

VIEW FROM HERE

Stephen Cloete

As the cruise director of the MSC *Opera*, he's the guy who makes sure everyone has fun on board.

SIMONE SCHOLTZ



What did you want to be when you were a child? I grew up in Durban and I always wanted to be an entertainer. I started off learning magic at the age of seven and I was doing my first paid shows by the time I was 13.

How did you find your way onto a ship? After working in hotels

for about six years, I decided to pursue my entertainment dream full time. One year later, I was working on a cruise ship. That was 17 years ago.

Right now you're the cruise director. What does that mean?

I look after all the entertainment on board: shows, games,

activities and bands for adults and children. I manage a team of about 60 entertainers. But I do other stuff too, like wedding ceremonies and staff training.

What's the hardest part? The admin and backstage work. There is a huge amount of behind-the-scenes planning involved when you design the entertainment for a cruise. The trick is to make it seem effortless.

What do you love about the work? The travel, and meeting guests from a range of cultures, countries and different walks of life.

What kind of travel are we talking about? At last count:

66 countries and 12 cruise ships. I stopped counting at 500 cruises. I've probably entertained more than a million guests.

What's challenging about the job? It's a diverse bunch of people who come onto the ships and we have to cater to all of them. It's easier with a themed cruise, where the entertainment is specific to the market on board, but for a "normal" trip, we have to choose options that appeal to all demographics so that everyone can find something they'll like.

What's the silliest thing you've been asked? "How high above sea level are we?"

– Eugene Yiga



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