



# Shades

10 x 60 minutes drama Series

*Based on Marguerite Poland's  
spellbinding novel of love and dispossession.*

In traditional African belief the shades are our ancestors, they are our guides and guardians. They are what connects the past, the present and the future and define who you are and who you will become. If we do something wrong, our shades will be saddened or angered and may inflict punishment. Thus, they are the keepers of our conscience.



# Shades

**Genre:** Epic romantic and political drama

**Logline:** A coffin arrives at Saint Matthias Mission bearing the body of a young much-loved man. His death calls our characters to account for their actions, for as they face challenges of forbidden love, unforgiving gods and historical upheaval it is not only what they did, but what they failed to do that matters.

**Tagline:** What we fail to do matters

**Format:** 10 x 60 minutes drama

**Synopsis:** Based on a hugely successful South African novel, Marguerite Poland's "Shades" is an enthralling drama set on a British mission station in the wilderness of the Eastern Cape and in the boomtown of Johannesburg at the end of the 19th century. Two love stories unfold – one between a British priest, Walter Brownley and a missionary's daughter, Frances Farborough, who is promised to another – the other between Benedict Matiwane, a Xhosa orphan taken in by the mission and Nomakwezi Pumani, a woman from a traditional Xhosa family in whose eyes Benedict is not a man because he has not undergone the traditional Xhosa initiation. These love stories develop across tragic unfolding clashes – of different Gods, colonial wars and dispossession, natural disasters and the beginning of deep tunnel gold mining in Johannesburg with its hunger for cheap powerless labour. It is an epic romantic and historical drama which casts a deep shadow on the fabric of our modernity.

# World

Set at the turn of 19th Century South Africa, *Shades* takes place in the remote, harsh and beautiful setting of St Matthias, a British mission in the Eastern Cape, where a Christian God rubs up against the traditional beliefs of the Xhosa community which becomes divided between the AmaGqobhoka (Believers) and AmaQaba (Non-Believers), each side paying a price for their convictions.

On the one hand we see the mission rectory with its careful recreation of an English world and on the other the Xhosa homesteads whose heart is the kraal – home to the shades and the family's cattle and therefore their wealth.

The wild, omnipotent environment is a lead character in the story and is a sanctuary for some, a place to be feared and tamed for others, and for a few it will be their unraveling.

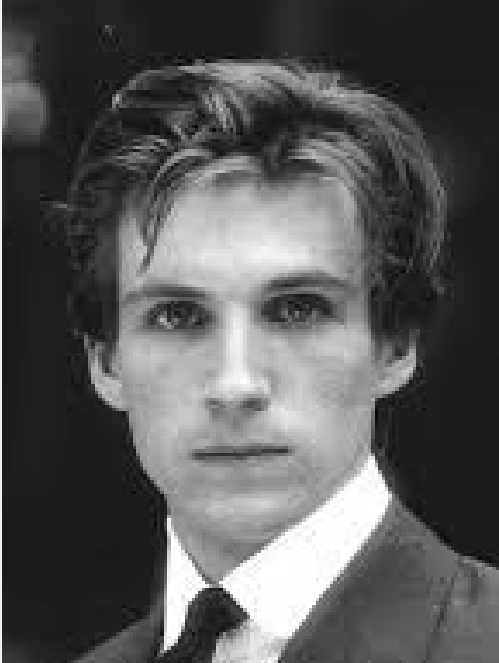


From St Matthias we travel to the cultivated world of British society in Grahamstown and to the cauldron of Johannesburg, an unruly frontier mining town driven by a greed for the riches of the world's largest gold deposit. The white mining magnates realize that as deep gold shafts develop, they need a cheap black workforce to exploit its riches. A new phenomenon of fatherless homes in rural communities emerges as migrant labourers travel to the hell of the mines.



# Characters

The images are an indication of our imagination of casting – not cast we have attached.



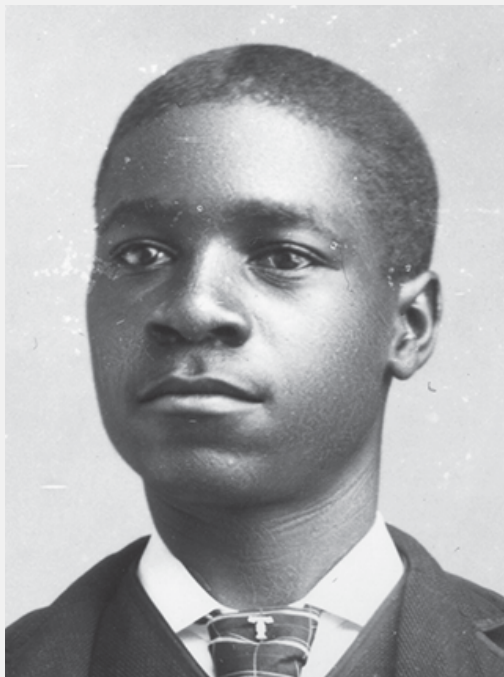
## Walter Brownley (30)

Small in stature, dark hair, dark eyes and a large nose, Walter at first cuts a comic figure alongside Adonis-like Victor. But, like Father Charles, he has vision, insight and warmth and people are drawn to him. He loves words, nature and the piano and is deeply moved by the individuals he meets in this complex universe. He has no wish to impose his will on others and learns the language and ways of the local people, and he comes to be loved by them and in turn to love deeply. Despite appearing an unlikely hero Walter proves to be a man of imagination, courage, humour and humanity – and ultimately, he wins the love of Frances. His presence and integrity allow for a new inclusive way to be found.



## Frances Farborough (18)

At the start of the story Frances is but a girl, embroiled in the games of her beloved brother Crispin, Benedict and the Pumani brothers, always led by the charming but arrogant, handsome Victor Drake. Seemingly her destiny has been to marry Victor, but this reality is disrupted by the arrival of Walter, not the least bit as handsome as Victor but a mature, kind man who shares her sense of humour and lively imagination. Over the course of the story Frances becomes a woman and as her knowledge of self grows, so does her love for Walter and her shame at her culture's role in the devastation that happens around them.



## Benedict Matiwane (18)

Benedict is a young man with no home, no family and no voice. He is raised as a Christian in a white mission, his education sponsored by a “kind” lady in England, whom he has never met. Although accepted as a Christian, Benedict knows that as a black Xhosa man, he will never be truly part of the Farborough family. The Christians also deny him the opportunity to attend Xhosa initiation which will signal his entrance into manhood, so in the Xhosa community he will always be considered a boy, unsuitable for a relationship with any of their daughters. Through Walter he discovers a love of writing and becomes a powerful voice in the independent black press. As the story unfolds Benedict becomes embittered especially when his relationship with Nomakwezi (Dorcas) is discovered and she is expelled from the mission. He concludes “God was a white man. That he knew.” He grows into an independent, assertive and angry young man, determined to pursue freedom.



## Nomakwezi Pumani (17)

Nomakwezi, (meaning stars of the sky) is the beautiful daughter of the groom, Kobus Pumani, and his second wife. Nomakwezi’s intelligence and perceptiveness are only acknowledged by her mother and later by her lover Benedict. She has an intuitive and acute respect of culture, yet she is aware of her inequality as a woman. She joins the mission to be closer to her love, Benedict. In Benedict she sees a true man of the world and kindred spirit, their conversations fuel her desires to forge an elevated partnership outside of the confines of cultural and religious rules. Their love appears doomed, but we believe that in leaving the mission Benedict is going to join her and pursue his nascent career as a contributor to the burgeoning black political press.



## **Crispin Farborough (17)**

Crispin is more comfortable roaming the hills with his friends Sonwabo, Tom, Reuben and Benedict than in the starched and stifled Englishness of his mother's home. His dyslexia prevents him from meeting his mother's expectations, but of all the characters he is the most suited to becoming a priest for he has an innate spirituality of his own as well as a deep empathy, appreciation and understanding of Xhosa culture, language and religion. But, in many ways, he is a child, an innocent, beloved by all our characters but too sensitive, self-effacing and porous to withstand the dark forces within the novel which ultimately lead to his suicide.



## **Victor Drake (21)**

Handsome, smart, sporty and naturally good at everything, success comes easily to Victor. But when it doesn't, the darker aspects of his personality rise to the surface. Ambitious, manipulative, selfish, and insensitive, he will be the 'hero' his father once was, at all costs. Always the leader and the player of childhood games, and later, when he feels the pull towards Frances, psychological games in his efforts to have her for himself. Ultimately Victor is as much a victim of his 'ancestral shades' as the other characters are, for in the great charge for Glory, for Empire and for identity, he sacrifices much of his humanity.



## **Father Charles Farborough (50)**

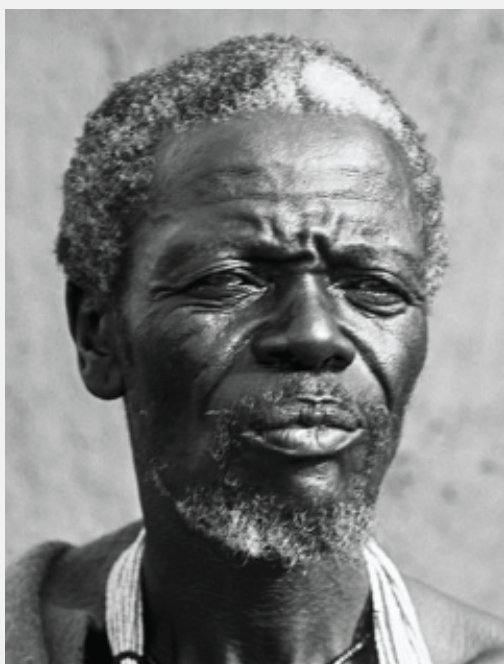
Father Charles Farborough epitomises the dedication of a benevolent missionary, whose selfless devotion to his family and flock exemplifies the finest traditions of the contribution by missions in southern Africa. He cares deeply about the well-being of his daughter Frances and his son Crispin. He is deeply saddened by his failure to breach the barriers erected by his son's depression. His faith is all-embracing and he lies at the heart of the success of the mission in providing both formal training as well as training in farming and the production of tin goods.





## Emily Farbororough (45)

In contrast to the warmth of Father Charles, Emily appears cold and austere. Her movements and voice are clear and light, but her small stature belies her “titanic will”. She has a fraught relationship with both her children: the chasm between mother and daughter is unbridgeable; and Emily does not hide her disappointment in her son's poor scholastic record. Thus, Crispin and Frances grow up feeling inadequate, their mother's devotion is centered on her nephew, Victor Drake. Her alienation from Africa is seen in her iconic reverence of “Englishness”, symbolised by her love of roses and family china and posset cups. Unlike her husband, her faith is founded on strength borne from iron determination, an unrelenting moral code and hard bargaining with God.



## Kobus Pumani (50)

Kobus Mongezeleli Pumani, the 3rd generation Pumani of Qoboqobo, and a man with means to run a polygamous household, comes from a line of men of good social standing. Due to frontier wars, land dispossession and cattle killings, the family has met a slow but definite material decline. Kobus tries to maintain the legacy by proudly honouring his role as ikhankatha (caregiver and mentor to initiates), but also compromises by taking work at the mission as a groom, fully aware that fellow maQaba will look at him questioningly. When the Rinderpest kills his entire herd, his ensuing reactions are born from pure despair and desperation.



## Reuben Pumani (17)

Reuben is much like Tom and does not know a world without him. Whilst he may not feel the responsibility of being first born, he works hard to keep up with his older brother. Competitive, he fights to prove that he is equal to Tom and is more likely to lead the brothers into trouble and then look to Tom to get them out. The brothers are close, they are always side by side and their loyalty to one another is absolute. Reuben is at once last born to his mother and middle child to his father, a position that makes him sometimes emulate Tom's good behaviour yet also fall into Sonwabo's lack of seriousness.



## Tom Pumani (18)

Tall, strong, the eldest born Pumani is everything that Kobus would want in a firstborn son. But with position of first prince comes the responsibility of stepping into his father's shoes, something Tom is well aware of. As a result, he is less care-free, more serious than his younger brothers. He is their leader, and they look to him to make the final decision. Tom leaves the mission for the mines in the hope that he will return with new wealth to elevate the Pumani name to what his father said it used to be. He questions everything and shares his father's distrust of Western ways and beliefs.



## Sonwabo Pumani (15)

Sonwabo came into the world early, small and screaming. From the outset it was clear that he didn't have his older brothers' stature, but what he lacked in size he made up for in personality, always laughing and joking, and in courage, never afraid to take on someone bigger than himself, always aware of course that he had two older brothers for back up. For him Qoboqobo is home, but he does not feel pressed to return before he has seen the whole world. Leaving for Johannesburg means finally showing people what he can do but his optimism will turn to tragedy when the brothers cannot defend him.



# Story

We open on a young man walking through the bush. He carries a gun, relaxed in his hand. Eventually he comes upon an open glade, an escape from the relentless heat. He places the gun down as he builds a small cairn of stones. He closes his eyes and delivers a confession in Xhosa. He finishes his prayer and stands taking a moment staring at the hills that surround him, then his jaw hardens, his face taut as he points his gun at his chest. The shot rings out across the bush, the birds scatter, and then silence.

It is night when Crispin Farborough's body is brought home. Through Benedict Matiwane's smouldering gaze we meet a family grieving for the loss of a son. But he is the fourth son lost to the community. Our characters grapple with the tragedies trying to make sense of it all. Benedict knows that the seeds for this tragedy were planted long, long ago. As we journey back through Benedict's gaze we are given an understanding of where it all began.

As a newborn infant Benedict is abandoned at the doorstep of St Matthias mission. He is taken in by Emily and Charles Farborough and grows up in the mission boarding house. They name him Benedict, a blessing, a boy with no known shades, who is caught between two worlds - that of his British benefactors and the Xhosa community - belonging to neither. The story of his abandonment comes in spasms over time in dreams about wars with loud noises, hunger and a mother's wail.

Benedict grows alongside Frances and Crispin Farborough, three babes lulled to sleep by the songs of Nowasha, the woman employed as a cook in the mission household. They meet their playmates Sonwabo, Reuben and Tom Pumani on the pastures while the cattle are grazing, or between their chores of sharpening utensils and maintaining their home's shelters. The Pumani boys' father is Kobus, the groom at the mission and also a respected mentor of the Xhosa initiates, instructing them on their journey to becoming men. Emily regards the local tradition of Initiation as "pagan depravity" and forbids Benedict from joining them. Thus, when Benedict comes to Kobus' homestead with his friends, he dares not approach Kobus' kraal for that is where the family comes to welcome babies and brides and to seek guidance and interventions from the ancestors. It is not a place for him: irhanuga; a stranger, a wanderer. No, Benedict dare not look upon the glistening skin of Nomakwezi Pumani, Kobus' daughter and the most beautiful girl in the district, for how could a boy who would never become a man be worthy of her?

Benedict is happiest playing with Frances and Crispin far from the mission grounds chatting in forbidden Xhosa, identifying birds and mimicking their calls. But during holidays, the tall, dashing Victor Drake joins them and dominates play, dismissive of their innocent games, daring them all to participate in wild exploits, always casting himself as hero. Both Crispin and Frances are caught in Victor's thrall. As Victor and Frances blossom into adolescence a searing attraction manifests between them that will have far reaching repercussions. Victor's presence serves to remind Benedict that he is not really a member of the family as he is often told, that he doesn't belong to anyone, that he is alone.

Benedict finds his own salvation through the arrival of Walter Brownley, a short, dark-haired man from England, who comes to work as curate under Father Charles. Walter is a man whose passion for learning, books and philosophy motivates his calling. He shares with Benedict a love of the written word and it is news of an abandoned printing press, to be found at Mbokothwe, an isolated mission in the wilderness, a day's ride away from St Matthias, that draws him to Father Charles' mission.

Walter returns from Mbokothwe with the printing press, leaving behind the Reverend Hubert Brompton, who is struggling to cope with his alienation and personal prejudices. It is clear from the attitude of Brompton's assistant, Pusey, a traditional Xhosa healer made ridiculous in the role of an English butler, that he is regarded with scorn by the people he is supposed to serve. As he rides away from Mbokothwe Walter prays that Brompton's fate never becomes his own.

Walter and Benedict set about restoring the printing press. As they print the Sunday service for the first time Benedict feels like he has found a home. A love of writing is not the only similarity that Walter and Benedict share. Both have fallen in love with women they cannot have.

Walter is captivated by Frances. He finds himself waiting for her spontaneous visits, her gruff laugh, her curiosity, her lack of self-awareness. But, how can he ever measure up to the Adonis-like figure of Victor? When Victor and Crispin return to boarding school in Grahamstown however, Frances is lonely at the mission, and finds excuses to visit Walter. Together they conjure stories for Walter's niece in England. These stories become their own world in which their alter egos are cast: Plotz and Mrs. Brodowski. It is a world to which they both retreat upon which nobody else can intrude. Until Victor returns. For Frances, what was once a childlike devotion, has become a passionate attraction, the physicality of which neither of them can resist, it feels that they are destined to be together.

News reaches Father Charles that Father Brompton has disappeared. Walter, Crispin and Benedict are sent to Mbokothwe to find out what happened to him. Both Walter and Benedict's heads are full of thoughts of the women whom they love as they undertake the long road. At Mbokothwe they find a man completely driven to madness by fear and loneliness. For Crispin, Benedict and Walter it is a reminder of how destructive and uncompromising Christian culture can be. During the trip Crispin tells Walter and Benedict of his dream of becoming a priest, if only he were smart enough. He also declares that as a priest he would always remember the shades, for they are the key to understanding everything.

Whilst they are away Frances and Victor give in to their desires. Afterwards Frances almost immediately resents Victor's possessive attitude towards her. She feels trapped by his expectations and when Walter returns from Mbokothwe she cannot look him in the eye, perhaps already knowing that it is he whom she truly loves.



Meanwhile the Pumani household is shaken to the core by the sudden desire of Nomakwezi to convert to Christianity hoping it will bring her closer to Benedict. Emily and Helmina fuss around her excitedly. New attire is found for her. Benedict returns home to find the newly renamed Dorcas Pumani waiting for him. Even he, like her father, is overwhelmed by what she has given up for him.

But then the Rinderpest Plague of 1898 decimates the herds of cattle in the Cape. In an attempt to stop the spread of the disease the government sends out men to shoot those cattle that are not fenced. Most black families lose all their cattle and are left not only virtually starving but morally depleted. The very nature of livestock is that it is supposed to multiply itself, therefore ensuring security and future wealth.

For Benedict the plague is a huge catalyst. In order to prevent the spread of disease the white colonial authorities dip the cattle of transport riders as well as any Africans accompanying them. In an act of naked racism, Benedict is forced to strip and go in with the animals. He emerges on the other side reborn, determined to no longer be one of “God’s mules”. He begins writing for *Imvo Zabantsundu*, an African liberal newspaper, using the printing press as a weapon against the injustice and prejudice he has witnessed. Walter notices a change in his friend and is saddened by the sudden distance between them. Dorcas (Nomakwezi) and Benedict still find solace in one another through their illicit trysts, made more bittersweet because any hope of their relationship’s survival died the day the Pumani cattle died.

The booming gold mines, with their huge thirst for labour, offer to restock black families’ cattle in exchange for their sons’ labour. Seeing himself as a potential mine magnate, Victor organizes a grant of some cattle for Kobus and in exchange, Sonwabo, Reuben and Tom, recently returned from their initiation are sent from the freedom of their homes to the claustrophobic depths of the mines in Johannesburg. Victor also secures a job for Crispin in the compounds. Tom and Reuben are set to work in the bowels of the earth, and Sonwabo who suffers from claustrophobia, is made a “wife” by the compound induna and raped in exchange for being allowed to stay above ground.

On discovering both Dorcas (Nomakwezi) & Benedict’s and Victor & Frances’ physical transgressions, Emily Farborough, is outraged. She separates Dorcas (Nomakwezi) from Benedict by sending her to serve as a domestic servant in a white English household in Fort Beaufort. Frances is condemned to marrying Victor, sent to Grahamstown where she feels the walls of Victorian expectations close in around her.

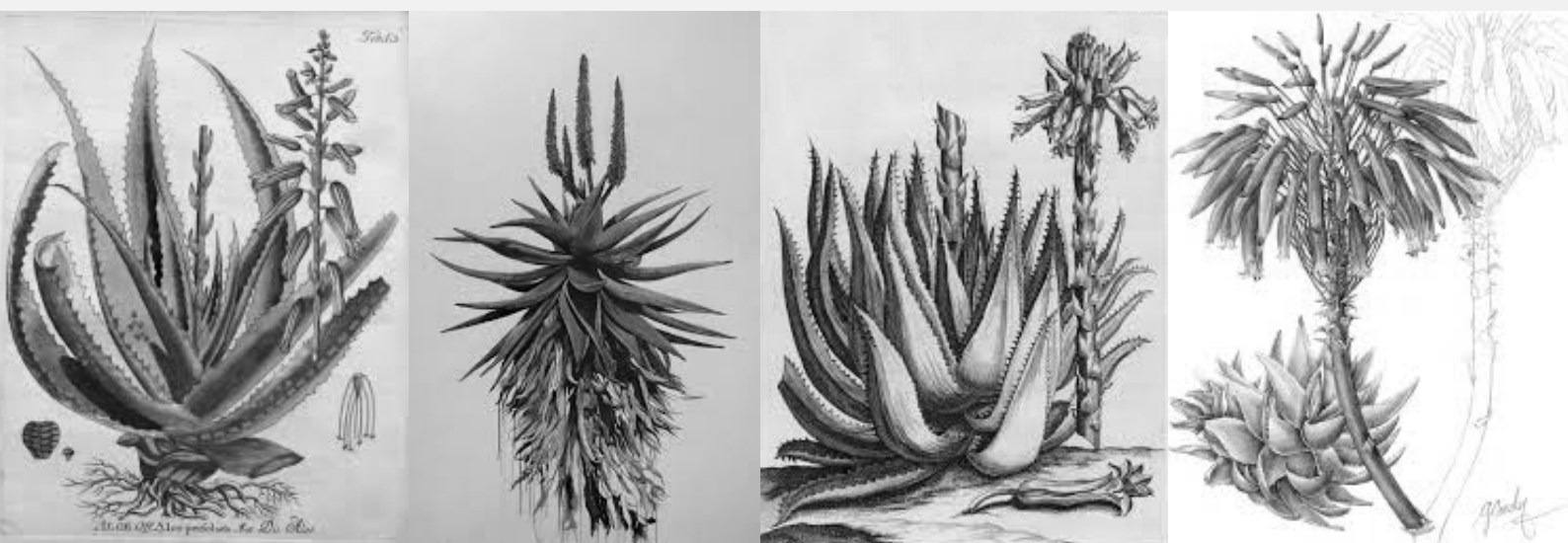


Walter is posted to the dreaded Mbokothwe to pick up the pieces of Brompton's failed mission. He dreads this assignment but rises to the occasion. Like Father Charles, he has vision, insight and warmth and people are drawn to him. He has no wish to impose his will on others. He and Pusey bond and Walter learns the language and ways of the local people. He comes to love and be loved by them. Despite the mission's success when he hears that Frances and Victor have set a wedding date, he knows he must return home to England. He writes Frances a letter wishing her happiness, telling her that he loves her and asking her to tread kindly in his dreams.

As the Boer War breaks out, Victor volunteers, hoping to become the war hero that his father was. Crispin, in his resolve to save the Pumani brothers from their entrapment on the mines, refuses to join the British war effort. He tries to help them find Sonwabo who was arrested on charges of "sodomy" after he tried to escape the induna's demands. Crispin discovers that Sonwabo died in jail like so many others. Devastated, Tom and Reuben decide to return home. Tom takes a small branch from an mpafa tree – a traditional gesture through which he and Reuben can 'lead the spirit' of their dead brother home'. At the train station Crispin urges the brothers, who don't have permits, to join a crowd of striking Basotho mineworkers as they board the train. After the train has already left Crispin realizes the army has been contacted and are in pursuit of the Basotho mine workers. The train is stopped at a small station and the workers ordered to disembark. Crispin arrives just in time to witness the massacre of his friends. He searches among the bodies of the dead Basotho workers and finds Tom and Reuben. He takes the frond of mpafa which is clutched in Tom's fingers. It is this tragedy that leads to Crispin's breakdown and suicide.

It appears as if our love stories will also end in tragedy. But it is Crispin's death that galvanizes Victor to engineer that Frances go to meet him at the station in Grahamstown only to find Walter there instead. It is also what galvanizes Benedict to seek out Nomakwezi in Fort Beaufort, knowing that he cannot walk into his future without her, so that when she hears a bird call from behind the washing line it is revealed to be a familiar shadow on the other side of the sheets.

Shades is a story about love, faith, belonging, accountability – and finding salvation in unexpected places.



# Team

## Angus Gibson

Producer/Director

Angus Gibson is an Oscar nominated director and Executive producer of acclaimed South African production company Bomb. He was a founding member of Free Filmmakers, established in 1985 to create a relevant South African cinema. Since 1983, when he created his first television drama, he has produced, directed, and co-written numerous highly acclaimed and internationally award-winning documentary series and dramas for British and South African television. Amongst them is the South African leg of the 7up series. 28Up was nominated for a BAFTA. He is a creator of the controversial, wildly popular television series Yizo Yizo – was nominated for an Oscar for the authorized biography of Mandela – produces the record-breaking telenovela Isibaya and his three screen Truth & Reconciliation Commission installation represented South Africa at the Venice Biennale.

## Pat van Heerden

Producer

Pat van Heerden is a broadcast content specialist and channel strategist. Most recently she was the Head of Content for a Media24 lifestyle channel on DSTV. She has held the following positions: Head of Entertainment for SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation, SABC1,2&3); Commissioning Editor Factual Programming SABC1, the largest channel in Southern Africa; Head of Editorial for AL Jazeera's current affairs program, South2North.

She recently co-produced an international co-production fiction feature film between The Netherlands and South Africa, An Act of Defiance about an Afrikaner revolutionary. The film has won local awards as well as best film at festivals around the world. She has taught: The Horror Genre, African History, Documentary film and a Masters 'Course in History and Film. She holds a MPhil and MA from NYU. She is presently the Co-Chair of the South African Screen Federation (SAS-FED) representing 7 industry organisations.

## Libby Dougherty

Writer/Producer

After completing a MA in Film and Television Production at Bristol University Libby Dougherty began working as a writer in the South African television industry. She has written on a number of award-winning drama series and soap operas, and has directed on drama series, one of which Tempy Pushas won a Safta for best directing team. Her short film Panic Button premiered at the New York Africa Film Festival. Her first feature film For Love and Broken Bones won Best Film at the Portland Film Festival, her second feature Back of the Moon won best South African Film at the Durban film festival.



## Chumisa Ndakisa

Writer

Chumisa Ndakisa is a Mthatha born, Johannesburg based curator and writer. With an educational background in film and television, her experience in organising and interpreting art spans across many disciplines. The premise of her curatorial and artistic practice reflects on femininity, religious and spiritual doctrinal politics, music in all its formations and Pan African history. Her short stories have been published in various journals and anthologies including, Brittle Paper, Wits University's Itch and Goethe Institute's African Futures Anthology. Currently she is working as studio manager for the artist Kudzanai Chiurai and developing the first draft of her untitled debut novel.

## Marguerite Poland

Writer of the novel *Shades* and Story Consultant to the *Shades* Drama Series.

Marguerite Poland is the author of the novels *Train to Doringbult* (shortlisted for the CNA Award), *Shades* (shortlisted for the M-Net Award), *Iron Love*, *Recessional for Grace*, and, most recently, *The Keeper* (winner of a Nielsen Booksellers Choice Award). Her non-fiction work includes the highly acclaimed *The Abundant Herds: A Celebration of the Nguni Cattle of the Zulu People*, based on her doctoral thesis in Zulu literature, and the memoir *Taken Captive by Birds*. Poland has been honoured with two Sir Percy Fitzpatrick Awards for children's literature, an Ingwazi Award, and a SALA Lifetime Achievement Award; in 2016 she was awarded the National Order of Ikhamanga (Silver) by the South African President for her contribution to African languages.

## Desireé Markgraaff

Executive Producer for Bomb Productions.

(Please see company website: <https://thebomb.co.za>)

Desireé is a producer and CEO of The Bomb Shelter Film Company. She has been at the forefront of creating some of South Africa's most successful television content, including *Yizo Yizo*, *Isibaya*, *Ayeye*, *Zone 14*, *Jacobs Cross*, *Isithembiso* and many more. She is the co-producer of *Amandla: A Revolution in 4 Part Harmony* – winning two coveted Sundance awards as well as wins at the Emmy's, *Telluride*, *Black Reel*, *Encounters* and many more. She is a Fellow of the Africa Leadership Initiative-South Africa and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network. She served as chairperson of the IPO for 8 years and has served as a member of the NFVF board.

'There are men who know that when you are finished with this war of yours and have raised your flag to the glory of your Empire – the one that we, as black men, are supposed to revere for having bestowed on us education, faith, prosperity and all the other high-sounding gifts – that you will sell us out – perhaps against the advance of metaphorical cattle – and say it is expedient. You will sacrifice our rights in order to secure your peace with the Boers and shrug us off. It is for this expedience that men like Tom and Reuben and Sonwabo Pumani are dead. There will be thousands like them in the time to come.'

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