

Further Than the Furthest Thing

 By [Frances Aron](#)

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Norman McFarlane directs a group of highly committed amateur actors from the Hottentots Holland Dramatic Society (HHDS) in *Further Than the Furthest Thing*, a fictitious play originally written by Zinnie Harris and based on historical events that deeply affect the lives of those on the island of Tristan de Cunha, situated in the South Atlantic.



It is a complex and emotionally powerful play that explores the parallels of a world of community and the seemingly simply things in life versus a foreign, alienating and, as inferred, world of ulterior motives and greed.

However, as the play unfolds we discover things are not as straightforward as they seem: the inhabitants of the island hold a dark secret, which metaphorically erupts to the fore soon after the 1963 eruption of a volcano throws their singular world into chaos and all islanders are evacuated to Southampton.

Mill and her husband Bill Laverello play the main characters, perhaps generic of families in the island community. Mill, played by newcomer Lee-Ann Murray, toys with the idea of modernity in the form of a proposed factory coming to the island, whilst her husband, played by old-timer Bobby Bennet, rejects it completely. This conflict precedes the changes soon to come.

Clever use of the island dialect

Zinnie Harris cleverly uses the island dialect to immerse us into the lives of the island community. It takes some getting used to but is done convincingly by the cast and one can only admire their determination to portray their characters as honestly as they do. The playwright uses familiar objects and surnames throughout the play to emphasise the significance of family line and community.

Mr Hansen (who is played by Deon Fourie) represents the profiteering businessman in a world unknown to the islanders and thus threatening. We see how Francis' (played by CJ Opperman) pull towards the glamour of the modern world fades somewhat over time. Through the tragedy that strikes, grief and remorse are revealed by those seemingly hardened characters.

Murray (as Mill Lavarello) impresses with her compelling monologues in the second half of the play and we are assured of her strength and courage and role in keeping the family together. The audience cannot avoid experiencing pathos as it witnesses the change in Bennet (as Bill Lavarello) from a highly respected and forceful chaplain to a troubled individual in a foreign country, haunted by past choices.

The character of Rebecca Glass (played by newcomer Sonette Swanepoel) is less developed in the script; however the adversity she has and still faces elicits great empathy from the audience. Here, it would seem the playwright uses her to represent the emotional hardships of individuals, whether from the island community or on the mainland; after all, we are all human and capable of intense feeling.

We discover that little is resolved in the play that may leave the audience confused and a little disappointed; however this adds to its sense of realism. We may all yearn for the simple romanticism of island life, but we learn that even there, things are not as clear cut as they would seem. Indeed, they may simply be romantic ideals.

This production runs at The Playhouse, Somerset West from 22 to 30 October. Tickets are R100 and can be booked at [Computicket](#) or online at theplayhouse.org.za/all-event-list/further-than-the-furthest-thing

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