



Please note, [Lunar Poetry Podcasts](#) is produced as 'audio content' and is intended to be heard and not read. These transcriptions are to be used as an aid alongside the audio recordings. If it is possible I recommend you listen to the audio which includes emotion and emphasis, not included in this text. This transcript is produced by a human and may contain errors. Please check the corresponding audio before quoting in print.

If you would like to see any changes to the way this transcript is formatted, then please contact us on [Twitter](#) or on [Facebook](#). Alternatively, please take the time to complete this short online [survey](#).

This transcript was made possible with the aid of funding from Arts Council England.

The rights to any and all poems printed in this transcript are retained by the author, **do not** reprint or copy without the permission of the author. – David Turner, Lunar Poetry Podcasts.

©2020 Lunar Poetry Podcasts



---

## [Episode 35: InZync Poetry Collective](#) (June 2015)

Transcript by Christabel Smith

Host: Michelle Madsen – **MM**  
Guest: Adrian van Wyk – **AvW**  
Peter Odendaal – **PO**

### Conversation:

**MM:** Hello and welcome to the Lunar Poetry Podcast. I'm Michelle Madsen and I'm here with Peter Odendaal and Adrian van Wyk from InZync Poetry in Stellenbosch. We are at The

Roundhouse today and we are going to be chatting about their brilliant poetry night and their own poetry, which has brought them over to London. Hi, guys.

**PO and AvW:** Hello!

**MM:** So, Adrian, can you tell us a bit about the night?

**AvW:** Our platform focuses on providing multilingual content to audiences and we purposefully do that when we curate the evening. We bring different styles of poetry together, so it's in the InZync Poetry sessions where the poets meet. It's a meeting place of different poetries, different languages and different forms of expression to one platform.

**MM:** Coming from a one-language poetry world, which is the UK poetry scene at the moment, it's quite overwhelming and impressive to be met by all these multilingual poets. Even if you don't understand the language, you can still get quite a lot out of what's going on. Peter, how do you choose the people you bring on? Is the poetry world very interconnected in South Africa? Are you pulling people from Cape Town or all over the country?

**PO:** It is very connected. It has always been quite fragmented, a few individuals doing different things. What we usually do is draw poets from the Cape Town area or Western Cape and every now and again, we will have travelling poets, either from overseas or other parts of the country we also host. There is a very particular regional character, so mostly the languages you hear are Afrikaans, Xhosa and English. Sometimes a bit of Sotho, but those are the three main languages.

Then maybe I can also say the sessions are held in a township, on the periphery of Stellenbosch, so that is the traditionally Black areas. What we are also trying to do is create a platform in a community where something like that doesn't exist.

**MM:** I went to that venue and it's an amazing bar, perched on a little hill overlooking the glittering lights of the city, but very much in the township. The taxi driver I got from Cape Town was like 'are you sure you want to go here?' How did you find that venue?

**PO:** It just happened. I heard about the venue and asked if we could use the space and bring more students in.

**MM:** It's a bar isn't it?

**PO:** At the moment, it's not used for a lot of things. It used to be a restaurant, a theatre for a while, it's in a bit of an in-between phase at the moment. It's essentially a township theatre.

**MM:** As far as you know, is this the only poetry night in a township?

**PO:** No, there are poetry gigs in other townships that aren't Cape Town.

**AvW:** In the country as well. The cultural gathering and sharing [of] stories is very strong in South Africa and the poetic tradition of various languages. They have their own form of gathering, their own form of getting together, so a lot of the time you find gigs happening without the formal structure of a gig, so there won't be sound or marketing, but everybody knows to be at that place at a specific time.

There is a very organic sense of community and getting together and sharing stories. There is another poetry movement in Cape Town, good friends of ours, Lingua Franca, from Delft, which is also a township more close to the Cape Town side. They started in a shack and it has now developed over four years. They still have regular poetry sessions without the formal structure, without sound or marketing. They just get together and perform. That side of poetic tradition in South Africa is quite healthy.

**MM:** Could we have a poem? Peter's ready!

**PO:** This one is for a prehistoric fish called a coelacanth. They were long thought to be extinct. They live very deep in the ocean where there is no light. This is for one of them.

**[We are unable to reproduce this reading at this time.]**

**MM:** Thank you, that's amazing. Listening, I was thinking this could be read in a different way. One of the things I've found is that pretty much everything performed at your night was political, saying something not just about that person's view, but what it is to be in South Africa and alive at the moment. Peter, why did you start writing poetry? And how poems like that one come about.

**PO:** I started writing when I was about 18 years old. I only really got into it about three or four years ago. I write whenever I feel touched in some way. Also, this poem has an interesting history. It was part of a course in creative writing I did and we had to compose a poem to some animal. I went and looked for an animal, that's where it came from.

A lot of my poetry, I guess I'm really interested in the natural world and the relationship to the natural world. Also, of course, the political reality faced in South Africa and poems about identity politics, how do I see myself as a white Afrikaan? How do I fit in to the grander scheme of things?

**MM:** Adrian, do you want to give us a poem and your thoughts about how you write?

**AvW:**

**[We are unable to reproduce this reading at this time.]**

**MM:** Thank you. Same question for you. Where does your writing come from?

**AvW:** I started writing when I was 12 or 13. I was going through 'that' phase of life. Uncontrollable emotions. It started for me as a space to make sense of myself and express, trying to find clarity as to what was happening to myself, entering into this journey. From

there, writing has always been a tool for me to also make sense of my environment, to help channel and see where I'm going. Also, I enjoy exploring my vocabulary and trying to associate words with feelings.

**MM:** What aspects of your environment are affecting your writing at the moment?

**AvW:** It's an international idea of rethinking education and what university is and those kinds of things. Also, at the moment, I'm trying to explore... Ah, happiness has arrived.

**MM:** Just to let you know, waffles with bacon and maple syrup have just arrived and we have two exceptionally happy poets. If you hear munching, that's what's going on.

**AvW:** So at the moment, it feels like I want to speak about sad things and things that are real. I'm exploring and trying to develop the style called Barakah, which is Arabic for blessing, so trying to find the positive in the negative, find the happiness in the sadness, the darkness within the light. That's my journey right now.

**MM:** How easy is it? I love writing poems of blessings and joy, but they always come out bittersweet.

**AvW:** It's also about not shying away from the things that need to be spoken about. I feel we need to find ways to have dialogue with each other, but also with ourselves. It's hard writing about difficult, sad things in the world. I have a poem I wrote for my grandmother and that ended up being a celebration. Even though it's a sad poem, every time I perform it, she is with me and I feel her presence with me. That's how I see it.

**MM:** As we're in London, at The Roundhouse, where you have been performing and mixing with lots of people in the UK poetry scene, I'd be interested to hear your thoughts about how it compares with what you're doing in South Africa. Have you been impressed or have you been 'hmm'?

**AvW:** For me, The Roundhouse slam night was an amazing experience. It was really good to hear that diversity of young voices and to get a sense of what people are interested in talking about. I was blown away by the quality of the poetry in general and the storytelling.

**MM:** What was the winning poem about?

**PO:** The first one was about the river Nile. How he sees himself being connected to the Nile as a celebration of African-ness.

**AvW:** His heritage is from Sierra Leone. It was a celebration of finding himself within this place. I saw the content might be different, but the themes are exactly what young people back home are speaking about. The same struggles, same journeys, same type of thoughts that young people are going through. It was amazing to see that.

Sometimes, our geographical location separates us, but our humanity doesn't connect us. I felt so connected to humanity on Sunday night after that slam, so happy to have been here

as a poet and to see that language and stories are connected. The content might be different, but the actual themes people are speaking about are just the same.

**MM:** It's really reassuring. We eat, sleep and worry about similar things. Language is not a barrier. I know you're tackling waffles and bacon, but can we get another poem?

**PO:** This one is called Reaching Shore. It's to describe the meeting of people across town, people coming together and listening to each other.

**[We are unable to reproduce this reading at this time.]**

**MM:** That was great. Thank you so much. That is a lovely segue from the conversation about common themes of humanity. Where do you see your own poetry going next? Are there any particular projects you have on the go? You're here as ambassadors, you've done a great job pulling together lots of people in one city in South Africa, it looks as if you're forging links across the world.

**PO:** On a personal level, this has been a creative rebirth, this past week. I am very excited to go back home and start writing and not stop and to try and get a collection of poems out in the next year or two. Then on a collective level, it's about creating more opportunities for South African poets to come here, for UK poets to come down to us, have more collaborations, create things together.

Because we live in such a connected age, there are so many possibilities for digital collaboration. That is definitely something we want to look into. A dream would be to bring a minibus full of South African poets and tour around the country.

**AvW:** Tour the country, all the festivals. We don't have a poetry circuit like you have here that people can follow in each city. Our next goal is to come back and do that circuit, bring a whole variety of South African poets, for people to see our context, where we come from.

**MM:** Are there other countries you're interested in connecting up to?

**PO:** I think we've got to start at home. We think about travelling through our country, but also get poets together from sub-Saharan Africa.

**MM:** I'm travelling to Nigeria and there's a really strong spoken-word scene.

**PO:** It would be amazing if we could somehow collaborate.

**AvW:** We're speaking to a few people to try and get conversations going between organisations in South Africa and Nigeria, so we're starting inter-African conversation and collaboration, which is needed in an African context because we've been so separated as a continent. This is the time for us to use technology and resources in order to unify through poetry, through our stories.

It's very exciting right now. We're going back home with this idea that 'the sky is the limit' for us. We can think it, we can achieve it. We thought when we met Sylvia Harrison of The Roundhouse two years ago, we were just thinking of playing around, 'oh we're going to London.' We're in freaking London now! Anything is possible.

**MM:** Is there advice you would give to poets who are nervous about binding people? You guys push hard and make things happen. It's not necessarily easy to think 'oh, I could do that.'

**AvW:** Just keep at it, keep on keeping on. That's the best advice.

**PO:** Don't underestimate what you can do. Don't think, 'this won't work, I can't do this'. Try and cultivate that openness towards creating new things.

**AvW:** Words are power. What we say, we become. That's how powerful we are. Channelling that into a way you want to see for yourself. I'm sure everyone wants positivity for themselves. Sow positivity and you will reap success.

**MM:** Openness is such a key word.

**AvW:** The more you give, the more also you will receive.

**MM:** Adrian, can you reference that with a last poem?

**AvW:**

**[We are unable to reproduce this reading at this time.]**

**MM:** Amazing! How many languages is that?

**AvW:** Two.

**MM:** A huge thank you for taking time to talk to us. People can find out more about Inzync Poetry at...

**AvW:** Inzync Poetry on Facebook, Inzync\_poetry on Twitter, #inzyncpoetry on Instagram. Website coming soon.

**MM:** I'm writing an article on the people I met in Stellenbosch, which is going to go on my website [www.michellemadsenpoet.com](http://www.michellemadsenpoet.com). That's Lunar Poetry signing out, thank you.

**End of transcript.**