

Uncompromising determination by Durban freelancer, Melusi Shabane

“A family is like a forest, when you are outside it is dense, when you are inside you see that each tree has its place.” – African Proverb-

With love and encouragement from his sister, 26-year-old Melusi Shabane, a Durban based freelancer, discovered the live events industry in South Africa and his passion, determination and perseverance has seen him expanding his skills. He recently attended Vectorworks and Basic DiGiCo Training at DWR Distribution, in fact, it was Melusi’s perseverance that served as the catalyst for both courses to be presented.



Melusi Shabane at the Basic DiGiCO Training presented by Jaco Beukes.

“A long time ago when living at home, we attended a jazz festival in Durban,” recalls Melusi. “After seeing the show, I thought that a gospel event would do very well in our area, and I shared the idea with a few people.” Listening to her brother’s enthusiastic dream and realizing his potential, Linda Shabane, Melusi’s sister, helped him enroll for an Events Management Diploma at College SA. As this was a long-distance learning programme, she also invited him to stay at her home in Mpumalanga for the next two years.

For practical experience, College SA required students to volunteer at events or productions. While Mpumalanga (a Zulu name for “the place where the sun rises”) hosts numerous festivals, events and

shows, it really is better known for providing tourists with outdoor leisure activities such as visiting waterfalls, hills, caves and the Big Five in the Kruger National Park.

“I realized that I would either have to relocate to Johannesburg or move back to Durban,” said Melusi, and he opted to return home to his family in KwaZulu Natal. “I worked like a donkey on productions but while it was tough, I really enjoyed it,” he smiles. It was physical labour for his first gig as Melusi set up tables and was part of the clean-up crew, and then for the second, working behind the bar. There were days when the youngster even sold sandwiches, but suddenly, all the theory he had studied and all the knowledge he had accumulated fell into place and he fell in love with the live events industry.

Soon doors opened and Melusi found himself loading trucks and learning on the job at technical supply companies Sound Stylists and Sounds Ideal Productions. At the back of his mind, however, was the desire to attend Gearhouse Academy’s Live Event Technical Production course, a free-of-charge internship that ran for a year in partnership with technical services provider, Gearhouse Group. College SA had supplied each student with a thick file listing industry players ranging from technical production companies to draping suppliers. “That is where I first saw the number for Gearhouse South Africa, and eventually worked at the company for four years. I was accepted to their learnership program in 2017 and I learned everything from LED lighting to rigging, staging, and audio. The teachers were passionate, and we worked hard.”

More experienced and confident, Melusi wanted to spread his wings and joined the industry as a freelancer in 2019. Early in 2020, he was interested in participating in a DiGiCo Training course to be hosted by DWR Distribution in Durban, but this was canceled due to the Covid-19 lockdown. Throughout 2020, Melusi sent regular WhatsApp messages to DWR, checking up on the team and enquiring on both DiGiCo and Vectorworks Spotlight training.

A year later, in March 2021, DWR made both DiGiCo S-Series training and Vectorworks Spotlight training available to Melusi and anyone else interested in attending. Melusi’s sister once again stepped in to assist with transportation costs from Durban to Johannesburg, while the DWR team was inspired by his sheer tenacity.

“Melusi was extremely passionate,” said Jaco Beukes from DWR Distribution who presented the DiGiCo S-Series training. “What I liked about him was his persistence in asking for training, which means he was eager and keen to learn. He seemed to grasp concepts and was prepared with DiGiCo and various other audio software already uploaded to his computer. I could tell that he was actively teaching himself and it was refreshing to witness.”

While Melusi had watched various online Vectorworks training videos, it was his first encounter with the actual Vectorworks software with the training presented by Dylan Jones of DWR and attended by two additional delegates. “Vectorworks Spotlight is a specialized program,” said Dylan. “It was a lot to absorb, and I admire Melusi for wanting to better his skills and to broaden his knowledge.”



Melusi Shabane, in the front row, at the Vectorworks Spotlight training presented Dylan Jones.

Melusi Shabane has found his place, but without the kindness displayed by his sister, he could have remained hidden, unseen, or perhaps have taken that much longer to reach his destination. Linda's kindness has provided the sunlight and the water, the shelter and the shade that every living thing needs in order to grow. In turn, as Melusi grows, he will offer his knowledge, his experience, and his passion to others so that they too, may find their place, and be seen.