

## **RIKA VERMEULEN**

Rika Vermeulen was born in Sydney, Australia and grew up in Paarl, Lusaka (Zambia), Johannesburg and Stellenbosch. She started piano at 8 after being fascinated by the piano since she was 4 years old. Rika is gifted with Absolute Pitch.

After matric Rika studied classical music at the Technikon Pretoria for four years. She specialised as concert pianist with added subjects such as Harpsichord, Harmony & Counterpoint, Rudiments and History of Music, Form in Music, Ensemble work, Prima Vista, Practical Musicianship, Piano Method and Piano Literature as well as obtaining her UNISA Grade 8 Piano and UNISA Grade 8 Theory qualifications. During her studies she was active as pianist in the Drama, Dance and Film Faculties.

After her studies, Rika's career branched into several directions:

### **DANCE: 1984 - current**

Rika worked as class pianist in Ballet, Tap, Spanish and National dance at the Dance Faculty of the (then) Pretoria Technikon. She was class pianist at the State Theatre Ballet Company, the State Theatre Contemporary Company and the State Theatre Ballet School for 14 years. During this time she worked with several international choreographers and teachers and also composed the music for a contemporary ballet "RUSH", choreographed by Timothy le Roux and staged by the State Theatre Contemporary Company. She played for the Royal Academy of Dance, Cecchetti Method as well as Vaganova Method classes, examinations and winter/summer schools. Rika has played for the Cape Town City Ballet as an hoc class pianist. Since 2017 Rika has been involved in the international programme Dance for Parkinson's SA®, she is the only Dance for Parkinson's Disease musician in South Africa and the national music advisor of DfPD(SA). ([www.danceforparkinsons.org.za](http://www.danceforparkinsons.org.za)).

### **ACCOMPANIST: 1988 – current**

In 1988 Rika worked as accompanist to Danièle Pascal, touring nationally. In 2007 Rika produced an album of French music, "Parisette" for mme.Pascal. From 1989 - 1993 Rika was accompanist to Nataniël, also touring nationally, involved in music videos, CD albums and television with Nataniël. Becoming known as accompanist, Rika also accompanied most well known artists in South Africa like Elzabé Zietsman, André Schwartz, Helene Hetteema, Lieze Stassen and many others, often as duo-accompanist with Rocco de Villiers. Rika was involved in many productions in all the major theatre centers in SA. She was part of an all female group called Da Capo with coloratura soprano Hanlee Louw, lyric soprano Pauline du Plessis and mezzo-soprano Elizabeth Frandsen and later including soprano Annalie Van Rooyen. Rika recorded two albums with Elizabeth Frandsen in 2005 and another with Annalie Van Rooyen in 2012.

In the Western Cape, Rika was involved as accompanist and musical director with Niël Rademan for four years, taking part in Kabaretmania and other projects. Rika became accompanist to Louis Loock (Romanz) in 2003, a partnership that is still current. Rika was involved in many productions for KKNK, US Woordfees and Suidoosterfees since 2008, with many well-known artists from the Western Cape. A production for US Woordfees 2018, "Verflenter die vers", with Louis Loock, Stian Bam, Wilken Calitz and Rika (director Juanita Swanepoel) was nominated for a Woordtrofee in that year.

## **TELEVISION**

During the early 80s Rika played a (very) small part in the TV series “Ballade vir ‘n enkeling”. Rika featured in many music videos of Nataniël and often guested on TV programs during the early 90s. In 2009 Rika took part in an episode of Rocco de Villiers’ TV-program, “Klop Die Klawers” and in 2017 led the Klein Libertas Theatre Choir in an episode of “Klavierkuiers met Pedro” with Coenie de Villiers.

## **TEACHING / LECTURING**

Rika teaches piano performance privately and coaches young artists in professional theatre under Vissi D’Arte Productions. She lectured part time at the Stellenbosch University Drama Faculty for four years.

## **CHOIRS AND BANDS**

Rika was musical director for both choirs at Hendrik Louw Primary School in Strand for 11 years. During this tenure she was adjudicator of choirs for the Overberg Eisteddfod. Rika handled the mass choir performances for Suidoosterfees Gala concerts. In 2011 Rika founded the Klein Libertas Theatre Choir with fellow founder members GiGi Fourie and Juanita Swanepoel of the Klein Libertas Theatre in Stellenbosch. The choir has, since 2020, become independent from the theatre, under the new name of the Theatrix Singers and has performed with many well known musicians and actors over the last 9 years in, to date, 15 productions. In 2009-2010 Rika was the manager of a rock band, Peter Poon (who won the national Rockspaaider competition in 2009) and she consequently became involved in the “band scene” in SA, inviting artists like Francois van Coke, Leroi Nel (Foto Na Dans), Lucas Swart & Calvin Siderfin (currently with Dangerfields), Pierre Arnold Theron, Wilken Calitz, Basson Laubscher, Die Wasgoedlyn, Churchil Naudé and many others to feature in productions produced and directed by Rika under Vissi D’Arte Productions.

It was during this time that Rika started a small local theatre magazine, “KYK! Teaterblad”(now obsolete), reporting on all the theatre goings-on in Stellenbosch. She served on the Woordtrofee panel for the US Woordfees in 2013.

## **SOLO**

In 2014 Rika was commissioned by the Baxter Theatre to do a solo-production. She consequently wrote, directed and performed “A B-flat in my Bonnet” and toured successfully with the production. In 2018 she repeated a solo show, called “Rika – Solo After All These Years” leaning on her training as concert pianist in a hour-long chat with the audience about her career and anecdotes thereof.

## **PRODUCER & DIRECTOR**

Rika has her own production company called “Vissi D’Arte Productions” which boasts a long list of productions made for, amongst others, KKNK, US Woordfees, Kabaretmania and Cultivaria. The Theatrix Singers, a theatrical “show choir” has now been incorporated into Vissi D’Arte Productions and Rika serves Artistic Director, stage director, Musical Director, choir leader and accompanist for the Theatrix Singers.