



**MVG PRODUCTIONS PATRONS AND
SUBSCRIBERS OUTLINE**

Introduction

Since premiering *My Fellow South Africans* on 3 May 2023, the show has been performed more than 75 times across the Western Cape, Gauteng, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal. We're on track to realise our original goal to run it till the 2024 elections to catalyse thought and debate, and to inspire people to participate in the elections and so help to change the trajectory of our country.

"Everyone should see this show before going to the polls next year," said Nomsa Mazwai after the seeing the show in Joburg, echoing a sentiment expressed by many around the country.

We don't tell people how to vote, only that they should vote as the least that we all can do to make a difference.

We've been blown away by the responses of the widest range of audiences for whom we have performed in theatres and festivals, but also at a church, in NGO forums, a retirement village, schools, universities and a number of people's homes! The many post-show discussions we've had reflected a generosity, goodwill and a deep desire to help change our country for the better.

But of course, it's not only people who can afford to pay ticket prices who should see this work. The vast majority of the electorate needs to be reached too and we have been greatly encouraged by a number of initiatives around the country to educate young people and to inspire them to vote. We have been invited to work with some of these in the build-up to the elections.

There is thus a clear need to scale up to reach more people – perhaps through putting out the full revue in audio-visual format, in translating some of the work into indigenous African languages with actors performing the work in those languages, posting some of the sketches on Tik Tok, finding actors to perform the work in all nine provinces....

This all offers MVG Productions both the challenge and the opportunity to build a more sustainable theatre practice that contributes to building a more just, more humane, more caring society. To do this though, we need a more coherent community of support.



The Economy of Theatre

To provide context for the sustainability strategies that are being proposed in this document, it is necessary to provide some insight into theatre's economy. Notwithstanding the high visibility of actors and even the 'sold out' signs, the truth is that making one's livelihood within the theatre industry is to seek to do so in one of the most challenging sectors of our economy.

First, what is visible to the public, is only a small part of the costs of a production. There are costs related to the director, designers, writer, technicians, publicists, social media practitioners, photographers, venue hire, ticketing, etc with most of the costs being incurred before the play has opened to the public i.e. before it has begun to earn box office income. A one-person production could cost R80 000-R120 000 to create and stage for its first run, with few independent producers having such funding, let alone R450 000 or more for a 3-4 person show.

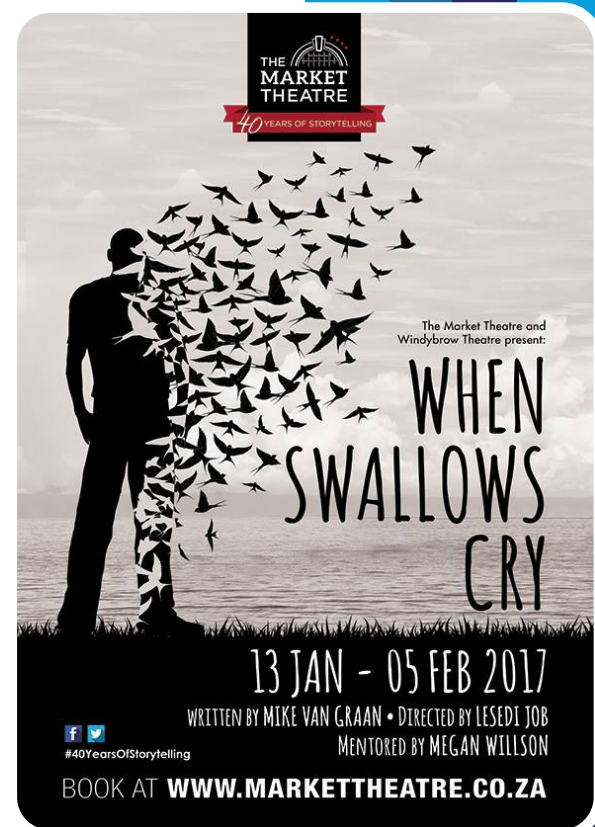
In a recent Cape Talk interview, Damon Galgut – Booker Prize winning author of *The Promise* which played to 95% audiences at the Star Theatre – said that the play version was possible only because of the backing of two individual patrons. "I was quite upfront with both of them in saying the kind of scale we needed and the budget that's required, means that they are not likely to make money...in fact, they're far more likely to be losing money, and both of them said they wanted to go ahead anyway."

After the initial production costs, to tour a piece requires accommodation, flights, per diems, local transport, etc; these are necessary, for the longer the play has a life, the more people see it, and the more it is able to generate an income for those involved in the show.

Actors, technical crew, stage managers, designers and directors are seldom employed in a traditional sense with a regular, consistent income. They are engaged from show to show in theatre's 'gig economy' and few know where the next income opportunity will arise. Accordingly, to secure the commitment of Kim Blanche Adonis to *My Fellow South Africans*, I have contracted her for a year, guaranteeing her a weekly wage irrespective of whether we are in rehearsal, in production or having a break.

There are too few theatres for the number of productions being created so that even if a show sells out, it generally needs to end within three weeks to allow the next show its booked space; the time that a show has to recoup its production costs or to generate an income to sustain its creators or its own tour, is extremely limited. Word-of-mouth is the primary source of advertising in theatre and by the time potential audiences have heard about a must-see show, the season is nearing its end.

Choosing to do a one-person show such as *My Fellow South Africans* with minimal technical requirements, allows us to tour the piece for as long as we want, and to do it in a variety of spaces. Yet it still needs support in addition to box office income to reach even a portion of the electorate who could influence next year's elections. And, of course, to invest in new work!



There was a demand for *When Swallows Cry* – my piece about African refugees and migrants – to tour globally but costs for this 3-person show were prohibitive

Building a Community of Support

From the feedback we have received around the country, we have been greatly encouraged to continue to tour *My Fellow South Africans*. There has also been a lot of encouragement to continue to do theatre that speaks to our contemporary issues, that provokes, that challenges, that inspires, that offers constructive alternatives and that helps to change minds.

People whom we don't know have offered their homes for the show. Others have provided accommodation to save on costs during tours. Still others have offered to assist with local transport. Many have encouraged others to see the work. A few have made one-off financial donations, and one couple has begun to transfer an amount of money in support of our work on a monthly basis.



This resonates with some of my pre-COVID theatre work when individual Angels supported various productions with one-off grants of R2 000 to R10 000, or by opening doors to sponsors, or even underwriting productions with substantial loans (one Angel provided an interest-free loan of R100 000 for a production, while another provided a low-interest loan for a similar amount for a festival of plays).

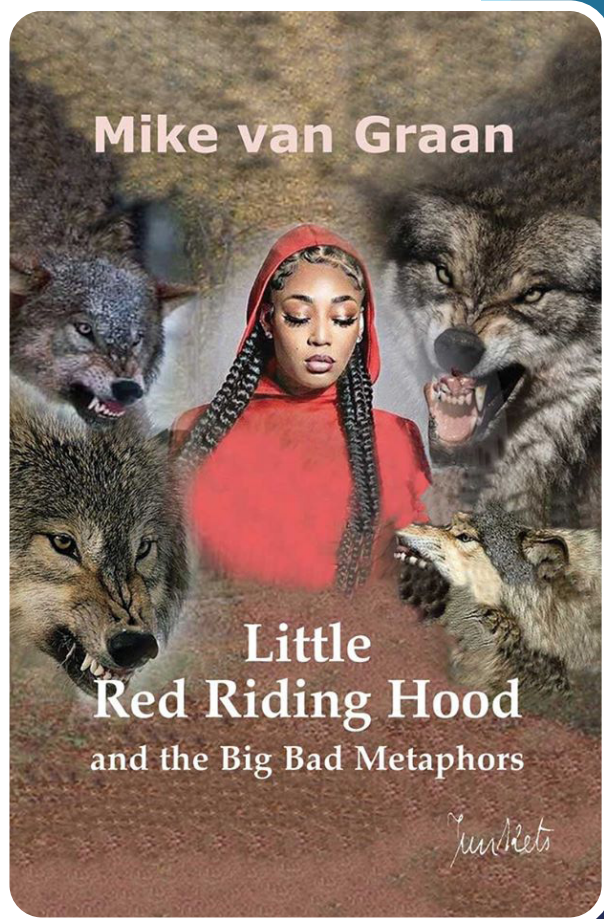
The ongoing tour of *My Fellow South Africans* offers an opportunity for MVG Productions to build a community of supporters and so develop a more sustainable theatre practice.

We are all – to a greater or lesser extent – experiencing greater financial hardships than might have been the case a few years ago. So, many may continue to be supporters of MVG Productions by buying tickets for our shows or providing in-kind support (Friends). Others may be in a position to be regular contributors of small amounts (Subscribers), still others may be Angels (one-off medium donations) and a few could be investors (bespoke contributions for an agreed set of returns).

This is to test a model in building a community of support! If it works, it could be replicated by other independent theatre producers.

How Your Support will Help MVG Productions

- The kind of theatre done by MVG Productions is less 'commercial' than that of many other production companies and theatres as we believe in producing work that deals with sometimes difficult, often uncomfortable themes, but which we need to confront and deal with in order to make our society better. Financial support will provide us with the means to produce and tour such work (existing plays and new plays).
- Democracy is enhanced when the constitutional right to freedom of expression is practiced without fear of compromising one's source of funding, or without having to genuflect to sponsors.
- We believe – as per Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – that everyone (not only those with disposable income) 'has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts...'. Supporting MVG Productions will enable us to take our work to communities who may not have the means to access traditional theatres.
- MVG Productions will be able to publish plays that may then be studied at schools and universities, thereby broadening their educational value (for example, IEB Schools and universities have prescribed previous plays of mine such as *Green Man Flashing*, *Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Metaphors* and *Some Mothers' Sons*).
- Plays may be recorded as podcasts/radio plays and on video, and so be made more accessible.
- Opportunities for young theatre-makers will be created as *My Fellow South Africans* has done for Kim Blanche Adonis



Your support will help to publish scripts that could then be studied at schools, like *Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Metaphors* is prescribed by IEB Schools

Future Plays

Financial support will also provide the writer/producer with the time and space necessary to work on new plays. The following is a list of plays in various stages of development.

WHAT WE WISH FOR, a commission from the former Fugard Theatre, was not produced as part of their tenth anniversary celebration as planned in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic which shut the theatre permanently. This play deals with the important social and moral themes of the sanctity of life versus the quality of life and assisted dying. This four-person play has had a reading or two and requires resources to be developed further and then produced.

SIX YEARS WITH AL QAEDA (Working Title), a one-person play based on the book that tells the story of the South African – Stephen McGown – held for six years by Al Qaeda, their longest-held prisoner. Stephen's story is told in a book published by Daily Maverick, and we – Stephen, the Daily Maverick and I – have recently agreed on the details of our working relationship.

THE GOOD WHITE is set in a university against the backdrop of the Fees Must Fall Campaign. An excerpt of the play was read at TEKSMARK at the Baxter Theatre in late August 2023, and with the recent publication of Max Price's book, *Statues and Storms* and the ongoing debates around decolonization, this four-person play interrogates the personal and the political particularly as it plays out intergenerationally between anti-apartheid activists and students who were born mostly after 1994.

SHELL BY DATE (Working Title), a one-person play that explores themes related to climate change for global distribution.

THREE'S COMPANY (Working Title), explores the notions of love and relationships for people older than 50 in a three-person play.

HE HAD IT COMING, a one-person play that deals with the scourge of gender-based violence, exists and has been staged publicly but is in further development to make it more viable and in order to reach a larger male audience. (The title may change).



FRIENDS, SUBSCRIBERS, ANGELS AND INVESTORS: DEFINITIONS AND BENEFITS

Friends of MVG Productions

- Individuals who purchase tickets for shows produced by MVG Productions
- Individuals who help to market MVG Productions' shows to friends, families, colleagues
- Individuals who offer in-kind support – e.g. time, services, expertise, accommodation, local transport – to MVG Productions
- Benefits for Friends are similar to those outlined below for subscribers and will be offered relative to the support provided by Friends

Subscribers

- Individuals who contribute (at least) R95 per month or (at least) R160 per couple (they may decide to contribute more)
- Individual subscribers may pay the total subscription valid till 31 December 2024 between October and December 2023 upfront at a reduced amount of R950 (as opposed to R1140 for 12 months in 2024 or 15 months from October 2023); couple subscribers may pay the total subscription upfront as a one-off amount of R1600 (as opposed to 12 months X R160 = R1920).
- Benefits (see the table below) will be phased in from October 2023

Angels

- Individuals or couples who donate at least R10 000 (payable as a one-off or in instalments of R1000 within a 12-month period)
- Angel benefits will be valid till 31 December 2024

Investors

- Individuals/partners who commit to investing an amount of money into a production for an agreed set of returns/benefits
- The structure of the investment and its returns are outlined in a separate document.



Benefits include invitations to staged readings of existing plays – like *Green Man Flashing* – and of plays in development

Benefit	Angels	Notes for Angels	Subscribers	Notes for Subscribers
Host a play (or parts) e.g. <i>My Fellow South Africans</i> , at home or office, corporate space once in the year of patronage for free	X			May also host a play or parts of it at a reduced, negotiated price
Use of the play for a charity of your choice, to raise funds for a cause at the lowest MVG Productions fee	X			May also host a play, or parts of it at a reduced, negotiated price
Invitations for you and a partner to the opening night of any MVG Productions play	X	Transferable if unable to attend		
One free ticket to a preview or second night for any MVG play (Offered on a buy-one-get-one free basis)		May request for any night	X	Two free tickets for a couple who subscribe
Invitations to readings of MVG plays in development, for feedback and critical engagement	X		X	
Regular newsletters to keep you informed of the activities and progress of MVG Productions	X		X	
Invitations to exclusive interviews, social functions with leading theatre-makers and/or newsmakers relevant to theatre	X		X	
Alerts to interesting physical and/or online performances around the world and locally	X		X	
Free tickets or reduced ticket prices to events, theatre that MVG Productions is able to facilitate in association with other producers (i.e. works staged by other producers)	X		X	
Optional acknowledgement in programmes, on our website, at awards ceremonies, book launches and other appropriate forums	X			
Exclusive opportunities for engagement in small scale settings e.g. dinners with casts, directors	X			
Electronic versions of MVG scripts on request	X		X	
Signed copies of published/printed MVG plays	X			These may be purchased
An original MVG poem on a monthly basis	X		X	
Access to MVG Productions' audio-visual channel or creative material on at least a monthly basis	X		X	



Sign up by clicking and completing this form
<https://forms.gle/A89BX49MQfzPvVbk7>



Contact Information

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