

First collection of shows in National Arts Fest Experience programme unveiled

The National Arts Festival (NAF) has announced the first collection of shows that will be showcased in its 2021 Experience programme.

The hybrid festival sees the National Arts Festival return to live stages in Makhanda from 8 to 18 July 2021, and for the first time in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Gqeberha and Durban ahead of the Eastern Cape event with a series of shows called Standard Bank Presents, in theatres from 17 June to 4 July. The National Arts Festival Online programme will also unfold through July on the festival's website. The Festival Experience features new elements such as Standard Bank Presents, as well as audience favourites such as the Standard Bank Jazz Festival and the Fringe.



Gavin Krastin - "Swell"

Working within the Covid-19 regulations and responding to what audiences and artists need, the festival has spread its programme across three platforms to create enabling spaces that best accommodate and interpret the work being made in South Africa right now. As such, it is a study of work migrating, shifting and returning across mediums, platforms, time and space as the arts strives to re-establish and express itself after a long period of forced hibernation.

Says National Arts Festival's artistic director, Rucera Seethal:

“ The festival has, this year, emerged as a time capsule of the artmaking coming from the past year and our current predicament. Opportunities to create and present have notably reduced, however, artists have still made work, in new formats and using new methods. In 2021, the festival has taken on the challenge of considering how to curate live experiences for audiences in Makhanda and various cities. There is a sense of works in transformation, works crossing disciplinary boundaries, works insisting on new relationships with space, distance and audience. As much as, thematically, artists are reflecting on this current disorientating moment, curatorially the festival has sought to present works which offer solace to audiences – from stillness to humour to healing. ”



Rebuilding value in the arts during Covid-19

Rucera Seethal 15 Apr 2020



Standard Bank Presents

Standard Bank Presents brings Johannesburg art lovers the debut of multi-award-winning performer Tony Miyambo in the epic *Commission Continua* at Market Theatre on 30 June, 1 and 3 July. The show was conceptualised by Tony Miyambo and Phala O Phala, tracing the history of South Africa's commissions of enquiry, laying bare the heart of the South African society's struggle for real change and reconciliation.

At Gallery44 in Cape Town, Standard Bank Presents will stage *Ndinxaniwe*; the latest show by Qondiswa James, whose play *A Howl in Makhanda* received critical acclaim in 2020. A contemporary adaptation of Credo Mutwa's *The Coming of the Strange Ones*, it follows three teenagers who attend a Catholic school in the forest of a rural town in the Eastern Cape. The teenagers are troubled by a shadow of their past selves – which calls them deeper into history. Through drug-induced hallucinations, the boys slip into a deep sleep and arrive in the past, at the first point of contact between the white colonialists and the Black indigenous population. A critical analysis of the effects of patriarchal conflict, the conquest of the African continent and its insidious effects on present-day rural boyhood. Catch the show on 25 and 26 June.



National Arts Festival to present in-person, virtual and nationwide programme in 2021

10 May 2021



On 3 July in Gqeberha, Xabiso Zweni and the Masifunde Creative Academy will perform the musical satire *Social Disturbing* outside their Academy in Walmer Township for their Standard Bank Presents show. The play imagines a fictional prophet of doom who spreads panic and conspiracies into the pandemic-hit township. The piece evaluates how South Africans have often been naïve and foolish in looking for quick solutions in dealing with health and spiritual issues. The piece brings comic relief and satirical parallelism to break the silence dividing people around fake news, real lies, delusions or honesty amongst God, the government and worshipers.

In Durban, Standard Bank Presents will stage *Acapella by Afrika Mamas* at the Seabrooke Theatre on 20 June 2021. The seven-piece *isicathamiya* acapella group hails from the area but have performed internationally in Germany, Poland, Belgium, Holland, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Namibia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. They also won the Imbokodo Award at the Isicathamiya Awards in 2019.

Live Returns to Makhanda

The long-time home of the National Arts Festival remains at the heart of the 2021 programme. Makhanda Live sees a smaller programme of works in keeping with the prevailing Covid-19 regulations, but there is no dampening of energy, excitement or urgency from artists who will be delivering on stage.

The Ecstatic, a collaboration between choreographer and dancer Jeremy Nedd and Impilo Mapantsula, is a powerful

pantsula dance piece that gives expression to the Praise Break; a break in the context of the Christian Pentecostal Church service, where the dancing body, voice and music energetically coalesce and, as a result, blurring the difference between ecstatic and cathartic. Within the piece, six *pantsula* dancers turn to the motions that lead up to the praise break to 'break open' a new space that is all their own. This work is included with the support of Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council.



Jeremy Nedd and Impilo Mapantsula - "The Ecstatic"

2020 Distell National Playwright winner Amy Louise Wilson's *Another Kind* is 'a funeral for a piece of theatre which never existed and a celebration of the birth of a new hybrid artwork between the digital and the live'. Wilson's award-winning script *Another Kind of Dying* tells the story of Silumko, a young man from rural Eastern Cape who moves to Johannesburg after the death of his father. Due to the pandemic, *Another Kind of Dying* was not able to be staged as a play and, in keeping with the times, this incredible young playwright has created a new piece, uniquely suited to its first staging in Makhandia and our current context. In the new work, the script is broken down into a series of short video and sound pieces. Performed by Aphiwe Livi, filmed by Francois Knoetze and co-created with a variety of artists – this archive for a lost play is activated through a series of live video performances by creator Amy Louise Wilson.

2020 Standard Bank Young Artist for Visual Art, Blessing Ngobeni, will bring his much-anticipated *Chaotic Pleasure* exhibition home to the Festival. Both an observation and a form of confronting complex issues of power and abuse, this exhibition conveys Ngobeni's diverse artistry, skilfully realised in various mediums such as collages on canvas, stainless-steel sculptures and animated videos, which played a significant role in both his nomination and winning of the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for the visual arts.



2020 Standard Bank Young Artists for Visual Art, Blessing Ngobeni - "Chaotic Pleasure"

James Webb's *Nothing here does not hear you* is a site-specific sound installation created from research into the space formerly known as the 1820 Settlers' Monument. The process began when guests including historians, cultural workers, political activists and sangomas, as well as members of the building's maintenance and technical staff, were invited to talk about the building. All the interviewees spoke in different ways of blockages, barriers, clots, stuck places and obstacles. The recorded interviews were developed into a series of texts that could, when spoken, work as blessings and invocations. These ideas form a manifesto of spiritual intent: a welcoming of the ancestors, a request for forgiveness, a putting to rest of uneasiness, a calling for creativity and wisdom and a token of gratitude for lessons learnt and lessons to come.

South African visual artist Lisolomzi Pikoli works across multiple mediums, including murals, installation, drawing and painting. In Makhanda from 15 to 22 June 2021, as an artist in residence, Pikoli is one of four artists invited to paint a mural for our street art project *Nature is Louder*. Lisolomzi Pikoli's work predominantly explores relationships: between people, urban and rural spaces and, in this project, the relationship between humans and the natural environment. His mural will be positioned next to the Link Street Taxi rank, on the main road in the town, a busy commuters hub. In our fast-changing, modern world where nature is often abused, Pikoli's work brings nature to the forefront, making it and our relationship to nature as humans, impossible to ignore.

Artist and researcher Maureen de Jager's *History: Refocusing the South African War* is an installation of original hand-bound book-works and videos, 'activated' through three performance lectures. Informed by archival research conducted in the UK and SA, the exhibition focuses a contemporary lens on the South African War (or Anglo-Boer War) of 1899-1902, situating it within present-day decolonising South Africa and a legacy of history-writing marred by erasure and exclusion. It interrogates how 'official' histories 'mythologised' the Boer concentration camps, while the Black concentration camps were effectively written out of historical record (for successive decades). Produced as part of De Jager's fine art PhD through Kingston University (London), the exhibition was originally hosted by the prestigious National Archives UK in 2019. It is exhibited here, in the artist's hometown, with the inclusion of new work (a set of four book-works, *Marginalia*, which symbolically 'holds space' for marginal histories). The lecture performances related to the work are *Proposal for The Book Of Holes*, *Proof* and *In Parenthesis*, which visitors to the festival can experience to further explore the exhibition.



Maureen de Jager - "In Parenthesis"

Born and raised in Kolkata, India, Johannesburg-based artist Puurna Deb also takes residence in Makhanda during the festival. Her printmaking work often reflects themes excavated from her dreams. Visitors to Makhanda will not only see her prints displayed on the walls of the Monument, but they can also visit her in-studio or learn from her technique during a scheduled print-making demonstration.

Hedy! The Life and Inventions of Hedy Lamarr is a fascinating single-hander performed by Heather Massie, revealing the other life of screen siren Hedy Lamarr as the inventor of frequency hopping and spread spectrum technology that makes the world of wireless communication tick. It is apt that this production will be streamed live to a Makhanda audience from her performance at the Reykjavik Fringe Festival, thanks in part to the technology Hedy invented!



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Rucera Seethal 6 Jan 2021



National Arts Festival online

Continuing to hold space for the rise of online performance and virtual audience interaction, the festival's month-long National Arts Festival Online programme will be announced soon. Alfred Hinkel's Garage Dance Ensemble will be part of the online showcase with *Gat innie Grond, Wond in My Siel (Hole in the Ground, Wound in my Soul)*; an innovative, socio-culturally relevant dance theatre production, choreographed by Byron Klassen under the mentorship/direction of Alfred Hinkel and John Linden. The project combines local knowledge, academic inquiry and artistic practice to uncover stories of post-mining towns. The piece documents and highlights the embodied aftermaths of extractive mining practices on communities of the Nama Khoi region with a focus on exploring and translating the memories, trauma and current lived experiences of the Khoekhoegowab (South Africa's first people).

A first for South African audiences, Galician producer Baiuca presents *Embruxo*. Accompanied by the cantareiras, Lilaina and the percussionist Xosé Lois Romero, this filmed work was created to accompany the release of the album – which will premiere at the National Arts Festival. With the support of the Spanish Embassy, this is Baiuca's first time presenting work to a South African audience

The expanding National Arts Festival Experience programme can be found at nationalartsfestival.co.za. Tickets will go on sale on 21 June 2021.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>