



## Press Release

### **BACKSTAGE 2006** **Weekdays @ 6.30pm**

**Flashback to January 31 2005:** We launched the All-New Backstage in consultation with playwright, Deon Opperman, the founding director and co-owner of AFDA (The South African School of Motion Picture Medium and Live Performance).

Vulindlela (the Jozi arts college) kicked off with a fresh start: writers; scripts; film directors; music director & original scores and productions; theme song and intro; choreographer, dancers and sets; and 12 new actors joined the established cast of 10.

Storylines have included serious, topical, contentious issues of alcohol and drug abuse; abortion; suicide; fraud, money lenders; STDs and child molestation. However, we've also introduced a serial seductress; teachers' pets; a toy boy and a superstar/super stud; bully boys, bitches and snitches; love affairs; marriages; break ups; exam nerves; clashes and crushes.

Deon Opperman's Bottom Line Entertainment became Backstage's full-time production company from July 1 2005. Three evenings of themes-within-episodes have been introduced: Every Friday it's a new music video; every Wednesday it's Ziggy's interactive Tjooning In show-within-a-show and on Mondays a showbiz guest star is featured (we've featured approximately 50 in total this year - from Latin American dancers and Brickz, Karen Zoid and motivational speaker, Putco Mafani, to Janice Honeyman's pantomime cast for Goldilocks And The Three Bears.) The pop-rock band Clout, who are back together again after more than 20 years of being apart, will appear on Backstage in the New Year.

Another highlight this year was the Nike competition, where Somizi was written into the storyline, and the Backstage EMI Superstar Search 2005.

**Back To The Future:** In 2006 there are going to be new first year students; the grand draw on Ziggy's show, with the winner visiting the Backstage set for the day (with a cameo appearance on the show and dinner with the cast); a launch of a bigger Superstar Search and the live Backstage AIDS benefit concert - all of this during the first quarter!

We're also going to continue pushing established SA soapie boundaries. Don't ask. Just watch.

#### **Bullet Board 2006:**

**Carmen (Michelle Levin)**, classical ballet teacher and dance head, went on maternity leave in September. Michelle had a real-time baby (Cyd) in October this year and rejoins the on screen cast in January. And in the show's storyline, Carmen's son, Hamilton, is the catalyst for a potential lawsuit between her and the father of her child - music student, Gyles...

**Charmaine (Lorcia Cooper)** is a part-time dance lecturer, who had a rough time of it recently when she lost her son, Ethan (he was in an accident, and suffered brain trauma). But the New Year brings our dance lecturer into contact with a new child who will claim Charmaine's heart. On a personal front, Lorcia got married this year.

**Chippa (Loyiso Mangena)** thought he'd finally found the love of his life (Lerato, a new music student), until a little family matter of incest came in to play. He's inherited shares in Emanzini (the old Duke's bar). Will this new venture pay off for him (he also has an erratic artists' management career), or will Zinzi, the other major shareholder, bully him out of business? Loyiso, in real life, released a CD this year, "Undisputed Round 2 Reloaded", with Mzambiya.

**Duma (Leroy Gopal)** had to cope with his parents' divorce and girlfriend Kwezi up and leaving him for Hollywood. Then he was kidnapped and his father murdered. Virtually bankrupt, he and mum discovered they'd been left dirty diamonds by Dad. Now mum's started dating the guy who killed dad. Duma also sustained physical injuries from dance rehearsals, lost the lead role in the musical to the college cleaner - and has failed his year-end evaluation. For some reason, Duma appears to be spiralling into depression...

**Frankie (Pam Andrews)**

Pam's just released her debut solo CD, "Here We Go", (Frankie's also released an album on Backstage). She makes headlines and new fans (never mind the social pages) wherever she goes.

**Gyles (Ryan Laatz)** Our previous pop star playa is now a father. And after an HIV scare, he's cleaned up his act, grown up and focused on studying. However, he's in for a battle next year when he tries to meet his baby son. How will Carmen respond to his overtures?

**Ipeleng (Grace Mahlaba)**

Ipeleng's been through a lot in 2005. She's had to deal with the personal and very public crises of her dear friend, Katlego. She has, with much patience (over many weeks), helped a distraught Roxanne, who's suffering from post-child abuse trauma. Ipeleng has also seemingly coped with the so many daily complications and stresses of being the principal of Vulindlela. Will she suffer her own burn out next year? Grace (in character as Ipeleng) acted as one of the judges for the Backstage EMI Superstar Search 2005, receiving warm welcomes in every one of the nine provinces visited.

**Katlego (Baby Cele)**

Katlego, Vulindlela's talented music teacher and voice coach, married Duke. This caused her to turn to drink, divorce and bitterness. Duke's death solved a lot of her problems. So how will things turn out with Mpumi, her old flame - and will Katlego's dreams of becoming a businesswoman come true next year?

**Keketso (Katlego Danke)**

Drama student Keketso broke up with long-time boyfriend Ziggy this year. She's hosted her own in-college TV show and Daddy's just cut her off financially. The gal's got to work. Luckily, she's been offered a job as a junior lecturer at the college. She will also become involved in yet another tricky love triangle.

**Lerato (Tahirih)** is a second year music student at Vulindlela. She began a romantic relationship with Chippa, before finding out that they were, well, brother and sister. Now Chippa has become increasingly protective of his younger sister and he guards her closely - from men he considers undesirable. But will one man slip through the net next year?

**Melissa (Mari Michael)** got dumped by Gyles and then fell head-over-heels for Vulindlela cleaner, Shaka, and even assumed an African Identity in her quest to bond with the man. She

has a good soul and kind heart (she's also a virgin), but her natural curiosity (OK, nosiness), always makes for new drama...

**Mike (David Dukas)**, once Duke's right-hand man, sits at Zinzi's heels now. He's become her diamond dealer... her Rottweiler. She is quick to temper his bark, to tighten his leash and to hand-train him to serve her every single need. But is this scenario for real? Or will the lap dog show his teeth next year?

Film lecturer, **Mpumi (Mpho Malatsi)** has been a rock for Katlego, an advisor to Ipeleng and Sebastian, Ziggy's mentor, a friend for Naomi and Charmaine, as well as being a spiritual guide for Keketso - he might as well be the college's unofficial counsellor. He and Zinzi (and therefore, Mike) clash next year as he starts investigating her suspicious source of wealth...

**Naomi (Thahira Syed)** As she's come up against the new writing teacher Sebastian, past secrets and hidden desires are causing mayhem in her life.

**O'Ryan (O'Ryan Donald Winter)** O'Ryan's musical coaching is an important part of Vulindlela College's artistic wealth. However, he doesn't have a formal qualification to teach. Will this prove a setback in his chosen career?

Uncle Desmond abused **Roxanne (Carmel Fisher)** when she was a child. Ipeleng undertook the gruelling process of trying to help Roxanne heal the psychological scars left from this tragic experience. Now Roxanne is involved romantically with Ziggy, but will she be able to have a normal relationship with him, or will her past always haunt her?

**Sebastian (Duncan Lawson)**, Vulindlela's new writing lecturer and author of a high-class porn novel, *Break My Stride*, is bluntly opinionated. He has to work with cool, restrained Naomi - who is his polar opposite. They fancy each other. But another woman enters his life and a love triangle will complicate his life, as they usually do.

**Sgolwane (Mpho Malatsi)** started off on Backstage as one of Duke's Bad Men. Then he became the club's barman. Thanks to Duke's will, he now owns 2% of the bar - and that 2% is important because he's the one who makes the final decision in the power struggle between Zinzi and Chippa. He has love issues in the New Year.

College cleaner **Shaka (Quincy Myeza)** is a magnificent dancer and singer. But not having completed his Grade 12 school year prevented him from having a life. Now he's got his matric, and he's all set to join Vulindlela as a student, with Zinzi as his benefactress.

Film student **Ziggy's (Charl Timotheus)** life has exploded in the last year. He is the host of Tjooning In, and he also hosted The Backstage EMI Superstar Search 2005. But with his hectic work schedule, will he be able to cope with the pressures of an emotionally vulnerable Roxanne?

**Zinzi's (Tselane Tambo)** world turned upside down this year as she ended up divorced, broke and floundering in a sea of insecurity and a lack of identity. But then her man returned to her - only to end in tragedy when Peter was murdered. Now Zinzi is stinking rich. And thanks to an illicit pouch of diamonds, she's become a powerful (greedy) businesswoman who plans on expanding her empire - at all costs. She also dresses better these days.

*Drama was never this extreme! Backstage 2006. Every weekday @ 6.30pm. May your New Year's resolutions remain firm as the ones our Backstage actors will make on the last episode of 2005. Happy festive season!*

**For backstage photos of our fabulous cast, please contact:**

**Alissa Baxter**  
**e.tv Publicity Writer**

**Tel : 011 537 9496**  
**Fax : 011 537 9380**