

# ASSITEJ NEWS

A Window on Theatre for Children and Young People in Zambia

No. 3

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**EDITOR**

Cheela F.K. Chilala

(Cell: 096-456172)

**DISTRIBUTION**

George Mumbuna

(Cell: 096-453811)

ASSITEJ Zambia

Tel: 252539

Telefax: 252022

E-mail:

cchilala@admin.unza.zm

Website: www.assitej.org

ASSITEJ INTERNATIONAL

SECRETARIAT

P.O. Box 6033 S-12106

Johannesbo, Sweden

## ASSITEJ Zambia Celebrates World Day in Grand Style

**THEY** came from all manner of background. They came with all manner of performances: drama, dance, music and poetry.

And they came in numbers. Young people. Children. Yet they were all talented. They were all a marvel to watch. All stars in their own right.

The place: Lusaka Playhouse.

The date: 20 March 2002. And the reason? To celebrate the 2002 World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People.

A headline in The Post newspaper captured the event this way: "Children Take Over Lusaka Playhouse." The reporter evaluated the celebration thus: "The Lusaka Playhouse came alive when children from various schools displayed their theatrical talents in drama, traditional song and dance and comedy. The celebration brought to the fore the immense talent that remains hidden in these institutions and more often goes unnoticed."

Yes, the children took over the Lusaka Playhouse, which is normally patronised by adults. The shows at the Playhouse are usually by adult artistes.

But on this day, the children switched roles with adults. Instead of them merely sitting in the audience and watching adults perform they did their thing on stage while adults watched.

The audience included, among other adults, members

of the ASSITEJ Zambia National Executive Committee, some artistes, and journalists from almost all media organisations.

Also in attendance was Winna Kanyembo, the Acting Chairperson of the National

included Ngwelele Basic, Lilayi Basic, Kabulonga and Don Gordon. Others were Rhodes Park School, Ng'ombe School Project, Kizito School and one community based group the ESTEN group from Kalingalinga Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

The Post reporter, Rueben Phiri, described the performance of the group from Ng'ombe School Project as "outstanding" and "a marvel to watch". Comparing the children to the famous Zambia National Dance Troupe, Phiri wrote: "I would still argue that the young lads have an edge over the old guards when you



Warrior dance by Ng'ombe School

see them taking advantage of their youthful agility in their dancing style, coupled with the acrobatic drummers."

Exaggeration? Not at all. Just the bare facts.

Ngwelele Basic were also simply mesmerising with their dance drama. The kids looked simple and ordinary off-stage, but on stage were simply bursting with talent and creativity.

Barbara Kalunga, reporting for The Monitor newspaper, who described the occasion as "unique and colourful," could not help noticing the captivating performance of 11-year-old Ngenda Mwitumwa and 12-year-old Peter Fusheke, both

Arts Council of Zambia, who was the Guest of Honour. He was accompanied by Basil Mbeve, the National Arts Council Director, and Jacob Chirwa, the Assistant Director for Literary and Performing Arts.

The audience could not help but marvel at the brilliant performances of the children on stage.

The emceeing was ably handled by two children from Don Gordon School: Bwalya Lusanya and Chomba Mwambazi.

The schools in attendance

*The good wine was saved  
for last*

Grade 5 pupils at Don Gordon School. The young twosome sent the audience into laughter and applause with their modern dance antiques in which they mimicked various Congolese musicians.

But there were also touching moments. Kabulonga Arts Centre gripped the audience with their poem highlighting the plight of children.

The performances by ESTEN and other groups were also brilliant.

However, the performance by Rhodes Park School is also worth mentioning. The school, which only came in the afternoon because of commitments in the morning, performed a poem and a piece of modern dance.

The performance, which

was the highlight of the afternoon, left some people wishing the kids from Rhodes Park had come in the morning.

The good wine was saved for last.

Well, many others wished the celebration could go on and on...

## HOW ADULTS SAW IT:

*"Being Part of ASSITEJ is a Plus"*

ASSITEJ NEWS interviewed two teachers: Bernard Mutambwa, Patron of the group from Ng'ombe School Project and Harrison Muleya, Patron of Fine Arts at Rhodes Park School.

Question: What is your view of the celebration and the performance?

Muleya: "The celebration was quite good because it gave children exposure. In Zambia theatre in school has gone down. Even traditional values have gone down. It is therefore good to have such events because they bring together children from various backgrounds.

Mutambwa: "The event is nice because it exposes

the children to what their friends in various schools are doing. It helps to bring a challenge when children watch others perform better. It should be done more frequently so that the

formances.

Harrison Muleya, on the other hand, suggested that prizes be given out as a way of enhancing quality. He further suggested that "workshops be held to help children get skills in theatre" and that "teachers from member groups be brought together to discuss the association's work and programmes."

Mutambwa saw a social angle to the event. "Such events keep children away from vices and delinquency. Children who participate in such events are even helped to be more active and are not shy in class. Being part of ASSITEJ is a plus and we hope to continue taking part in its activities and programmes."



children are kept busy and look forward to such gatherings."

Bernard Mutambwa was of the view that there was still room for improvement in terms of the children's per-

*Inset:*

*Talented girls from Rhodes Park School show how it is done with a contemporary dance*

*"The Child is Father of the Man"*

ASSITEJ Zambia is about empowering children by all possible means, including according them opportunities to do what seems to be the preserve of adults.

The World Day Celebration eloquently demonstrated this principle. Two children

played the roles of co-emcees for the celebration. Quite interesting, especially in view of the fact that the two little stars did not even have the opportunity to do a dress rehearsal for their roles, which they were doing for the first time.

The two, both from Lusaka's Don Gordon School, a private institution, were just among the many little stars

who graced the occasion and made it lively and worth attending.

Chomba Mwambazi, 12, is in her seventh grade at Don Gordon, while the COMC, Bwalya Lusanya, 11, is a Grade 6 pupil.

What did they think of their roles?

"It was very interesting and nice," quipped Bwalya. "I have enjoyed it very much."

## Who Said Children Cannot Do It?

## AFRICA PICKS THREE CANDIDATES

CHEELA F.K. Chilala  
Zambia. Elizabeth Kabasa  
Zimbabwe. Jackson Ndwula  
Uganda.

What do these three have in common? Well, they are all leaders of ASSITEJ centres in their respective countries. And they share one vision: to carry the African banner in the World Executive of ASSITEJ International.

The three were picked as Africa's candidates at the elections to be held during the 14th ASSITEJ World Congress and General Assembly to be held in downtown Seoul, South Korea, from 20-28 July.

The elections, which will see the emergence of the World Executive Committee that will be in office for the next three years, are expected to be tough. They will be contested by candidates from different parts of the world, and from virtually all the continents.

With more than eighty centres around the world, ASSITEJ is expected to draw a large variety of nationalities to its Congress. The elections will obviously be the apex of the performances, workshops and other events that will characterise the World Congress.

Will the three African candidates all make it despite the anticipated stiff competition?

"It won't be easy sailing," says Cheela Chilala, "but the boat is already downriver, and there is no turning back. What must be will be."

As an individual, the ASSITEJ Zambia President is riding a tide of hope. "I am an optimist," he says. "If my hour to be in the ASSITEJ World Executive has come, all the pieces will fall in place. My foot is on the peddle, and I am ready to peddle the long last mile."

Chilala is confident that ASSITEJ Zambia will serve to satisfaction on the World Executive.

"ASSITEJ Zambia has faced all manner of obstacles at every turn and corner, but the fact that we have managed to make considerable progress is a clear testimony that we have the capacity to face any challenge."

## BRINGING PUPPETS TO LIFE

CAN puppets talk? Can they come to life? Can they change our lives?

You may not think so, but ASSITEJ has other ideas.

Come June, ASSITEJ will make puppets come alive and talk. Puppets will be able to influence our lives.

And how will that be done? Simple. ASSITEJ Zambia has lined up puppetry workshops for children and adults. The workshops will be followed by Zambia's first puppetry festival, dubbed 'PUPFEST 2002'.

The children's workshops will involve teaching children from ASSITEJ member groups how to make as well as how to manipulate puppets for entertainment, education and social campaign purposes. The children will later be ex-

pected to perform during the festival.

The workshop for adults will target beginners and masters. The beginners will be taught how to make various types of puppets, as well as how to manipulate them for various purposes.

While the children will be taught basic puppetry, the adults will deal with more advanced levels and forms of puppetry.

During the workshops, the participants will make the puppets, but during the festival, the puppets will come alive.

ASSITEJ Zambia's dream is to turn puppetry into a major form of artistic expression in Zambia, as well as to bring to life the hitherto unknown and unexplored puppetry tal-

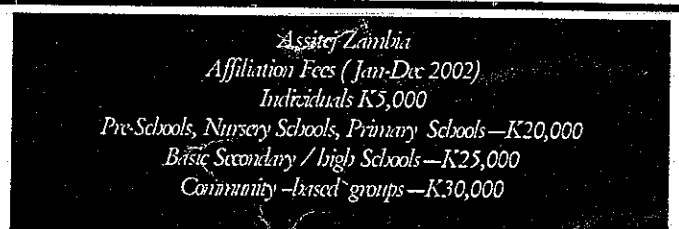
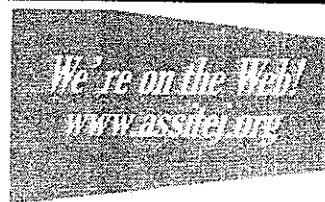
ents.

The workshops are scheduled for early June while the festival is slotted for 27 June.

Participants will be drawn mainly from the membership of ASSITEJ Zambia. However, non-members interested in taking part are encouraged to contact the ASSITEJ Zambia Secretariat at the Provincial Cultural Office on Jacaranda Road, Lusaka.

The June programme will mark the beginning of major strides in puppetry on the part of ASSITEJ Zambia.

According to the ASSITEJ Zambia President, PUPFEST 2002 will give Zambians a for-estate of PUPFEST 2003 which will be bigger, better and will involve foreign participants.



## THREE DOWN, SIX TO 'GOAL'

ON March 15, another domino fell as ASSITEJ Zambia continued with its programme of establishing centres in all the nine provinces of Zambia.

This time the domino fell in Central Province. ASSITEJ Zambia was officially launched in the province at the Horizon Hotel in Kabwe by a team of ASSITEJ leaders from Lusaka.

The team was headed by the President, Cheela F.K. Chilala. The other members of the launch team were George Mumbuna, the General Secretary, and Florence Hachilala, a member of the

Lusaka provincial executive committee of ASSITEJ Zambia.

The occasion was graced by a group of fifteen children from Mwashhi Basic School in Kabwe who sang, performed some sketches and a poem on the AIDS scourge. The children demonstrated the fact that there is potential for greater things even among the children of Central Province.

It was also evident that, although Kabwe is economically dead, it is not dead in terms of the arts.

ASSITEJ, however, would like to spark off a theatre explosion among the children and young people of Kabwe

the heartbeat of Central Province.

ASSITEJ has a foothold in Central Province, and, what with the new vibrant provincial team in place, the association is destined for higher heights. The provincial executive committee is headed by theatre veteran Gabriel Mbambara as chairman. The Secretary is Leonard Lingomba while Modrine Mukulo is the Publicity Secretary.

Chomba Mbambara is the Treasurer while the committee member's position is held by Chinyingi who, like Mukulo, is a teacher at Mwashhi Basic.