.

NDLOVUKAZI

Namhlanje sinezihambeli zethu, ezivela emazweni amaningi omhlaba, zizelapha ukuzofunda kabanzi ngosikompilo lwethu njenga maZulu.

TRANSLATOR

Today, we have visitors from many countries around the world. They have come here to learn about our culture and origin, amaZulu.

NDLOVUKAZI

Siyanamukela KwaZulu, Namukelekile kwelikaMthaniya, KwelikaPhunga Nomageba.

TRANSLATOR

We welcome you here in Zululand. You're welcome in the land of Mthaniya, in the land of Phunga and Mageba.

NDLOVUKAZI

Thina njenga MaZulu siyaziqgaja ngokwethu 5anye nemvelaphi yethu, kungaba usiko, umdanso, umculo, izitshalo nemfuyo nokunye okuningi.

TRANSLATOR

We, Zulus are very proud of our culture, tradition, and origin. It could be dance, music, plants, livestock and many more.

NDLOVUKAZI

Lapha kwelikamthaniya, asicwasi muntu. Kungabe ungowokudabuka lapha eningizimu Africa noma ongowokufika, kuyefana nje, Ziweni nisekhaya.

TRANSLATOR

Here in the land of Mthaniya, we do not discriminate, whether you are a South African or a foreign national.

NDLOVUKAZI

Hlalani phansi, ninethezeke. Bukhona utshwala, ikhona inyama. *(NDLOVUKAZI moves and stands in front of her chair)*

TRANSLATOR

Sit down and feel comfortable. Meat and drinks will be served.

VILLAGERS

Ndlovukazi!, Qili likaMahoshoza!, Mama weSizwe!

(3RD FEMALE Starts izihasho, and the villagers respond. While this call and response happens, everyone moves around the space except NDLOVUKAZI. While this call and response and movements happen, 1ST MALE takes NDLOVUKAZI'S Chair and places it in the centre stage. When NDLOVUKAZI takes the position in front of the chair, all the villagers also find their positions. They all face the front, forming a semicircle resembling the cow's horns. When NDLOVUKAZI lift the spear, the women sit on the right and the men on the left. NDLOVUKAZI is in the centre, placed between men and women. The song, Sisukaphi? Starts. An old man named MAKHATHINI appears among the villagers. He strolls with a stick. When he reaches downstage, he stands, and a few seconds later, someone brings him a bench. He sits. With a husky voice, he calls…)

MAKHATHINI

Bring my guitar here! So I will play beautiful music for the white people. (He puts down his walking stick. They offer him a guitar—the opening song fades out. MAKHATHINI does an ear tuning on the guitar, then starts playing and hums a tune. The villagers join in. As the voices start blending, the music becomes loud. He stops playing. He signals the villagers to sing softer and begins his story)

MAKHATHINI

As for my grandchildren, I am Donda. The Donda are Ntungwa Nguni. In the past, they lived with the people of Sibiya and Elangeni in Mhlongo. At that time, they were led by Donda of Gxabhashe but not one of the Khumalos. The area where we find the Donda people is between the Mfule and the White Mfolozi rivers, facing the Sea. This clan of ours used to live with its neighbours in great peace. However, because King Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa wanted to build his dynasty during these times, he attacked Gxabhashe and his tribe near Mthonjaneni. After all, it was then that Dingiswayo wished to become the King of the whole nation. All the clans he had conquered should serve under him.

(The humming fades out)

MAKHATHINI (Continued)

Our chief, Gxabhashe, fell into the trap of finding the King of Mthethwa wanting to rule with great power that had never been seen before. One night, when my most terrific grandfather, Gxabhashe, was resting without expecting anything, he did not know he would be attacked. When he awoke from his sweet dreams, he was a prisoner of Dingiswayo. The Mthethwa army attacked at night, and everyone was suddenly asleep. When he woke up, Gxabhashe was so angry that he had a heart attack and died. The Xulu warriors were furious at what had happened to their King. All right, grandkids, I hope you heard.

(The villagers praise Makhathini! Donda, Xulu! Ntonga! Nomandla! Gxabhashe! Then, another man named NDLANGAMANDLA from the villagers appears. He helps Makhathini stand up from the bench and hands him the walking stick. Someone picks up the bench. And then Ndlangamandla goes to the centre stage and starts his story)

NDLANGAMANDLA

I am Ndlangamandla.

(The villagers praise NKOSI as Mntungwa! Mbulazi! Ndlangamandla! Mphazima! Mntungwa! Mawandla kaNdlela! Nina baseMandlovini!)

We are Zulu; it was because of iLembe. Nkosi's people are also Mantungwa-Nguni according to the Nguni groups, and they are also Mantungwa by descent because they were born to Mbulazi's Mantungwa as Khumalo people. During the reign of King Shaka in this region, the prince of the Khumalo people was Magugu, the son of Gasa, who had his home in Sikhabeni. He first built in Babanango, but as time passed, he returned to Nquthu—Magugu and the people of Khumalo built in the mountains of Babanango and went to Nondoni. The surname of Nkosi appeared when Ntungwa of Nkosi was owned by Sodlaka, also known as Ndlovu. Sodlaka built his house and named it Kusezi Ndlovini or EmaNdlovini (the land of elephants). It is said that he forbade people to enter his home in Ndlovini, saying…

(Ndlangamandla freezes, and then the song titled 'Akungenwa emaNdlovini' starts from the background; after two sections of the song, NDLANGAMANDLA continued.)

You cannot go in here; it is the King's house, you cannot go in here. It was said that the people of Sodlaka belonged to King Ndlangamandla. Sodlaka did not want his daughters to marry other surnames; he wanted them to marry the Khumalo family.

(Some village members are heard, and some are whispering, saying that Khumalo was an illicit man since he wanted to marry his sisters; hence, this is against the amaZulu cultural practices.)

NDLANGAMANDLA (Continued)

One day, he surprised people by sending his daughters to get married in Mantungweni, where he lives in Khumalo. These young women came to Khumalo wearing tanned skins, and the interest of Nkosi's people appeared, saying that the ones who returned were wearing goatskins.

(He finishes his story, and on the way back to his original position, he meets and shakes hands with the woman named NGEMA, who comes from the villagers. NGEMA is carrying a short beaded knobkerrie. She kneels in the centre stage, and with a gesture, she greets the guests and starts her story)

NGEMA

Ebukhosini, Mina ngingu Madlokovu, Ntusi Yenkomo, Mngadi.

(The villagers praise her, saying, Sthenjwa! Muji, Wena wasengweni! Sabela uyabizwa ekonjeni! Ubizwa ngaba mhlophe! Ukuzokhuluma ngomhlaba wakini kamalandela, nina

basemfule!)

NGEMA (Continued)

The origin of Ngema comes from the Nguni tribe, which was led by King Shaka of Senzangakhona, among which other surnames appear, including the Ntusis and the Nenes. One day, Malandela was born to Mnguni's young man. Gumede's Mnguni left with the army he was leading, and they headed for the North of KwaZulu Natal. They went until they came to a place known as Mfule. At Melmoth, they had travelled a long distance, and on the way, they were attacked by hunger and starved. Luckily, they reached a flowing river called Mfule, and they came across fields with crops and fruits that belonged to the Xulu people. They did not bother anymore; they feasted on these Xulu plants. When the Xulus heard of the intruders, they came. Malandela left with part of his people and crossed the river while the others covered themselves with plants. The river suddenly brought them in, and they shouted at Malandela, warning him that the river was bringing them in and they might leave. He ignored them and did not listen to them. Until the river was complete, some could cross, but others could not. Then he turned them away and left them like that. Among those who remained there was Ngema, who was born to Ntusi and Ntusi of Mafu Ngema, who ended up being the King of those who remained. Those who stayed with Ngema in the Xulu garden were called Mngadi because they were caught in the garden, and since then, Ngema has been called Mngadi.

(NGEMA finishes her story, and a man called MABUYA appears from the villagers. He carries a shield and a spear. He goes to the Centre stage and acknowledges NGEMA)

MABUYA

Thank you, Ntusi Yenkomo, for a lovely story. I am the most extraordinary snake' who ate dung and lingered, Mafukufukwana, Jam-Jam Kanjelele, Siwela, Gasa., Msuthu wasenhla.

(Switches to the Sotho language)

MABUYA (Continued)

Msibi is from Lesotho, and that is where his mother originated from. He went all the way looking for a shoe polishing job.

(Switches back to Zulu)

MABUYA (Continued)

He ended up being called just Mafukufukwana, which was the thing he carried with him from home. He travelled to have children all over the country; he reached Swaziland and Phongolo and worked until he found a settlement in Jozini in the Bhiyela area, where he got married and started having a family. When the children grew up, they migrated to Mtuba in the Ntondweni area, the main village where they found their sons and daughters. Due to the family size, my great-grandfather, Mbhoshongo, then migrated to Empangeni in the Ntambanana area with his children and his wife. I grew up here, as you see me, with grey hair. All right then, I hope you heard.

(MABUYA finishes his story and then leaves. Then comes a young lady named MA-PHORI. She carries the clay port with her head. She kneels in front of the tourists, takes off the clay port and puts it in front of her)

MA-PHORI

I greet you all. I am from the Phori family. Even though I do not have a long history with my family and my family comes from a white background, it does not change the fact that I am umZulu. The history of Phori comes from the grandmother who gave birth to Phori's mother. My most incredible grandfather had a relationship with ndlebe Zikhanya'ilanga, the ones with the ears that reflect the sun white man. Then, they had children. Afrikaans is the language of Phorie, which is the language of the Afrikaners. Since it was during colonialism and apartheid, it was a crime if a black person fell in love with a white person, so they had to change their surname to Phori in the isiZulu. That is how our last name came about.

(She picks up her clay pot and leaves).

(A woman named MAJOZI comes from the villagers and is heard with a big voice appreciating PHORI's history. She starts her story on the way to the centre stage)

GOGO-MAJOZI

Thank you, MaPhori. I enjoyed the history of your surname.

(Now at the centre stage)

GOGO-MAJOZI (Continued)

Historically, the Majozi tribe originates from a place called Msinga in KwaZulu. The Majozi surname was named after a person named Majozi, who was born to Mchube, and they had four children. Majozi was the first of them, followed by Nala, Mnomiya, and Shezi, who was the last. Shezi was young, but he took the kingship for some reason, and that did not go down well with Majozi, who said that he did not get the royal position when he was old. That is why there was a disagreement between him and Shezi. It was forced that Shezi, who ended up going to build at iNKandla. The Majozi and other kings, such as Macingwane and Zuma, were famous for making ploughs and spears to fight during those years of war. King Shaka of Senzangakhona said the spears were made of jozis. This is because they built jozis complicatedly, using rock they dug from the mountain called iThala, where King Macingwane left. The spears were used to fight the battles of the villages and the war that was going on between the whites and amaZulu. That is how the MAJOZI family came about.

(GOGO-MAJOZI finishes her story, and the villagers praise her as Lukhozi! Mqamu! Gwanyana! Mbhuli Wezingwe nezingonyama! Mfazi Omabelemade, oncel'isingane ingaphesheya komfula! Just after the villagers have praised GOGO-MAJOZI, a man named NSIZWA appears from the villagers carrying a stick)

NSIZWA

The Shoba clan were the members of the Dlamini clan a long time ago when King Mbandzeni of Swaziland ruled. As we might all know, during the wars, King Shaka Zulu kaSenzangakhona used his wisdom to form the amaZulu kingdom by challenging all other clans. It was like a bet that if he conquered a clan or if the clan surrendered, they would all bow to him and become the amaZulu kingdom. For this reason, King Shaka sent his troops to Swaziland to fight King Mbadzeni. Indeed, they overcame King Mbadzeni and his troops. It was raining heavily during that war, and anyone who attempted to cross that river drowned. Nevertheless, the troops of King Mbadzeni, who did not want to bow under the dictatorship of King Shaka Zulu, drove the oxen because the oxen did not move in a flooding and drowning river. When they got to the other side, King Shaka Zulu said he could not fight them as they were very few. He said they were no longer the Dlamanis but the Shobas because they crossed the river by holding the oxtail hair; hence, the oxtail hair in isiZulu is called ishoba. Thank you, I made it clear.

(After NSIZWA has shared his history, we see a woman named MAMLAMBO. She carries an Umakhweyana stringed bow. She starts praising herself as she departs from the villagers.)

MAMLAMBO

I am Gubhuze, the river that swallows across Maphedla and wades in Ndlovana, Maphisa. It is not fuelled by sulphur but by anger. I will ask you to enjoy my music before I tell you about the origins of KwaMlambo.

(When she reaches the centre stage, she takes her Makhweyana bow, starts playing and sings a very relaxing song. The music becomes soft, and she stops playing. Then starts talking)

MAMLAMBO (Continued)

The Mlambo people come from the Mtshali clan. A long time ago, the village of Mtshali became very numerous. They were having sex with each other, and the local King looked at it and devised a solution. A part must live somewhere else anyway. A part of the river has been crossed, and it is being told that you will become Mlambo people. You do not date or marry Mtshali because you are of the same blood. In Mlambo's poems, Mabhedla appears, which was left by Mtshali's great-grandfather.

(Immediately, when MAMLAMBO is done, NGCOBOH starts a family ihubo song titled "Sigodephi Na?" and the villagers back her. She begins while seated and leads the song until she gets to the centre stage. When the song is finished, they start praising her as Mapholoba! Nyuswa! Fuze! Mavela! Mashiya amahle ngathi azoshumayela- beautiful eyelashes that look like they will preach)

NGCOBOH

Your Majesty, Thank you for backing me so sweetly. The Ngcobo tribe is a significant and widespread tribe throughout Mthaniya. In the history of the amaZulu nation, they are known as Nguni, which is Malala. Malalas are known to slurp when they talk. In fact, Vumizitha became the head of the Ngcobo family. According to history, he was initially from the Mthethwa tribe in Mpangeni, then he migrated further up, crossing the Mhlathuze River and ending up in Gqalaba in Nkandla. He built on the Mamba River near Thukela. Vumizitha

then gave birth to Ngcobo and Mkheshane. Ngcobo became the King of this tribe and had several wives. Ngcobo gave birth to Dingila, Ngongoma and Nozidiya, who married Mandela, who was born to Qwabe and Zulu. Dingila gave birth to Prince Nyuswa, Zonca and Ngothoma. Thank you.

(When NGCOBOH has finished sharing her story, a woman named MA-KUNENE comes from the villagers and strolls to the centre stage.)

MA-KUNENE

Your majesty, let me greet our honoured guests and our Queen. I am a lady from Kunene, and I am proud of my origin. We are from Embo. Actually, our origin is above ground, like all Nguni surnames. We are closely related to the surname Dlamini, the ruling surname of Swaziland. Kunene's surname was named after Kunene ka Gebase ka Sidwaba siluthuli, the ancestor of all of us, as Swazis, who lived long before the Dlamini rulers. He avoided us, who were supposed to be the ones to take the throne, but the culture rejected him, so he went and took his people and started his homestead in KwaZulu Natal.

(The drum starts softly and slowly from the background.)

MA-KUNENE (Continued)

He came and died. Therefore, the people of Kunene were called by their ancestors (Kunene), which is how our family name in Kunene came to be. At home, we sing the songs they used to sing at Mkhumbane, where my ancestors died. *(She finishes)*

(As soon as MA-KUNENE finishes her story, the drum improvisation gradually gets louder and faster for one phrase, then back to soft again. Then, we see a woman named DUNAKAZI. She starts a vocal improvisation, which turns into a song. The villagers back her, and two dancers join her for a contemporary dance piece. When the dance is finished, we see NDUNAKAZI standing in the centre and facing straight at the tourists. The other two dancers are lying on either side of NDUNAKAKI. The VILLAGERS start praising NDUNAKAZI as Magansa! You who attacked the tiger and the chicken. The Sea is not crossed! 'They are the crows that fly up, Skhwaphune! You who defeated the King of Gengen. As they are done praising her, she starts speaking)

NDUNAKAZI

Long ago, a king had many sons, including Tembe, Mthembu, Mabuza, and others. There was a division, and they journeyed along the Sea from the country's centre. Moreover, others took the path that runs through this land, KwaZulu. Ndaba was always the name that was repeated when the King was crowned. There is one of the kings who did not find an heir because a tiger or a lioness were the ones who attacked and killed the King's children before they entered the palace. This situation caused the King's sisters to conspire to bring the baby into a bundle of wood. In those times, children were not allowed inside the palace because of the traditional medicine.

(The two dancers leave the stage and return to their original positions.)

NDUNAKAZI (Continued)

They were allowed in the forest by the river bank. That is how the hope of Ndaba came in and snatched the kingship from the lion and the tiger that had narrowed it down. Mvelase came from Ndaba's hope. However, it did not take long before the sun went down - the lion bowed down. After that, there was a big fight to remove the tiger, which caused us to lose the kingship. That is why the King got the nickname that says the one who renounced his majesty because he refused to drink the blood of his brothers. On the way to escape, we passed the tribes of Mabuza until we reached the Buthonga tribe of Tembe, where we were in small numbers because some of our clan members were left behind. After all, they were tired of running away since there was no hope of reviving the dynasty. (MTHEMBU finishes and returns to her original position.)

(While NDUNAKAZI is returning to her position, a Woman named LEZI comes from the villagers and acknowledges DUNAKAZI.)

LEZI

What an outstanding performance, my sister. Let me take this opportunity to say hello. I am LEZI

(The Villagers start praising LEZI as Shenge ka Ndaba! Phungashe! Mthwal' uSolwalisa! You of Mevana from Mcakwini! You are the sizes of the big pots.)

LEZI (Continued)

The Buthelezi tribe is ruled by the Prince of Phindangene, King Mangosuthu Buthelezi of Qwangubane of Nyathikazi, of Cole and Mavane of Lubisi, of Msicwa, of Mtshubane, of Malahle, of Lubisi, of Mandulo, of Nyathi, of Nduvane and Mlambo, of Mvulani, of Nqengelele and Myamana, of Mkhandumba and Tshanibezwe, of Mathole of Mangosuthu, the King of Phindangene. He is based in the fields of uLundi and Baqulusini. We have a long history in the Zulu kingdom. Buthelezi's history begins with a man called Shenge. Shenge gave birth to Mageba, but do not confuse him with one of the amaZulu tribes. Buthelezi gave birth to Ndaba, Ndaba gave birth to Shenge, Shenge gave birth to Ngwane, and Ngwane gave birth to Phungashe, the King of the Buthelezi tribe that he built in Mcakwini, Babanango. When King Shaka united the Zulu tribes, Phungashe was conquered by the Buthelezi tribe and became part of the tribes united under King Shaka. Other sons of Ngwane are Mpundulwana.

(While LEZI is still busy explaining to the guests, she gets interrupted by a drunkard man named MUNT'OFAKUDE. This man was drinking during the event because he was serving traditional beer. When the villagers try to stop him, he resists. LEZI goes back to her position. Then MUNT'OFAKUDE speaks)

MUNT'OFAKUDE

I didn't know that Buthelezi's surname had so much history because what I know is different. What I know is that there was a young lady called Zi. After all, Zi was selling alcohol.

People used to get drunk daily.

(He uses hand gestures to symbolise how people are getting drunk.)

MUNT'OFAKUDE (Continued)

When men gathered at Zi's place of alcohol selling, these men were heard saying, Pour here Zi, buthele Zi (pour it Zi, Pour it Zi). That is how Buthelezi's surname came about

(This is so funny, as most people laugh at this statement by MUNT'OFAKUDE. But others are asking him to talk about his background.)

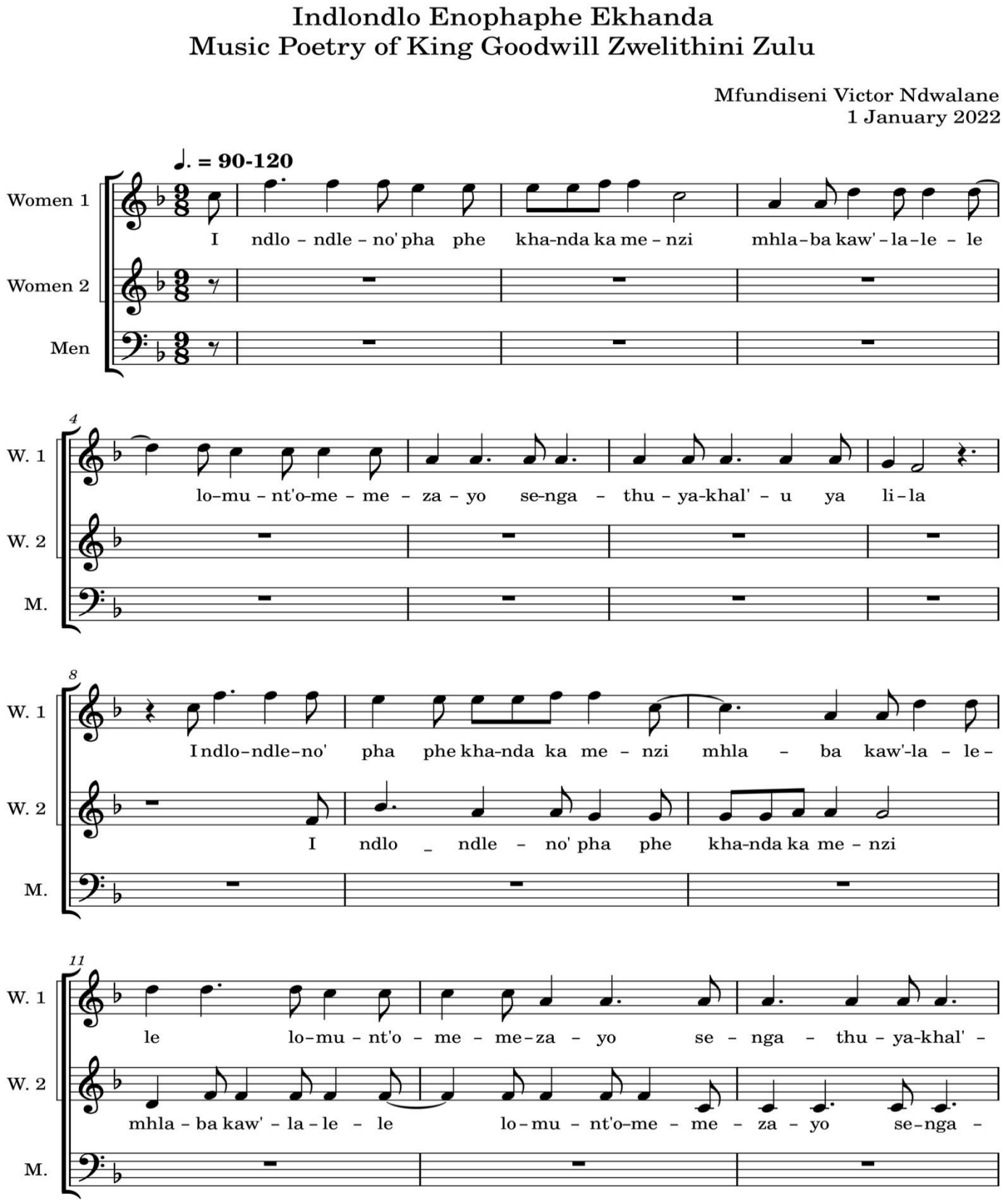
MUNT'OFAKUDE (Continued)

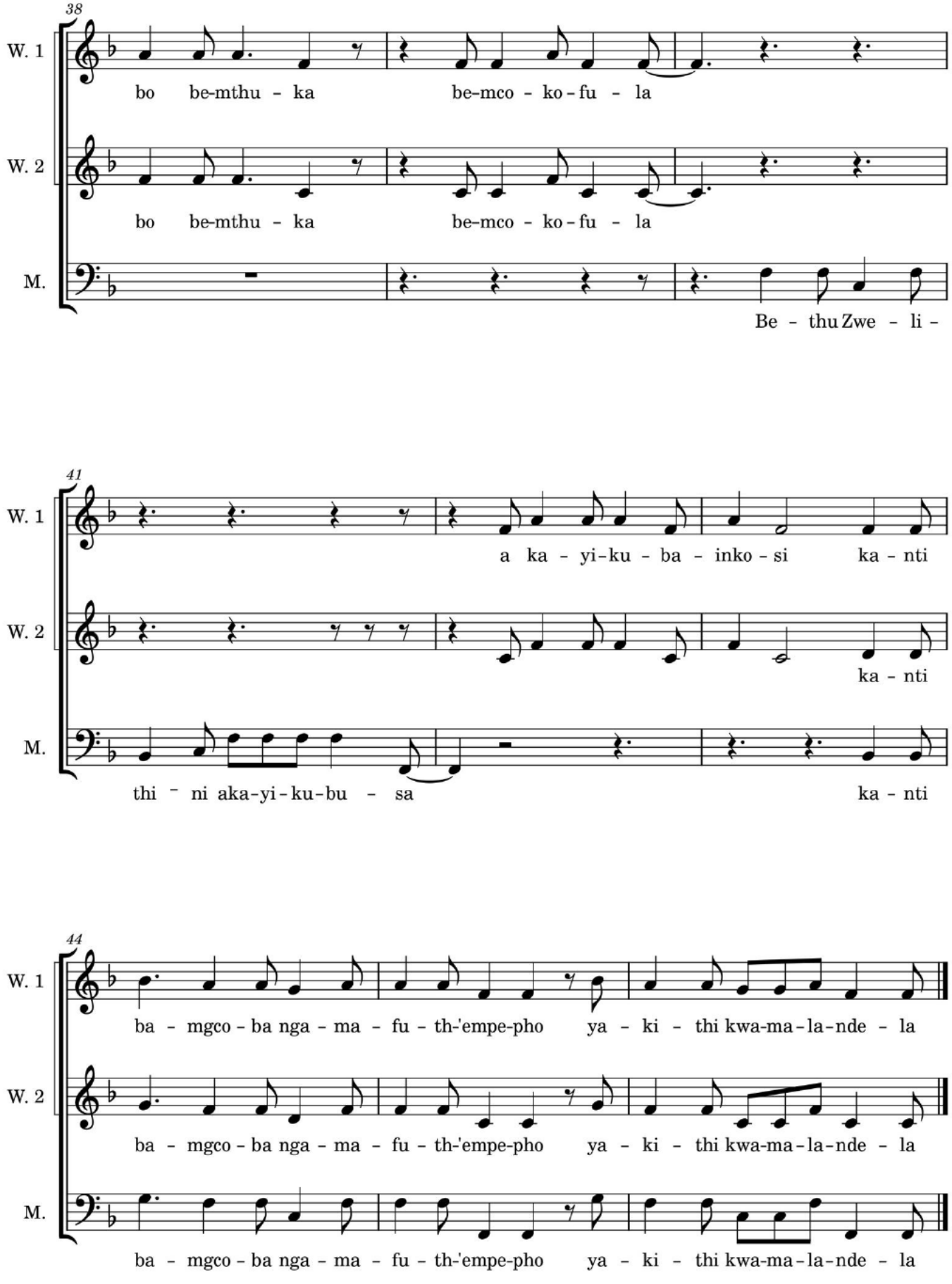
Shame on you people, you do not believe me. Oh well. You do not want me to give you an accurate history of Buthelezi. Ok, the surname Fakude came from a particular action from a particular man; here, a man who lived in the mountains called Mdzibha in Swaziland. This man did not get along with people; he would run away and hide in a cave when he saw people. The people reported the man to the King, who told them to fetch him and bring him to his palace in Zombode Wamagugu. When they were brought back, the man from Ngwane asked whom this man belonged to, and he said he belonged to Matsebula. Sobhuza asked why he lived in the forest. The man replied that he feared people because they would kill him. The King said, do not be afraid to die because you are still here, my friend. Since then, Sobhuza told him, you are now Fakudze, meaning you will live long. Sobhuza built a house for him; over time, Fakudze married and took his family to KwaZulu. Over time, the Fakude surname spread nationally, especially in Kwa Zulu-Natal and Mpumalanga Province. In short, the surname of Fakde comes from the surname of Mathebula (Matsebula), a man who did not get along with the people who lived in the mountains of Swatini. I am Ndabile Mfene of the chief! Msuthu! Mswazi! Mtolo! Cesana! Gininda! Mayisi!

(When MUNT'OFAKUDE is done presenting his background, NDLOVUKAZI raises a spear and calls izihasho. Then igosa starts imvumo to prepare for a closing dance)

The end

APPENDIX 8: INDLONDLO ENOPHAPHE MUSICAL POETRY




38
W. 1
bo be-mthu - ka be-mco - ko - fu - la
W. 2
bo be-mthu - ka be-mco - ko - fu - la
M.
Be - thu Zwe - li -
41
W. 1
a ka - yi-ku - ba - inko - si ka - nti
W. 2
ka - nti
M.
thi - ni aka-yi-ku-bu - sa ka - nti
44
W. 1
ba - mgco - ba nga - ma - fu - th-'empe-pho ya - ki - thi kwa-ma-la-nde - la
W. 2
ba - mgco - ba nga - ma - fu - th-'empe-pho ya - ki - thi kwa-ma-la-nde - la
M.
ba - mgco - ba nga - ma - fu - th-'empe-pho ya - ki - thi kwa-ma-la-nde - la

APPENDIX 9: LETTER OF EDITING

Pauline Fogg
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[redacted]

09 July 2024

Letter of Editing

This report serves to state that the dissertation submitted by Mfundiseni Victor Ndwalane titled 'The Interrogation of Power Dynamics and Students' Cultural Beliefs Through the Performing Arts in a University Context: The Case of Sisukaphi?' has been edited.

The dissertation was edited for errors in syntax, grammar, punctuation and the in-text referencing system used.

The edit will be regarded as complete once the necessary changes have been effected and all of the comments addressed.

Thank-you for your business.

[redacted]

Pauline Fogg