

JOBURG
BALLET



UNIVERSE
ON STAGE

SPRING SEASON OF DANCE



Joburg

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Celestial Bodies

Joburg Theatre

4 October at 14h00 and 19h00

5 October at 14h00

2025

First Light

Raymonda Act III

Mpho

Nothing Twice

Concerto for Charlie

Classics of Spain

Joburg Theatre

9 October at 11h00

10 October at 19h00

11 October at 14h00

12 October at 14h00

2025

Cover: Miguel Franco-Green in *Celestial Bodies*

This page: Monike Cristina in *Classics of Spain*

Programme photographs: Lauge Sorensen



Dane Hurst | Artistic Director, Joburg Ballet

It is a great honour and unique privilege to curate a season that shines a light on the artistry and choreographic talent within Joburg Ballet. This programme is both a celebration of our company's foundations and a testament to the collective dedication of dancers, creatives, staff, and supporters who, over many years, have built the platform from which today's artists take flight.

Our season opens with *Celestial Bodies*, the brainchild of Naledi Award-winning choreographer and Joburg Ballet Soloist, Mario Gaglione. Created in collaboration with Luca Pontiggia and Yasheen Modi, the visionary team behind the sell-out success *Hidden Giants*, this pioneering production merges dance, science, and music in a profound and poignant way. It marks a first for Joburg Ballet, and we are excited for the impact this work will have on the artform and proud to bring it to life on our stage.

In the closing weekend, we present *First Light*, a programme that celebrates the diverse artistry within our company while elevating ballet in its many expressions—classical, contemporary, neo-classical, and Afro-classicism. Opening with *Raymonda* staged by Shannon Glover, we honour the timeless beauty of the classical tradition. This is followed by *Mpho* by Tumelo Lekana, fusing African spirituality, storytelling, and balletic form. Chloé Blair's *Nothing Twice* brings strong, dynamic, and expressive contemporary ballet to the stage, before the programme closes with two exhilarating works: *Concerto for Charlie* by South Africa's most respected ballet choreographer, Veronica Paeper, and *Classics of Spain* by Senior Soloist Bruno Miranda, a vibrant celebration of Spanish culture through beloved extracts from *Carmen*, *Don Quixote* and *Laurencia*.

This Spring Season of Dance is a true celebration of Joburg Ballet's artistry. It would not be possible without the commitment of our artists, staff, partners, sponsors, and most importantly, you—our loyal audiences and supporters. For this, we extend our heartfelt thanks. Enjoy the performance.

JOBURG
BALLET



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Royal Opera House, London

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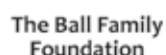


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We welcome any opportunity to discuss how we can best work together and find synergy in our work. Our interest is in building partnerships of shared value.

For more information or to arrange a meeting, please engage with our CEO, Elroy Fillis-Bell on elroy@joburgballet.com

**JOBURG
BALLET**



Dance With Us

Pointe Shoe Fund

At Joburg Ballet, our dancers rely on these essential tools of the trade to express themselves on stage, but the high costs can be a challenge. With your help, we can ensure our dancers have the support they need to continue captivating audiences with their stunning performances.

Join us in supporting the graceful art of ballet by contributing to our Dance With Us Pointe Shoe Fund.



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CELESTIAL BODIES



Bruno Miranda

CELESTIAL BODIES

Choreography	Mario Gaglione
Music:	Yasheen Modi
Story:	Dr Luca Pontiggia
Visual Design:	Darius Botha
Costume Design:	Mari Robinson and Mario Gaglione
Lighting Design:	Simon King

The Cast

Orion	Miguel Franco-Green / Revil Yon / Ivan Domiciano
Andromeda	Chloé Blair / Savannah Jacobson
Cygnus	Miles Carrott / Fanelo Ndweni / David Maluleka
Cassiopeia	Savannah Jacobson / Latoya Mokoena / Ashton Harris
Draco	Revil Yon / Miles Carrott / Thabani Ntuli
Norma	Cristina Nakos / Kayleigh Smith / Isabella Godinho
Pegasus	Ivan Domiciano / Miguel Franco-Green / Tumelo Lekana
Phoenix	Darragh Hourrides / Isabella Godinho / Botlhale Phalane
Lupus	Bruno Miranda / Gabriel Fernandes / Fanelo Ndweni
Ara	Gabriella Ghiaroni / Chloé Blair
Corvus	Gabriel Fernandes / Bruno Miranda / Thando Mgobhozi
Hydra	Savannah Ireland / Ashton Harris

A Note from Mario Gaglione



Celestial Bodies is a new creation born from my fascination with the work of Universe on Stage, whose production *Hidden Giants* first ignited this collaboration. I remember walking up to Luca Pontiggia and Yasheen Modi and saying that I longed to see their vision take shape through dance, that their world of music, science and art was already moving like choreography waiting to be embodied. Almost a year later, this dream has become reality.

This ballet carries us into the essence of life itself. We are all part of an ever-expanding Universe, reflections of the very stars we gaze upon. Every atom, every particle, whether vast or invisible, belongs to an infinite cosmic dance. The breath we draw stretches beyond our understanding, while time guides us with its unyielding rhythm. The Universe is our stage, and we ourselves are celestial bodies, orbiting in an endless poem of light.

The dancers of Joburg Ballet are my greatest source of inspiration, each one a spark of magic and stardust. Their artistry brings Yasheen's astonishing score and Luca's profound narrative into motion, carrying us through galaxies and black holes, into the delicate structure of atoms, and finally to the simple, universal breath of life. *Celestial Bodies* is a journey through wonder, a reminder that we are never apart from the cosmos, but always moving within its dance.

UNIVERSE ON STAGE

Universe on Stage is a vehicle of curiosity. We explore our understanding of the universe, presenting it in a way that evokes both the intellectual and the emotional. Art, science, music, and storytelling converge to help people of all ages fall in love with their existence in the cosmos—and inspire them to learn and take action. Our goal is simple yet profound: to awaken that inner childlike sense of curiosity and wonder. For those who may have lost it, we aim to rekindle it. For those who still have it, we encourage them to be bold enough to keep it alive.

Universe on Stage was founded by Dr Luca Pontiggia (Physicist and Speaker) and Yasheen Modi (Actuary and Composer) in 2022. Together they bring an unusually diverse set of skills that culminate in the productions of Universe on Stage. They share a love for both creativity and rational thinking, with a combined 20 years of corporate experience in technical storytelling—the art of making complex ideas not only simple, but enjoyable.

A Note from Yasheen Modi



I've performed with Luca and with symphony orchestras—but never with dancers. I'll admit, I was nervous walking into that first rehearsal. Yet those nerves vanished almost instantly. The way the choreography locks into the music is extraordinary—when we hit certain accents together, the room feels electric. It's addictive. The composition process began with Luca, Mario, and me in my studio, choosing themes from *Hidden Giants* and reshaping them with Mario to fit the language of dance. At times, this meant reworking ideas completely. Our "Gravity 101" theme, for example, wasn't Mario's favourite. But I didn't scrap it. I shifted a few chords into minor, extended the phrase by two bars, and suddenly it became the foundation for the six-couple dance—each pair exploring a different variation of lightness and weight.

The score for *Celestial Bodies* moves from bold and heavy to airy and playful, before building into a finale that is both technically demanding and physically exhausting. A final ode to our existence.

A Note from Dr Luca Pontiggia



There is a concept called collective effervescence: a psychological effect that occurs when groups of people are united in a large crowd under a shared experience—like a concert, sports event, or rally. It creates a feeling of unison, a sense of belonging to something greater than oneself.

That moment heightens happiness, opens people to the lives of others, and makes them less judgmental. To me, there is no greater shared experience than that of our existence.

Celestial Bodies is a celebration of that existence. It tells a story of how the movement between order and chaos transforms nothing into something—a story perfectly suited to the art of dance. It reminds us that we are not merely inhabitants of the universe, but literally part of it.

Not every audience member will follow all the scientific concepts in detail—and that's okay. They will, however, learn a few new things about our universe. More importantly, I believe they will feel transformed by the story, walking away with a renewed appreciation for just how extraordinary our world really is.



Chloé Blair



Savannah Ireland



Savannah Ireland, Gabriel Fernandes, Chloé Blair, Miguel Franco-Green, Gabriella Ghiaroni, Bruno Miranda

FIRSTLIGHT



Revil Yon | Concerto for Charlie

RAYMONDA ACT III

Choreography: Marius Petipa

Music: Alexander Glazunov

Staged by: Shannon Glover

Costumes: Joburg Ballet

Lighting: Simon King

It was a convention of Russian ballet in the 19th century that the final act of many full-length ballets provided a showcase of pure classical dancing with little connection to the dramatic action that had gone before. While the best known example is the final act of *The Sleeping Beauty*, another, highly esteemed by critics, dancers and audiences, is Act III of *Raymonda*. Created for the Imperial Russian Ballet in 1898 by the great Marius Petipa, *Raymonda*, set in medieval Hungary, tells the story of a princess whose betrothed, Jean de Brienne, departs on a crusade. While de Brienne is away, a Saracen knight attempts to abduct Raymonda and cause her to break her vow to de Brienne that she will await his return. However, de Brienne returns in time, saving Raymonda and slaying the Saracen. All this happens before the curtain rises on Act III which is presented as a celebration of the marriage of de Brienne and Raymonda. Set to Alexander Glazunov's lush music, this act provides a magnificent suite of dances in the classical style with a grand pas de deux, solos and ensembles, with Petipa's classical brilliance splendidly on display.

The Cast

Ryoko Yagyu / Monike Cristina / Tammy Higgins / Savannah Jacobson

Ivan Domiciano / Revil Yon / Bruno Miranda / Mario Gaglione

Chloé Blair / Daria D'Orazio / Gabriella Ghiaroni / Isabella Godinho / Ashton Harris /

Darragh Hourrides / Savannah Ireland / Savannah Jacobson / Latoya Mokoena

Miles Carrott / Gabriel Fernandes / Miguel Franco-Green / Mario Gaglione /

Tumelo Lekana / Bruno Miranda / Fanelo Ndweni / Thabani Ntuli

Chloé Blair / Daria D'Orazio / Isabella Godinho / Ashton Harris / Darragh Hourrides /

Savannah Jacobson / Latoya Mokoena / Botlhale Phalane / Kayleigh Smith

Miles Carrott / Gabriel Fernandes / Miguel Franco-Green / Mario Gaglione / Tumelo Lekana /

David Maluleka / Thando Mgobhozi / Fanelo Ndweni / Thabani Ntuli

MPHO

Choreography: Tumelo Lekana

Music: Peter Mpho Mothiba

Costumes: Yolanda Roos

Lighting: Simon King

Mpho, meaning 'gift', is a dance informed by Tswana culture. This multi-disciplinary work weaves together African music, African-inspired costumes and traditional storytelling, re-imagined through a classical European lens. Inspired by the rich cultural heritage of Africa, *Mpho* tells the story of a young woman's journey, guided by two spiritual mentors who symbolise the maternal lineage. This narrative thread is deeply rooted in African cultures, where the maternal side is often revered for its wisdom, nurturing, and spiritual guidance. Through the protagonist's journey, *Mpho* explores themes of identity, cultural heritage and the interconnectedness of tradition and modernity. By blending African and European theatrical traditions, this dance honours the past while embracing the present.

The Cast

Latoya Mokoena / Botlhale Phalane

Savannah Jacobson / Ashton Harris

Daria D'Orazio / Chloé Blair

NOTHING TWICE

Choreography: Chloé Blair

Music: Ezio Bosso, Concerto No. 1 for Violin, Strings and Timpani "Esoconcerto": II. Adagio and III. Presto con Fuoco

Costumes: Mari Robinson, Prince Mahlangu and Chloé Blair

Lighting: Simon King

Set to Ezio Bosso's Concerto No. 1 for Violin, Strings and Timpani, a classical essence of romance is conveyed through a modern love story which explores the uniqueness of the two individuals' connection to another. Whilst many people can come and go in our lives, we may yearn for one specific connection that can never be repeated. Try as we may to recreate that connection, nothing will ever be the same as that relationship. Nothing is the same twice.

The Cast

Ryoko Yagyu / Gabriella Ghiaroni / Latoya Mokoena
Mario Gaglione / Bruno Miranda / Miguel Franco-Green

Isabella Godinho / Ashton Harris / Savannah Jacobson / Latoya Mokoena / Kayleigh Smith

Miles Carrott / Gabriel Fernandes / Miguel Franco-Green / Mario Gaglione / Tumelo Lekana / David Maluleka / Thando Mgobhozi / Fanelo Ndweni / Thabani Ntuli

CONCERTO FOR CHARLIE

Choreography: Veronica Paeper (1979)
Music: Dmitri Shostakovich; Piano Concerto No. 2 in F major Opus 102 (1957)
Stage Design: Veronica Paeper and Kirsty Cumming
Costumes: Robyn Taylor
Lighting: Simon King

Concerto for Charlie, created by Veronica Paeper in 1979 for Capab Ballet was part of a programme sponsored by the fragrance house Elizabeth Arden, with the title 'Charlie' referring to the perfume. It has no narrative or story and is purely an expression of Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No 2 in dance.

Concerto for Charlie is presented by courtesy of the South African National Dance Trust.

The Cast

Tammy Higgins / Savannah Ireland / Chloé Blair
Ryoko Yagyu / Monike Cristina / Darragh Hourrides
Mario Gaglione / Bruno Miranda / Revil Yon / Gabriel Fernandes

Miles Carrott / Ivan Domiciano / Gabriel Fernandes / Miguel Franco-Green / Mario Gaglione / Tumelo Lekana / David Maluleka / Thando Mgobhozi / Bruno Miranda / Fanelo Ndweni / Thabani Ntuli / Revil Yon

CLASSICS OF SPAIN

Choreography and Production by: Bruno Miranda
Music: Georges Bizet, Alexander Krein, Ludwig Minkus
Costumes: Joburg Ballet
Lighting: Simon King

"The idea of *Classics of Spain*," says choreographer Bruno Miranda, "came from my love for Spanish dances. I thought: why not put all the main Spanish ballets together, highlighting the best part of each ballet in a single one-act ballet." Few countries have made as rich a contribution to the classical ballet tradition as Spain, with Spanish culture providing the material for a dazzling array of works in the ballet repertoire. Bruno Miranda has dipped into this treasure trove to create a showcase of just some of the ballets inspired by Spanish stories and settings, among them *Don Quixote*, *Carmen* and *Laurencia*.

The Cast

<i>Carmen</i> : Carmen	Monike Cristina / Savannah Ireland / Darragh Hourrides
<i>Carmen</i> : Escamillo	Revil Yon / Gabriel Fernandes / Mario Gaglione
<i>Laurencia</i> : Pas de deux	Tammy Higgins / Ryoko Yagyu / Savannah Jacobson Miles Carrott / Ivan Domiciano / Miguel Franco-Green And Artists of the Company
<i>Laurencia</i> : Flamenco	Latoya Mokoena / Chloé Blair / Daria D'Orazio And Artists of the Company
<i>Don Quixote</i> : Mercedes	Savannah Ireland / Gabriella Ghiaroni / Cristina Nakos
<i>Don Quixote</i> : Espada	Ivan Domiciano / Miles Carrott / Revil Yon
<i>Don Quixote</i> : Gypsy Dance	Fanelo Ndweni / Tumelo Lekana and Chloé Blair / Latoya Mokoena And Artists of the Company
<i>Don Quixote</i> : Fandango	Cristina Nakos / Ashton Harris / Gabriella Ghiaroni Gabriel Fernandes / Mario Gaglione / Miguel Franco-Green And Artists of the Company

Ryoko Yagyu, Ivan Domiciano and Artists of the Company | *Raymonda* Act III



Ryoko Yagyu and Mario Gaglione | *Nothing Twice*

Peter Mpho Mothiba, Daria D'Orazio, Latoya Mokoena, Savannah Jacobson | *Mpho*
Photograph: Andrej Uspenski



Ivan Domiciano, Gabriel Fernandes, Tammy Higgins, Bruno Miranda, Revil Yon | *Concerto for Charlie*

PRINCIPALS



Monike Cristina



Ivan Domiciano



Tammy Higgins



Ryoko Yagyu



Revil Yon



Bruno Miranda

SENIOR SOLOIST

SOLOISTS



Chloé Blair



Miles Carrott



Gabriel Fernandes



Mario Gaglione



Gabriella Gharoni



Darragh Hourrides

CORYPHÉES



Savannah Ireland



Cristina Nakos



Ashton Harris



Tumelo Lekana



Fanelo Ndweni



Thabani Ntuli

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Miguel Franco-Green



Isabella Godinho



Savannah Jacobson



David Maluleka



Thando Mgobhozi

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Kayleigh Smith



Bothale Phalane



Jonathan Victor

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JOBURG BALLET

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Programme compiled by Jonathan Hurwitz

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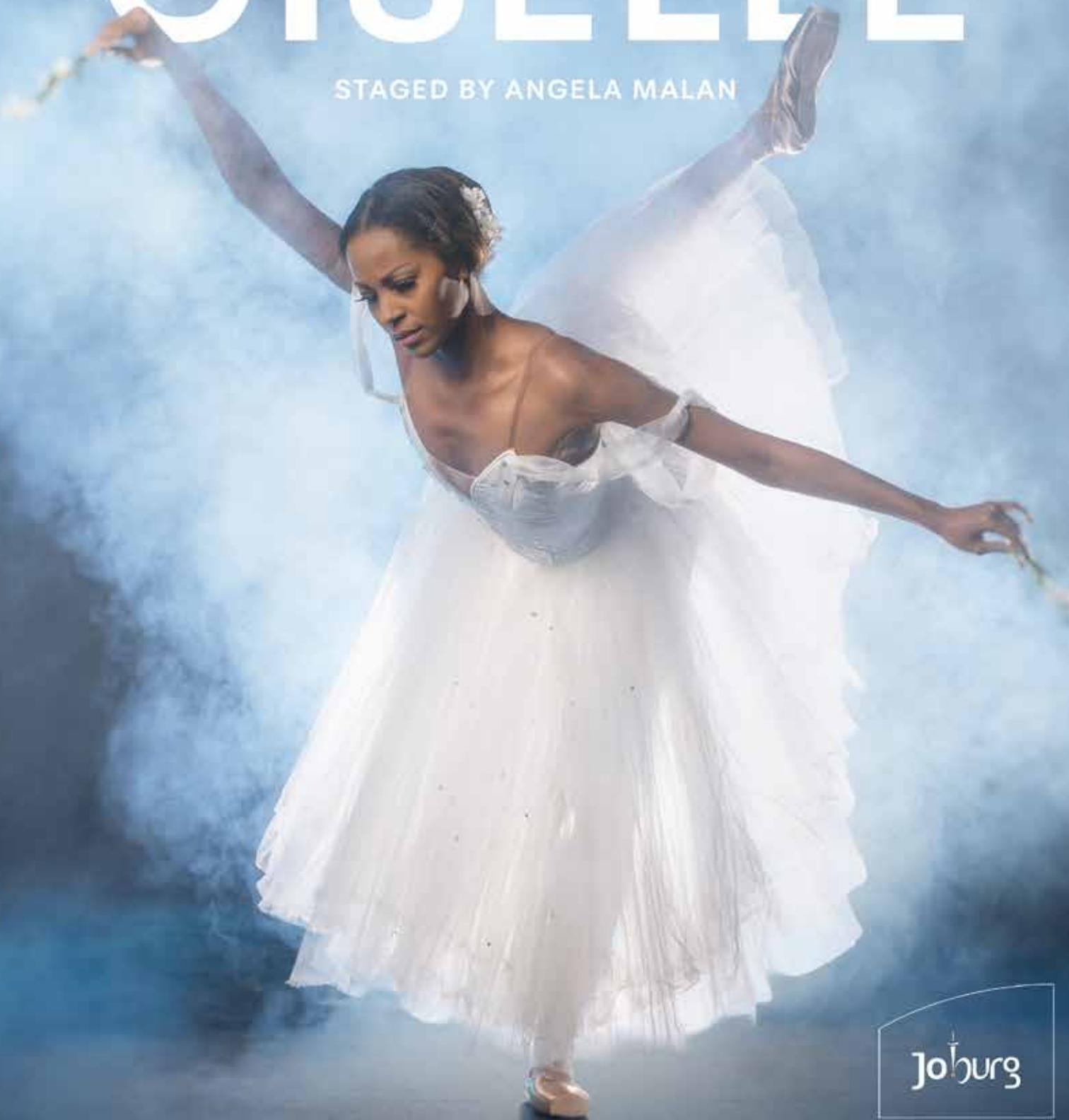
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