

# Alice Gillham calls to home

 By [Martin Myers](#)

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I spoke to the composer, Alice Gillham, who has a new musical, *Calling Us Home*, coming out in theatres in Cape Town.



Image supplied: Alice Gillham

This musical will bewitch you with its spectacular music and move you to feel joy, heartbreak and compassion as it celebrates love, the triumph of hope and the invincible strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

Bookings are now open for Cape Town season before going international.

The show will be open for one week only at Artscape Theatre Centre for five shows from 15-19 February.

## ■ **What is your job description?**

I am described as a composer, writer, lyricist, arranger, orchestrator and studio producer. My company produces and develops musicals and large-scale studio/live productions.

I've had the privilege of writing everything from country music to heavy metal to modern 'classical music'! But, simply, I'm a musical storyteller.

## ■ **What does music mean to you?**

Music is a part of everything in my life. It is the current that keeps me afloat, the air that keeps me alive and the compass that leads me into the future.

## ■ **My music is about...**

Being human. In all its messy emotional magnificence.

## ■ **What is your motto?**

My great-grandmother always said: "just keep moving forwards!"

### 🎲 *Fame is about...*

Many, many complicated things... for most people fame is about recognition, respect, applause, and celebrity. I have always shied away from it. It can also be about letting the world in, about giving others a little part of you and hoping that they will be kind. I find that hard.

### {{biziocn}} *Retirement will happen when...*

Hopefully never.



The nostalgia of music proves prominent in South Africa

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### 🎲 *I don't do...*

Single-use plastic, animals performing in circuses, hunting for pleasure and fake news.

### 🎲 *I would love to co-write with...*

Queen in the morning, Ennio Morricone in the afternoon and Bob Marley after the midnight hour.

### 🎲 *Where do you go for inspiration to create?*

I go into nature – the desert, I particularly love open skies and wide landscapes that have a special silence and that simultaneously fill the world with their own unique sounds.

### 🎲 *What is the most enjoyable aspect of your work?*

Writing and creating something that leaves me behind and finds its own path, its own truth through the talents and experience of others. Working with singers, working with directors with musicians. I'm going to stop now, or this list is going to get very long. Basically, I love my job.

### 🎲 *My heroes are...*

All the people who put their hearts on the line and write music and poetry and stories and then put them out there for others to experience! They are super brave as far as I am concerned.

### 🎲 *My style icons are...*

Dvořák and Issey Miyake

▣ **Which living person do you admire most and why?**

Jane Goodall. One of the most important things we are only just beginning to truly learn is that many animals have complex emotions and are much smarter than we ever gave them credence for.

▣ **What is your most treasured possession?**

My beautiful old grand piano that treats me kindly and with infinite patience.

▣ **It's your round; what are you drinking?**

A good South African Red wine...

▣ **What makes you stand out?**

I'm very introverted, so don't like to stand out...

▣ **Any nicknames?**

Shy.

▣ **If you were not a musician, what would you do?**

That is a totally inconceivable possibility!

▣ **Pick five words to describe yourself?**

Curious, independent, loyal, funny, perfectionist

▣ **What are you streaming?**

*The Forsyte Saga* (for research for upcoming work)

*The Witcher* (I mean really, who wouldn't)

*Borgen* (difficult enough to find strong female role models!)

▣ **Greatest movie ever made?**

*The Godfather* is tied with *The Lord of the Rings*.

▣ **What book are you reading?**

*Assassin's Apprentice* by Robin Hobb



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▣ **What song changed your life?**

*River* by Joni Mitchell

■ ***Who do you love?***

When we know each other better I will share that with you.

■ ***What is your favourite word?***

Anyway

■ ***Top of your bucket list?***

Scottish Hebrides

■ ***Your greatest achievement?***

Learning to trust myself.

■ ***What do you complain about most often?***

Lack of time.

■ ***What is your biggest fear?***

All my fears are equally, terrifyingly big.

■ ***Happiness is...***

A very tall tree. A good cup of coffee. Dappled shade.

■ ***On stage, I tend to...***

...run like hell

■ ***The best life lesson you have learned?***

Focus and then focus and then focus some more and don't give up. Ever. Under any circumstances. And then focus.

■ ***What has been your favourite journey so far?***

They're all wonderful! Most recent: A working tour of the theatres of Europe with our publisher.

■ ***Do you do charity work, and if you do – what do you do?***

I support young talented artists both personally and through the Africa Voices Trust.

■ ***Wishes and dreams?***

An unpolluted and peaceful world for everyone.

Find the *Calling Us Home* Facebook page [here](#).

## ABOUT MARTIN MYERS

Co-owner at Triple M Entertainment, founder Music Exchange, manager Siphon Hotstix Mabuse

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