

DUT Drama Presents
Marikana to Mahagonny
DUT Courtyard Theatre: 27 – 31 August, 2018

Dr Pamela Tancsik adapts and directs **Marikana to Mahagonny** – an adaptation of the seldom performed masterful operatic songplay by iconic German powerhouse music makers – Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht which plays for a short season at DUT Courtyard Theatre from 27 until 31 August nightly at 7.30pm.

Tancsik has adapted the opera to reference the Marikana tragedy – the aftermath of which is the opening scene – told through song set against the backdrop of the watershed documentary, **Miners Shot Down** by Rehad Desai.

Marikana to Mahagonny is a new staging of **Mahagonny Songplay** – a precursor to the opera, **Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny** (adapted from the German: **Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny**) a political-satirical opera composed by Kurt Weill to a German libretto by Bertolt Brecht.

The lack of hope, social decay, moral collapse and focus on money above all else as referenced in the original opera struck a chord with Tancsik who draws comparisons with contemporary South Africa.

Tancsik was herself in a production of **Mahagonny Songplay** in 1999 in its original German, conducted by Dr David Smith with Suzy Stengel.

Kurt Julian Weill active from the 1920s, was a leading German composer for the stage who was best known for his fruitful collaborations with Bertolt Brecht. Weill's score uses a number of styles, including ragtime, jazz and formal counterpoint notably in *Benares Song*, and *the Alabama Song* (covered by multiple artists, notably Ute Lemper The Doors and David Bowie). The starting point of the production was a series of poems penned by Brecht, Hauspostille, which were adapted to music by Weill in order to enter a festival competition in 1927 in Baden-Baden.

“The music is really complex and interesting. It was considered a new sound – using strong jazz influences and a Gershwin feel. It is *vivace* – fast and not easy to play or perform as was created for a full orchestra, now condensed down to a solo piano,” explains Musical Director Richardt Wissink.

The full scale opera, **Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny** was first performed on 9 March 1930 in the Neues Theater in Leipzig. The opera was banned by the Nazis in 1933 due to its socialist content, and did not have a significant production until the 1960s.

The sung-through dark scenic cantata for eight principal actors and a chorus, supports a socialist / communist ideology and is hugely critical of capitalistic greed: in **Mahagonny**, poverty is not just a condition the poor bring upon themselves, but a crime to be punished. The cast features DUT drama students. **Marikana to Mahagonny** will be staged at DUT Courtyard Theatre nightly at 7.30 Tickets at the door / in advance on 031 373 2194.

Ends

8 August 2018



