

Elelwani

A Film by Ntshavheni Wa Luruli



63rd Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Forum



SHADOWY MEADOWS PRODUCTION AND BLACKBOARD TRUST PRESENT AN NTSHAVHENI WA LURULI FILM ELELWANI BASED ON THE NOVEL BY TITUS MAUMELA
FLORENCE MASEBE ASHIFASHABBA MULEYA SAMMY MOETI AND VUSI KUNENE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS KETSO GORDHAN FLORENCE MASEBE COPRODUCER JYOTI MISTRY
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY LANCE GEWER ORIGINAL MUSIC CHRIS LETCHER EDITOR ARYAN KAGANOF PRODUCED BY FLORIAN SCHATTAUER WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY NTSHAVHENI WA LURULI



ELELWANI

Production Notes

Genre: Drama
Running Time: 103 Mins
Age Restriction: PG
Release Date: 7 August 2013
Format: Cine E//PRO RES
Aspect Ratio: 1:2:35
Sound Mix: 5.1 Dolby
Official website: www.indigenousfilm.co.za/elelwani
Indigenous Film Distribution (Pty) Ltd. www.indigenousfilm.co.za

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Shadowy Meadows Productions

and

Blackboard Trust

present

a film by

Ntshavheni Wa Luruli

ELELWANI

Based on the novel by Titus Ntsiene Maumela

Florence Masebe
Ashifashabba Muleya
Tovhowani Neluvhalani
Prudence Msipha
Samson Ramabulana
Salome Mutshinya
Sammy Moeti

Director of Photography

Lance Gewer

Editor

Aryan Kaganof

Executive Producers

Ketso Gordhan

Florence Masebe

Co-Producer

Jyoti Mistry

Producer

Florian Schattauer

Written by

Ntshavheni Wa Luruli

Directed by

Ntshavheni Wa Luruli

SYNOPSIS

It all begins with a car journey. For urbanites Elelwani and Vele, it feels like they're setting out on the summer holiday of their lives. Having long ago left her rural village for the big city, Elelwani has just completed her studies. She's been offered a dream job in Chicago, and she's engaged to Vele, the love of her life.

They drive through the ever greener countryside into Elelwani's village, where they intend to tell her parents of their plans to marry and spend their future together. They are greeted with a dramatic dance in honour of her being the first woman from the village to have gained a degree, or at least that's what Elelwani thinks.

But she's wrong. She's blindsided when her parents reveal shortly afterwards that her hand has been promised to the tribal king, the dance being the prelude to the celebrations for the planned wedding. Torn between a glowing future and familial duty, she initially rebels, but finally consents.

What happens next is a cinematic initiation into the culture of the Venda and is the first film to be made in this language. 'Elelwani' is an ethnographic thriller infused with the Venda culture's oral storytelling tradition. Shot against the glorious green backdrop of the Thohoyandou area of Limpopo, incredibly beautiful images and a disturbing plot combine to create a film inflected with magical realism.

With this film, Ntshavheni Wa Luruli, himself a Venda, offers insights into an exotic culture without exoticizing it, all a result of his consistent refusal to explain its secrets. He deals maturely with conceptions of gender applying sensitivity and balance, and the tale comes to a complex and grounded resolution.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

For many years I have longed and desired to celebrate black South African authors who have written and published their stories in indigenous languages which had not been recognized under apartheid. One of these unsung artistic heroes is Venda author T.N. Maumela who has written and published over 20 novels, short stories, folklores and essays in the Venda language.

Elelwani, a dark, romantic comedy adapted from the novel of the same title offers important insight into Venda culture. It reflects the myths, legends and taboos of the cultural beliefs, and also the challenge of incorporating contemporary South African aspirations with deep-rooted ritualistic practices.

When T. N. Maumela first wrote the novel, he was adamant that he wanted to show how education was an important vehicle to change the treatment of women in the Venda community. The making of this film in contemporary South Africa could not have a stronger historical relevance than now, since issues of women's rights and their relation to cultural practices remains one of the most debated issues not just in South Africa but across the continent.

As a Venda I have an intimate, insider's position on the culture and the community in which the narrative unfolds. There is no danger that the Venda culture will be exoticized and this unique position allows me to offer commentary on the culture while being critical (through the narrative and characters). Such a film challenges local audiences and also offers foreign audiences insight into a culture very rarely, if ever seen, since so little is known about the sacred and ritualistic practices of this community.

My intentions are not a romantic obsession with the African past. I am attracted to this story because of its timeless social themes and their cultural and political relevance to contemporary experiences in South African life.

Most importantly, my intention is not to offer a didactic film but one which portrays the experiences of women in a community through characters that are engaging in a moving story which reassess cultural-gender frameworks.

FESTIVALS

33rd Durban International Film Festival 2012 – Opening Night Film – Competition

63rd Berlin International Film Festival 2013 – Official Selection

Fespaco 2013 – Official Selection

2nd Luxor International Film Festival – Competition

PRESS REACTION

“A dedicated lead turn by local TV star Florence Masebe as an urban career woman blindsided when her parents sell her into marriage”

Guy Lodge - Variety

"Elelwani, is a look into a culture that many of us really don't know much about [...] The issues of gender inequality and cultural significance in the modern world are incredibly relevant to this country at this time. Although this is one of those films that deals with “issues” and will probably go down as an important film in South African film history [...]" **Durban is Yours - durbanisyours.co.za**

"A decade of work and passion had gone into making something that will become an important milestone in South African cinema history. [...] This film is a window into Venda culture. [...] As much as it is a cultural expose, it really is a brilliantly told story, beautifully shot, with solid performances from the key characters. A couple of unexpected plot developments and one or two rather well conceived twists make the film a joy to sit through." **[Vandals Took The Handle \(Blog\)](#)**

"[...] Beautifully shot by Cinematographer Lance Gewer one gets a different viewpoint of the cultures and traditions of the Venda people. There is some wonderful music in this movie and the soundtrack is brilliant. It really does add another dimension. You almost find yourself in a surreal landscape. Almost as if David Lynch went to Africa." **Fred Felton - Umhlanga Life**

"Ntshaveni wa Luruli's film Elelwani is a textured cinematic benchmark that comes in the wake of years of steadily building momentum. From the onset the film operates on a premise that is both shaky and interesting. It is the first feature film in Tshivenda which means already-at least socially the film bares the responsibility of taking the battle to legitimise this language into the South African mainstream-to the next level. [...] This however is not a film that is part of what I often call voucher cinema - aiming to tick all the right boxes on route to box office returns without making a dent in the cultural landscape. Refreshingly, it is also not a manifesto for liberal values taking place in a rural setting; rather it is a comparative study about how two eras of a culture are at loggerheads as they battle for relevance in the contemporary. [...] Elelwani is a film that South Africans deserve. A mastered film that is relevant without feeling too self-consciously and quintessentially South African. " **Sihle Mthembu - The Witness**

"A film that will [...] hold its own in the decades to come." **Charl Blignaut - City Press**

"[...] Director Ntshavheni wa Luruli, a humble and unassuming personality, has not only made history, he's made a beautiful film. If you're a film lover, it's difficult not to feel euphoric when you have a great cinematic experience." **Joanna Sterkowicz - Screen Africa**

BIOGRAPHIES: CAST

Florence Masebe (Elelwani)

Florence Masebe is a South African actress and television presenter best known for her role as Humbulani in the SABC2 soapie Muvhango, from 2004 to 2009.

Florence was born in Limpopo. From humble beginnings she chose her path through the UCT Drama School and started acting professionally in 1993.

Her launch into the big time was through a youth programme called Electric Workshop with Urban Brew. Cast as a member of the original cast of Generations she followed up her success on the show by landing one role after another including co-hosting Fokus with Freek Robinson and continuity presenting for SABC2. She also hosted SABC2's cutting edge adult education programme It's For Life.

In August, 2009 she joined the cast of the SABC2 soapie 7de Laan in the role of Refiloe Morapedi, the mother of Alice. In 2011 she played the lead role of Sis Noni in the eleventh season of the SABC1 AIDS drama series Soul City. Elelwani is her first leading role in a feature film.

Vusi Kunene (Thovhele)

Vusi Kunene is best known for his role as villain Jack Mabaso in the SABC1 soapie Generations. In 1991 Vusi registered at the Wits School of Drama for a degree in Dramatic Art. During his student years he was cast in three television films: Drumbeats, directed by Jurgen Shaderburg; The Line, directed by Brian Tilley for Channel Four; and the mini-series Rhodes, directed by David Drury for the BBC. He was also cast in three feature films including Cry the Beloved Country, directed by Darryl Roodt, in which he played the Reverend Msimango.

In 1996 he was cast in Homelands and in 1997 he appeared in Deafening Silence, both for SABC television. In 1998 he was cast in the drama series Justice for All, for which he won an Avanti award for Best Actor. In 1996 he was cast in two feature films: Fools directed by Ramadan Suleman, and Kini and Adams (in which he played the lead role of Kini), directed by Idrissa Ouedraogo for Framework, Zimbabwe.

In 1998 he was cast in A Reasonable Man directed by Gavin Hood and then The King is Alive, a Dogma production which was directed by Kristian Levring and filmed in Namibia in 1999. Later film roles included Final Solution (2001) and the made-for-TV movie/mini-series Diamond Hunters, also in 2001. He also had a lead role in the second season of the SABC1 youth drama series Yizo Yizo. In 2008 he played the role of Doctor Gulubane in the pilot episode of The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, directed by the late Anthony Minghella. He also starred in the 10th season of the SABC1 drama series Soul City, in 2010.

Ashifashabba Muleya (Vele)

Ashifashabba Muleya is better known as popular comedian and radio DJ Ashifashabba.

He has his own language called “Shabba Lingo” and is passionate about his African roots, telling some of the most hilarious jokes in his native tongue. As a radio DJ, Ashifashabba is entrenched in urban youth culture of which dance is a major part. Vele is his first leading role in a feature film.

Sammi Moeti (Madzwara)

Sammi Moeti is a South African actor best known for his role as Mushasha in the SABC2 primetime Venda soapie Muvhango.

BIOGRAPHIES: CREW

Lance Gewer (director of photography)

Lance Gewer is an accomplished South African cinematographer. He was the cinematographer on the Oscar-winning film *Tsotsi* (2005), *Spud* (2010) and the multi award winning *Otelo Burning* (2011). He has also worked on a number of mine series and documentaries, both local and international.

Ntshavheni Wa Luruli (director, writer)

After completing a BA in Dramatic Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Ntshavheni went on to complete a Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting and Directing degree at Columbia University under the tutorage of Milos Forman. After winning the Paramount Picture Writing Award in 1989 with Rambani, Ntshavheni then worked as assistant director to Spike Lee on features including *Malcolm X*, and *Jungle Fever*. Ntshavheni wrote *The Rainbow Callabash*, a feature-length film for SABC in 1994 and was head writer for 26 episodes of the drama series *Success/Kgateloepo*, for SABC in 1996. He directed *Chikin Biznis* in 1999 for M-Net. Ntshavheni is also a lecturer at the Department of Journalism, Film and Television at the University of Johannesburg. In 2004, his film *The Wooden Camera* won the Crystal Bear at the Berlinale for Best Youth Film.

Florian Schattauer (producer)

Florian Schattauer is a Vienna born, New York trained and Johannesburg-based producer and arts manager. He is the founder and CEO of film production company Shadowy Meadows Productions, and Managing Trustee of the Blackboard Trust, a South African non-profit dedicated to the creation and presentation of South African art. His production credits include *I Mike What I Like* (2006), *Long Street* (2009), and *Bull on the Roof* (2010).

Jyoti Mistry (co-producer)

Jyoti Mistry is an associate professor at the Wits School of Arts. She has taught at New York University, University of Vienna and Arcada University of Applied Science Polytechnic in Helsinki. Her filmography includes films, documentaries and film installations. Her research areas include cultural policy, questions of identity and multiculturalism. Mistry has also worked as a photography and film curator. Her recent film *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* (*Bull on the Roof*) (2010) premiered at the Durban International Film Festival and forms part of a new installation project that comprises of four separate installations that explore various facets of urban and city life. *09:21:25* (2011) was currently part of *WELTRAUM: Die Kunst und ein Traum*; an exhibition at the Kunsthalle, Vienna, in 2011, which commemorating the 50th anniversary of space travel. The installation of *Itchy City* from her highly acclaimed film *I Mike What I Like* (2006) was part of the exhibition *Afropolis*, held in Cologne in 2010 and 2011.

END CREDITS

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Elelwani | FLORENCE MASEBE |
| Vele | ASHIFASHABBA MULEYA |
| Mutshekwa | TOVHOWANI NELUVHANI |
| Rendani | PRUDENCE MSHIPA |
| Father | SAMSON RAMABULA |
| Mother | SALOME MUTSHINYA |
| Madzwara | SAMMY MOETI |
| Emissary 1 | MASHUDU RUBSON DIMA |
| Emissary 2 | JOHANNES RALINALA |
| Royal Advisor | MUSANDIWA SUSAN MADZIUHANDILA |
| 1 st Wife | REGINA NESENGANI |
| 2 nd Wife | TSHIANEO CYNTHIA NDOU |
| Makhadzi | ELSIE RASALANAVHO |
| King Ratshihule | MUTODI NESHEHE |
| Thovhele | VUSI KUNENE |

'Elelwani'

Based on the Novel by Titus Maumela

National Lotteries Distribution Trust Fund

Department Of Trade and Industry

National Film and Video Foundation

Department Of Arts and Culture

With Support of the Hubert Bals Fund of the International Film Festival Rotterdam

Shadowy Meadows Productions

Blackboard Trust

Written and Directed by

Ntshavheni Wa Luruli

Produced by

Florian Schattauer

Executive Producers

Ketso Gordhan

Florence Masebe

Co-Producer

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Original Song “Moratiwa”

Judith Sephuma

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Robert Van De Coolwijk

Tshikona Performed By The Mudacahophe Rembuluwani Dance Group

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Ntshavheni Wa Luruli

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2nd Assistant Director

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3rd Assistant Director

Thamba Masindi

Venda Cultural Advisor

Aifheli Tshivase

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Lunga Xaba

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Rams Mpfumba

Digital Imaging Technician

Christopher Grant Harvey

Gaffers

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Clint Stone

Sparks

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Steven Ndlovu

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Alpheus Manaka

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Genny Operator

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Champ Twala

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Nkhulu Ntshudisane

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David Guwaza

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The Creatureshop
Jaco Snyman

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Franco Meyer

Set Dresser

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Nanafi Rakaku

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Shirly Rasalanavho

Wardrobe Seamstress

Thifheli Mukhati

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Hair & Make-Up Assistant

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Lion Wrangler

Rodney Nombekana

Unit Manager

Douglas Rodrigues

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Naki Tshivase
Elson Neluonde
Enock Ravhura
Thanga Namanashe
Timothy Tshivase
Ida Nenweli
Caroline Mphephu

Mini Bus Driver

Fhutuwani Takalani

Rendani's Chaperones

Matseliso Selapyane
Pinky Makhubele

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Ndibudza Ndivhudzannyi

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Blackboard Trust Trustees

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Zureida Garda

Post Supervisor

Lauren Van Rensburg

Colorist

Alex May

Final Mix

Peter Cornell

Original Music Composed And Arranged By Christopher Letcher

Voice

Judith Sephuma

Clarinet

Luke Newby

Viola

Violeta Miljkobic
Violin & Bowed Saw
Katherine Mann

Cello

Maren Du Plessis

Recording Engineer

Wesley Ayliffe

Dirge Appears Courtesy Of Sheer Sound [And The Estate Of Zim Ngqawana] And Ingoma Music [Admin: Sheer Publishing]; Original Track Version From The Album: Zim Ngqawana "Vadzimu" (Sscd 096).

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Heather Sonn
Devia & Chotoo Mistry
Akin Omotoso
Ken Kaplan
Maryana Iskander
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Eran Tahor

Serengeti Golf Estate

Boat & Lifestyle
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The Lion Kingdom
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Department of Trade and Industry
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