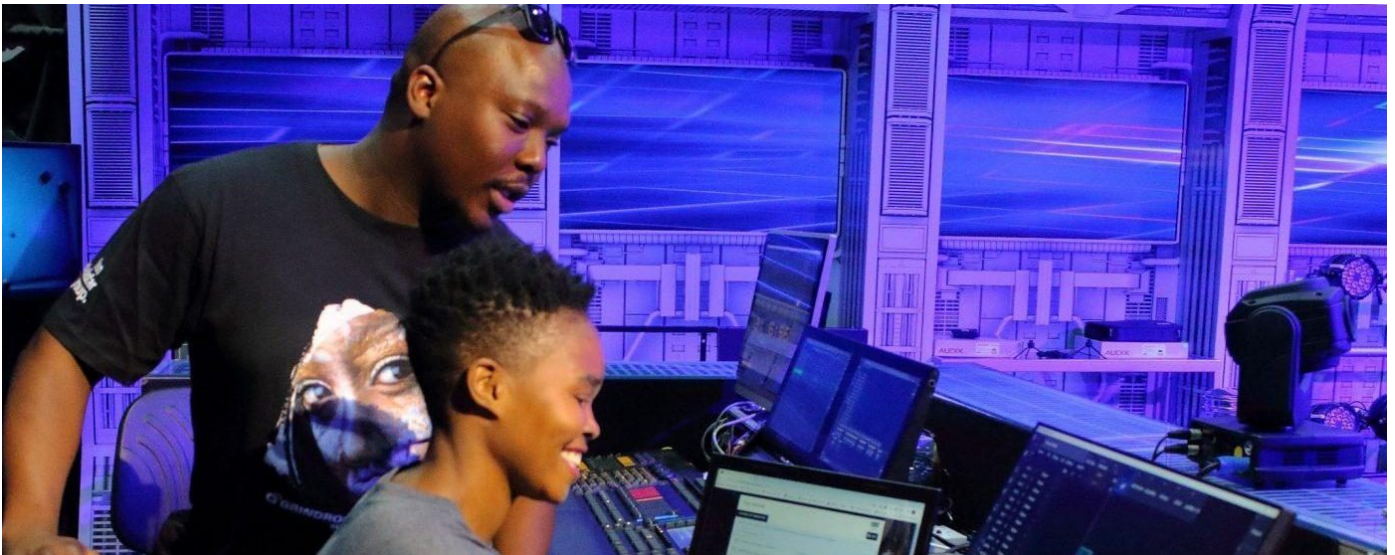


South African technician Natasha Nthuli opens doors with MA University

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Natasha Nthuli with Olebogeng (Ole) Boinamo at DWR In Johannesburg

Establishing a successful career as a technician in the entertainment industry requires a unique set of skills and natural abilities. Being technically proficient in your chosen discipline is important. However, one can only achieve this if you have a natural willingness to learn, an ability to work under pressure and a driving passion for the industry that makes the long hours and time away from loved-ones worth it.

Natasha Ntuli, a freelance technician in South Africa, has all of these attributes in abundance, and is using her passion, personal drive and ambition to establish herself as a force to be reckoned with in the industry.

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In addition to crewing as a freelancer for some of the leading technical solutions providers in the country, Natasha has recently completed a certificate on the E-learning platform of the MA University.

Born in a small village in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Natasha's first exposure to the technical eventing industry was through her church. "When I was young, I often watched live shows on television and was very curious about all the people dressed in black that run around making things work. The first time I saw an actual crew in action was during a church conference that I attended in my early teens in Durban," Natasha explains. "Fascinated, I approached the people manning front of house and asked if there was any way that I could get involved. That was when I met Brandon Bunyan, director of Black Coffee and his team, and over the next few years, I spent as much time as I could volunteering at church events and learning from them."



Natasha Nthuli, freelance production professional

Based in Kwazulu-Natal, Black Coffee is a leading technical solutions provider that specialises in audiovisual production services in Kwazulu-Natal and beyond. Brandon quickly identified Natasha's natural talent, and most importantly her incredible hunger to learn and improve her life circumstances and has served as a mentor over the years. "Brandon has always been so

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supportive and is like a father to me at times,” says Natasha. “I am so grateful for all of the guidance and support that Black Coffee has provided over the years and will always thank God for bringing them into my life.”

By the time that Natasha was 16 years old, she was regularly volunteering as a junior crew member under the care of the Black Coffee team. She then secured a placement with the Gearhouse Academy, an accredited learnership programme run by the Gearhouse Group of Companies. “During my time with the Gearhouse Academy, I grew so much and was given the opportunity to learn about staging, rigging as well as lighting and sound. I quickly realised that, despite stereotypes held by some of my more traditional friends and relatives, the industry has space for women to grow professionally and rather than being a disadvantage, I actually bring something unique to the crews with whom I work,” she points out.

Natasha elaborates on this by pointing out that “as a female crew member, I am sometimes a little more skilled when it comes to dealing with people. I love what I do, and I always try to share a smile or encourage those around me, especially when there is a lot of pressure and my team members are tired and short-tempered. I also am very sensitive to the relationship between the service provider that I am working for and the client. I always try to be as accommodating and as professional as possible when interacting with clients and try to lead other technicians to do the same.

“At the same time, it’s important to show everybody that you are just as capable when it comes to more physical work, like lifting boxes and rigging equipment,” she goes on to say. “In this day and age, there is no such thing as ‘men’s’ work or ‘women’s’ work, and I am evidence of that.”

Natasha’s hunger to learn new skills and broaden her scope of practice as a production professional lead her to enrol for a course on the MA University online E-learning portal.

“When I found out that I could learn how to programme on the grandMA2 platform online, I saved up to buy the data I needed for my phone to run the course, and jumped at the opportunity as soon as I could. The grandMA2 console is recognised as an industry standard by many production and eventing companies and being certified to operate a grandMA2 will open up international opportunities for me, which is something that I really want to pursue.”

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Natasha Nthuli has completed her MA2 and MA3 certificate with MA University

According to MA Lighting, the MA University aims to enable lifelong learning opportunities and creates a platform to provide comprehensive training programmes and deliver global MA knowledge of the highest quality standards, irrespective of a candidate's physical location. The MA University training programme is certified worldwide and will enable Natasha to apply for work wherever she chooses, as MA is a well-recognised console for lighting systems across the world.

While MA's online platform is extremely user-friendly and has opened learning opportunities for technicians the world over, having the discipline to study independently is a tall order for any professional, especially while trying to balance a demanding work schedule. Olebogeng (Ole) Boinamo, a lighting specialist and trainer at DWR Distribution, the South African distributor of MA Lighting, assisted Natasha in her journey towards completing the certificate.

"Natasha was able to cover the majority of the course by herself, and only needed a few hours of my time to practice the skills that she had learned online on an MA console at DWR's offices in Johannesburg," he points out. "The most impressive thing about her achievement is that she has managed to get through the whole course with nothing more than her smartphone, as she does

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not have access to a personal computer. Her dedication and passion are exceptional, and I am very proud to have played a small role in her incredible achievements,” says Ole.

While Ole may think this achievement is remarkable, Natasha simply says, “I can’t afford to get my own computer yet, but I was not going to allow that to hold me back from my dreams. The MA E-learning course runs just fine on my smartphone, and I have managed to complete the course and am now confident to operate a grandMA2 console anywhere in the world,” she says proudly. Natasha continues to develop her professional skills through MA University and has recently completed her grandMA3 certificate as well.

In a country where youth unemployment rates are currently sitting above 50%, and opportunities for young people to enter the job market are few and far between, Natasha is a shining example of what the technical eventing industry has to offer young people who are seeking a professional space to excel. “I see a lot of people my age waiting for somebody to solve their problems, pay for their school fees and give them jobs. The problem with that mindset is that nobody can take responsibility for your future but yourself. What I love about working in this industry is that, if you are willing to do the work and find opportunities for yourself, the sky is the limit. It does not matter if your family can’t afford to send you to university, if you are male or female, or come from a disadvantaged background – it’s your attitude and your work ethic that determines your success!”

Natasha has demonstrated the power of this approach in every step of her career progression and is a stellar example of what can be achieved with a winning attitude and resources such as the MA University.