

Friends unite at KKNK festival

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Photo by Pieter Jan-Kapp



Once you get bitten by KKNK (Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees) bug, it's a festival you'll want to attend every year. Families travel from all over the country to enjoy the music, drama, works of art and delicious food and a place where the crew work hard and 'kuier lekker' (socialize). Whilst part of the magic is the spectacular setting – the blue-skied town of Oudtshoorn located in the Klein Karoo between the Swartberg and Outeniqua mountains – a drawing card is the camaraderie amongst the technical team who work under the helm of Pieter Jan-Kapp. The festival is also a welcome injection to the economy of Oudtshoorn, the ostrich capital of the world and home to the Cango Caves.



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This year's festival took place at the start of April with Blond Productions once again appointed as the main technical supplier for most of the theatre venues, Multi-Media taking care of the main theatre (The Burgersentrum), and Nation Events & Projects, a local rental company, assisting with some of the smaller venues. Heuer Pianos supplied the pianos and tuning services, Split was responsible for the production decor transport and MERL Structures did all the staging and seating stands.

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There were at least five MA Lighting consoles on the festival ranging from a grandMA full size to a grandMA2 light, and Jaques Pretorius from DWR Distribution, MA Lighting's South African distributor, was on site during set-up to provide technical assistance.



Respected and loved by his peers, Pieter Jan-Kapp, better known as Kappie, has worked on KKNK since the festival started in 1995 – for the first 12 years as lighting technical support and for the past 15 years as the Technical Manager. He remembers those early years and the pure size of the festival. “During the first five years, KKNK was the only Afrikaans Arts Festival and had over 35 venues! There was nowhere to park in town,” he says.

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With Covid-19 stealing two years from the festival and fewer freelancers available as a whole due to the pandemic, the 2023 KKNK team worked extra hard to pull off high-quality shows whilst overcoming loadshedding, the widespread national blackouts of electricity experienced in the country. “The greatest challenge we faced was the shortage of crew, specifically theatre-trained crew,” Kappie shares. “Oh, did I mention crew, young crew especially? There are not many new crew coming through the ranks. Lastly crew... and loadshedding.”

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The technical team on site, however, were “van die boonste rakke” (top quality)! Riaan Rademan from Blond, who has been part of KKNK since 2005 with 17 festivals under his belt, oversaw the technical planning. On standby first thing in the morning until midnight, he made sure that all the technical requirements for the productions were met and designed rigs that would meet the demands of multiple shows working in a single venue.

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“It’s always special to be able to meet up annually with a lot of the ‘old hands’ from all over the country to become part of the KKNK family,” Riaan comments. “It’s like going ‘back to our roots’, creating theatre venues out of school halls and other spaces, and is a place where many of us started our journey in the industry. It also gives me great pleasure to be able to pass on my

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knowledge to some of the younger techs, fresh to the industry. Then, there are the surrounding landscapes and sceneries, with some of the productions taking place in some of these beautiful settings. I would like to thank Kappie who has been a colleague, mentor and friend for many years and for allowing us to be part of KKNK. I also want to thank DWR for always assisting us in any way possible to make the festival a success.”



Lighting Operator, Edwin Böhmer from Multi-Media was stationed in The Burgersentrum, the main theatre at KKNK. No stranger to KKNK, he first started working on the event for three years as a TUT (Tshwane University of Technology) student, and then every year since joining Multi-Media in 2016. For Multi-Media and people like CJ Mostert, the company’s branch manager in Cape Town, it means a great deal to be part of this tradition and to support theatre and the arts. “It was amazing coming back to the town again, and I don’t know why, but I really love Oudtshoorn,” Edwin affirms. “It was a great experience to see people gathering at the Burgersentrum, coming back to see productions again.”



Pieter Jan-Kapp, Technical Manager at KKNK. Always time to smile along the way.

Working on a grandMA2 to operate most shows, he says the desk ran smoothly and was reliable. "One of my highlights was working with Kappie," says Edwin. "He is a legend. While he predominantly takes care of the technical side at KKNK, I was lucky enough to work with him on one of the shows where he was the lighting designer. It was such a great experience to be able to programme lights for him and realize what an excellent lighting designer he is! My thanks also extend to Jaques from DWR who was on site, answered a few questions I had, and showed me a few functions on the console."

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Photo by Hans van der Veen



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Everyone agrees it was heartwarming to see the shows at KKNK well attended. “What I love most about this job is the challenge, the love for theatre and the satisfaction of seeing people and artists leave a performance being touched by something we helped create,” Kappie concludes. “It’s also about seeing old industry friends and making new ones, and I’d just like to give my thanks and admiration to my tech crew and to the Oudtshoorn family of locals who come together

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every year and work hours and hours to make it all come together and still have time to 'kuier' (visit) and have a beer."



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