

## Told in the language of the soul



**MUNDANE AND DIVINE:** The story revolves around the symbolism of water.



**ELECTRIC:** Zulu music played on Western instruments creates a 'new modality' in The Flower of Shembe.

**Zibusisozethu Sithole**

### *The Flower of Shembe is no run-of-the-mill operetta*

FROM the realm of fantastical religion and music comes the story of a girl messiah (Addis) born to unite two separate worlds in harmony. Neo Muyanga's operetta, *The Flower of Shembe*, is a marriage of music, imagination and hard work.

The operetta follows the trials of a girl leader, born of immaculate conception, the child of the divine and the human; she is raised as the son of a cruel king of the living and the queen of the slaves. The boastful king is

deceived into thinking Addis is his son to protect her identity so that she can fulfil her destiny as the leader of both worlds in harmony.

The story plays out around ever-present water, centred on the stage. "Water represents baptism and prophecy. It represents life between mundanity and divinity" said Muyanga. And water is just one of the many symbols sharing the stage with the talented singing, dancing and

musical cast telling the powerful story that pulls the audience into Muyanga's "magical universe".

Told in the language of the soul, what is lost in translation is more than made up for by the convincing performances and the electric music.

Far from a typical operetta, the production features all kinds of South African and Western music, from praise poetry to Maskanda. "Maskanda is traditional Zulu music played on

Western instruments, making Western instruments speak IsiZulu," said Muyanga. "We need to take these definitions and make them speak in our language. We can invent a new modality."

Although the play – a tribute to his mother's maiden family the Shembe's – is fictional, Muyanga gives an allegorical perspective on social issues. "The key moment is when Addis says: 'The problem is not choice

but our immutable instinct for self-preservation. The very fact, our glory, makes it impossible for us to love,'" said Muyanga. The instinct of self love makes it difficult to love others and, sometimes, through self-sacrifice, that love can be demonstrated.

Muyanga said the operetta also communicates that salvation comes from within through the character of Addis.

Unfortunately, the Cape Town run has ended with no plans to tour. Keep an eye on the media for updates. It's too good to miss! [zibusos@thenewage.co.za](mailto:zibusos@thenewage.co.za)



**MAGICAL UNIVERSE:** Told in the language of the soul.

## Vogue vows to promote healthier, grown-up body image

**NEW YORK**

THE editors of all 19 editions of *Vogue* around the world have pledged to use only healthy models no younger than 16 on their editorial pages, in an attempt to shift fashion's approach to body image.

Anna Wintour, editor of *Vogue's* flagship US edition and Emmanuelle Alt of Paris *Vogue*, which touched off a furor in 2010 with a photo spread featuring a 10-year-old girl, are among the editors who agreed to the pact.

"*Vogue* believes that good health is beautiful," said Jonathan Newhouse, chairman of Conde Nast International and a scion of the New York publishing family that privately owns the world's most influential fashion title.

"*Vogue* editors around the world want the magazines to reflect their commitment to the health of the models who appear on the pages and the wellbeing of their readers," he said in a statement.

The editors said that in a six-point pact to appear in their respective June issues, they would pledge not to work knowingly with models under the age of 16, or with those "who appear to have an eating disorder".

"We will work with models who, in our view, are healthy and help us to promote a healthy body image," they said.

The editors will also instruct modelling agencies not to send them underage models, require casting directors to check mod-



**WAIF GOODBYE:** US *Vogue* editor Anna Wintour will promote a healthy body image. Picture: AFP

els' IDs prior to their photo shoots and encourage "healthy backstage working conditions", including food options.

Fashion designers, mean-

while, will be encouraged – though not obliged – to "consider the consequences of unrealistically small sample (dress) sizes, which encourages the use

of extremely thin models".

"We will be ambassadors for the message of healthy body image," the editors' pact concludes.

In an email, a Conde Nast spokesperson said the initiative was being "implemented locally as is appropriate in each market by the individual editions".

The Model Alliance, launched by New York-based fashion models in February to campaign for better working conditions, said it welcomed *Vogue's* "impressive lead" and hoped other magazines would follow suit.

"The use of underage models is linked to financial exploitation, eating disorders, interrupted schooling, and contributes to models' overall lack of empowerment in the workplace," it said in a statement.

"We simply believe that 14 is too young to be working in this very grown-up industry, and we're glad that Conde Nast International is making this commitment."

In a recent survey of 241 New York-based models posted on its website ([www.modelalliance.org](http://www.modelalliance.org)), the Model Alliance found that 54.7% had started working between the ages of 13 and 16.

Sixty-four percent said they'd been asked by their agencies to lose weight.

"Eating disorders are not uncommon," said the survey. "Models report that drug use in the workplace is rampant. And more than two thirds of models say they suffer from anxiety or depression." – AFP

## Sleeping with the fishes takes on a new meaning in Dubai

A LONG-AWAITED under-sea hotel in Dubai looks finally set to be built, after an agreement to develop it was unveiled this week.

The Water Discus Hotel won't be totally submerged as previous plans have suggested, but will be a disc-like structure with part of the building above water and the rest below the surface.

The 21 rooms are expected to be submerged up to 10m below the surface of the water, with huge windows offering a view out from the bed and an external "explorer" robot which can be controlled from the room to allow guests to interact with marine life.

According to Deep Ocean Technology, the company which owns the water discus hotel concept, a restaurant, spa and reception area would be hosted above the waterline, with guests descending below the surface in glass-walled tunnels to get to their rooms.

As might be expected, the hotel would offer plenty of services for divers, with a training pool and other water sports offerings set to be available.

With no specific planned opening date, observers will be watching closely whether this plan comes any further than previous attempts to

build underwater hotels in Dubai, which have stalled or quietly disappeared as the country faced economic ruin.

However, at this week's Arabian Travel Market there was little doubt that the country appears to be performing better, with one study suggesting that tourism business in the United Arab Emirates is expected to grow at 6.5% percent annually over the next nine years.

For the first three months of this year, hotel analyst STR Global found that Dubai hotels were 9% more expensive than the same time in 2011 thanks to a "surge" in visitor numbers. – Relaxnews



**DEEP SEA DREAMS:** An artist's mock-up of a room at the Water Discus Hotel.



<p><b>CAPRICORN</b> Dec 21 – Jan 19</p> <p>You can't be too independent now, Capricorn. Be courteous to others and their response will be positive. Of course, this is easier said than done! You'll also be more romantically inclined, but love could be hampered by unnecessary misunderstandings.</p>	<p><b>AQUARIUS</b> Jan 20 – Feb 17</p> <p>You'll probably find your ideas shaken up by someone new. This person might be tactless, or very assertive and the shock of such odd behaviour could pique your curiosity. Whether you can handle this unusual energy for an extended period or not is the question.</p>	<p><b>PISCES</b> Feb 18 – Mar 19</p> <p>Push ahead with personal plans, even if an unexpected setback slows you down. This is great for overcoming obstacles, or getting some heavy work done. Romantic misunderstandings lead to anger – unhappiness lurks in the wings. Don't be nasty to your loved one.</p>	<p><b>ARIES</b> Mar 20 – Apr 19</p> <p>Stressful aspects bring out the more abrasive side of your nature, and unless you understand what you really want to achieve, you could easily upset the balance of any situation. Making enemies will be far easier than usual, for you will be extra critical. Self-control is vital.</p>
<p><b>TAURUS</b> Apr 20 – May 20</p> <p>Focus your mind on some personal goals, even if it means acting independently. Don't be downhearted if others ignore your efforts. Avoid destructive arguments: emotions could cloud the issues. Impulsive words and actions will lead to disharmony.</p>	<p><b>GEMINI</b> May 21 – Jun 20</p> <p>Ignoring the little details will lead to problems before the day is out, forcing you to change your plans unexpectedly. You're also not open to sensible advice, don't be your own worst enemy – it's a passing phase, so don't burn any bridges.</p>	<p><b>CANCER</b> Jun 21 – Jul 21</p> <p>Stress levels may rise rapidly – handle tension constructively. Don't indulge in self-pity or tantrums; you may end up being ignored instead. Perseverance is one of your gifts, don't abuse it by consistently refusing to control your volatile feelings.</p>	<p><b>LEO</b> July 22 – Aug 22</p> <p>Reassess your budget and discipline spending today, Leo, or you may regret impulsive expenditure. It's also vital to avoid criticising people close to you, for you might be far too judgmental and unaccepting of any weakness, yet avoid admitting to your own.</p>
<p><b>VIRGO</b> Aug 23 – Sep 23</p> <p>Today you'll certainly come out of your shell, but it's possibly with all guns blazing. You're easily irritated by anything that's not proper and you won't be shy about what you feel. An unreasonable mood could make any negotiations or discussions lively, angry or unproductive.</p>	<p><b>LIBRA</b> Sep 23 – Oct 22</p> <p>An energetic, aggressive mood makes you an unstoppable force, and you certainly won't sit back and take orders or direction from anyone. In fact, you could easily alienate others and discover that you're unsupported – only because of what you've radiated, though.</p>	<p><b>SCORPIO</b> Oct 23 – Nov 21</p> <p>Today you might not wish to follow anyone's leadership. The extreme side of your character comes to the fore, so you'd be wise to avoid destructive moods. By refusing to adapt to anyone, you could destroy any chance of cooperation. Try a new strategy today.</p>	<p><b>SAGITTARIUS</b> Nov 22 – Dec 20</p> <p>Working with others will be quite frustrating today, as your freedom-loving nature gets a shocking awakening through the total unpredictability of the day's events. Irritation and temper outbursts are possible – you'll need plenty of tact.</p>