

## HOT FACES

# the power of poetry

Lebogang Mashile vs Malika Ndlovu

**Gugu Mkhabela** gets some inspiration from two potent and powerful poets...

**Lebo Mashile** first came to our attention as a poet in a collective known as Feelah Sister (feel-a-sister), belting out her conscious poetry in underground clubs and venues across Mzansi. These days we find her presenting current affairs show, *Drawing the Line* on SABC2, but her first love remains performing poetry to a live audience.

**Finding a balance to be where I am right now** without being splashed all over *shwashi* (tabloids) or any publication for the wrong reasons – has been really hard. It's been a challenge because I worked very hard in my 20s and burned out. I recently turned 30 and I've learnt to respect the fact that there's only one me – I have this one body and one spirit. So I take care of myself in every way. This means doing things like going to the gym, being mentally together and truly learning to prioritise by knowing

what is important and what isn't. I hang out with my family and am really close to my sisters. That keeps me grounded, as you can easily get caught up in this industry.

**If I could stop working right now and go anywhere in the world**, I would go to India. I'm simply seduced by the flair, the colours, the texture, the music and the ancient culture there.

**I would love to be seated next to** musician Prince, on a long flight. I'm a serious Prince disciple. He is so true to himself and has had a long and consistent music career. I'm in awe of the way he fuses music with absolutely beautiful words. If I could work with him, I'd be done.

**I cannot travel without** my gadgets – cellphones, camera, laptop, the works. And, oh, I can't go anywhere without my face products. I'm a Clinique girl.

**I respect** my audience. People don't owe it to me to make time to listen to what I have to say, so I make sure that I deliver for those who make the time to listen or buy

and read my work. Whispers are also quite powerful, so I always listen to them as well. **The best holiday I've been on** was to Disney World when I was 11.

**Jozi just keeps you on your toes.** It constantly pushes you to think about class, race and identity. It's built on illusions, greed, dreams and all kinds of contradictions. You have to work hard to stay relevant in this city. **A book that changed my life** was *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker.

**At the moment I'm listening to** Zuluboy's *Inqolobane*, Amy Winehouse – *Back to Black*, Caiphus Semenya and Letta Mbulu's hits album and Tracy Chapman's *Crossroads*.

**I'm a serious sms freak.** I never answer the phone but can send smses all day. **If I was a billionaire**, I'd live in pyjamas, like Hugh Hefner – I love the comfort and the no-frills-and-fuss factor about them.

**I'm a serious fan of** trashy TV. I love mindless TV channels like E! and programmes like *Cheaters*, *Celeb Rehab* and *Candy Girls*.



**Malika Ndlovu** recently launched her new book *Invisible Earthquake* and had her latest play *Sister Breyani* premier at the KKNK. This busy mother of three is motivated by her personal mantra 'healing through creativity'. Her intense and interrogating poetry sees her touching audiences from pages to stages in Mzansi and the world.

**I see being an artist as** inseparable from the kind of human being I am. All aspects of what I do and who I am, influence, support and enrich each other.

**I can't travel without** a journal. In order to soothe the traffic flow in my head, I offload on paper.

**If I could stop working right now and go anywhere in the world for a holiday,** it would be to Japan. I was there for a 10-day conference about eight years ago. I didn't want to leave. Its beauty, the extreme contrast of the landscape, the language and the culture are intoxicating.

**If I could be seated next to anyone on a long-haul flight I would choose...** my mom. We're like sisters who don't spend enough time with each other, living busy lives in different cities. She's never left South Africa and I'd love to give her that experience.

**When I travel, I try to pack** less clothing, and fewer books. Taking several options for fear of not having variety can be a real bane when you are penalised for overweight luggage.

**I rarely get** writer's block. I do whatever is necessary to clear my space (literal and figurative) and to relax, instead of getting anxious.

**One of my favourite cities in the world** is Amsterdam. I lived there for six months on an artist's residency. I feel like a part of me is still there or at least, came alive in a different way there.

**One place I have to see before I die is** Antarctica. I'm from the tip of Africa, so I'm fascinated by a stark, relatively empty landscape of snow and sky.

**Three book/s that changed my life** include *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron.

**I'm currently listening to** a combo of Putumayo World Music, Lira, Buddhist Chants, Jamie Cullum, India Arie and Natasha Bedingfield. (Smiles.)

**One thing that people do not know about Malika Ndlovu is** that she still enjoys a good dose of her late-teen favourite musicians: Indigo Girls, Tori Amos, Sinead O'Connor and Annie Lennox, every now and then!

**I love** coconut marshmallows.

**I feel an inexplicable connection to** whales.

**I will never say no to** a (good) foot massage. Look out for Malika's moving and highly successful production *Womantide* with singer-songwriters Ernestine Deane and Tina Schouw: an inspiring show with song, poems and dance at the Artscape. Check our iKapa City Guide (page 39) for more info. >>