

Winners of the 2021 Standard Bank Young Artists Awards announced

Standard Bank and the National Arts Festival have announced the six Standard Bank Young Artists for 2021.

Standard Bank Young Artists for 2021:

- Kristi-Leigh Gresse (Dance)
- Vuma Levin (Jazz)
- Buhlebezwe Siwani (Visual Art)
- Cara Stacey (Music)
- Gavin Krastin (Performance Art)
- Thando Doni (Theatre)

Each of these artists will receive a cash incentive, as well as a commission to premiere a new work or exhibit on the main programme of the 2022 National Arts Festival.



Image: Supplied

More than 160 artists have been recognised since the first SBYA award in 1981, and the alumni of the programme have shaped South Africa's arts landscape (at the same time boosting the creative economy) over the past forty years. They have been subversive and provocative, and they have tackled the issues of the day head-on; but they have also produced work that remains significant, urgent and inspiring today.

Last year, Business and Arts South Africa recognised the value of the SBYA programme by giving its Long-Term Partnership Award to Standard Bank and the National Arts Festival.

Festival CEO, Monica Newton, observed on that occasion:

“ After all these years the SBYA Award is still an award that artists aspire to and one that the public recognises as a major endorsement. The recipients often go on to become household names overnight. We would like to extend gratitude to our partner Standard Bank, not just for this project but for their continued commitment to supporting South African talent. ”

Newton also offered her warm congratulations to the 2021 Standard Bank Young Artists. “Young artists in South Africa need the inspiration these individuals embody. Standard Bank Young Artists represent the reward for years of hard work and determination and remind us that we have great talent in our midst. I would like to recognise the exceptional achievements of the 2021 Standard Bank Young Artists; and we look forward to seeing them perform and exhibit at the National Arts Festival in 2022 and to seeing how they use this accolade to further their artistic dreams and ambitions.”

The young artists of 2021:

Kristi-Leigh Gresse has collaborated with a remarkable variety of South Africa’s dancers and choreographers, developing her own ‘voice’ as an artist as her work has cohered thematically around the politics of the body as well as expressions of collective and individual identity. She won a Standard Bank Ovation Gold Award for *Sullied* at the National Arts Festival in 2018 and went on to win the South East Dance Award at the Brighton Fringe Festival in 2019, before being commissioned to produce a dance screen offering for the digital JOMBA! Festival in 2020.

“ And the winner in the [#SBYA2021](#) Dance category is the formidable [@KJGresse](#) 💎💎 [pic.twitter.com/nhLBj5vflc](#)— Standard Bank Arts (@StandardBankArt) [September 2, 2021](#) ”

Vuma Levin is a guitarist whose compositions combine South African musical traditions with jazz, pop and electronics. He has lived and worked in Madrid, Amsterdam, Basel and Johannesburg. After teaching at various conservatoriums in the Netherlands, he returned to South Africa to take up a lecturing post at the University of the Witwatersrand. He has produced four studio albums to date, and his latest – the concept album *Antique Spoons*, which is also accompanied by the release of three short films – has been critically acclaimed for its virtuosity.

“ And the [#SBYA2021](#) Winner in the Jazz category is the magnificent [@VumaLevin](#) 💎💎 [pic.twitter.com/8xRrjtdJa](#)— Standard Bank Arts (@StandardBankArt) [September 2, 2021](#) ”

Buhlebezwe Siwani works in a variety of media, focusing on embodied performance, installations and sculpture, but also exploring the creative possibilities of the canvas, paper, photography and video. She completed postgraduate degrees at the Wits School of Arts and the Michaelis School of Fine Arts. Following residencies in France, Switzerland and the Netherlands, her work has been exhibited from Europe to Asia and Australasia to America. She has also published two books, *Imfihlo* (2015) and *Qab’Imbola* (2018). She lives in Amsterdam and Cape Town.

“ And the [#SBYA2021](#) Winner in the Visual Arts category is the multi-disciplinary artist [@BSiwani](#) 💎💎.

pic.twitter.com/lhsVm6eM0v— Standard Bank Arts (@StandardBankArt) [September 2, 2021](#) ”

Cara Stacey is committed to contextualising and preserving indigenous southern African music, and to connect it to different musical histories and sound forms. She trained in piano and the umrhubhe, uhadi and makhweyane (traditional musical bows), and has also studied the mbira and budongo. In addition to being a composer and performer, she is a musicologist and scholar who holds a Ph.D. and is a Senior Lecturer in African Music at North-West University. Her work is described as “rich and complex, and at the same time beautifully accessible”.

“ And the winner for the [#SBYA2021](#) in Music is [@CaraLStacey](#) . pic.twitter.com/8WTt3VNr3d— Standard Bank Arts (@StandardBankArt) [September 2, 2021](#) ”

Gavin Krastin is a performance artist, scenographer and arts educator. The National Arts Festival Artistic Committee notes that he has “revitalised the field” of performance art by managing to be “risky and brave” and, at the same time, “mindful and meticulous” – thus “opening the door” for a new generation of artists. Based in Cape Town, he challenges audiences with discomfiting meditations on the politics of representing the body within his immediate South African context and situating these local concerns alongside global considerations.

“ And the winner for the [#SBYA2021](#) in the Performance Art category is the esteemed artiste, Gavin Krastin . pic.twitter.com/QIIlWzBzNN— Standard Bank Arts (@StandardBankArt) [September 2, 2021](#) ”

Thando Doni has worked extensively with independent physical theatre company Magnet Theatre and numerous other theatre organisations. He won Best Director at the Baxter Theatre’s Zabalaza Theatre Festival in 2011 and was awarded a GIPCA director’s bursary in 2012. The National Arts Festival Artistic Committee affirms that Doni is “one of the rare theatre-makers who works across the board – from young people to ex-offenders and professional performers” and that he crafts “profound and profoundly moving”, life-changing experiences for both performers and audiences.

“ And the [#SBYA2021](#) Winner in the Visual Arts category is the multi-disciplinary artist [@BSiwani](#) . pic.twitter.com/lhsVm6eM0v— Standard Bank Arts (@StandardBankArt) [September 2, 2021](#) ”

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