

P.H.Q.E.B.E



Playmaking, Performance, and Leadership Through Theatre A Partnership Between



PHOEBE ZIMBABWE



An African Feminist Theatre Project
& Zimbabwe Theatre Academy

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INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe Theatre Academy (ZTA) is committed to nurturing the next generation of theatre-makers through rigorous, practice-based training that combines performance craft with personal and professional development. In partnership with Phoebe Zimbabwe, an African feminist theatre project dedicated to the wellbeing and empowerment of young girls, ZTA proposes a 10-month Actor-Creator Training Programme designed to equip ten young girls with acting, playmaking, arts management, and leadership skills.

The programme is built around a simple conviction: theatre is a rigorous craft and a powerful vehicle for personal growth. Over ten months, participants will move from foundational acting technique through to devising and staging an original full-length production, while gender empowerment and leadership run throughout the training as core supporting threads, building confident, articulate young women who are skilled creative practitioners in their own right. The training will culminate in public performances of the participants' original work.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This proposal outlines a ten-month training and production partnership between Phoebe Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Theatre Academy. Ten young girls will undergo intensive actor-creator training, delivered three days a week, with acting technique and playmaking/devising as the primary focus, supported by arts management, gender empowerment, and leadership modules woven throughout.

The training culminates in a full-length devised theatre production, developed and staged by the participants for public audiences, the capstone demonstration of the acting, devising, and creative leadership skills built over the programme.

The programme requires a total budget of USD 500 per month (USD 5,000 across the ten-month programme), covering instructor allowances, transport, and administrative costs. Phoebe Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Theatre Academy will jointly oversee implementation.

BACKGROUND

Girls in under-resourced communities often lack access to structured, high-quality creative and vocational training that builds genuine artistic skill alongside transferable life skills such as confidence, voice, and leadership. Formal actor training, technique, ensemble work, playmaking, and production craft, remains largely inaccessible to young people outside major institutions, leaving significant creative talent undeveloped.

Theatre training builds far more than performance skill. The discipline of ensemble work, the collaborative process of devising original material, and the public accountability of staging a production all cultivate confidence, self-expression, and leadership in ways few other programmes can match. For young girls in particular, this kind of skill-building, paired with a deliberate focus on gender empowerment, offers a route to voice and agency that extends well beyond the rehearsal room.

This programme addresses that gap directly: it trains ten young girls as skilled actor-creators, grounded in rigorous performance and devising technique, and reinforced by leadership and gender-empowerment modules that prepare them to carry those skills into further study, creative careers, and community life.

This reading of theatre as a site of women's power, rather than only a stage for their disempowerment, is supported by scholarship on gender in African theatrical tradition. Chinyowa (2002) argues against the assumption that African women were simply subordinate within indigenous performance culture, showing instead that women held real material, intellectual, and ideological authority through forms such as narrative performance, ritual, and children's dramatic play. The gender-empowerment strand of this programme draws on that same insight: theatre training does not just respond to disempowerment; it reconnects young girls with a long-standing African tradition in which performance was itself a source of women's voice and authority.

This proposal brings together Zimbabwe Theatre Academy's training expertise and production infrastructure with Phoebe Zimbabwe's grassroots reach and mission of empowering young girls — a natural and complementary partnership.

OBJECTIVES

- To train ten young girls in acting and performance technique over a ten-month period.
- To build strong playmaking and devising skills so that participants can co-create original theatre from research, imagination, and lived experience.
- To introduce arts management skills that support sustainable creative careers beyond the programme.
- To strengthen participants' leadership capacity through ensemble work, devising, and production responsibility.
- To embed gender-empowerment principles throughout the training, building participants' confidence, voice, and self-advocacy as young women.
- To devise, produce, and publicly stage a full-length original theatre production created by the participants.
- To empower ten young girls with lasting artistic skill, confidence, and leadership that extend beyond the theatre space.

ANTICIPATED RESULTS

By the end of the ten-month programme, the partnership expects to achieve:

- Ten young girls trained as competent actor-creators, skilled in performance, playmaking, and devising.
- One original, full-length theatre production, devised and publicly performed by the participants.
- Participants equipped with arts management, leadership, and gender-empowerment skills applicable across the creative sector and beyond.
- Strengthened confidence, voice, and self-advocacy among all ten participants.
- A strengthened, replicable partnership model between Phoebe Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Theatre Academy.
- Increased visibility and opportunities for participants to pursue further training or work in the arts sector.

Methodology

DURATION, SCHEDULE, AND PARTICIPANTS

The programme will run over ten months, with training sessions held three days per week. Ten young girls will be enrolled as the core training cohort, selected jointly by Phoebe Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Theatre Academy.

PHASED TRAINING APPROACH

- **Phase 1 — Foundation (Months 1-2):** Acting fundamentals, voice and body work, ensemble-building, and trust exercises to establish a strong creative foundation.
- **Phase 2 — Playmaking and Devising (Months 3-5):** Improvisation, story circles, research, and collaborative script development, drawing on participants' own ideas and experiences to build an original devised work.
- **Phase 3 — Arts Management and Leadership (Months 5-7):** Modules on budgeting, event and production management, marketing, and leadership, delivered alongside continued rehearsal of the devised material.
- **Phase 4 — Gender Empowerment and Facilitation Skills (Months 7-8):** Training in gender-empowerment principles, self-advocacy, and practical facilitation techniques for leading audience talkbacks and community workshops.
- **Phase 5 — Production and Performance (Months 9-10):** Full rehearsals, technical runs, and public performances of the full-length original production.

Facilitation

Sessions will be led by experienced Zimbabwe Theatre Academy instructors and facilitators, with guest specialists invited where relevant — particularly for the gender-empowerment and leadership components of the training.

Conclusion

This partnership between Phoebe Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Theatre Academy offers a focused, achievable model for combining rigorous artistic training with genuine personal development. Over ten months, ten young girls will develop into skilled actor-creators, grounded in strong performance and devising technique and reinforced by leadership and gender-empowerment skills that extend well beyond the rehearsal room, culminating in an original production that showcases everything they have built.



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