

DHLOMO ON A ROLL

Omeshnie Naidoo

SHE WAS named best newcomer at last year's Mercury Durban Theatre Awards, and young Lihle Dhlomo has been living up to the title since.

She is among the stellar cast of acclaimed director Ronnie Govender's *Botoo*, which opened at Durban's Playhouse last night as part of the Playhouse Company's South African Women's Art's Festival.

The drama, based on Devi Rajab's book, *Women: South Africans of Indian Origin*, and on the life of activist Gonam Naidoo, also stars Rajesh Gopie, Kumseela Naidoo, Jayshree Parasuramen and Sivani Chinappan. The production runs until August 17.

Dhlomo, at 23, is the youngest among the cast.

She is moved by the subject matter of *Botoo* and is in awe of her colleagues, but is equally talented.

"I play a nurse, Thandiswa Dlamini, who works alongside Dr Gonam, who is quite straightforward, speaks her mind... and Dlamini seems to really understand her," she says.

"Being involved in the production has been overwhelming – firstly, to tackle a lesser-known but important aspect of our history, and, secondly, to work with such skilled artists."

The actress, who has appeared in the award-winning *Abnormal Loads*, *Veil* and *The Wizard of Oz*, says this year has been a defining time for her, in

more ways than one.

She explains: "At a casting earlier this year I made a decision to choose one of my four names.

"To different people I am known by different names: Nontobeko, Thembelihle, Fortunate and Lihle.

"The decision to choose one name going forward has been an important one – I am now Lihle (Beauty) – one person; very sure of who I am and where I am headed."

If career moves are anything to go by, that direction is up for Dhlomo.

She will appear in the highly anticipated local film *Ithala*, directed by Zuko Nodada, written by Rolie Nikiwe and scheduled for release in February.

"Amazing talent, cinematography and direction – this is a film people are going to be talking about," she says.

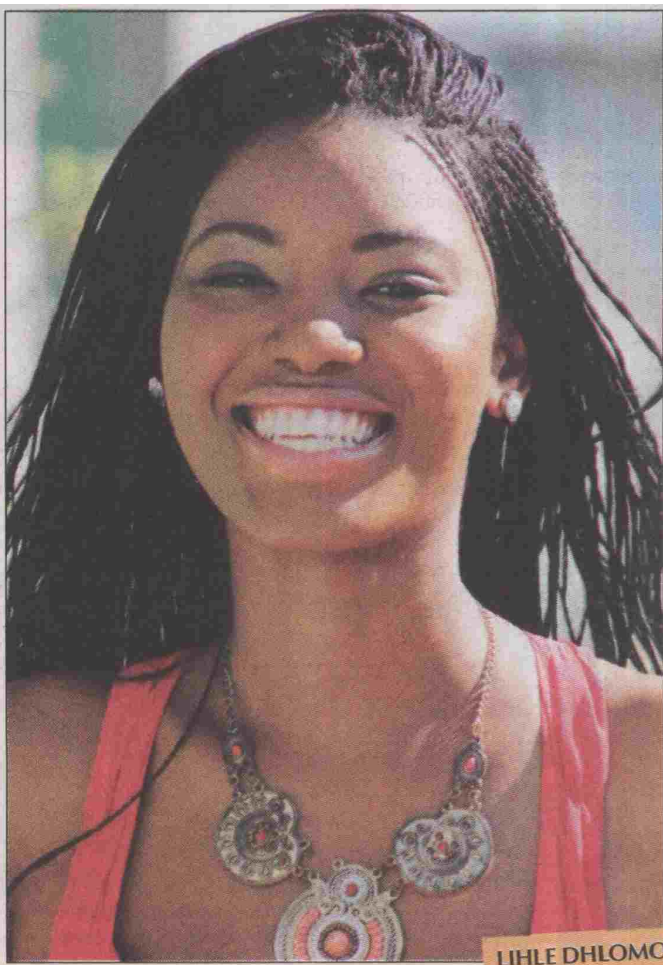
Although Dhlomo already has a number of awards under her belt, and has been everywhere from Grahamstown to Joburg's Market Theatre, she cites her early education as her greatest inspiration.

"I had a moment in my Grade 10 drama class, at Dr AD Lazarus Secondary in Reservoir Hills, when I just knew I wanted to be a performer," she says.

Dhlomo went on to study drama at the Durban University of Technology and passed *cum laude*.

She is an advocate for a strong foundation beneath steady dreams.

You can follow her on Twitter at @LihleDhlomo.



LIHLE DHLOMO