

Matsimela Mogashane

## **The centrality of costume as performative commentary: A case study of Mary Sibande's Sophie**

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Much attention has been given to both the performance and performers as the driving force behind performativity and theatricality within the existing discourse of theatre and performance. This has been done by representing character portrayal through the use of costume and acting. Yet, rarely has discourse included theatricality and performativity of the personification of costumes. The costume is mainly considered as an extension to the body of the performer and not as an independent entity that is capable of performance without and despite the performer's body.

This study examines costumes as a performative agent that can evolve as an expressive embodied object outside the parameters of a human performer by taking the case of Mary Sibande's Sophie persona. The study uses the installations of Sophie to examine the performativity and theatricality of costumes as a form of a non-verbal communicator by looking at how the costumes used in these installations evoke and put across significant political, social and moral commentary. The study further reflects on how these costume visuals have become a contemporary form of protest theatre themselves, advocating political power in the current South African socio-political landscape using the symbolism of dress. Scholars and theatre makers are overlooking the importance of using costumes as the central tool for conveying protest messages and messages of social and political importance. This separation of costume from the (active) performer to activate it in and of itself is a point of departure for this study.

Biography:

**Matsimela Mogashane** is a costume designer, props master, and an emerging young researcher and academic at Tshwane University of Technology. Her academic career in the arts started in 2015 when she registered for course in Performing Arts Technology at Tshwane University of Technology. This is where she developed a passion for three dimensional art forms in the theatre and performance space, which led to her majoring in props and costume design. She went on to obtain her National Diploma in Performing Arts Technology (cum laude) in 2018 and Baccalaureus Technology in Performing Arts Technology (cum laude) in 2019, both from The Tshwane University of Technology. She also received a Chancellors trophy for her outstanding academic performance in her undergraduate studies. Matsimela is currently studying towards her Master's degree at Tshwane University of Technology.