

SA State Theatre celebrates Youth Month with Youth Expressions Festival

In celebration of Youth Day and Youth Month, the South African State Theatre will host its annual Youth Expressions Festival (YEF) from 16 to 30 June.

This year's instalment will converge under the national government's Youth Day and Youth Month theme: "The Year of Charlotte Mannya Maxeke: Growing youth employment for an inclusive and transformed society."



This year marks the 45th anniversary of the 16 June 1976 student uprising in Soweto, when young people protested the imposition of Afrikaans by the Apartheid regime as a medium of instruction. The uprising ended tragically with hundreds of young people being brutally killed. Whilst aimed at empowering young creatives, the festival remembers the essence of Youth Month in South Africa.

Education Youth Children's Theatre manager, Thabiso Qwabe, comments:

“ The festival is a celebration of the youth's creative spirit that remembers the past while reflecting on today and interrogating the hopes of tomorrow. The youth of 1976 had the drive and energy to make a difference and challenge the norms and forced norms, this is what the current youth is still doing, finding ways to overcome their new challenges. ”

Inaugurated in 2008, the YEF has been an empowering platform of growth for many young artists that developed to be masters in their crafts. It provides funding for productions, shares door sales with artists, and creates multiple employment for young artists using curated productions. The festival is inclusive of dramaturgy for artists productions and workshops in partnership with the South African Revenue Services (Sars) and DALRO, which educate and empower young creatives on how to be tax compliant and on ways to protect their works.

The 2020 edition of the festival could not take place last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Amid the current third wave scare, the show goes with limited attendees under strict Covid-19 regulations. New exciting artistic works by young creatives telling their stories in various art forms are in store for festival attendees. "In our selection of featured artists and works, we were eyeing creativity, new stories and thought-provoking works across all genres in the arts. We were also

looking at creating opportunities nationally and internationally, but the pandemic has put a limit to access to such artists,” adds Qwabe.

Youth Expressions Festival lineup

Thought, created and curated by Nancy Ndaba, Abigail Mabeba and Linah Mokoena, 16-19 June. This is a visual art exhibition symbolising free expression. It draws inspiration from various artists in the art industry. Ideas, expression, speech, and creativity is what completes it. The trio makes use of simple traditional media that one can easily find at any art shop.

Kgaube, written and directed by Thabang Gabogope, 16-18 June. *Kgaube* is a drama exploring the journey of a son of a traitor who wants to redeem his name. He joins the *kgaubes* (politicians) and disguises as one of them to steal water and give it to the people of Ipelegeng Township and becomes a traitor himself. “What must happen to corrupt politicians? However, if it is the system then who is part of it?”

Tokologo The Musical Garment, written and directed by Zinhle Mbokane, 16-18 June. This is a children's theatre piece following two boys on a quest of discovery on music notes and the gift of song that was handed down to them mysteriously by an unknown creature. As they embark on the journey alone without the supervision of an elder, they come across an unexpected friend in the enchanted forest. Their new friend has a mischievous plan of action under his sleeve, landing the boys at an unforeseen destination.



The Iron, written by Emmanuel Mashigo, and co-directed by Sphiwe Malusi and Emmanuel Mashigo, 19-21 June. *The Iron* is a story of a single, humble and loving father Edwin Malunga, who is raising his daughter through fixing irons. This heart-racing drama takes a sharp turn when Edwin remarries a woman named Mantwa, who starts chaos which lands his family in hot waters.

Skrop'laap, written and directed by Tsietsi Morobi, 21-23 June. *Skrop'laap* is a drama that explores homelessness and displacement as seen through the eyes of Magents and Pops. The two friends find themselves relegated to the hard concrete and are forced to fend for themselves in ways unimaginable. This comedy and drama offering uses elements of poor theatre to drive its narrative.

Zazi (Know Yourself), curated by Nombuso Wanda, 21-25 June. In this visual art exhibition, virtual artist Nombuso Wanda is joined by exhibitors Khulekani Mkhize, Kwanda Xaba, Mpilo Mthembu, Nothando Mazibuko to tackle misrepresentations of identity in the 'Black' communities. It delves on issues of substance abuse, challenges of child-headed homes and how these challenges affect the daily lives of the black youth and its purpose in this life.

Bapa, directed and choreographed by Phuti Mojela, 23-25 June. Featuring Teresa Phuti Mojela (choreographer), Billy Langa (text writer) and Ntsika Fana Ngxanga (music composer), *Bapa* is an exciting fusion of music, dance and theatre highlighting the link between us and our forefathers – in our gifts, personal traits and spirituality and, most importantly, in our connection with art and creativity. It begs the compelling question: Are you content with the blueprint you are writing for those not yet born in your clan?

Peace is of a Struggle, directed by Phomolo Sekamotho and Lefa Biya, 25 June. This poetry and music showcase inquires into the struggles of the Fees Must Fall movement. The concept itself emanates from *Piece is of a Puzzle* and speaks to the fragmentation of people, the vastness, the constant overcoming and recollection of history and other struggles- The struggle for free education and the struggle for equity. It features executive producers and writers: Phomolo Sekamotho, Mpotseng Sehume, Sifiso Matsimela, Bongani Sithole, Sakhile Thebethe and Mocketso Mahlangu.

M'khukhu Experience Theatre Edition, 26 June. This is a stylistically spoken word poetry saturated in modern indigenous sounds comprising a mix of Afro-jazz and contemporary music suggesting influences from a wide music range of Africa, giving the audience a real experience of South African music and culture. It features Kefiloe Leeka (music producer), Price Mabaso (writer), Lehlogonolo Seodisha (content director).

Mowa (Mailakgang), written by Orapeleng Diphoko and Kagiso Shomolekae, directed by Orapeleng Diphoko, 28-30 June. Presented in collaboration with Mmabana Arts and Culture Foundation, *Mowa (Mailakgang)* is a play based on the story of a young man named Tsholofelo, who finds himself lost in the cave of 'the third eye' and got trapped by a fiendish man called Mosala, who has superstitious powers that he uses to enslave prophets inside a cave. The story divulges the power of witchcraft and ancestors.

All YEF shows are priced at R80 per ticket. Entrance for visual art productions is free. Tickets can be obtained at Webtickets, available online, over the counter at Pick n Pay stores nationwide, and at State Theatre's box office.