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NATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL SUPPLEMENT

#NAF17

national arts festival

GRAHAMSTOWN

29 JUNE
– to –
9 JULY
2017

IMAGE: MARY SIBANDE

City Press

Province of the EASTERN CAPE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

arts & culture
Department:
Arts and Culture
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Standard Bank

Top tips from local fest pros

Grahamstown residents and experienced Festival-goers share their inside tips on getting the most out of #NAF17

Mary Birt has not missed a single Festival since its inception in 1974.

- Don't book too many shows in advance, but do buy tickets for the big Main events. Fill up your schedule by talking to people for recommendations. Late-night music is a good way to end the day.
- If you don't have a car and need a lift, catch a Hopper or a Tuk Tuk!
- As happens anywhere at crowded events, your security can be compromised, so look after your bag and other belongings.
- Enjoy all that little old Grahamstown has to offer during Festival. We always do our best to make you very welcome!

Yandisa Sobahle is a Journalism and Media Studies Masters candidate at Rhodes University.

- The Rat and Parrot remains the favourite pub for many. Saints Bistro is chilled and the food is excellent. If you are after a chilled township environment then Mfana's is the place to try.
- Follow the Festival's social media channels and the hashtag #NAF17 for updates.
- Bring something warm – Grahamstown can be freezing. Don't forget a raincoat and umbrella.
- Secure your accommodation on time. It's a good idea to get a recommendation.
- There's lots on offer for coffee lovers – Handmade Coffee, Madhatters and Homeground.

Carissa Govender has four Festivals under her belt.

- Do everything – or as much as time and budget will allow. Some things only come around once and you will regret missing that one show everyone else raves about.
- Challenge yourself to see at least one show from every genre. You'll either be pleasantly surprised, or leave wondering what you've just watched.
- Support street artists, connect with inspiring thinkers at Think!Fest, eat something you've never tried before (the Hare Krishna's chickpea fudge is a must), let your inner child delight in the funfair at Fiddlers Green, and support the Church Square vendors. Last year I picked up a pure wool coat for just R90.

Busi Tshabalala, lover of all performing arts, is based in Johannesburg.

- Respect Grahamstown weather. Always carry something warm with you no matter how "hot" it may seem.
- Take the time to go through the Festival programme. Look out for the free and discounted shows, and read up on shows you ordinarily wouldn't attend.
- Don't neglect Fingo Festival. It's bright, it's vibrant, and it's authentic.

How to master the Festival

With more than 700 events, navigating your way around the Festival can be daunting so planning – and a little flexibility – is essential

I'm keen to come to Grahamstown. How do I work out what to see?
Ask your friends for recommendations, follow the Festival's hashtag #NAF17 on social media for suggestions, and spend time browsing the programme on our website, www.nationalartsfestival.co.za, or on the free NAF app for your phone. The 'browse by day' function is a particularly nifty function.

What's the difference between the Main, the Fringe and Arena programmes?
The Main programme showcases works across all genres that are selected by a 21-person Artistic Committee after a lengthy application and consideration period. It includes the work of the 2017 Standard Bank Young Artists, international shows as well as the best new work from South African talent. The Arena is a child of the Main, featuring award-winning local and international productions.

The Fringe is an open-access platform, which means anyone can perform on the Fringe. The result is an exciting luckypacket of shows – from bold new work to remakes of classics, from debuts to familiar faces.

How do I book tickets?
Booking tickets is a simple process and you have several options.

Online: Browse shows and book tickets on www.nationalartsfestival.co.za. Easy to use and fully secure, you can pay by credit card, Instant EFT or SnapScan.

By phone: Contact the Festival Call Centre on 0860 002 004.

By email: Send your booking to boxoffice@nationalartsfestival.co.za.

I'm on a tight budget. Are there any discounts?
Times are tough. We understand. But there are amazing specials and discounts in place to make the Festival easier on your pocket.

Concessions: There are discounted tickets available to learners (under 18), students (with valid student cards), and pensioners (over 65). Proof of ID may be required.

Half Price Hut: Artists offer a limited number of tickets at a 50% discount for the next performance of their show.

Group Bookings: Groups of 10 or more seats per performance may be booked at the discounted rate for Fringe shows only.

Buy One, Get One Free (2-for-1 tickets): A good reason to bring a friend! Book two full price tickets to the performance and you will only be charged for one.

Discounted and Free Fringe performances: Artists are offering between 25% and 100% discounts on shows. NB: If productions are free, you still need to book to get in. Donations are encouraged in lieu of a ticket price.

The artwork for this year's Festival was designed by Mary Sibande, a former Standard Bank Young Artist. Titled 'The High Priestess', the figure holds all the cards, delivering prophesy is her main occupation. The Priestess is 'a personification of mystery and spirit that is unknown to the rational world,' Sibande says.

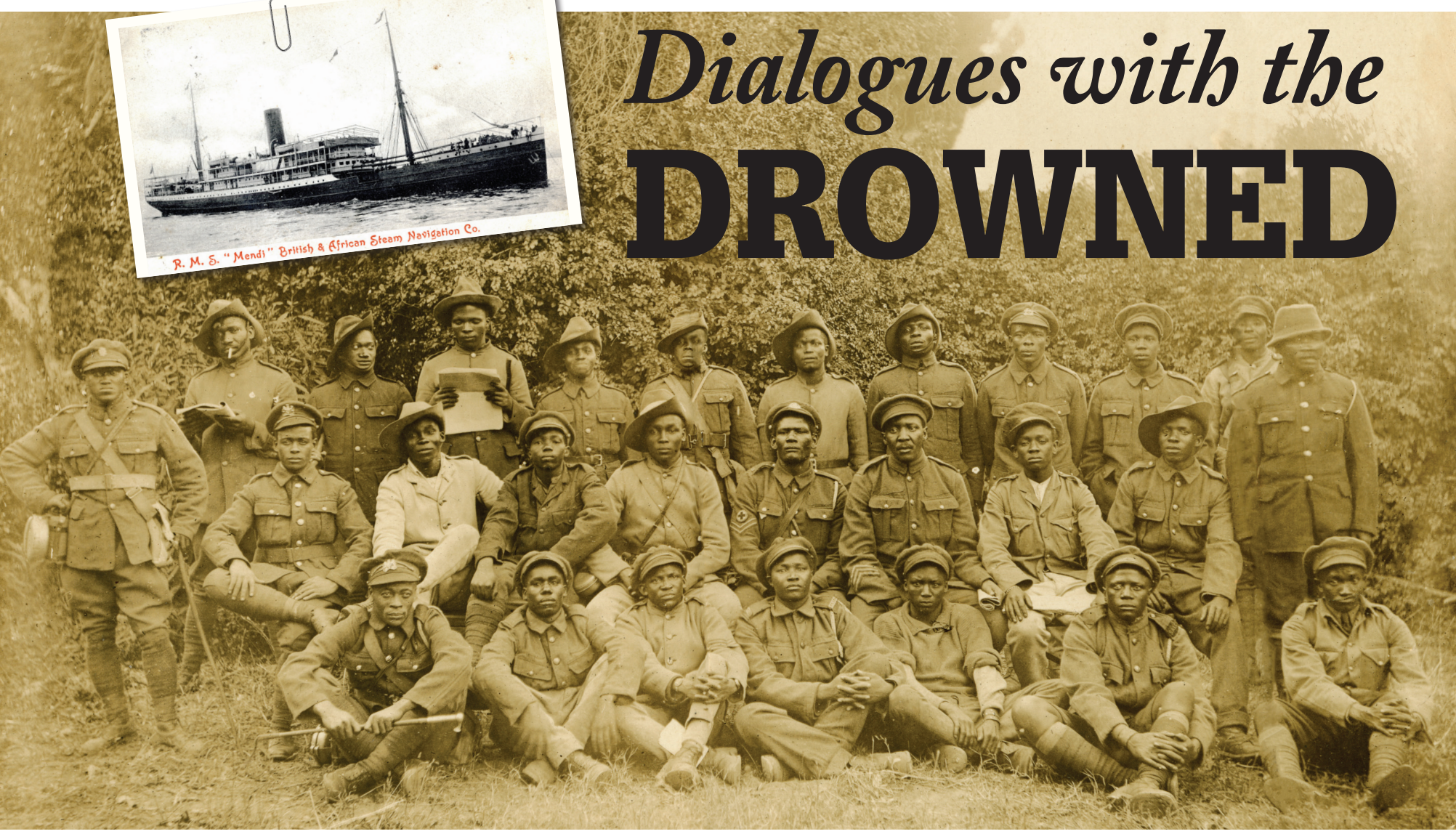
History and memory

Theatre makers and artists will be breaking new ground as they excavate forgotten histories in a number of new works at this year's National Arts Festival.

THEATRE: Monageng "Vice" Motshabi's *Ankobia* and Nadia Davids' *What Remains*

DANCE: Thandazile Radebe's *Sabela*, Vincent Mantsoe's *KonKoriti*, Dada Masilo's *Giselle*, and the collaborative, *Breaking Borders*

VISUAL AND PERFORMANCE ART: Sethembile Msezane's *Excerpts from the Past*, Francois Knoetze's *Virtual Frontiers*, photographer Andrew Tshabangu's *Footprints*, *They are Greeting* by Mmakgabo Helen Sebidi, Dineo Seshee Bopape's *Sa koša ke lerole, in perpetuum* by Beth Diane Armstrong, and *September Jive – SA Musical Graphics & My Favourite Sounds*, two exhibitions paying tribute to South Africa's musical heritage



Dialogues with the DROWNED

One hundred years after the sinking of the SS Mendi on a foggy night at the height of World War I, the spirits of the dead will be honoured in a multimedia live installation to be staged in a venue surrounded by trees, writes ALEX DODD

There is a condition known all too well by those mad officers of conscience who work in the field of archives, libraries, bone throwing, memorialisation and the recovery of lost memories. It's heady territory, but you feel it physically – in your veins, your sweat glands and in the accelerated rhythms of your beating heart. French philosopher Jacques Derrida diagnosed it as 'Archive Fever' and I could distinctly feel its heat travelling across the trans-Atlantic ether on a recent Whatsapp call to multi-award winning writer, director, teacher, curator and artist Mandla Mbothwe in New York City.

No matter that it's 6am East Coast time, the conversation fires up quickly and passes in a spell-like fervour, with Mbothwe speaking freely off the cuff as if he's channelling an internal script. 'We arrived in New York late yesterday afternoon and hit the two-hour gridlock of rush-hour traffic,' he says. But before he'd even had time to unpack, he was heading downtown to experience the 9/11 Memorial & Museum first hand. 'I found it more factual than artistic, but so intense,' he says. 'This is the stuff that interests me – the work of remembrance, excavating stories, performing archives. How do we put these things into the world?'

Mbothwe has been on a 22-person tour of Washington DC, San Francisco, Cleveland and New York as one of five African participants in the US State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program, visiting museums, galleries and public art spaces, and meeting fellow artistic directors. 'I've been struck by how they take care of memory and history in public spaces here in the US,' he says, speaking of his experiences of the new ship-shaped David Adjaye-designed Museum of African American History and the Martin Luther King Jnr Memorial – and how prominent and well-integrated into Washington's National Mall and Memorial Parks they are. 'It's quite mindblowing,' he says. 'There's no tick-the-box attitude at work here. They are integrated well-thought out aspects of the precinct.'

But it is when he starts to speak about the role of water in memorialisation that I realise we've entered Mendi territory. *Sabamnye no Mendi* (I became one with Mendi), the production Mbothwe is staging at this year's National Arts Festival, is all about the real and metaphysical power of water – water as sustenance, physical force and metaphor. 'I'm struck by the Americans' use of water in all of their memorials. Concrete is not enough – concrete is the tombstone, but for it to be made alive, you need the sight, sound and smell of water. This is what we need to learn at home. As Africans, we should know this the best – understand the elements and what they cause in the body.'

'The water that took those men away is the same water that was used to deliver slaves from point to point, and in that same water we seek healing. These are some of the contradictions of what water carries in black narratives. Chiefs and warriors went off to that war they call "the Great War". Those men disappeared and were never buried by their families. Clan names and families were discontinued – stopped just like that,' he says.

When Mbothwe speaks of 'these men who were swallowed', he is talking of more than 600 black Southern African men who signed up to the Native Labour Corps not knowing that they would lose their lives in one of South Africa's greatest military disasters. 'Remember that this was just four years after the implementation of the Natives Land Act in 1913 and people were desperate,' he says. 'People's livelihoods had been radically disrupted – their masculinity too – and they needed work, so they swallowed the conscription publicity and went off to war.'

At 5 am on 21 February 1917, in thick fog about 19 km south of the Isle of Wight in the English Channel, the cargo ship Darro accidentally rammed the British troopship Mendi's starboard quarter, breaching her forward hold. Some men were killed outright; others were trapped below deck. Many others gathered on deck as the Mendi listed and sank, killing 646 people in about 20 minutes.

An interpreter, Isaac Williams Wauchope, who had previously served as a Minister, is said to have calmed the panicked men when he raised up his arms and cried out: 'Be quiet and calm, my countrymen… Brothers, we are drilling the death drill. I, a Xhosa, say you are my brothers... Swazis, Pondos, Basotho... so let us die like brothers. We are the sons of Africa. Raise your war-cries, brothers, for though they made us leave our assegais in the kraal, our voices are left with our bodies.'

Mbothwe first encountered this epic loss through the writings of Xhosa poet and historian SEK Mqhayi, most celebrated today for his authorship of the poem, *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica*, now core to South Africa's national anthem. It was in 2011, as Artistic Director of the Steve Biko Foundation, that he staged his first production to surface the history of the drowned and give it new breath. 'What was most moving about that initial production is that we got to stage it in the Community Hall in Ginsberg where Steve Biko grew up and was buried,' he says. This poignancy was added to by the fact that most of the men who died in 1917 hailed from the Eastern Cape, and some of the cast members performing the production hailed from New Brighton in Port Elizabeth.

After years of research that has reached deep into communities and involved dialogues with researchers at the University of Fort Hare and elsewhere, Mbothwe has assembled a stellar group of contemporary artists working across film, dance and music to stage this multimedia incantation in the centenary year of the sinking of the Mendi. 'We've relied on a range of resources combining imagination and knowledge to find meaning,' says Mbothwe. 'We needed to find variations and forms to express the fragmentation of memories that live in our bodies.'

'We are all in a state of trying to remember,' he continues. 'If the body heals, but the spirit doesn't you've got a problem… And when it comes to intergenerational traumas that involve the loss of identity and memory, it is only art that can help us to excavate lost aspects of history and go beyond the literal, beyond facts. Those men that were swallowed, we do not remember their names. Like it or not, we remember "Mendi" in the singular. They have become Mendi. So too Mendi is becoming us. We are Mendi – we are the commemoration of that memory.'

In addition to this live production, the National Arts Festival and the Mendi Centenary Committee with the support of the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town present Abantu beMendi, *an exhibition comprising major works by Mandla Mbothwe, Buhlebezwe Siwani and Hilary Graham, rare photographs and documents, poetry, underwater footage of the Mendi wreck, and footage of the ceremony at sea that paid tribute to the families of the men who died.*

Thandazile Radebe, Standard Bank Young Artist for Dance

Her show

Sabela, an African contemporary dance piece inspired by our names as human beings. What they mean to us, how they carry us and how we carry them as we journey in life.

Her picks

Ankobia, Monageng 'Vice' Motshabi.
Excerpts From the Past, Nolwazi-Sethembile Msezane.
With nothing but silence they turned their bodies to face the noise, Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative.

Beth Diane Armstrong, Standard Bank Young Artist for Visual Art

Her show

in perpetuum, a solo exhibition of newly resolved sculptural forms, video, drawings and installation-based artworks that explore scale, materiality, process and change.

Her picks

KidCasino, with Roberto Pombo & Joni Barnard.
Virtual Frontiers, a visual art exhibition by Francois Knoetze.
Rhodes Fine Art Student Exhibition.

Monageng 'Vice' Motshabi, Standard Bank Young Artist for Theatre

His show

Ankobia, a play set in Pelodikgadile, a land where history is forbidden. Motshabi uses sound, silence and text to explore the pain of not being allowed to remember.

His picks

Tau, directed by Thabiso Rammala and Momo Matsunyane.
Yellowman, directed by Tsegho Khutsoane.
Savage/Love, by Nondumiso Lwazi Msimanga.

What artists will be watching at #NAF17

We ask National Arts Festival artists what shows are on their must-see lists

Rob van Vuuren, actor and director

His shows

Stand-up shows, *Life and Best of Rob van Vuuren*, *Dangled*, a one-hander written by Louis Viljoen, the children's show *Florence and Watson and the Sugarbush Mouse*, and the Main comedy extravaganza, *The Very Big Comedy Show V.*

His picks

'All the shows I'm in - which is a lot'.
State Fracture, a political satire by Mike van Graan.
Heavier, by comedian KG Mokgadi.

Vincent Sekwati Koko Mantsoe, choreographer and dancer

His show

KonKoriti, referencing an ancient song about pride, arrogance, a state of being, physical power and selfishness.

His picks

Sabela, by Thandazile Radebe.
KonKoriti, by Vincent SK Mantsoe.
Re Mixing Music, by Neo Muyanga.

Roberto Pombo, actor and director

His shows

KidCasino, a surreal and satirical exploration of the underbelly of casino culture. *Rat Race*, a physical comedy for young audiences.

His picks

The Devil and Billy Markham, performed by James Cairns, directed by Jenine Collocott.
Oh Baby, I'm a Wild one, performed by Emma Kotze, written and directed by Louis Viljoen.
Black, performed by Ameera Patel directed by Jade Bowers.

Ameera Patel, actor and writer

Her shows

Black, directed by Jade Bowers – a young South African woman grapples with constructing her family's history.
Whistle Stop, an award-winning love story like no other. *Rat Race*, with Roberto Pombo.

Her picks

Womb of Fire, written and performed by Rehane Abrahams.
Yellowman, directed by Tsegho Khutsoane.
What Remains, by Nadia Davids and directed by Jay Pather.

Songs in the key of revolution

Musician, composer and cultural activist Neo Muyanga is this year's Featured Artist. Here he talks to BRAD EVANS about the political poignancy and power of revolting songs

BRAD EVANS: The historical links between politics, violence, and music are well established. What remains neglected, however, is the way in which the lyrical has a more emancipatory dimension. Can you tell me more about your interest in this often forgotten history of revolutionary struggle?

NEO MUYANGA: I can't pinpoint exactly when I became interested in revolutionary songs. This is largely because I was immersed in their presence long before I understood their significance. I grew up in Soweto, during the last two decades of apartheid. The songs I heard growing up were revolutionary chants and hymns that spoke directly against this system; they were, happily, also songs that spoke of the valour and the dignity of the downtrodden in my own community. I don't even remember how we learned them – the songs just seemed to accompany every aspect of our lives, be it going to school, playing sport, attending worship on a Sunday (if church was your thing), or when attending celebratory township gatherings or funerals over the weekends.

BE: The songs you highlight relate to an often "bracketed" conception of anti-colonial struggle. And yet, as authors such as David Theo Goldberg and Achille Mbembe show, the very idea of the "post-colony" is a fiction often deployed by those in positions of power. How might we connect all this history to the contemporary political moment?

NM: Today, protest music appears through the voices of the marginalised and oppressed in many countries around the world. Songs in revolt are now part of a common repertoire for those who confront highly combative political contexts, much exemplified in movements such as Fees Must Fall and Rhodes Must Fall both in South Africa and Britain, Black Lives Matter in the US, the Zapatistas in Mexico and the *movimento dos trabalhadores rurais sem terra* (MST) in Brazil.

In South Africa, many well-rehearsed revolting songs are often recycled and remixed, posing an added irony. Whereas chants such as *Siyaya Epitoli (we are going, or rather marching, to Pretoria)* were sung fervently in October 2015 by some of the youth marching on the government buildings to call for a no-fees-increase, that particular revolting song was pelted like a rock at the glasshouse now run by those erstwhile radicals of the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, who sang the very same ditty to threaten apartheid, then ensconced in those selfsame hallowed halls of the Union Buildings. A kind of poignant switch has therefore been flipped, transposing a new band of revolutionaries at the door – in this case, the kids, out where the parents once revolted.

I will hazard a guess here and claim the poetic justice of the occasion will have struck a South African president much lauded as well as reviled for gleefully singing *Umshini Wam* at various high points during his rise to office. It was the same president who sanctioned a no-increase to all university fees for 2016, thus temporarily securing a reprieve.

It is true that while revolting songs can shield, they can also cut like the sharp edge of truth against forgetting, against the arrogance and delusion of power.

This is an edited version of an interview first published by the Los Angeles Review of Books. Read the full interview at lareviewofbooks.org

Neo in Grahamstown

Neo Muyanga will present three works at the National Arts Festival

1. Solid(T)Ary

The work is a survey of the tradition of protest song in the global south: moving swiftly between the chanted chorales of Soweto and Salvador to the laments around the squares of Tahrir and Meskel, the presentation is a musical contemplation of modes of resistance in a changing world.

2. Works for Trio by the Neo Muyanga Trio

With Andre Swarts, Peter Ndlala and guest artist, Msaki. The trio works its way through the repertoire composed by Neo Muyanga and includes material featured on the albums *Blk Sonshine, The Listening Room, Dipalo* and *Toro Tse Sekete*.

3. Re Mixing Music

As the 2017 JIMF (Johannesburg International Mozart Festival) composer in residence, Neo worked on the mixing and re-working of Western Art Music and African Art Music with three young South African composers: Lungiswa Plaatjies, Kingsley Buitendag and Prince Bulo. Note: After the performance there will be a panel discussion on the creative process.

Neo composed the score for the Magnet Theatre's production of *I Turned Away and She was Gone*, and is a co-curator on Msaki and the Golden Circle's Arena production, *Platinumb Heart*. He will be interviewed in a Think!Fest *What's Your Story* pop-up.

11 Hot **Music** Tickets

Pendo Masote

Opposite the Other / Desmond and the Tuns

Robin Auld & Wendy Oldfield

Re Mixing Music

Chris Chameleon

Simply Blue

Platinumb Heart

Christine Weir and the Kilts

Seshego Gospel Choir

Steve Newman & Ashish Joshi

Noma Khumalo

Jazztown holds promise of rare musical dialogues

When musical notes take flight at the Standard Bank Jazz Festival this July, it will be for much more than a merry musical celebration – this year's programme seems curated with deeper ideas at its heart, writes PERCY MABANDU

The line-up for the 2017 Standard Bank Jazz Festival in Grahamstown is at once locally rooted, outward looking as well as underpinned by the spirit of collaboration. All these are foundational principles for both the music we call jazz as well as our national experiment with democracy as a governing ideal.

Traditionally, collaborations at the Standard Bank Jazz Festival involve headlining international band leaders setting up session bands with local talent. This provides a rare global collaborative opportunity for our young jazz musicians, as well as for some of the country's greats.

For instance, consider the much-anticipated collaboration between trumpeter Feya Faku and Dominic Egli's group, Pluralism. Their music draws from African traditions that include song styles of Southern Africa's Nguni speaking peoples, west African sensibilities and all the areas in between. These are all addressed through Egli's own explorative musical European heritage.

The body of music they will present during the National Arts Festival is titled, More FUFU. It builds on the winnings of Fufu Tryout, the record released in 2014. Fufu is a staple food made with cassava and various flours, such as semolina, maize flour or mashed plantains and enjoyed across the African continent. Just like fufu, great syncretic African musics have travelled to other parts of the world to be shared.

The programme also has the prodigiously gifted Neo Muyanga, this year's Featured Artist. His creative practice has over the years situated him as a musician who transcends his locale. To start, Muyanga spent a year in Italy studying that Mediterranean country's madrigal tradition with choral maestro, Piero Poclen. He has also worked on various projects with hip-hop highflyers and folk musicians.

While many of Muyanga's fans know him mostly for the charming music he made with Masauko Chipembere in the guitar duet project, BLK Sonshine, Muyanga's recent work comprise an unparalleled research into our heritage of protest music. He has come out of that with gems that he has shaped into an oeuvre that is as robust as it is spiritual. Muyanga will play his guitar and sing with Peter Ndlala on bass and Andre Swartz on drums.

Notable among the list of international headliners at the Festival is the steelpan player, Andy Narell. He is no stranger to South African jazz lovers. In fact, Narell has such a strong following of appreciators that there is even a jazz stokvel dedicated to following his musical exploits.

Though Narell is a New Yorker, his music has an indelible Caribbean texture to it – not least because his instrument of choice, the steelpans, have their roots in that region of the Atlantic. Narell's music is driven by infectious melodies and a rhythmic sensibility that is undeniably tropical. There's a hopeful joy that South Africans seem to be unable to get enough of. Narell will share the stage with a band made up of Louis Mhlanga on guitar, Thandi Ntuli on piano, Pete Sklair on bass, Vusi Khumalo on drums and Tlale Makhene on percussions.

South America is marked with the inclusion of the young bass guitar genius at the Festival: 21-year-old Michael Pipoquinha. He will lead his Brazilian troupe with Mestrinho on accordion and Alex Buck on drums. This South American trio will feature Swiss pianist Malcolm Braff who, in another performance, will also go on stage with drummer Tumi Mogorosi. They have a collaborative project dubbed Sanctum Sanctorum.

Fans with an ear for large-bodied sounds will be delighted by James Morrison's presence. Dubbed Australia's greatest jazz export, Morrison will collaborate with the Festival Big Band. The ensemble will be made up of alumni of the Standard Bank National Youth Jazz Band. The performance will make fitting statement for Jazztown as a historic hotbed for budding talent.

So, this July, when 100 musicians from across 12 countries converge for 10 days of magical exchanges in #Jazztown, as Grahamstown is called during the Festival, a space will be open for dialogue that is very rarely seen elsewhere.

Reza Khota Quartet

Mxo

Julian Sanchez Carballo

Asanda Bam

Ikati Esengxoweni

Where the *wild* things are

Music writer MILES KEYLOCK teases out some of the edgier acts on this year's Fringe

In our age of high capitalist consumerism where notions of the "underground" or an "avant-garde" are commodified into mainstream popular culture at hyperspeed, does the idea of a fringe still have any real currency?

Perhaps not. After all, what on earth are acoustic guitar legend Steve Newman, Boo!'s charismatic Monki Punk crooner Chris Chameleon, urban-hop innovators MXO and Sliq Angel (Roots 2000), and instrumental guitar-sitar wizard Guy Buttery doing gracing the Fringe music festival stages?

Sure, these award-winning artists are all fantastic drawcards for punters but where are those edgier, innovative, lesser-known musicians for audiences to stumble upon that capture the thrilling discovery of any fringe music experience?

Well, with more than 30 musicians performing in bars, hotels, clubs and halls across Grahamstown, the Fringe promises more than just a melting pot of genres.

Hardcore jazz heads should tune into trumpeter Julian Sanchez Carballo, who maps the beat routes between Hugh Masekela, Dudu Pukwana and Abdullah Ibrahim in a free jazz folklore of cathartic rhythms, simple melodies, and non-conventional instrumentation. Kinsmen's Muhammad Dawjee (tenor saxophone), Dhruv Sodha (sitar), Shailesh Pillay (tabla) rearticulate themes of spirituality and everyday life through improvisation influenced by jazz and Indian classical music traditions.

Patrons who prefer more of a genre-surfing experimental journey are spoiled for choice. Samthing Soweto takes five from penning multi-platinum selling songs for The Soil by stirring up an emotive neo-jazz, alternative and a capella cocktail. Nelson Mandela Bay quartet Ikati Esengxoweni (Cat In the Bag) blend alternative, urban traditional and world music into a bitchingly hip creative brew.

Sounds cool, but what about the really fringe sonic flavours? Well, Dave Knowles channels influences ranging from Radiohead, Portishead and Alt-J into an "audio-visual chimera of flute, bass, guitar, beatboxing, voice and visual whispers" when he tests the limits of live solo performance as Aminal. And if you're after a truly leftfield live experience, then look no further than loop-pedalling, anti-folk auteur Gary Thomas, who returns to the Festival after a two-year absence touring Europe.

Joining a rich legacy

By honouring and nurturing talent, the Standard Bank Young Artist Awards help generate a rich artistic legacy for the country. Meet this year's Standard Bank Young Artist Award winners

Renaissance poet William Wordsworth wrote: "Pictures deface walls more often than they decorate them." It's an uncomfortable observation, and one that still seems relevant today, given the relative scarcity of works that resonate and play in the fleeting space between discomfort and joy.

Art's function should be to make us think, feel, discover, confront; it shouldn't always be easy or even pleasant, but dynamic and provoking. Luckily, we live in a country in which there is no short supply of artists who are at the forefront of their craft, and who are able to tap into South Africa's rich and unique context to create art that succeeds not only in an aesthetic sense, but functions as social commentary.

In 1981, the National Arts Festival established the Young Artist Awards to acknowledge emerging young South African artists who demonstrate outstanding artistic talent. These prestigious awards are presented annually to established but relatively young artists in different disciplines, affording them national exposure and acclaim. The winners are decided by the Festival's Artistic Committee.

Standard Bank took over the sponsorship of the awards in 1984 and has presented Young Artist Awards in all the major arts disciplines, as well as posthumous and special recognition awards. For the past 33 years, the Standard Bank Young Artist Awards have sought to recognise South African practitioners pushing the limits in their respective disciplines.

Winning the award guarantees the artists a place on the Festival's Main programme. Apart from a cash prize, each winner receives substantial financial backing for a Festival production or exhibition. Partnerships with institutions such as Standard Bank Gallery also provide a platform for winners in the visual art category to showcase their work in a widely recognised space.

The roll of past winners reads like a definitive list of South Africa's creative talent, many of whom have gone on to gain international recognition. Luminaries such as visual artists William Kentridge, Jane Alexander, Brett Bailey, Pieter Hugo and Nicholas Hlobo; musicians Sibongile Khumalo, Johnny Clegg, Bongani Ndodana and Gloria Bosman; stage practitioners Andrew Buckland and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom; director Akin Omotoso; and jazz extraordinaires Kesivan Naidoo, Bokani Dyer and Nduduzo Makhathini are just some of the previous recipients, representing some of the country's most recognised artistic exports.

This year is no different. The 2017 recipients have proven themselves worthy of the prestige befitting the award through the work they have created.

Dineo Seshee Bopape

The award winner for performance art is none other than Dineo Seshee Bopape (35) for her use of experimental video montages, sound, found objects, photographs and sculptural installations in her work. Ruth Simbao, the National Research Foundation/Rhodes Research Chair and member of the National Arts Festival Artistic Committee for Visual and Performance Art, said, "Dineo's complex and often enigmatic work engages with performance, installation, video, digital montage, sound and text as she plays with our notions of space and time through an exploration of bodies and materials … Deeply psychological, her work registers both trauma and playfulness, pushing viewers to raise questions rather than find answers as they are drawn into her performance and installation spaces."

Abel Selaocoe

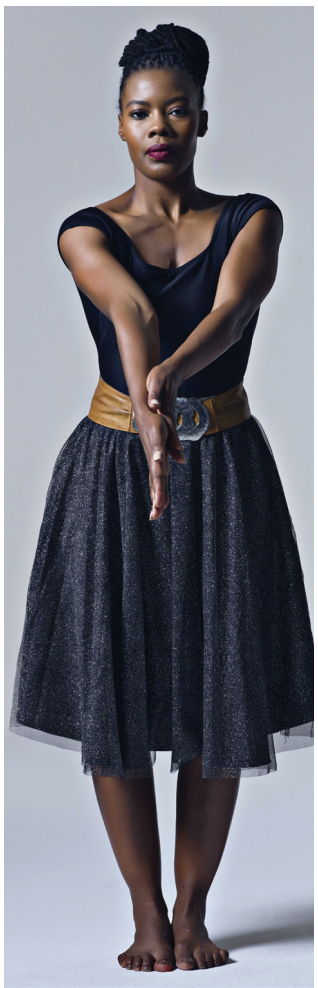
Cellist Abel Selaocoe (24), is a shining example of a musician pushing the limits. "Abel is quickly becoming a consummate artist possessing great skill, command and flair on the cello. Coming from humble beginnings in Sebokeng, he has ascended to perform on world stages, combining a new eclectic sound with the mainstream. Abel's extensive and impressive CV is the product of hard work and the sort of excellence that bodes well for a young artist with an exciting career ahead," says Samson Diamond, member of the National Arts Festival Artistic Committee for Music.

Beth Diane Armstrong

Although Beth Diane Armstrong may be just 31 years old, her acclaim as a sculptor has already secured her a place in the art world. Mandie van der Spuy, independent arts consultant and member of the National Arts Festival Artistic Committee for Visual Art, says: "Beth has a strong intellectual approach to her work, which has identified her as a leading sculptor in her generation of younger artists. Her work has matured over the past few years, and although she has exhibited predominantly monumental works made of steel and aluminium, her creativity extends to include a variety of different media ranging from printmaking, video, photography and drawing to temporary installations."

Thandazile Radebe

Dancer and choreographer Thandazile Radebe was chosen as the Standard Bank Young Artist Award winner for Dance "thanks to her incredibly diverse approach to movement and choreography", says Gregory Maqoma, a member of the NAF Artistic Committee for Dance. She is certainly one of the pioneering female choreographers in South Africa. Her work is an ode to the country's cultural and political heritage, often dealing with complex issues and constantly stepping out of the comfort zones, and discovering new and interesting artistic offerings. She is also consistent in her practice of her art, and functions as an independent artist while still managing to perform and make art."



Benjamin Jephta

Alan Webster, the director of the Standard Bank Jazz Festival and member of the National Arts Festival Artistic Committee for Jazz, selected young pioneer Benjamin Jephta (24) as the winner for Jazz. "Benjamin is an excellent young musician who is technically very adept, creative in his improvisation, skilled in a wide variety of music styles and, very importantly, organised … He is prepared to work hard and has the confidence to present himself – very important qualities in a professional musician."

Monageng 'Vice' Motshabi

Storyteller and director Monageng "Vice" Motshabi (34) is this year's theatre award winner. "Motshabi's work is audience-centered and socially engaged, and his mode of creation is intensely collaborative. In essence, he is an enabler of local stories. Through his role as a creator and facilitator of theatre, audiences confront this country's history. These are confrontations that aim to help our ruptured society claim and recreate itself," says Greg Homann, the 2014 Standard Bank Young Artist Award winner for Theatre and member of the National Arts Festival Artistic Committee for Theatre.

The Festival bug

A play in 800 words

Somewhere in the Monument, National Arts Festival CEO Tony Lankester and new gun Ashraf Johaardien shoot the breeze about #NAF17, purple couches, profound experiences and other forms of entertainment.

TL: Hey Ashraf.

AJ: Hello Tony.

TL: So it's your first Festival on this side of the fence. Welcome to what is affectionately called "the Dark Side". Actually, I'm kidding. No one is affectionate in this game. It's just "the Dark Side".

AJ: You may not know this Tony, but I come from The Land of Dark and Twisty so "the Dark Side" is fine by me ... as long as there are cookies ...

(Awkward pause)

AJ: Although my role as Executive Producer is new, much about the Festival remains the same: an epic 11-day celebration of local and international arts, culture and creativity.

TL: I bet you're looking forward to it –

AJ: I am!

TL: And I'm guessing you're also terrified.

AJ: Maybe. Maybe not ...

TL: Want some advice?

AJ: Shoot.

TL: Find time to enjoy it.

AJ: And how would you suggest I do that?

TL: Wear a false moustache. Hide at the back of a theatre. See things you want to see. Not shows you feel you should see because it's your job. I've been doing this gig for 10 years – maybe I'll get a pen or a tie – so how would you suggest a jaded, cynical chief executive spend his time?

AJ: You're not nearly as cynical as you claim to be but, just in case, here's something novel to catch your attention: why not hang out at Think!Fest, which will be hosted at the Monument this year? And look out for my old cronies from UJ, who will be lugging a purple couch around for a series of pop-ups called *What's Your Story?* and other conversations that aim to connect artists and audiences in creative ways. I could go on about what we're up to for days – all 11 of them ...

TL: Hmmm ... watching people move furniture ... sounds entertaining ...at least I know what to expect from next year's performance art programme ... Seriously though, I love the *What's Your Story?* idea. I'll do my best to catch some of it if you promise to go along to the launch of our new *Short. Sharp.Stories* anthology. Editor Joanne Hichens tells me this year's book is one of the best she's done. And, while I don't want to prescribe your Festival experience, I have to recommend Louise Reay's *It's Only Birds*. I saw it at the Brighton Fringe and it's extraordinary. She does an entire stand-up show in Mandarin!

AJ: But I don't understand Mandarin ...

TL: That's the whole point!

AJ: Okay. How about I see you your Louise Reay– and raise you any one of the works by this year's Standard Bank Young Artists?

(Cue instrumental track of Lady Gaga's "Poker Face")

TL: Alrighty then ...

AJ: ... Okay.

(Brief hiatus)

TL: Although this is your first Festival in an official capacity, you're no Festival virgin. As it were. What's been the low point of your experience over the years?

AJ: The year I submitted half a draft of my stage adaptation of K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence Of Dreams*.

TL: How so?

AJ: It was turned down for the Main programme. *Happy Endings Are Extra* had been on the Main in Rhodes Box the year before, so I was gutted.

TL: You wrote *Happy* and it was on the Main? Was that your highlight?

AJ: Actually, no.

TL: What then? Finally premiering Duiker's *Dreams?*

AJ: Nope. Nothing can surpass the experience of *Suip*, the Fringe production that first brought me to the Festival as a student performer in 1993. It was a profound artistic experience that has shaped my career as a playwright. And as a performer. That was also the year the Festival bug first bit and probably has quite a bit to do with why I signed up for this job. What made you sign up a decade ago?

TL: When I got the call to do this job I had been involved in the Festival, in one way or another, for about 16 years. I had done pretty much everything – it's a long story that involves a blow-up doll and some gaffer tape that I'll share with you at the Long Table sometime. When they asked if I wanted to be in charge, there could only be one answer: hell yeah. And so here I am ...

AJ: Your 10th year ...

TL: And your first ...

AJ: On this side.

TL: We've got cookies but we need innovative, creative, mold-busting thinking. I'm delighted that you're part of the team, playing that role – your most important at the Festival to date.

(Blackout. Commence #NAF17)

Ashraf Johaardien

Tony Lankester

Ovation Awards
a guarantee of excellence

Need help choosing what to see? Look out for the winners of the 2017 Standard Bank Ovation Awards. Selected by our jury for artistic excellence and innovation, these productions will be named daily throughout the Festival on the Festival app and social media platforms. Follow #NAF17 for the latest on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Look out for the following 2016 winners making a return to Grahamstown this year:

Dangled, Falling Off the Horn, Out of Bounds, Burn, You Suck: and Other Inescapable Truths, Rat Race, Sillage, The Dark Ages.

And catch these former winners with brand-new work on the Arena programme – Pendo Masote, Msaki and the Golden Circle in *Platinumb Heart, Kidcasino, Black, Reparation, Down to Earth, Ghostdance for One.*

From the world to Grahamstown...

Now in its seventh year, the National Arts Festival's partnership with 10 other festivals in the World Fringe Alliance has seen us bring some of the most exciting work from around the globe to Grahamstown. Work from Australia, the US, the Czech Republic, Netherlands and the UK has been staged here.

This year, there's a selection of award-winning shows from the Amsterdam Fringe *(Macho Macho)* and England's biggest arts festival, the Brighton Fringe *(Police Cops* and Louise Reay in *It's Only Birds*).

There are 200 fringe festivals around the world. The inaugural World Fringe Day, on 11 July, will celebrate the collective power and worldwide reach of the fringe movement.

It's a Festival first!

In 2017 we're delighted to introduce the National Theatre Live digital experience to Grahamstown as we screen two superb films, shot on stage in the UK:

- Simon Godwin's direction of a joyous new production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* with Tamsin Greig *(Friday Night Dinner, Black Books, Episodes)* as a transformed Malvolia and an ensemble cast that includes Daniel Rigby *(Flowers, Jericho)*, Tamara Lawrence *(Undercover)*, Doon Mackichan *(Smack the Pony)* and Daniel Ezra *(The Missing, Undercover)*.
- Lucian Msamati *(Luther, Game of Thrones)* plays Salieri in Peter Shaffer's iconic play, *Amadeus*, with orchestral accompaniment by Southbank Sinfonia.

Join us in the comfort of the Guy Butler Theatre for a screening of these unmissable productions.

Curious, furious and poetic dance line-up

Bringing together different aesthetics, contexts and languages, the dance programme at this year's National Arts Festival interrogates and celebrates questions of identity, culture, spirituality and sensuality.

From brand-new works by acclaimed choreographers and dancers, to reinterpretations of classic works, the 2017 programme represents a "game of different aesthetics, contexts and languages, oscillating between perception and attribution, between history and that which is current and urgent," says Gregory Vuyani Maqoma, convenor of the Artistic Committee's dance panel.

The dance programme selected by Executive Producer Ashraf Johaardien and the Artistic Committee, with Maqoma, dance lecturer Lliane Loots and arts writer Tracey Saunders on the dance sub-committee.

Topping the bill is 2017 Standard Bank Young Artist for Dance Thandazile Radebe. In *Sabela*, she explores tensions between names and numbers, bodies and biometrics, space and passwords. "Through our names we want to be free from ourselves and transcend each other until we are one," she says. "

Vincent Mantsoe's *KonKoriti* has been described by dance critic Adrienne Sichel as "cathartic", "deeply poetic, uncannily intuitive". He toured France and Germany last year with this solo work, performing to sold-out houses.

Unmute Dance Company (Cape Town) and Tumbuka Dance Company (Harare) have united to present *Breaking Borders*, a powerful collaboration that takes on xenophobia.

Dada Masilo's feminist reworking of the classic ballet *Giselle* will make its South African debut in Grahamstown. Masilo says she has aimed "to create a work that is not about forgiveness, but about deceit, betrayal, anger and heartbreak".

Another interesting take on a classic is Mark Hawkins's delightful reimagining of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in celebration of the Johannesburg Youth Ballet's 40th anniversary.

The Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative presents *With Nothing But Silence They Turned Their Bodies To Face The Noise*. This "dance-theatre" piece brings into focus the realities of environmental degradation and climate change.

The Oakfields College Faculty of Dance and Musical Theatre returns to Grahamstown with their student theatre production, *4*, an experimental platform, using Antonio Vivaldi's Four Seasons as the point of departure.

From Phakama Dance Theatre in Kwa-Zulu Natal comes … *On The Line*. Part of the Arena programme, this work engages with lost dreams, empathy and self-discovery.

Dancers from the National Youth Ballet in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Photo: Andrew Tshabangu

Sculpting our future

Much in the way the ruling party characterises itself as a broad church, it is useful to think of the 'visual art' and 'performance art' categories as tent poles holding up a large and inviting marquee where anything goes, writes SEAN O'TOOLE

Two sculptors form part of the line-up at this year's National Arts Festival: **Beth Diane Armstrong,** who is the 2017 Standard Bank Young Artist for Visual Art, and **Dineo Seshee Bopape,** winner of the same award in the performance art category. Armstrong is more recognisably a sculptor – she welds; Bopape does everything but. Her practice encompasses drawing, painting, photography, filmmaking and the production of enigmatic environments.

Bopape's contribution pivots around a 20-member adult choir from Polokwane. The exhibition of wall-drawings, memorabilia and music videos at the Gallery in the Round, in the Monument, will be a polished show: Bopape did a dry run of *Sa koša ke lerole* at the 2016 Montreal Biennale in Canada. Her decision to showcase the Polokwane Choral Society is, perhaps, motivated by an affection for the diverse meanings of the choir.

Founded in 1977 and originally known as the Seshego Choral Society, the choir has enjoyed great demand. For Bopape, whose father was a choir member and mother a conductor and director, the choir "evokes my first ideas of positive representation while acting as a nostalgic memory of a community held within the music".

Armstrong's show *in perpetuum*, on view at the Monument, includes five monumental abstractions, and three smaller works in a "grungier" style. Two of the large works will be installed outdoors. She will also show a new suite of drawings and a video made in New York.

Her confidence is clear in her handling of form and space. Don't forget to visit the National English Literary Museum in Worcester Street, where she installed an outdoor sculpture last year.

The purpose of public sculpture has been under scrutiny since the 2015 removal of Marion Walgate's bronze statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT. Performance artist Sethembile Msezane witnessed the event, holding vigil for four hours and wearing wings that referenced a Zimbabwean bird appropriated from Great Zimbabwe by Rhodes. For her trip to Grahamstown's Studio Gallery, Msezane will restage *Excerpts from the Past*. A feminist critique of patriarchal and colonial histories, the action is set on a circular stage and involves fragile china, archival sound clips and mask work.

Curator Nkule Mabaso's *They are Greeting* at the Albany Museum showcases the work of Mmakgabo Helen Sebidi. Now in her mid-70s, Sebedi was a hit at the 2016 São Paulo Biennale. The eruptive surfaces of her paintings will reveal why.

Photographer Andrew Tshabangu is best known for his lyrical black-and-white photographs of Joburg street life. *Footprint*, also at the Albany Museum, surveys a career in comfortable midstride.

Reflecting the state of our nation

By holding up a mirror to South Africa, the country's artists offer Fringe fans a chance to reflect as well as to escape, writes TRACEY SAUNDERS

During the 1980s, the National Arts Festival was one of the few places where truth was spoken to power. In 2017, the born-free generation is once again raising its voice – and it's on the Fringe where their voices speak the loudest.

As the largest non-curated performing arts platform in the country, the Fringe programme this year amplifies the despair felt by many. The daily reality of public and private violence, unemployment and poverty seems to be informing the creative practice of many young South Africans.

In recent weeks, ordinary men have taken to the streets to show their solidarity with the #NotInMyName campaign, joining women who have been screaming for years – from the stages and the sidelines. The prevalence of plays dealing with sexual violence perhaps points towards our country's own "Nirbhaya moment", the Indian feminist revolution sparked by the 2012 rape of a medical student.

Women's Tears is inspired by the Marikana massacre and tells the story of the widows who remain and the failure of accountability after the murders.

Another unnecessary and tragic death, that of Michael Kompape who died in a pit latrine in 2014 inspired *Izim le Toilet*.

The epic story of an Indian family during apartheid, *Out of Bounds* features Tazme Pillay and Tailyn Ramsamy who create an entire community of characters on stage. Fearful youngsters, feared grandmothers and the generation in between are recreated with a twist of cloth and sleight of hand.

More recent sociopolitical events are the subject matter of a play by young Grade 3 to 6 learners in the *Fees Must Fall* Drama.

The political gaze is not merely inward though, with writer Bhekani Biyela exploring the lives of Somali women in *Ants Job. Roots of All Evils* follows the fate of three Nigerian women accused of murdering their husband.

Tension between traditional cultural practices and modern is another theme which many have chosen to explore. The practice of ukuthwalwa is tackled in *Nimbandini* and *Nomalizo – The Brave*, while *Pheko ya Pula* and *Inyathuko* look at relationships that defy tradition.

In addition to artists mirroring the state of the nation, they are also giving audiences ample opportunities to escape it – and love and desire, friendship and family are the safe havens to which we retreat, despite (and sometimes because of) reality.

The delicious *Laced* introduces an unusual genre, the dance detective story. Beautifully crafted and performed by Lee van der Merwe and Jared Musker, this is no ordinary whodunnit.

Whistle Stop and *Savage/Love* make use of physical theatre to define and depict the layers of meaning that build between lovers.

Equal measures of lust and lasciviousness are served in *Pop iCherry* and *Cult Clit*.

Kieron Jina queers up the programme with *Pink Dollar*, shredding every label ever given and Francois Knoetze pieces together other shreds to create magical puppets in *Plastocracy*.

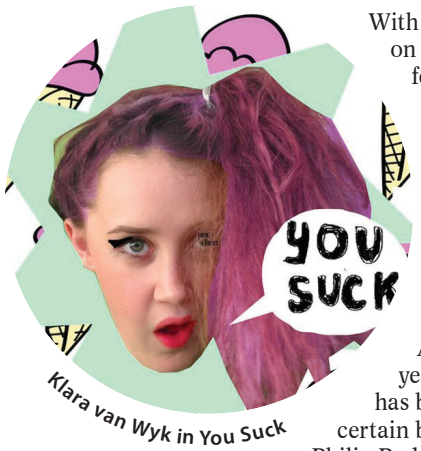
If it's reflection or relaxation or, perhaps, the stirring of a revolution you're after, this year's Fringe is where you'll find it. There is an overarching sombre mood but exposing the truth is the first step in confronting it. In times of fear, it is artists are most often fearless. Their capacity for confrontation is required now, more than ever.

Follow Tracey Saunders on Twitter: @heartoftheatre

Ameera Patel and Jaques de Silva in *Whistle Stop*

One-stop theatrical experience

By Tracey Saunders



Klara van Wyk in You Suck

With so many productions to chose from on the Fringe, you will be forgiven feeling overwhelmed. Fortunately, there's a creative solution: simply spend a full day in one venue where you'll be able to sample great shows, food and a NAF ale – or two.

The Cape Town Edge has, in recent years, presented some of the highlights of the Festival with several Standard Bank Ovation Award-winning productions. This year, **The Edge** at Princess Alice Hall has been re-branded, revitalised and is a certain bet for a day of fine entertainment.

Philip Rademeyer describes the venture as a "festival within a festival" – a curated programme of independent work of high quality, including drama, comedy, illusion/magic and physical theatre.

Relaxing is not really in the Followspot team's vocabulary – Vanessa Harris and Ash Searle bring the spirit of the Kalk Bay Theatre – together with sets and props, food and coffee trucks – to Grahamstown in the **Followspot Collective** at Kingswood Theatre. Think eclectic décor, a high-energy atmosphere – and a very large dash of personal style.

Ash and Brad Searle

Siv Ngesi is very excited for the first year of the **ExploSiv Collective** at Masonic Hall. Bringing together an eclectic mix of comedy and drama he is confident the venue will "be the top-selling venue, EVER, at the Festival!"

The Edge

Three of the (almost) one-woman offerings range from the sublime to the insanely ridiculous.

Jemma Kahn, no stranger to the NAF, returns with *We didn't Come to Hell for the Croissants*.

Klara van Wyk incarnates Pretina de Jager in playful teenage truthtelling, *You Suck and Other Inescapable Truths*.

Emma Kotze is in *Oh Baby, I'm a Wild One*, from the pen of Louis Viljoen, whose text takes you on a rollercoaster ride with a stomach-churning dip.

Followspot at Kingswood

Joining *Big Boys*, *The Third* and *Au Revoir* this year is the high-kicking, thigh-slapping, sassy duo of Alicia McCormick and Genna Galloway, who bring country and western with all the feminist feels in *Angels on Horseback Reloaded*.

Tats Nkonzo

ExploSiv at Masonic Back

Features productions from veteran Fringe participants Rob van Vuuren (Dangled), Mike van Graan (State Fracture) and Daniel Richards (Pay Back the Curry) and stalwart comedians Tats Nkonzo and Tyson Ngubeni.

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