

Music + technical = TSO Productions



Kgomotso Malebye

TSO Productions is a new company established by well-known South African technician and musician, Kgomotso Malebye. For a company that's three months old, Kgomotso has been busy every week and supplied the technical for the Gsport Awards, an event which encourages women in sport and which was broadcast live for SABC 2, the SuperSport United Awards, Gender Mainstreaming Awards (GMA), Brutal Fruit Netball Premiere League, Nedbank Cup, Telkom Knockout and there's the SAB League to be held later this year. On the side he writes music and concepts for adverts, plays drums and occasionally will step in as a DJ for corporate events.

"There is a demand to buy more gear because the word has gone out quickly and I'm doing a lot of work," he said. "Sometimes it feels unreal, if I can put it like that. I feel blessed because as you know it's a tough industry, the competition is high and I thank God that I still have the business." Because it's a small company, Kgomotso is there for every event, from set-up to strike, the first one in and the last one out. "My family give me support", he says, and he will always be grateful for his mom, a nurse, who has been an encouragement in his life. He is proud of his new little family too and tries to spend every free moment with his one-year-old son.

While Kgomotso usually hires in lighting gear from MJ Event Gear or Blackmotion Production, he hopes to gradually build up his own supply. He recently purchased Prolyte trussing and six Longman LED parcans from DWR Distribution. He uses the trusses as lighting totems and they also work well for plasma stands. "I only use Shure microphones and one thing I did was brand them, so on television you could see our company name. It worked out very nicely because everyone called me after that live shoot!"

He is hoping to get a dot2 before the end of the year and he is also looking at Robin 600s. "I always hire the Robin MMX from MJ Event Gear so in future I would like to buy fixtures that can take the MMX gobos."

Kgomotso is no stranger to the industry and is a well-respected, soft spoken and a hard working individual. He enrolled for IT tuition when leaving school, but left the course two years later to study music. "I am a drummer, and played music. I used to help a lot of artists setting up the band, backline and so on. I then left my music studies and joined TUT's Performing Arts Technology course, initially to do stage management. There I found out that there's actually lighting, sound and props and the course was bigger than just stage management!"

While at TUT, he met up with Mark Gaylard from MGG Productions and freelanced for him over weekends working on events like KKNK or the Grahamstown Festival. “When I had completed my course, MJ Event Gear gave me the opportunity to do my practical there. That’s where I furthered my lighting and technical knowledge. After that I went to Gearhouse South Africa, starting off in the audio department. MGG in turn helped me to understand everything from lighting to sound and AV.”

His next career move was working as a Technical Production Manager for Lloyd Wild at Monster Productions where he stayed for three years. It was the toughest company for him to leave as the team was small and it felt more like a family.

More recently Kgomotso went solo with a sense of freedom to follow his passion, a focus on music and writing concepts for adverts. Most of his events are corporate, making more weekends available to him.

“For now I am working alone,” he says. “I have a lady who helps me with my books, two casual workers and I hire freelancers when needed. I usually programme my own lights and if it’s a sound job, I will do the sound. It really helped me to have worked at various rental companies because I was exposed to different things and learnt very quickly.”

Kgomotso says he would love to think he has reached success, but rather he is on the road to success. “In this industry if you follow the money you will get burnt. The important thing is ethics and things you can’t learn from any institution like being on time, being loyal, keeping your word, being trustworthy – those things go over your skills and will get you somewhere,” he says. “There should also be a willingness and openness to discover and never be afraid to learn even from your juniors because they will show you something you’ve overlooked. That has got me far!”