



Press Release

THE MOTHER OF ALL STORIES

**Sophie and Maria on Backstage
Weekdays @ 6.30pm**

Amu Muyanga comes across as much older than her nine years. She has a direct gaze, an adult way of speaking, and a lack of childishness, which is quite unusual in one so young. Amu plays the role of troubled Sophie in Backstage, a little girl who is in the temporary care of Vulindlela College dance teacher Charmaine (Lorcia Cooper) - put there by her mother Maria (Boshadi Nkomo). There's something rather mysterious about Sophie and Maria. Something sad and despairing about Sophie, who is struggling to find her place in an unfair world, and Maria, a young mother who is unable to care for her child, and therefore has relinquished her role as primary caregiver to another...

Charmaine, who tragically lost her son, Ethan, last year, now has Sophie in her life. It would seem that this child has providentially come along to fill the gap in her heart that Ethan left, but the circumstances surrounding Sophie's entry into Charmaine's life are uncertain and emotionally precarious and who is to say that Sophie will remain a permanent fixture in Charmaine's life anyway? Sophie isn't too well - in fact she has to take daily vitamin supplements to keep her in good health... Is Charmaine simply setting herself up for heartbreak again? What secrets will be revealed in the upcoming months as Sophie and Charmaine grow closer and closer, and bond as mother and child? Will sorrow overtake Charmaine once again or will hope triumph in the face of pain and suffering?

An Introduction to Amu:

Amu's acting career began when she signed up for acting classes at Professional Kids in Melville. Within a month of completing acting class, she was called in to audition and was cast as "Lebo" in a maths programme on another TV channel. She started working on Backstage in November last year, after wowing the casting agent with her acting abilities. She is currently a Grade 4 student at St Catherine's School in Germiston and in 2005 she received a trophy as the best Grade 3 student. Her plans for this year include concentrating on her acting career, and recording a lullaby album for kids. Her hobbies include playing her guitar and harmonica, writing short stories, singing and dancing. Amu lives in Mofolo South in Soweto, and when she grows up she'd like to be a lawyer as well as a part-time actress.

Amu has the following to say about Backstage: "It's very exciting, but sometimes really hard, and it's interesting to see all the actors and the directors. It's fun, and I enjoy doing it."

When asked how she prepares for her role, she says, "First I revise alone, and then my mother helps me. We practise it two or three times until I get it. After that I bath, and then I practise a little bit more before going to bed."

And how has she got her mind around the role? "I think it's best to put myself into Sophie's shoes, then you get into character and imagine you're the person," Amu says seriously. "I think Sophie struggles and feels really neglected. There are many children out there who are similar or exactly like Sophie. She feels that a lot of people are running away from her and don't like her. She thinks Charmaine is going to leave her, because her dad has left and so has her mommy. She feels so alone in the big world. She thinks she's a little kid with no one. She's a neglected child. That's really sad. But when I read the script I say to myself, it might be really sad, but it's giving a message to people, and that's why I do it."

"I've wanted to act ever since I knew what acting was," she continues. "I was three years old when I started. Every day I used to sing or

dance, and perform parts from movies. I told my mom I really wanted to do it, and she found me an agent.”

So how does Amu balance her schoolwork and acting? “I’m a multitasked person,” she explains. “I do my homework, go and act, and then go home and finish my homework and go to bed.

“I’m so young to be on TV,” she concludes. “Sometimes I can’t believe it when I’m watching myself. I think, no, no that’s not me...”

An Introduction to Boshadi:

Boshadi has two careers - one as an actress and the other as a journalist. She studied journalism at the Allenby Campus in Bramley, before going to Pretoria Technikon, where she studied musical theatre. After she graduated, she worked full time as a journalist in 1996. She then went on to perform in musical theatre from 1997 to 1999, before reverting to journalism in 2000, and then switching back to acting once again in 2001.

She has performed in a number of AIDS awareness shows, performing for a wide range of people - from CEOs to mineworkers. She did this for three years, and also trained as an AIDS Peer Educator. Besides that, she performed in two shows with Disney UK, touring throughout South Africa: *The Lion King* in 2002 and the *Disney Christmas Show* in 2004.

Another highlight of Boshadi’s career was her performance in the Janice Honeyman musical, *Cardboard Dreams* in 2002 - where she acted on stage with 80 street kids.

Boshadi’s hobbies include reading, yoga and she simply loves spending time at home.

She has this to say about her character, Maria, on Backstage: “She is very different from any character that’s ever been on Backstage. Her background is different, and her storyline is moving in a different direction. Maria is Sophie’s mother, and I think she’s there to learn something about motherhood, something she hasn’t realised yet. Especially when she befriends Charmaine. At first she was very

aggressive and negative towards Charmaine, but they both learn things that they didn't know about themselves, and the role of motherhood is examined."

So is she enjoying her role? "Yes - I am," she responds. "Although it's difficult to get my head around the fact that Maria leaves her daughter. I don't think many mothers would abandon their children on a whim. They would have to be really desperate, so Maria must be in this position. Initially I found it difficult to connect with that. I judged Maria a lot, but when you look at her circumstances, you start understanding everything that she does. Maria is in a very difficult position, and soon she'll have to make the biggest sacrifice she'll ever have to make in her life..."

Watch Backstage during the coming months as this fascinating, wholly South African epic storyline unfolds on the screens of your favourite local youth drama.

For photos of Maria, Sophie and Charmaine, please contact:

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