

Partnerships that rise: The 2021 Basa Awards announces winners

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2020 was a true test of resilience, and only the strongest of partnerships measured up against the extreme challenges brought on by the arrival of Covid-19. In many ways, the global threat and subsequent lockdown was also the mother of invention. If ever there was a time to reinvent or create something new and fresh, this was it. Considering projects that were executed in partnership during 2020, the 24th Basa Awards, partnered by Hollard, reflects all of this determination, inventiveness and tenacity. Here are the winners across the seven categories:



Zolani Mohala (*The One who Sings*) performs at the online BASA Awards.

The **Beyond Borders Partnership Award** recognises a partnership that builds brand reputation and audience for both partners across borders, through a project showcasing South Africa to the rest of the continent and/or overseas, or bringing international or intercontinental arts projects to South Africa.

The winner is **Standard Bank of South Africa Limited and African Artists for Development (AAD)**, for **Lumieres d'Afriques**; a touring group exhibition comprising 54 artists from each country making up the African continent. It presents work inspired by a single theme 'The Illuminated Africa'. It is premised on the idea that the 21st century belongs to Africa, while reflecting on the challenges facing the development of the continent. For the first time in Contemporary African History, 54 artists committed to creating a single original work of art to highlight the challenge that energy access represents for the continent's sustainable future. The installation includes artists filming their creative process for each varying piece from their environment.

The **Community Development Award** recognises support for arts and culture projects enhancing their communities, whether through education, skills development, contributing to livelihoods or employment, tourism, or other growth opportunities in the community.

The winner is **Rand Merchant Bank, a division of FirstRand Ltd, and Outreach Foundation**, for **Letters to You and Me - an intergenerational project**. For the past five years, the Outreach Foundation has offered an after-school drama programme for young learners and the youth in Hillbrow, in partnership with Tswelopele Frail Care Centre and Johannesburg Society for the blind. It has run as an intergenerational programme on themes like identity, belonging, cultural beliefs and generational curses that has inspired intergenerational knowledge sharing. After suspending the programme, Letters to You and Me – 5th Anniversary of the intergenerational programme was developed as a digital storytelling training programme and a training manual, based on Gcebile Dlamini's five years of engaging intergenerational theatre making practice. Letters To You and Me, the 2020 iteration of the intergenerational project, was also co-funded by the International Relief Fund of the German Federal Foreign Office, the Goethe-Institut, and

other partners: www.goethe.de/relieffund.

The **First-Time Sponsor Award** is for a sponsor supporting the arts for the first time, regardless of size, budget, whether it is through CSI, marketing, HR, B-BBEE or other.

The winner is **Sirdar** and **Artist Proof Studio**, for ***The Lockdown Collection***, which was developed to run during the initial 21 days of the lockdown, to capture the unprecedented times through the eyes of prominent South African artists as a live-online auction. These 21 art pieces by renowned local artists were sold to raise money to support South African artists. Each piece was revealed daily and reflected the thoughts, feelings and vision of artists' Covid-19 experience. The overwhelming support and demand has led to more collections such as the Student Collection, a Canadian Green Recovery Collection and also an Open Call Collection launched in 2021.

The **Innovation Award** celebrates the most innovative, cutting-edge and progressive partnership that served all partners' purposes effectively. These breakthrough projects and partnerships should demonstrate great creativity, originality, reinvention, new methodologies, or technological/digital innovation.

The winner is MTN SA Foundation and UJ Art Gallery, for UJ's Moving Cube breaks ground with MTN's Blind Alphabet. The Blind Alphabet Project: Letter B – Babery to Bigeminate (1993) from the MTN Art Collection was produced in line with a digital experience promoted as part of MTN and UJ's venture into the 4IR age. The project was inspired by insight from visually impaired individuals on the outdated nature of the Braille type format. The 40 works of the Letter B within the Blind Alphabet were augmented by music written by contemporary composer, Jaco Meyer, as well as voice-overs and QR codes. This enabled the visually impaired to access the works through cellular technology – listening to the music and rationale behind each artwork through earphones. The visually abled also got to appreciate this body of work in a unique way.

The **Long-Term Partnership Award** recognises outstanding initiative and commitment to the arts over a longer term period (at least three years) as an integral part of the sponsor's strategy. The value to the arts project, the broader community and the sponsor, must be apparent.

The winner is **Nando's** and **Spier Arts Trust**, for the ***Nando's Creative Exchange***, established in 2011 to recognise emerging Southern African fine artists who demonstrate exceptional ability. This programme offers selected visual artists exhibition and mentorship opportunities, with art material sponsorship and a platform to have work translated in a different medium, in collaboration with the Spier Artisan Studios. All of this is aimed at developing artists' professional practice. In the face of the pandemic, Nando's arranged the Nando's Creative Showcase event at Constitution Hill in November 2020, where a small Covid-compliant group of media and VIPs were invited to experience the various Nando's Creativity programmes, including the Nando's Creative Exchange exhibition.

The **SMME Award** is for vital support given to the arts by a micro, small or medium enterprise with up to 200 full-time employees and an annual turnover of no more than R10 million.

The winner is **Mrs Woolf** and **Artist Proof Studio**, for ***The Lockdown Collection***, developed to run during the initial 21 days of the lockdown, to capture the unprecedented times through the eyes of prominent South African artists as a live-online auction. These 21 art pieces by renowned local artists were sold to raise money to support South African artists. Each piece was revealed daily and reflected the thoughts, feelings and vision of artists' Covid-19 experience. The overwhelming support and demand has led to more collections such as the Student Collection, a Canadian Green Recovery Collection and also an Open Call Collection launched in 2021.

The **Sponsorship In-Kind Award** acknowledges a sponsor giving quantifiable and impactful non-monetary support to the arts. This may be through in-kind provision of equipment, materials, media or PR support, space, transportation or travel, or any other products or services, as opposed to monetary sponsorship.

The winner is the **Royal Hotel Riebeek Kasteel** and **Arts Town Riebeek Valley**, for the **Royal Arts Town**

Amphitheatre Summer Theatre Season, which was formed to address the crisis in the performing arts and to contribute to the survival of both the arts and tourism industries that are amongst the most fragile in the local economy. It also provided live theatre events for audiences starved of artistic and cultural events because of the Covid-19 pandemic – the Summer Theatre Season comprised ten new and existing professional productions, curated and presented under safe, socially distanced open air circumstances.

Each year, The Basa Chairperson's Advocacy Award is presented in recognition of sustained and extraordinary commitment to the arts in South Africa, in the form of advocacy and awareness initiatives or direct support for the arts, whether in a personal or professional capacity at a local, national or international level.

This year's recipient, Durban's Jomba! Contemporary Dance Experience, joins an illustrious roll-call of previous winners such as the Centre for the Less Good Idea (2020), the Eon Group (2019), Joburg Art Fair (2016) and The Handspring Puppet Company (2015), amongst others.

Jomba!, presented by the Centre for Creative Arts, University of KwaZulu-Natal, is Durban's (and South Africa's) benchmark dance festival, centred around connecting contemporary dance practitioners from across the globe. Aside from the landmark two-week dance festival, Jomba!'s Khuluma Writing Residency (launched in 2010), mentors graduate students' skills as dance writers. Through a series of seminars and critical discussions, the young writers work throughout the festival, offering their thoughts and responses (both personal and analytical) to the work on show. 2020's digital Jomba! Contemporary Dance Experience was a three-country collaboration for the Jomba! Khuluma platforms; a meeting between South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United State of America. For the first time the platform also offered an isiZulu language editor and translator on the platform.

In 2021, the Jomba! Masihambisane series of dialogues and critical engagements, launched its first three-day dance colloquium/dialogues, aiming to support focused South African and African (and Diaspora) dance scholarships in an accessible and community-driven manner, and with attention to new ways of engaging dance/performance scholarship, practice, and practice-led research.

"Centred on connecting contemporary dance practitioners from across the globe, the focus and purpose of JOMBA! is to support and nurture the growth of critical contemporary dance in South Africa," explains Basa chairman, Charmaine Soobramoney. "Guided by this vision, over the last two decades, Artistic Director, Liane Loots, and the Jomba! team have successfully linked important academic spaces with critical artistic practices, connected dance practitioners from across Africa and the world, and made a hugely positive contribution in firmly placing South Africa on the global contemporary dance map," she adds.

The winners were awarded ceramic trophies created by this year's Basa Awards commissioned artists Zizipho Poswa and Andile Dyalvane of Imiso Ceramics. More about the commissioned artists [here](#).

Says Basa CEO, Ashraf Johaardien, "This year's Awards reflects on the perseverance of the arts and business in making an impact through creativity. Behind each of these winners is a story of great resourcefulness and an indication of the opportunities that lie within this tumultuous time. We hope their efforts encourage others to redesign and reinvent, to collaborate and create."

The Basa Awards' long-time partner, Hollard, celebrated the achievements of all the winners. Said Chief Marketing Officer, Heidi Brauer, "It's always humbling to witness the power of the arts to challenge and heal and inspire and it's always an honour to celebrate the organisations and artists that make this possible through unique creative partnerships. We're just so proud to once again be a part of an initiative that contributes to better futures –for artists, for the businesses that support them, and for all of the communities that are touched by these wonderful projects. Congratulations to all the winners – may they continue to rise and to lift us as they do so."

Filmed at multiple locations in Cape Town and Johannesburg, this year's ceremony has been directed by Alby Michaels and features Rootspring artists, Jitsvinger, Zolani (The One Who Sings) and Native Young. Former Basa Supporting Grant

recipient, Iziko Museum of South Africa, is the lead venue partner and the online Basa Awards experience will be available to everyone from 31 August 2021 at <https://basa.co.za/awards/>.

- " **SoCreative Summit returns to Johannesburg for a free exploration of creativity** 29 Apr 2024
- " **450 emerging creatives shortlisted for the Debut Programme** 12 Apr 2024
- " **14 SA creatives join Cultural Producers Programme** 12 Mar 2024
- " **Cultural Producers called to become the creative leaders of tomorrow** 22 Jan 2024
- " **Basa hosts 'My Debut Story' panel discussion: Celebrating the success of emerging creative entrepreneurs** 27 Oct 2023

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