

## The Fugard Theatre, Cape Town

08 April 2010



Mannie Manim with Athol Fugard    *Photography by Timmy Henny with special thanks to Gilly Hemphill from The Famous Idea Trading Co who supplied the photos*

The Fugard Theatre, with performances by the Isango Portobello theatre company, opened in the District Six area in Cape Town on 12 February 2010. The theatre has been named in honour of Athol Fugard, which really is wonderful, as it's not often that a theatre is named after someone in their lifetime. The Train Driver, written and directed by Athol Fugard, had its opening night at The Fugard on 24th March, and is being met by sell out houses and standing ovations.

Having lit shows across the continent, Mannie Manim, the executive director at The Fugard and formerly the CEO at the Baxter Theatre, says that the building construction took just a week beyond six months to complete, where three buildings were made into one unit. "It was an enormous labour but we had a fantastic building team," said Mannie. A lot of the old paint, wall paper and some of the old history was kept to infuse old with new. The theatre complex redeveloped two warehouse spaces and a church to create the 270-seater theatre, a rehearsal studio, foyer space, dressing rooms and full staff facilities. As a textile and soft goods supplier in the early twentieth century the building was frequented by generations of District Six seamstresses and tailors. Care has also been taken to preserve the remnant of an old Gothic-style church.



Thanks to UK based producer Eric Abraham,

who established Isango Portobello in 2006, The Fugard Theatre is equipped with some of the best possible equipment and DWR Distribution were privileged to contribute a grandMA2 ultra-light console, Source Fours, ADB Fresnels, Parcans, a Le Maitre Hazer and Scrollers along with back up support.

Mannie Manim has lit shows across the globe. “GrandMA is the state of the art lighting board of this time,” he said. “The only thing that limits you is your own imagination and all mistakes are my own. I had a grandMA at the Baxter, and I’m happy to have one again.”

For Mannie it has been a tremendous tribute to be part of The Fugard Theatre; he has lit every first production of Athol Fugard’s plays in South Africa since 1970. “Well, Athol is my inspiration, to sum it up in one word,” said Mannie. “I met him when I was the HOD at PACT. He came up from Cape Town and was performing at the Alexander Theatre and Breytenbach, and then we took him to the township. It is a very special relationship... he is a giant.”





Another relationship formed over

the years has been with Dan Riley from DWR Distribution. “Dan and I go back to when we were both teenagers,” said Mannie. “It seems a long time ago, but whenever I’ve needed help he has been there. He has been a fantastic friend to the theatre and everyone knows and cares about Dan.”

On 24 March *The Train Driver* was met with an overwhelming ovation. “On the opening night the audience kept calling the actors back on stage and it was a wonderful evening. We received thank you letters and so far two reviews on radio, one of them being SAFM, and one on Radio 567 as well as a good review in *Die Burger*,” said Mannie. He adds, “Reviews are an occupational hazard but can help a production enormously.”

The production is proving to be both an artistic and commercial success which is a fantastic place to be. There has also been interest from London and America, and if all is set to go, Mannie will travel with the actors as LD and to take care of them.

People seldom take time to consider the performing arts’ contribution to the struggle for freedom in South Africa. Athol Fugard and his actors and technical support were in the forefront, speaking out against injustices at the height of the Apartheid era. “I still have my South African passport,” says Mannie. “And I still believe in the good and potential for greatness of this country.”

Tickets to see *The Train Driver*, which ends April 18, are very affordable. On Tuesdays the cost is R50, Thursdays R80, Fridays and Saturdays R120 and Sundays R80. Watch and be moved.

For bookings online, visit [www.thefugard.com](http://www.thefugard.com) or call them at 021 461 4554.

DWR supplied the listed equipment to The Fugard Theatre:

1	x	Grand MA 2 Ultra Light with UPS
18	x	ETC Source 4 19 deg
18	x	ETC Source 4 26 deg
6	x	ETC Source 4 14 deg
1	x	ETC Source 4 10 deg
20	x	ADB F 101 1200 watt Fresnel
50	x	Par 64 Par fixtures with Lamps
20	x	Rainbow 8 " Pro Scrollers
2	x	Rainbow Maxi PSU for Scrollers

