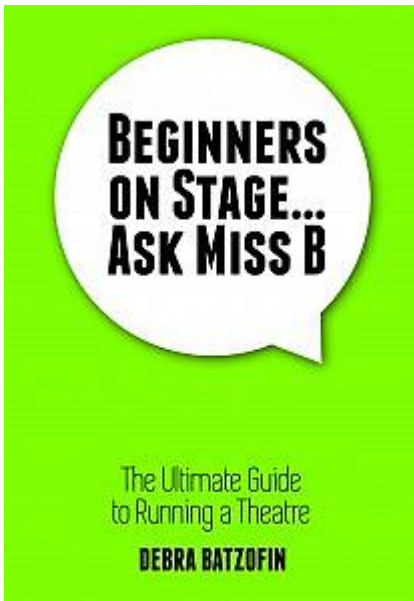


## Beginners on Stage – A Must Read



Debra Batzofin to launch her book at The Grahamstown Festival

With 40 years experience in the professional theatre industry, students can look forward to learning from Miss B, Debra Batzofin, in the pages of her first book titled, “Beginners on Stage... Ask Miss B”. South African born Batzofin is recognized for her association with Richard Loring, The Sound Stage, African Footprint, her contribution to the Lyric Theatre, Gold Reef City and her extensive travels around the globe with productions.

This ultimate guide to running a theatre came about thanks to Ismail Mahomed, Artistic Director of the National Arts Festival who suggested Batzofin write a book. “Who would have thought!” Batzofin smiles. “But he said if I wrote it, he would launch it at the Festival in Grahamstown, and so the project began. Due to work commitments I totally missed the first deadline but I set time aside this past year to ensure I would finish it.”

Thanks to sponsors DWR Distribution, Nedbank Arts & Culture Trust, Gearhouse Splitbeam and Tsogo Sun, 500 copies of the book will be given out to students from around the country and internationally free of charge at the National Arts Festival this year. The book can be purchased for R120.00 and an E-Book is to follow.

Within the pages, Batzofin shares her invaluable knowledge with the hope that the standard in the industry, which she is passionate about, is upheld. “I also felt I had been so fortunate to have mentors along the road that it was time to give back. If I had not had people being so kind to me and teaching me along the way, I would never have made it.”

Prospective students are directed to continue discipline on a day to day basis, especially for those wanting to reach the top. “One has to constantly aspire to make your venue better and to ensure your staff is motivated,” said Batzofin. I am hoping to make a small contribution in that direction.”



Debra Batzofin

The book took two years to complete, but once the chapters were set out, the fun began. “I did get stuck on a few occasions,” she admits, “But was so very fortunate that I had friends in the industry who could help me work through things. Sometimes just a second pair of eyes did the trick and I would be right back on track again. My main concern was to ensure the book was easy to read and that it would be used on a daily basis by managers and students alike.”

You may ask how Miss B came to be Miss B? “Well, my first job with Brickhill/Burke was when I was 20 years old and I was surrounded by all these crazy theatricals,” Batzofin remembers. “I was in awe of all of them. Carlo Spetto, lead dancer and choreographer, quickly nicknamed me Miss B and it has stuck since then! The title has personalized the book and soon there will be a website/forum where students and people working in the industry can ask questions and discuss their problems or even ask for or offer advice.”

Batzofin is grateful for the incredible opportunities that have come her way. "Starting with my parents for letting my brother, David, and I go into amateur dramatics," she says, "To Michael Brooke for giving me my first job on Ipi Tombi, to Brickhill/Burke for entrusting me to stage manage many big productions and then, of course to Richard Loring for 27 years of travelling the world and running our own venue, The Sound Stage in Midrand. Lastly, without my sponsors, there would be no book, so thanks again to them for their amazing support."

