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From Stage and Screen to Society: Dr. Mufunanji Magalasi and Theatre, Development Communication and the Future of African Scholarship

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This interview is rightly framed around Dr. Mufunanji Magalasi, his work and career which can be placed at the intersection of theatre, development communication, and African knowledge production, especially in Malawi. The interview thus positions him as a major Malawian scholar-practitioner whose work has linked drama, cultural studies, community engagement, and academic leadership, while also documenting how theatre can move from performance into a method for researching social problems and communicating development in locally meaningful ways. Apparently, this thesis fits within the wider spectrum of African literature, which shows that theatre for development emerged partly as a response to the limits of top-down, Euro-American communication models, and gained influence because participatory performance can speak through local languages, symbols, and cultural forms that communities recognize as their own (Ebewo, 2017; Asante & Yirenkyi, 2026).

This conversation takes particular resonance in Malawi as, in this context, theatre for development may be said to have been instrumental, if not always interchangeable, with public debate, health communication and community participation, and as recurrently surrounded in debates about who is in control of the process. In Malawi, community theatre and public health trials have demonstrated that performances could create an opportunity for villagers to discuss their local concerns – matters that might otherwise not have been discussed in public – and inform them of the power they hold to direct the theatre process (Kerr, 1989). Simultaneously, a later Malawian scholarship suggests that participatory approach may not be effective in theatre for development unless the underlying cultural resources and the lived reality of the people are not the starting point, but rather the participation is merely a slogan while the rest of the production goes on with the outsider reserving the authorship and authority (Abdulla, 2019; Abdulla, 2016). Taking this context seriously, then, Dr. Magalasi's career is marked by a clear attempt to think globally but act locally—in the sense of being Malawian and African towards a creative arts-based approach

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that does more than merely entertain, but rather uses theatre as a means of communication, critique, and social change.

It was in this context that the overall objective of this work was advanced, the objective being to document and critically reflect on the intellectual life and scholarship of Dr. Mufunanji Magalasi, with a view to examining his contributions and impact on scholarship, community and knowledge production in the disciplines of drama, development communication, cultural studies and academic leadership in Malawi and Africa respectively. Therefore, the interview was led closely by the following aims which guided the questions of the interview as follows:

i. To examine Dr. Magalasi's intellectual and professional journey in theatre, drama, and development communication.

ii. To explore his contributions to scholarship, research, and academic publishing in Malawi and Africa.

iii. To investigate the role of applied theatre and development communication in addressing social and developmental challenges.

iv. To understand his perspectives on leadership, mentorship, and higher education in the arts.

v. To document his vision for the future of African theatre, cultural studies, and development communication.

Thus, questions which were administered were drawn from and in line with the above guiding objectives therefore. Furthermore, the transcript of this interview was edited for length, clarity, and readability with the assistance of Claude, an AI assistant developed by Anthropic (Anthropic, [Sonnet/model version], accessed August 2026). It must however be noted that, AI assistance was limited to editorial tasks — removing repetitions, filler words, and off-topic passages, and improving sentence structure and punctuation — under the direct supervision and review of the author. No new content, claims, or information were introduced by the AI, and the interviewee's own words, meaning, and factual content have been preserved throughout. The final edited transcript was thoroughly reviewed and by the author and approved by the interviewee prior to submission for consideration in this publication.

Dr. Magalasi's Biographical Background

Dr. Mufunanji Magalasi, holds an MA in Dramatic Art from the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and Split-Site Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Dramatic Literature from the University of Malawi and University of the West of England, Bristol, UK. An Associate Professor of Drama and Development Media at the University of Malawi, and Deputy Chief Editor of Journal of Humanities, he has published a monograph, Stage Drama in Independent Malawi, edited Beyond the Barricades: A collection of Contemporary Malawian Plays, and authored numerous peer reviewed articles in Drama, Development Communication, Development Studies, Literature and Cultural Studies. An entertainment theatre, theatre for development and Development Communication academic and practitioner, Dr. Magalasi has been a communication research consultant for an IDRC Fish Processing and Marketing project in Malawi, a Global Affairs Committee's (Canada) Malawi Farmer to Farmer Agroecology (MAFFA) project and a Malawi Co-Case Country Manager for the European Union Horizon 2020's Innovate Africa's Future in Food and Nutrition Security.

Currently he is Co-Principal Investigator (Malawi) in the Parasport Against Stigma [on People with Disabilities] (PSAS) project: a collaboration between University of Malawi and Loughborough University, London. Dr. Magalasi has served in various administrative and academic capacities. He has been Head of Fine and Performing Arts at University of Malawi twice, and has also served as Deputy Dean and Dean of Humanities at the University of Malawi. He has taught at University of Witwatersrand, University of Leeds, UK, and has been a visiting scholar at Escola Communicacio e Artes at Educardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique, and Department of Development Sociology at Cornell University, New York. He has worked with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Haramaya University, Ethiopia on their Theatre and Health Intervention in Kersa, Ethiopia.

Dr. Magalasi has trained over 1000 theatre, film and television artists in South Africa, Malawi and the UK. He has staged over sixteen professional productions at Johannesburg Civic Theatre, Wits Theatre Complex, Bachaki Theatre, Vuka Africa Artists, Great Hall Complex - University of Malawi, Leeds Workshop Theatre, and Afrika Cultural Centre - Johannesburg. A member of the African Theatre Association [AfTA] (Goldsmith and Oxford), his research interests broadly lie in Development Communication, Cinematography, African Literature, Colonial and Postcolonial African History, Development Broadcasting, Applied Theatre, Cultural Studies, Popular Culture, Research, and African Commercial and Popular Drama.

Intellectual and Academic Trajectory

Solomon Idyo (SI): Prof Sir, you have trained and taught in institutions across Malawi, South Africa, the UK, and beyond. How have these diverse academic and cultural spaces shaped your intellectual journey and your approach to drama and development communication?

Dr. Mufunanji Magalasi (DMM): The different spaces have each shaped me in their own way. I started here in Malawi with the drama club at Kikiri Secondary School, a school for the deaf in Blantyre, where we took part in Association for Teaching English in Malawi (ATEM) competitions, deliberately organised to help young Malawian students practice their English, alongside debating clubs. In South Africa, I studied at the Africa Cultural Centre and then took my undergraduate degree at Wits University, where I also began to teach. I returned to Malawi about twenty-five years ago, in 2000, to join the University of Malawi as a lecturer, and from there I began connecting with the rest of the continent — Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Cameroon — and later with institutions abroad: Bristol, the University of the West of England, Leeds, SOAS at the University of London, Oxford, Humboldt University in Germany, the University of Western Ontario in Canada, and Cornell University in the United States.

My basic training is in drama and theatre. I am a professional theatre artist trained in directing, I am an actor, I have written scripts, and I have done stage management and technical theatre. Moving through these different spaces taught me, first, that the economy of a place shapes the cultural products it produces, including its education. In Malawi, drama and theatre were shaped at a basic level by the Oxford-Cambridge approach: English was not only our medium of instruction but our curriculum itself was led by Oxford, Cambridge, and the University of London, and the University of Malawi was in fact modelled on the University of London, with university colleges as in a federal system. This shaped what we could do in the drama club — we practised what I would call a "poor theatre," poor not in the Grotowskian sense but because resources simply were not available. That absence of resources forces you to be more creative.

South Africa was a completely different economy. Even under apartheid there was an established mainstream theatre and a parallel black theatre, both well developed from around the 1950s in terms of resources and professionalism. Training there — working with people like Benji Francis, who trained in the UK in the 1960s and became the first black director at the Market Theatre — connected me to drama, theatre, and cinema in a genuinely professional sense, because the work of the directors I trained under travelled to Europe, to other parts of Africa, and to Broadway. I worked close to figures such as John Kani at the

Market Theatre and Maishe Maponya of the Black Theatre Movement, whose play Gangsters, about Steve Biko, travelled to the UK and the US. I also interacted with the writer-director Amiri Baraka, author of Dutchman; with the filmmaker Imruh Bakari from Brixton, London; and with the academic-director Malcolm Purkey at the School of Dramatic Art, whose productions performed on international stages.

When I came back to Malawi, I realised that I did not actually know Malawian theatre — this is why the first article I wrote on my return was "Malawian Theatre at the Crossroads." I initially judged our theatre as substandard, largely because of the lack of resources and formal training, with most people trained on the job. I later realised this was a mistake: there was a great deal of professional innovation happening, with practitioners improvising and learning as they went.

Crossing over to the UK gave me a global platform. At Leeds, I was asked to coordinate the MA in Theatre for Development, while also working within the BA English programme's theatre-making strand. I directed a piece called Homeless with students from China, Ghana, the Caribbean, and the UK itself, staged at the Workshop Theatre. Interacting with students such as Mervyn George from Trinidad and Tobago, a Barbadian colleague, and a Ghanaian colleague bringing a West African approach to theatre, taught me a great deal, even as I was also learning, through teaching at the University of Malawi, how popular commercial theatre works here — a central concern of my PhD research, since it did not operate in the same way as the South African commercial scene.

On cinema, coming from a background in black theatre and black cinema, I went on to study African cinema more broadly: the shifts in aesthetics, methodology, and production style introduced by filmmakers such as the Ethiopian Haile Gerima; the Nigerian video-film tradition with its roots in performers like Baba Sala; the role of charismatic churches in shaping popular film, as documented by the scholar Onokome Okome (and others); and Tanzanian film scholarship, including the work of the scholar Eustacia Vaye. So by the time I speak on these subjects, I am speaking from a considerable range of accumulated international training and experience.

SI: Looking back at your formative years, what drew you to theatre and development as a lifelong pursuit of study and practice?

DMM: My initial ambition was to become a journalist or a lawyer. But at secondary school, our teacher, who ran the drama club, had trained extensively in drama with the Dutch Brothers, and he influenced me toward drama without my quite realising it. I found drama

fascinating — the whole idea of re-enacting a story for a live audience. I was born an extrovert, and drama was a way of showing off what I could do and making myself known. That impetus never left me. In 1985, I went to Johannesburg and was accepted by Rhodes University (RU) to do journalism, but couldn't take up the study because finance was a problem. Rather, I accepted a bursary from the Africa Cultural Centre, a black consciousness organisation that taught to value its black children under the slogan, "Go for a value, black child" as expressed by Steve Biko. It was managed by Benji Francis and financed by the Scandinavians who were active supporters of anti-apartheidism. Students came from around the continent such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Lesotho, Ghana, which expanded my understanding of "African" to a great extent.

Linking to development communication: I came across the concept of theatre for development in my theatre studies and was intrigued by it as it related to freedom for Africa. Africa was oppressed by colonial rule, and neocolonialism perpetuated the oppression in the postcolonial era. To me, it was Theatre for development on a spectrum — it spoke directly to the problems Africans and black people face -- health, governance, and so on — it was a political statement, a movement to address the daily life of Africans and blacks. I came to see that theatre for development was itself a form of applied theatre, and I was drawn to the politics embedded in it. Through this, I began to notice that theatre for development was not the only medium doing this kind of work — radio, cinema, television, and print media, in their applied forms, were also becoming participatory, and today we have participatory digital and e-communication as well. My early fascination with performance thus carried me, through theatre for development, into the broader field of development communication and its many mediums.

Theatre and Development Communication

SI: Your scholarship and practice intersect entertainment theatre, theatre-for-development, and development communication. In your view, how do these strands complement or challenge one another in addressing African social realities?

DMM: My first training was in entertainment, commercial theatre — you perform, and you get paid, as a career and a way of life. That training carried over into theatre for development, where the same skills are applied to development problems. A theatre-for-development piece requires you to be with the people, to listen to their problems, to understand how a community survives — whether it is agricultural, a fishing community, or based in a forest — through direct social and cultural engagement. In that sense, theatre for development is itself a research tool: it is participatory, with underpinnings in anthropology, and it allows you to

link a community's daily life to a specific development problem in order to generate information and data.

What bridges theatre, theatre for development, and development communication more broadly is that all of them are underpinned by participatory methods? In Africa, and across the Global South, this approach has been shaped by Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Its second chapter is especially instructive on education: rather than continuing to import ideas from England or America for local problems, Freire argues that education should draw on local examples, local experience, and indigenous knowledge, producing people who are critically conscious and able to resolve their own problems. This participatory trajectory underpins the theatre we do, the development communication we do, and the research we do — it is how we apply these strands to the existential problems Africans face.

SI: You have consulted on projects ranging from fish processing and agro-ecology to para-sports and stigma. How does applied theatre bridge the gap between research, communication, and tangible community development outcomes?

DMM: My involvement in these different developmental projects stems from being a theatre artist and a theatre-for-development and development-communication specialist. Applied theatre bridges research and communication because it is grounded in the same participatory principle: you spend time with communities, understand their social and cultural practices, and use theatre both to surface local knowledge and to communicate around it. This is what allows research findings to translate into tangible outcomes — the work is not simply about producing a performance, but about applying that performance-based, participatory method to resolve real developmental problems.

SI: What do you see as the unique role of Malawian theatre — and African theatre more broadly — in advancing development communication compared to Western approaches?

DMM: What is unique about us as Africans is indigenous knowledge — our own way of living, our own social and cultural sensitivities. This is what is often missing in Western approaches, which carry their own cultural and social sensitivities rather than ours. That distinction matters not only for development communication but for development itself: development cannot happen in a vacuum. It must happen with people themselves agreeing on what they want, for the sake of sustainability and mutual understanding. We understand each other best when we use our own indigenous knowledge as the entry point, rather than one shaped by Western cultural assumptions.

Research, Publications, and Cultural Heritage

SI: Your book Stage Drama in Independent Malawi and edited collection Beyond the Barricades have become touchstones in Malawian drama studies. What do these works reveal about the relationship between politics, culture, and performance in Malawi?

DMM: In Stage Drama in Independent Malawi, my entry point was to examine the link between governance, policy, and the way they shape the aesthetics of performance. Having grown up under a dictatorship, I wanted to understand how governance policies actually shaped performance. The book presents two case studies: one on the university's Travelling Theatre, and another on the popular commercial stage, examining how political dictatorship shaped both content and form.

At the university, playwrights had to submit their work to a censorship board before staging. Under Kamuzu Banda, plays could not touch on sexual matters — since Banda insisted Malawi was a Christian country — nor could they engage directly with politics, given how harshly he dealt with criticism, in what was effectively a police state. Playwrights from the 1970s responded by using metaphor, imagery, and coded language to comment on the political situation and to suggest solutions. One example is Puma Ohambe ("get out and go"), written by a young student, Lance Ngulube, using the metaphor of a village bewitched by its own chief, whom the villagers demand must leave — a clear message to Banda. Because it was written in metaphor, it was difficult for the censorship board to act against it, even though Malawians understood exactly what it meant. Professor Uledi-Kamanga, now a retired professor of English, was among the students involved in such productions at the time. These plays circulated through the university's writers' workshop, where coded language, rather than direct commentary, became the norm. Into the 1980s, writers such as Steve Chimombo and his contemporaries, including Edge Kanyongolo, continued in this vein. Around this period, the academic David Kerr, deported after his marriage into a family connected to a failed coup attempt, brought back a socialist orientation from his time at the Chikwakwa Travelling Theatre in Zambia — "chikwakwa" meaning "sickle" — which further shaped the students he worked with at the university.

Popular commercial theatre took a different route. Lacking the university's sophistication, township performers turned to comedy as a safe space for critique. Banda insisted publicly that Malawi was not a poor or hungry country, yet comedians appeared on stage dressed in rags, directly contradicting him. Their comedy carried jokes that seemed innocent on the surface but mirrored the political situation. One example, "One or One," set in a hospital, depicts a dominant doctor — echoing Banda's own profession — who neglects patients while

favouring a young woman, and the other patients, though visibly frustrated, fall silent and look away the moment he appears: a portrait of how people grumbled privately but publicly performed loyalty. After 1994, with the transition to multiparty democracy, these popular plays shifted to direct political commentary, which retrospectively validated this reading of the earlier work. Beyond the Barricades, a collection of plays by younger writers including Shadreck Chikoti, reflects that new freedom — plays that could put a president on stage as a character, address demonstrations, and speak directly about politics in ways that had previously been impossible.

SI: As Deputy Chief Editor of the Journal of Humanities, how do you envision the role of academic publishing in amplifying African voices and reshaping global narratives about African arts and culture?

DMM: Amplifying African voices through scholarship falls within a long intellectual tradition. As early as 1961, the Nigerian scholar Obi Wali raised the question of writing in indigenous languages, an argument that influenced Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's turn to writing in indigenous languages to give African literature its own voice. Journals such as the Journal of Humanities continue that tradition. At the University of Malawi, journals like Baraza, from the Department of Fine and Performing Arts, alongside the Journal of Humanities, gave young scholars such as William Mpalume, Chris Kamlongera, and Steve Chimombo a platform to write about Malawian, and by extension African, arts. It is a privilege to serve as Deputy Chief Editor, because the journal essentially showcases young Malawian scholars putting their research on Malawian arts and humanities before a wider audience.

Leadership and Training

SI: Having trained over 1,000 theatre, film, and television artists in multiple countries, what philosophies guide your teaching and mentorship of the next generation of African artists and scholars?

DMM: Identity is central to my training philosophy. When a young scholar is clear about their identity, they can choose the philosophies that will genuinely strengthen and give them confidence in their work. I was trained by black-consciousness and pan-Africanist scholars, and while that training is political in itself, it was liberating in that, instead of always looking to Europe for theories and ideologies, I was pushed to look to my own identity first. A useful central metaphor here is Haile Gerima's film Sankofa — the myth of a bird that, perched on a tree, always turns its head backward. That is the ideology I was trained in, and it is what I

try to instill in others: know yourself, or you will keep using borrowed ideologies and aesthetics that do not always apply.

In my own analysis of Malawian popular commercial stage drama, for instance, I drew on the local philosophy of kutieza ("chatting") — the practice, familiar in Malawian daily life, of two people bantering and needling each other in a way that is both humorous and pointed, as performed by figures like John Nyanga and Eric Mabedi. I also draw on Wole Soyinka's essay "The Fourth Stage," which describes the African life cycle across three visible stages — the living, the dead, and the unborn — and the transitions between them, which Soyinka treats as sites of violence: the struggle of dying, and the violence, sexual in nature, through which the unborn enters the world. I used Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman to teach African performance at Leeds, precisely because it captures this fourth stage so vividly. I also draw on the South African traditional healer and author Credo Mutwa, whose work on African humanism explores the relationship between the living and the ancestors, and on his play Unosilimela, about a young woman who returns from the city to the rural areas — a theme that speaks to a broader "return to roots." Writers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o extend this beyond the rural into the political and economic, addressing African socialism and the tensions between capitalist and welfare models of the state, while Ousmane Sembène's God's Bits of Wood shows how unionism, often assumed to be a European import, becomes genuinely African once workers recognise their shared struggle against exploitative employers. These are the kinds of references I draw on in training, whether in cinema, drama, or language and literature.

SI: As the Executive Dean of the School of Arts, Communication and Design, what institutional changes or visions are you prioritizing to strengthen the role of arts and communication in higher education in Malawi?

DMM: The School of Arts, Communication and Design is one of five schools at the University of Malawi, which itself has a strategic plan focused on leadership development, resource mobilisation, internationalisation, quality assurance, and state-of-the-art facilities. As a new school — Malawi has never had a School of Arts before, only a Department of Fine and Performing Arts — my task has been to align our work with that university-wide strategy. Our first priority is putting the school's departments on a firm footing: securing facilities and bringing in the human resources needed for teaching and research, including practitioners from the industry, both locally and internationally, who can enrich our programmes and better prepare students for their careers.

Research is our second priority. Staff are expected to research and publish, and we define publication broadly: staging a performance, producing a film, a fashion design, or a sculpture, or spearheading a media programme, are all forms of publication in our understanding. This is why, when recruiting, we look not only for academic credentials but for people who have published in their field and who have also practised it — that combination is critical for us. Through this approach we are, in effect, redefining Malawian and African arts scholarship: training students with practising researchers so that when they graduate, they are equipped not just to look for work, but to create it themselves.

Broader African Contexts

SI: As a member of the African Theatre Association, you engage in continental debates on theatre, postcoloniality, and cultural identity. Where do you think African theatre scholarship is headed in the 21st century?

DMM: African theatre scholarship is not yet as rigorous or prolific as we would wish. If you compare the number of journals on African arts and theatre on the continent with our counterparts in Europe, the US, or Asia — India, for instance — our numbers are lower. The aim of African scholarship is to bring out insights on what we are doing as theatre scholars on the continent, and to use that work to build confidence in the students we are training. Where it is heading, in my view, is toward documenting practice as fully as possible — not only academic practice, but theatre as an African cultural artefact in its own right, including our traditional performance forms. Increasingly, our scholarship is tracing how tradition influences what happens in the academy, and how the academy in turn influences traditional performance. The vision is a continent that has thoroughly documented its own theatrical and artistic practice.

SI: How should African arts and culture institutions negotiate the tension between preserving indigenous traditions and engaging with global artistic trends?

DMM: This tension recalls influential postcolonial thinkers such as Chinweizu and Madubuike. Striking the right balance is critical. I was recently at a Black Consciousness conference where a young Gen Z participant challenged me directly: our African experiences, though we share a continent, are different — so was I suggesting that he should return to wearing traditional regalia, like a mask dancer, to be a "true African"? My answer was no. The balance lies in living fully in contemporary Africa while remaining conscious of the ideologies and cultural artefacts that constitute your African identity, so that the two can be merged rather than opposed.

I use the example of the South African musician Makhadzi, who comes from the Venda tradition of the northern part of South Africa, near the Zimbabwean border — a language close enough to Shona and Sotho that speakers across that border can understand each other. Makhadzi performs Amapiano, itself a genre built from synthesised studio music combined with the drumming patterns of isgubhu. Yet she sings in her native Venda and brings in Venda cultural elements, such as the onomatopoeic sound associated with the traditional healer, into a thoroughly contemporary form. That is the balance: doing contemporary work rooted in African tradition. The Dutch scholar Mineke Schipper identified this same pattern in African theatre long ago, in her analysis of Wole Soyinka's work — in A Dance of the Forests and in the popular classic The Lion and the Jewel — showing how African tradition and African life continually inform contemporary theatrical creation. That is the kind of balance we as African scholars need to strike.

Personal Reflections and Future Directions

SI: With your extensive engagement in applied theatre, cultural studies, and development projects, what key lessons have you learned about the power and limits of theatre as a tool for social transformation?

DMM: Let me start with the power. Theatre has the power to change people because it operates through what, in development communication, we call interpersonal communication. Theatre for development and theatre of the oppressed are participatory: when people genuinely take part in a theatrical experience about their own local problems, and are engaged in the performance and the discussion that follows, theatre becomes very powerful — even revolutionary. It gives people the chance to voice what has happened to them and what they carry inside.

I will give an example. In 1988, my mentor, Professor Chris Kamlongera, the first Malawian professor of drama, took students to Thyolo, an area dominated by tea estates that had displaced local people from their land since colonial times, and staged a theatre-for-development piece there. Soon afterwards, the Office of the President and Cabinet contacted him: when the local MP returned for a political rally, community members stood up and confronted him about his failures in the area, drawing directly on the confidence built through that theatrical experience. That is the kind of strength this work can generate — and it is also why the university's Travelling Theatre was subsequently banned from performing in rural areas, under threat of arrest. Because it is participatory and face-to-face, theatre brings stakeholders — government, members of parliament, and community members

themselves — to account, on matters ranging from child abuse and school access to health beliefs that discourage practices like vaccination.

The limits, however, are real. Because theatre for development is developmental rather than commercial, it depends heavily on resources, which makes it difficult to sustain or scale. It is also inherently local: because it relies on the participation of specific communities, it is very difficult to implement nationally. Augusto Boal's legislative theatre in Brazil illustrates both the power and the cost of trying to do so at scale — when he challenged a law restricting the vote to literate citizens, he built some two to three hundred theatre-for-development groups across the country to promote functional literacy, turning everyday materials, such as a bank form, directly into the text of performance. By the end of that campaign, voter turnout rose from 45 to 90 percent. That shows how powerful this work can be — but also how expensive and resource-intensive it is to spread beyond the local, face-to-face level.

SI: What ongoing or future projects most excite you, and how do they align with your broader vision for African drama, literature, and development communication?

DMM: What excites me most is bringing together academics and practitioners to produce work that can cross borders more easily. I believe it is time we moved toward productions capable of travelling regionally and internationally, and this is central to the vision behind my current training work: building collaborations and connections with the industry, both locally and internationally, so that our students and our scholarship can engage more fully with the wider world.

Concluding Reflections

As a budding scholar in Theatre, Film, and Media Arts, I have been deeply inspired by Prof. Mufunanji Magalasi's educational journey, his vast knowledge and experience in the arts, and, above all, his remarkable willingness to share that knowledge with others. He stands out as a true maestro whose life and work reflect rare dedication to theatre, development communication, scholarship, and artistic leadership. For those of us who are still growing within academia and the creative industries, his example shows how intellectual depth can be joined to humility, mentorship, and service to society. I remain sincerely grateful for every opportunity to learn from his insight and experience, because younger scholars and students need precisely this kind of guidance and exposure if they are to develop confidence in their own voice and purpose.

It is especially important to acknowledge such legacies while their carriers are still with us. In many of our societies, people are too often celebrated only after they are gone, yet this interview reminds us that living intellectuals and artists deserve recognition while they are still actively shaping institutions, mentoring students, and expanding the frontiers of knowledge. This reflection is therefore not an exaggeration of praise, but a necessary recognition of a scholar whose contributions have already helped shape knowledge production, community engagement, and the evolution of arts and humanities scholarship in Malawi and Africa.

Prof. Magalasi's journey also demonstrates that theatre is not merely a space of performance, but a serious intellectual and social practice that can speak to the lived realities of African communities. His thoughts shared show that theatre for development and development communication gain their strength from participatory methods, indigenous knowledge, and direct engagement with people's everyday struggles. For emerging scholars, that lesson is invaluable: meaningful scholarship should not be detached from society, but should remain accountable to communities, cultures, and the urgent questions of African life.

On a conclusive note therefore, this interview leaves the impression of a scholar-teacher whose legacy lies not only in publications, productions, and leadership positions, but also in the minds he has shaped and the confidence he has helped build in younger generations. His vision of African scholarship calls for students and researchers to know their identity, document their own artistic practices, and build forms of knowledge rooted in African realities while remaining engaged with the wider world. That is why celebrating Prof. Magalasi now is also a way of affirming the future he represents: a future in which African theatre, film, media, and scholarship continue to grow through mentorship, creativity, and cultural self-understanding.

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