



Two Gents Productions

in association with UK Arts International

presents

***Vakomana Vaviri ve Zimbabwe or
Two Gentlemen of Verona***

By William Shakespeare



A two-man Zimbabwean riot of love, friendship and betrayal!

★★★★★ Metro

★★★★★ What'sOnStage.com

★★★★ Time Out

"A striking gem of a production"
(Kate Jackson, What's On Stage.com)

For more information or to book dates please contact **Megan Nelsey** at UK Arts International
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This production is designed for small – middle scale venues as well as non-theatre spaces. It can do single performances, split weeks and full weeks. The performers are joined by their director on tour. Workshops on their approach to the play and its playwright accompany the production.

About the production



From Verona to Milan, via Harare and Bulawayo, two great friends, Valentine and Proteus, vie for the love of the same woman. When Valentine is banished, their friendship is threatened and only through disguise, deception and intrigue are they reconciled.

In a broad, loud, triumphantly energetic 'township' style the two actors slip into all of the play's fifteen characters – from amorous suitors to sullen daughters, depressed servants and even a dog!

Using little to no props, a few items of clothing and a set that consists of no more than a trunk, the actors explore the text's nuances from a distinctly Zimbabwean perspective, bringing Shakespeare's verse to life in new and unfamiliar cadences.

With a watchful eye, great intuition and comic timing, the actors draw the audience into the action and create a soulful and engaging theatrical experience not to be missed.

Two Gents Productions is Denton Chikura, Tonderai Munyevu and Arne Pohlmeier. Its members share a penchant for African performance modes, a taste for excellent writing and a shared experience of life within migrant communities.



Denton Chikura is a Zimbabwean actor and musician. Previous shows include *Yours Abundantly, from Zimbabwe* (Oval House Theatre), *Qabuka* (Oval House Theatre) *Boniface and Me* (BBC Radio 4), *Heart of a Dog* (Rogue State Theatre Company) and *Nhamo the Mandinka Warrior and His Sexy Wife Chipu* – a series of sketches and short stories.

Tonderai Munyevu studied at the London Centre for Theatre Studies and the National Youth Theatre. Theatre includes: *Yours Abundantly, From Zimbabwe* (Oval House Theatre) *Merchant of Venice* at the Arcola, *Dark of the Moon* (Jermyn Street), *Lions of Teranga* and *Red Dust Rising* (Oval House). As a voice artist: *Nelson's Dream* (Cambridge Press), *Boniface and Me* (BBC Radio 4) and *Pure Brazil Samba*.

Arne Pohmeier has spent half his life in Germany and the other half in countries such as Cameroon, the USA, South Africa, and the UK, developing a taste for all things cross-cultural. His directing credits include a staged reading of *Caucasian Chalk Circle* with Omphile Molusi at the Actors Centre Johannesburg and the award winning *Beethoven, in Raptus* at Artscape, Cape Town.

UK Arts International



Since 1992, UK Arts International has been touring, presenting and producing provocative and culturally diverse theatre and dance throughout the UK and overseas, working with a range of productions and companies that deal with contemporary issues in a challenging and exciting manner. We have been presenting work in the UK since 1995 including productions from South Africa, Nigeria, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Haiti, the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

Our productions have won many awards, including Edinburgh Fringe Firsts for *Nixon's Nixon* (1999), *A Woman In Waiting* (2000) and *Truth in Translation* (2007) and a Bank of Scotland Herald Angel Award for *Township Stories* (2006).

In 2006, we co-produced *The Harder They Come* with Theatre Royal Stratford East which transferred to the Playhouse Theatre in London's West End in 2008.

Two Gents' production of *Vakomana Vaviri ve Zimbabwe or Two Gentlemen of Verona* was originally staged at the Oval House Theatre in London in November 2008 with support from Arts Council England.

Review – Vakomana Vaviri Ve Zimbabwe at the Oval House

[...] in this new production at Lambeth's Oval House, the play has been renamed *Vakomana Vaviri Ve Zimbabwe*, and all fifteen parts are played solely by two young Zimbabweans in South African township style. The set is a small, sparse black-painted room with just an oversized suitcase and a few items of clothing as props. No ruffs or elaborate backdrops here.



[...] Characters spring in and out of the action with no more than the change of a jacket or the addition of a headscarf. [...] And any difficulty in following the details of the plot here are swept aside by the sheer vitality of the performance. The production's self-imposed limitations have catalysed the creativity of the director and the two actors Denton Chikura and Tonderai Munyevu, who pull off their role-metamorphoses with energy

and insight. To transform themselves every few minutes they use a combination of simple, well-chosen props and pure acting - fluid swapping of accents, expressions and mannerisms that are by and large spot-on.



[...] there is no separation between actors and audience, and seeing Chikura and Munyevu's interpretations of character at close range is one of the greatest pleasures of the evening. With nowhere to hide, they pour themselves into every subtlety of expression. Soft-spoken Munyevu is mercurial and at times slightly menacing, while the more blokeish Chikura is a skillful clown and slips with surprising ease into his female persona as Julia.



It is clearly hard work keeping up this fast-paced performance, but it is never less than captivatingly enjoyable - the audience are in on the pantomime as well, exchanging glances with the actors and occasionally recruited as extra cast members. No doubt there are parts of Pohlmeier's *Two Gents* that don't quite hit the right note, and many that might raise eyebrows amongst Shakespearean purists, but here is a young

team whose self-imposed minimalism has produced raw and enlivening theatre.

You can read the full review at <http://todolondon.co.uk/content/2008/11/vakomana-vaviri-ve-zimbabwe-at-the-oval-house.html>