

# LIKE DOVES WE RISE



**UNIT 0**  
Prologue

**YAËL FARBER**

**THE UNDERSTUDY**  
DRAMA & THEATRE RESOURCES

# UNIT 0

## Prologue

# BEFORE WE BEGIN

*We need to talk about this*



As you will have understood from your contextual exploration, Apartheid is very recent history and is a very sensitive topic for many. It exists in the living memory of many South Africans - and racism all around the world is a problem we are all challenged with in some way or another. It's prevalent. It's sensitive. And it's important. That's why people like Yaël Farber have felt the need to make theatre like this. So that we can begin to address our past, to change our future.

Exploring this play might be difficult for some, depending on where you are living and what your history is. It's also a difficult choice from a practical perspective as it seems that it would be impossible and totally inappropriate to cast anyone but black South Africans (and a mixed race person for Roelf). For this reason, we will keep our 'performance' questions to advising the actor, rather than asking what you would do. We don't know if the exam board will do the same, but it might be worth thinking about how you could approach a question like that. It's difficult territory as there are many roles that we are unlikely to play that we might have to imagine playing for exam purposes, but these ones seem to be particularly sensitive.

There will be practical exploration exercises in our activities and you can undertake those sensitively. Try to explore with empathy, trying to find the emotional core of the stories, and to feel some of the pain the characters tell us about. The next slides explain a bit from the artists point of view why they would be pleased to know you are working with this play.



# UNIT 0

## Prologue

# BEFORE WE BEGIN

*We need to talk about this*

When Amanda Stuart Fisher asked Yaël Farber if these plays could be performed by other people, this was her response:

*"These narratives have been wrought from real experiences but should not remain limited to being performed by the original casts. The possibility of other actors carrying these testimonies forward offers a life force for stories that should continue to be heard. What is important in testimonial theatre, however, is that the audience is clear on whether the storyteller is an actor honouring another person's story - or if the narrator is the person who actually lived these events."*

(Farber, 2008)



*"As a South African artist, I wanted to be a part of revealing how individual lives were violated by Apartheid - as well as documenting these stories in a way that history text books cannot convey. Not only is it an issue of revealing the past, but remembering and acknowledging this past to the new generations through testimony, using the power of theatre. There is also something very profound about working to reclaim this past."*

(Farber, 2008)

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## DISCUSSION

TESTIMONIAL THEATRE according to Farber: "a genre wrought from people bearing witness to their own stories through remembrance and words."

Why might testimonial theatre be particularly powerful?  
What are the challenges?

Discuss the title: what are all the different meanings you can pull out of it?

Why might Bongi and Roelf be glad that you are exploring this text?

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Original Title  
(Amajuba =  
Doves in Zulu)

# AMAJUBA

*Like Doves We Rise*

TSHALLO says these lines in the prologue. How might the act of sharing stories help people to reclaim their past and feel a sense of freedom to move forward?

"For somewhere beneath the dust is the past... And until we go back and claim each broken piece - we will never be free."

(Farber, 2008)

# AMAJUBA

*Like Doves We Rise*

## DIRECTOR'S PROGRAMME NOTE

'You need only claim the events of your life to make yourself yours.'



South Africa is an extraordinary country in so many ways. Indeed the relatively peaceful transition from almost half a century of brutal oppression to democracy was nothing short of miraculous. Yet beneath the hype and sense of possibility emanating from our country lies the dark current of consequence. There are statistics and numbers that will some day speak to our grandchildren of the damage wrought by Apartheid... But the emotional devastation of those years cannot be audited. Forced Removals – while indeed socio-politically significant – on a more delicate level tore families apart, frightened children, and ruptured the fragile process of growing up. The State of Emergency declared in the 1980s – while explosive to the masses – was a shadow that fell upon countless adolescents. Instead of grappling with heady days of teenage insecurity and awakening sexuality, they were facing down war vehicles with nothing but stones and courage at 15 years old. The cold technicality of The Land Act & Group Areas Act indeed perverted the socio-economic structure of a country but the childhood years infected with poverty and relentless hunger haunt those who carry these memories today. The chillingly exact legislation of the Apartheid regime left in its wake countless lives irrevocably changed. The flexibility with which the survivors of

these years have had to rise to embrace the 'new' South Africa has inspired the world – but left little time for looking back to reclaim the emotional shrapnel left from those dark years... Somewhere out there is a metaphorical scrapyard where these lost details lie – waiting to be reclaimed. It is to this shattered landscape of memory that the actors agreed to return when we embarked on the creative process of *Amajuba*. Everything they will share with you tonight is true...the intimate details of their own childhoods lived within the Apartheid divisions. Embarking on this journey, we held fast to the notion that until you go back and claim each broken piece of your past you can never be truly free. *Amajuba* is the telling of five 'small' stories plucked from the millions untold – for indeed we are a nation of too many sorrows to recount. We hope that the light of these five stories remembered will shine for the countless that will remain untold. *Amajuba* was created as a proud acknowledgement of the inexplicable hope that has continued to burn in South Africa's people – even in the darkest years. It bears testimony to the extraordinary spirituality present in our country despite the devastation – and is a celebration of the fact that despite the damage, and against all odds...

From the Dust, Like Doves We Rise.



Yael Farber

Oxford, UK, Premier International Performance, 2003



*From the dust, like doves we rise...*



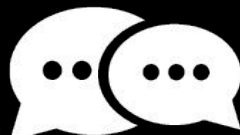
# UNIT 0

## Prologue

READING

Page 15  
Lines 1-35

## Quick DISCUSSION



What symbols  
and motifs are emerging  
as important from this  
prologue?

What themes  
begin to  
emerge?

Which ideas  
are repeated?



The five actors cast in this play were not chosen because they had devastating stories to tell; they happened to be the five resident actors at the Arts Council that had commissioned the play. That is why TSHALLO emphasises 'everyone has a story to tell' and 'there is nothing special about our stories.'

During the process: "a defining moment for Amajuba came when one of the cast members, overcome with emotion while recalling a memory - was given sudden reprieve from his narrative by the other cast members who began to spontaneously sing. This is common practice at township funerals, with song being perhaps the spiritual balm by which millions have survived unspeakable events in South Africa's past. Farber immediately determined that the narratives would be strung together on the powerful yet fragile thread of such community spirituals and songs."

(Farber, 2008)

There is a recording  
of a performance of  
the show here:

<https://vimeo.com/5323419>

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DIRECTOR



DESIGNER



PERFORMER



### MISE EN SCÈNE

*This work should ideally be played on the floor to a raked audience – as opposed to on a raised stage – so that contact with the audience is immediate and dynamic. As the audience enters, there are ten large enamel bowls (five filled with water) – placed in a seemingly random fashion on the performance floor. The bowls are typical of those used in many South African homes in the townships to wash – particularly prior to running water being provided to these areas. Upstage centre is a large zinc bath – also notably of South African aesthetic – filled with dry sand, and the props the cast will use to tell their stories. Downstage left and right are two additional zinc baths. The performance area is demarcated, by lighting, as slightly smaller than the stage area. This will create a periphery along the back, left and right of the performance space, in which cast members will wait (squatting or crouching in a position of alert readiness) when not directly involved in the action. These interludes between being in the ‘performance square’ are never without a complete focus from each company member towards those who are presently engaged in performance – while they wait. No one leaves the stage until the conclusion of the curtain call.*

*Amajuba plays without intermission.*



# PRACTICAL Activity

NOTE:

the exam board have left these details out of your extract so we assume you do not need to stick to these ideas, but it's useful to be aware of them. Our text does, of course, mention five enamel bowls so those are crucial.

As a whole class, experiment with how you can best bring this prologue to life. Select five actors to play the roles. If you have lighting, do the best you can to create something “intimate and evocative” – even if it's not five profiles.

If you will struggle to create the music live (very likely), you could use the recording from the video:

<https://vimeo.com/5323419>

Even if you can only create something very rough, it is likely that the experience of being in the room with the actors will create something moving.

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# WRITING TASK



Time is tight in the exam and you need to get used to answering the short questions fast. Try do both of these in under 6 minutes.

DESIGNER

1. How would you ensure that the "lights ris[ing]" on five performers standing in large enamel bowls, each illuminated by a single ray of light" is both "evocative and intimate"? Give a reason for your answer.

[2]

PERFORMER

2. Look at TSHALLO's lines from line 28 ("We come from a time and place...") to line 33/4 ("we will never be free"). Suggest three ways the actor playing the role could give physical emphasis to what is spoken.

[3]

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## IMAGES

- All images are stock images sourced from [www.canva.com](https://www.canva.com)