25th JOBURG BALLET ANNIVERSARY

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

THE BACCHAE

AN AFRICAN CHORAL BALLET

Neo Muyanga | Mthuthuzeli November | Jay Pather | UJ Choir



Joburg

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THE BACCHAE - AN AFRICAN CHORAL BALLET

Joburg Ballet

UJ Choir

The Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra

Writer & Composer ***Neo Muyanga***

Choreographer ***Mthuthuzeli November***

Director ***Jay Pather***

Assistant to the Choreographer ***Sayaka Ichikawa***

Conductor ***Eddie Clayton***

Set & Costume Design ***Jade Bowers & Students of UJ Faculty of Art, Design Architecture, Theatre 101***

Lighting & AV Designer ***Oliver Hauser***

AV Video Designer ***Noa Hall***

Choirmaster ***Sizwe Mondlane***

Stage / Production ***Vanessa Nicolau***

Joburg Theatre, Johannesburg

3, 10 July at 7pm | 4, 5, 11, 12 July at 2pm | 8*, 9* July at 11am | 2026

*Performance to recorded music

Cover **Latoya Mokoena and Miles Carrot**

Programme photographs **Lauge Sorensen**

ELROY FILLIS-BELL | CEO, JOBURG BALLET

When Joburg Ballet began imagining its 25th anniversary season, we knew that this milestone could not only look back. It had to look forward. It had to ask what ballet, in South Africa, can become when it opens itself fully to the sounds, stories, languages and creative forces of the country we serve.

The seed of *The Bacchae: An African Choral Ballet* was planted in 2023, when I experienced the UJ Choir's performance of *The New Covenant.* In that moment, the possibility became clear: the collective force of choral music and the expressive discipline of ballet needed to meet. Not as accompaniment and dance, but as equal forms of storytelling. From that first impulse came a larger question for Joburg Ballet and UJ Arts & Culture: what might happen if choir and ballet were placed at the centre of a single theatrical language?

In conversation with Pieter Jacobs, it was agreed that this work had to begin with music. Neo Muyanga was therefore the first essential creative anchor. His ability to hold history, ritual, politics, beauty and dissonance in sound made him the ideal artist to imagine a new musical world for Euripides' ancient tragedy through a South African lens.

The next extraordinary alignment was the opportunity to bring Mthuthuzeli November to Joburg Ballet to create his first full-length ballet in his home country. Mthuthuzeli's work continues to travel across international stages and ballet companies with remarkable distinction, yet this production carries a particular significance: a South African choreographer of global stature returning home to make a new full-length work with a South African company, for South African audiences, with South African collaborators.

We are deeply grateful to Professor Jay Pather, whose generosity, intellect and clarity have helped bring these many threads together. His role as director has been vital in keeping the work focused, rigorous and alive to the story we are telling. In a production of this scale and ambition, with ballet, chorus, orchestra, design, text, movement and myth all in conversation, Jay has helped ensure that we remain true to the central dramatic journey and to the audience's experience of it.

This production would not have been possible without the commitment and imagination of our partners at the University of Johannesburg. We extend our sincere thanks to UJ Arts & Culture under the direction of Pieter Jacobs, to the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, and to Jade Bowers for their belief in this collaboration and their willingness to work with Joburg Ballet in building something genuinely new.

We also thank our co-producing partners, Joburg Theatre, and CEO Xoliswa Nduneni-Ngema for providing a home for this premiere, and for their continued partnership in bringing large-scale South African performance to the Mandela Theatre stage.

To our funders and donors, including the National Arts Council's Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme, Friends of the Ballet, Spier Arts Trust, Stein Scop, Estelle Dippenaar, and all those who have contributed to making this work possible, we offer our deepest appreciation. Your support has enabled artists, musicians, designers, makers, dancers, singers and technicians to come together in the creation of a landmark production.

The Bacchae: An African Choral Ballet is a work born from partnership. It is born from the belief that ballet can be expanded without being diminished; that ancient stories can speak urgently to our present; and that, in Johannesburg, new forms can emerge when institutions, artists and communities are willing to listen to one another.

Thank you for joining us at this premiere. We hope this work moves you, unsettles you, and invites you to imagine what the next 25 years of Joburg Ballet might hold.

Elroy Fillis-Bell

Chief Executive Officer, Joburg Ballet



DANE HURST | ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, JOBURG BALLET

I remember sitting in the studio during the earliest days in rehearsal for *The Bacchae: An African Choral Ballet,* listening as Mthuthuzeli reflected on a series of simple yet profound questions: Why me? Why now? Why *The Bacchae*? Later, I heard similar reflections from Neo and other creatives. Their questions have been my own for some time and as I looked around the rehearsal room, I found myself asking again not only why this work, but why this remarkable convergence of artists at this particular moment in time. It feels as though we have all arrived here as part of a larger story - one that none of us can fully see, yet one that continues to reveal itself with every rehearsal, every conversation, every challenge overcome.

There have been moments of uncertainty, moments that have felt like a wilderness. Yet even in those moments there has remained an unwavering belief that what we are striving for and creating must mean something - not only for those of us making it, but for every person who experiences it.

The journey to bring this production to life has not been an easy one. It has demanded courage, resilience and an extraordinary commitment from every individual involved. To our dancers, I sincerely thank them for their tireless dedication, discipline and willingness to embrace both the physical and emotional demands of this work. Artists are, to me, blessed conduits of the divine, vessels through which imagination and the unseen become reality. They are the ones who step willingly into the chaos of creation so that something beautiful, truthful and enduring might emerge. To every member of our team, I thank them for their generosity, hard work and trust. To our production team, whose dedication has carried this work from imagination to the stage; to the magnificent choir, whose angelic voices vibrate into the core of our spirit; and to every artisan, technician, stagehand and supporter whose hands and hearts have shaped this production, my deepest gratitude. No work of this scale is ever created by a single individual. It is born through collective belief, shared purpose and the quiet generosity of countless people who choose to give something of themselves in service of a greater whole.

Finally, to you, our audience, thank you for joining us on this journey. I hope that what unfolds before you resonates long after the curtain falls. May it move you, challenge you and illuminate something within your own spirit, whatever that may be.

Dane Hurst
Artistic Director, Joburg Ballet



PIETER JACOBS | HEAD: UJ ARTS & CULTURE

At the University, we believe that the arts are essential to how societies imagine, question, and shape their futures. Arts & Culture at the University of Johannesburg is proud to collaborate with Joburg Ballet as co-executive producers of *The Bacchae: An African Choral Ballet,* contributing to the production's design, marketing and promotion, and supporting a creative process that brings together artists, scholars, and emerging practitioners in a shared pursuit of excellence and innovation.

Inspired by Euripides' timeless tragedy and reimagined through a distinctly African lens, *The Bacchae: An African Choral Ballet* demonstrates the enduring power of classical works to speak to contemporary realities. In a world increasingly marked by division, uncertainty, and rapid change, the arts offer spaces for dialogue, reflection, and collective imagination. This production reminds us that performance is not only a form of cultural expression, but also a means through which communities confront complex questions of identity, power, belonging, and humanity.

Central to this collaboration is our commitment to nurturing the next generation of creative practitioners. Students from the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA) have contributed to the visual and conceptual development of the production, gaining invaluable experience alongside professionals. Such opportunities embody the University's commitment to transformative learning and to building meaningful connections between education and professional practice.

As a public institution committed to societal impact, the University of Johannesburg recognises the arts as a vital force in fostering empathy, encouraging critical engagement, and strengthening cultural life. We are honoured to be part of a project that celebrates artistic collaboration, advances creative excellence, and expands the possibilities of performance in South Africa.

We thank our partners at Joburg Ballet and all those whose vision and dedication have brought this remarkable work to life, and we invite audiences to experience the power of dance, music, and storytelling to move, challenge, and inspire.

Pieter Jacobs
Head, UJ Arts and Culture



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There are various opportunities to engage with Joburg Ballet, whether the focus is Corporate Social Investment and development initiatives that align with your ESG framework, or Sponsorship and Brand alignment.
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

Jay Pather | Director



Jay Pather is a director, curator, choreographer and an academic. He curates for Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art, the Afrovibes Festival in The Netherlands, is Professor Emeritus at the University of Cape Town and Visiting Professor at Princeton University and co-curates Spier Light Art.

As director of the Institute for Creative Arts (ICA), he curated Infecting the City Public Art Festival and the ICA Live Art Festival in Cape Town. He has also co-curated the French Season Africa 2021, The International Theatre Festival in Sao Paulo and Spielart in Munich.

Recent choreography includes *surface tension* as a result of a Vila Albertine residency in New York and Janni Younge's *The Firebird.* Recent theatre work includes direction of Nick Payne's *Constellations,* Nadia Davids' *Bridling, Hold Still* and *What Remains* for which he won the Fleur du Cap Award for Directing. Recent publications include *Acts of Transgressions*, *Live Art in South Africa* and *Restless Infections*, *Public Art for a Transforming City,* which he conceived and edited. A monograph, *Jay Pather and Spatial Politics*, by Professor Ketu Katrak was recently published.

Pather has served as International Chair at Paris 8 University, as Fellow at University of London, Chair of Jury for the International Award for Public Art in Shanghai and named Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the French Government.

The Bacchae by Euripides in classical Greek style tells an unbearably tragic story. The slighted and banished God of wine, ecstasy and fertility, Dionysus, returns to Thebes and exacts revenge on the autocratic ruler Pentheus. Swept up in the magical energy of Dionysus (also known as Bacchus), the citizens (who become the Bacchae) experience ecstasy and freedom as never before. But like all excess, this has its toll and leads to clashes and violence. Agave, Pentheus' own mother, caught up in these rituals becomes an unwitting perpetrator of an extreme, violent act.

The work is variously seen as an ancient tale that demonstrates that disrespect of the Gods will have consequences. It is read too as a metaphor for, and a warning, that oppressive, patriarchal regimes cannot last forever, that they maintain that volcano beneath them – in the form of suppressed, impoverished, bereft citizens – at their peril and will explode. It is ultimately also a parable for balance between intuition, passion and freedom and order and compassion.

This production of *The Bacchae* is one of translation across time, place, culture and form, a Greek tragedy to a South African reality, an ancient tale brought into this contemporary moment, text meant to be spoken transformed into a choral score, and ultimately a choral ballet that draws from classical ballet as well as classical African forms. The rich and expansive music and dance by Neo Muyanga and Mthuthuzeli November becomes layered across culture and time.

One of the key translations in this work is casting Dionysus as a woman. Through the years, Dionysus has had a history of transgender representation. However, a woman at this time – played with dazzling authority by Kitty Phetla and Monike Cristina – who challenges autocracy and patriarchy while at the same time veering on annihilation and chaos, provided a powerful and inspiring challenge. The challenge we trust brings contemporary nuance to the work, leaving the audiences with something visceral to spark debate as we search for balance and order in our country, one of the most unequal countries of the world. Also, at a moment when citizens increasingly face duplicity and abandon by governments across the globe.

The Bacchae does not pretend to solve societal problems. Ultimately the story provided material for powerful, lush and stirring dance and music and exquisite design. In its translation across forms, cultures, space and time, it does provide impulses for us to feel and think through the complexity and conditions of turbulence and navigate the thickness of this time.

Jay Pather

Mthuthuzeli November | Choreographer



Mthuthuzeli November, born in Cape Town, began dancing at the age of 15 and graduated from Cape Academy of Performing Arts in 2014. He began his choreographic career with the Cape Dance Company in 2014, joining Ballet Black in 2015.

Since then, Mthuthuzeli has created several award-nominated and award-winning works and roles for stage and film around the world, including the Laurence Olivier Award-winning *Ingoma* in 2019/2020. Mthuthuzeli choreographed and performed for British artist Stormzy at the Glastonbury Festival in 2019. He was also commissioned by Cape Town Opera and Cape Town City Ballet to choreograph a film production of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. In 2022, he was nominated for Best Soloist in a Production at the Black British Theatre Awards and for Best Classical Choreography at the Critics' Circle National Dance Awards for his work *The Waiting Game.* He won Best Choreography at the Black British Theatre Awards 2023 for his work *Nina*: *By Whatever Means,* created for Ballet Black. Most recently winner of the Benois de la Danse award in 2025, winning best dance film and nominated for Best Classical Choreography by National Dance Awards 2026.

Mthuthuzeli November continues to create and stage works worldwide, collaborating with the Paris Opera Ballet, Washington Ballet, The Royal Ballet, Northern Ballet, TanzLuzern, Cape Town City Ballet, Ballett Zürich, Ballett am Rhein, Staats Ballett Karlsruhe, Cape Ballet Africa, Dutch National Ballet and Gibney Company. In 2025, he was appointed Charlotte Ballet's Resident Choreographer, where he has created three world premieres: *From Africa with Love* (2023), *Vibes and Variations* (2024) and *As I Am* (2025).

When this project came along I was first excited at the thought of working with Neo and creating my first ballet in South Africa outside Cape Town. As this is my first full evening work it's been really great to be challenged in this way.

Just like any story, how you choose to tell it is the important part. The more I read and became familiar with *The Bacchae,* the more I realised, at least for me, that it is meant to be a sort of epic ballet. It's huge in its scope but deeply human. The challenge was, in the vast language of dance, how would we make the movement speak? As an artist, I come from lots of different backgrounds, from traditional African dance, kwaito, pantsula, ballet, contemporary dance and have gone to a performing arts school. A lot of that then informed what felt important at what point.

I believe this work is about community and time and time again South Africans have been a strong community that comes together. To fight, to celebrate.

Mthuthuzeli November

Neo Muyanga | Writer & Composer



Neo Muyanga burst onto the South African music scene as a co-founder of the acoustic soul duo, BLK Sonshine. His practice spans a wide array of genres, including pop, opera, music theatre, and installation art, frequently blending these forms to create innovative performances that fuse original music with visual storytelling and immersive environments.

Muyanga tours globally as a bandleader, performer, choral conductor, and instigator. His compositions and productions have been featured at major international venues such as the Dutch National Opera & Ballet in Amsterdam (2020), the São Paolo Biennial of Art (2021), the Liverpool Biennial (2022), Opera North in Leeds (2023), the Centre for Art, Research and Alliances in New York (2023), and the Akademie Der Künste in Berlin (2025), further establishing his significance and influence in the world of music and performance.

His work consistently focuses on storytelling, often bringing original music and productions to life through re-animating and repurposing elements of forgotten archives. His academic research focuses on interpreting voice as a powerful sonic vector that influences how we form community and ultimately shape and constitute our collective identity.

Drawing on his roots, Muyanga—born in Soweto—fuses his compositional style with influences from the South African choral tradition, while also blending diverse musical approaches such as Brazilian Samba, the Italian Madrigal, Ethiopian Mezmur, and the Shaabi music of Egypt.

The process of mulling over this *Bacchae* first began for me a number of years ago when I read a translation of Euripides' (5th century BC Athenian playwright) text published by Gilbert Murray in the 1970s. Later I was able to locate versions of the story authored by the legendary Wole Soyinka as well as poet, Anne Carson, and at each reading I found the story resonated deeply with expressions of worry I hear shared over the media as well as in my own personal interactions regarding what feels like an impending societal crisis, both locally and globally.

The Bacchae is a harrowing tale of what the ancient Greeks called Sparagmos – a festival of violence and mayhem involving the tearing of one another from limb-to-limb, of spilling blood in order to work through periods of social upheaval. The ancient Greeks devised the genre of Tragedy as a way of helping a troubled society navigate towards catharsis - reaching a point of resettling the polis (the city) and returning it to 'right behaviour'.

I set out firstly to write a libretto (a sung script) that elaborates on themes of magic, power, violence and seduction which feature prominently in the original play in ways that speak to how these topics may be encountered in our contemporary context: the spectre of a political force that endeavours to run roughshod over a systematically disempowered populous, but which ultimately runs against a wall as denizens welcome into their midst a saviour figure – derisively called 'a foreigner' by detractors - who imports not only political revolution but also wanton personal freedom for citizens, poignantly led by the women of the polis.

I composed a musical score that aims to speak to the preeminence of ritual and trance, making deliberate use of brass, percussion and choral meant to reflect the embodied experience of our own practices of ritualised worship in the African Christian tradition (what used to be collectively termed the 'Ethiopic' churches of old).

Neo Muyanga

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LET'S WALK THE TALK

OUR STORYTELLERS. YOUR STORY.



WE'RE HERE TO WALK THE TALK WITH YOU.

THE STORY

The work is in Three Acts with an Overture and an Epilogue.

The Overture presents all the players:

- *Dionysus, the exiled and disrespected God*
- *The Citizens of the City, Thebes*
- *King Pentheus*
- *His mother, Agave*
- *His grandfather, Cadmus. and*
- *Tiresias, the prophet.*

The growing tension amongst these players creates the conditions for the arrival of Dionysus.

ACT I:

SCENE 1: *Arrival of Dionysus*

Dionysus descends into Thebes. The city is ignited. Two Citizens, the Cynic and the Comrade, debate the merits of the God.

SCENE 2: *Community of Thebes*

The different classes of the society attempt to sweep away tensions, pretense for some, resilience in others.

SCENE 3: *Cloak of Dionysus*

The cloak of Dionysus unfurls the promise of healing. The citizens are lured into Dionysus' plan of revenge.

Living under the oppressive regime of Pentheus, this comes easily to them.

SCENE 4: *Cadmus and Tiresias*

Cadmus, the old king, grandfather to Pentheus, and Tiresius, the prophet, warn about disrespecting Dionysus, getting more and more inebriated as they make their way up the mountain where Citizens from Thebes have been lured by Dionysus.

ACT II:

SCENE 1: *A Bacchanale ritual*

Dionysus and the Citizens of Thebes, who become the Bacchae, perform the sacred and ecstatic but forbidden rituals on the mountain.

SCENE 2: *Pentheus enters*

Pentheus and his soldiers arrive at the mountain and forcibly try to shut down the rituals. A confrontation ensues between Dionysus and Pentheus, followed by a chaotic and violent clash between the soldiers and the Bacchae. Amidst this, Dionysus disappears. Pentheus notices with shock that amongst the Bacchanale is his own mother, Queen Agave.

INTERVAL:

ACT II (continued)

SCENE 3: *On Pentheus' orders*

Sitting alone on his throne, a shaken Pentheus opens this second half.

His chief soldier arrives with the news that Dionysus has been captured. On Pentheus' orders, she is brought in, in chains. However, in the absence of the soldiers, Dionysus soon reveals her power as the choir sing: this is a God of prophecy, when they invade the mind, reason is put to sleep.

SCENE 4: *Temptation of Pentheus*

The Bacchae appear in the forest, transfix and seduce Pentheus.

ACT III:

SCENE 1: *Rite of Dionysus*

The main rites of Dionysus begin with taking Agave into a deep trance. Agave approaches Pentheus.

SCENE 2: *Tragedy of Pentheus*

The tragedy of Pentheus and Agave. Agave in a deep trance sees Pentheus as a lion and with strength given to her by Dionysus begins his tearing apart with the rest of the Bacchae.

SCENE 3: *Cruel Revelation*

Cadmus and Tiresias enter and bring Agave out of her trance, and she confronts what she has done.

SCENE 4: *Denouement – we humans*

With Dionysus' departure, Agave's shame and Pentheus' death, the Citizens are left to contemplate their humanity.

EPILOGUE:

WEIGHT OF OUR TIME

Tiresias leads the Citizens while the Choir sing:

People learn their lesson slow

Skies are filled with grief and deceit

O city vast, your silence hides a cry

Where hopes and shadows lie

A young woman remains behind.

THE CAST

DANCERS

DIONYSUS	*Kitty Phetla / Monike Cristina*
AGAVE	*Monike Cristina / Latoya Mokoena*
PENTHEUS	*Revil Yon / Bruno Miranda*
CADMUS	*Bruno Miranda / Mario Gaglione*
TIRESIAS	*Ryoko Yagyu / Chloé Blair*
THE CYNIC	*Mario Gaglione / Ivan Domiciano*
THE COMRADE	*Thando Mgobhozi*

SINGERS

DIONYSUS 1	*Merna Nicholls*
DIONYSUS 2 / THE CYNIC	*Philasande Malevu*
AGAVE	*Vhahangwele Moopo*
PENTHEUS	*Christopher Vale*
THE COMRADE	*Thabiso Masemene / Tebogo Makgwe*



MONIKE CRISTINA

LATOYA MOKOENA | MILES CARROT

UJ - FADA INTERDISCIPLINARY THEATRE PROJECT

Theatre 101 and the Making of The Bacchae: *An African Choral Ballet*

In the making of *The Bacchae: An African Choral Ballet*, Theatre 101 has been more than an educational project, it has been an important part of the creative life of this production. At its core, Theatre 101 is about access: to process, to professional practice, and to the complex, collaborative world of theatre-making. It gives students the opportunity to move beyond the classroom and encounter the stage as a living site of research, imagination, discipline and exchange.

This has long been the purpose of the FADA Interdisciplinary Theatre Programme. Each year, the project brings second-year students from across the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture into a shared creative process, asking them to work beyond the boundaries of their individual disciplines. It is a space where theatre design, visual art, fashion, jewellery, graphic design, marketing, architecture, multimedia and other design practices meet in response to the demands of a professional production.

For **The Bacchae: An African Choral Ballet,** this interdisciplinary model became especially significant as the production itself is built through convergence: classical text, African choral tradition, ballet, contemporary performance, music, design and ritual imagination all meeting in one ambitious work. Theatre 101 allowed students to enter that convergence in a meaningful way.

The cohort was invited to engage with *The Bacchae* not simply as a set text, but as a world to be interpreted and designed. They were asked to think through the themes of power, belief, excess, community, transformation and rupture, and to consider how these ideas might live through space, image, body, sound, costume, texture, object and atmosphere.

This is what makes Theatre 101 so valuable. It teaches students that performance-making is not the responsibility of one discipline alone. A production is built through many hands, many forms of knowledge and creative decisions. It asks students to think critically, collaborate generously and understand how their ideas must function within a larger artistic vision. In this context, the students are not passive observers. They are emerging creative practitioners being asked to research, propose, test, refine and contribute within a professional framework.

Theatre 101 also reminds us that arts education must be experiential. Students need opportunities to understand how ideas are developed, how collaboration is negotiated, and how the demands of a production shape what finally reaches the stage.

In *The Bacchae: An African Choral Ballet*, this encounter is especially meaningful. The production brings together UJ Arts & Culture, Joburg Ballet, the UJ Choir and an exceptional team of professional artists to reimagine Euripides' classic through an African creative lens. For Theatre 101 students to be part of this process is significant. It places their learning in conversation with artists working at a high level of ambition, scale and excellence.

It also affirms something important about the future of the creative and cultural industries: students must be given real opportunities to participate in the making of work that matters. They must be trusted with complexity. They must be invited into rooms where ideas are being shaped. They must be allowed to understand that their voices, questions and creative instincts have value.

Theatre 101 exists because we believe that the next generation of theatre-makers, designers, cultural workers and creative thinkers need more than instruction. They need meaningful exposure, mentorship and practical experience.

As *The Bacchae: An African Choral Ballet* comes to life, Theatre 101 stands as a reminder that every major production is also a learning space. It is a place where tradition can be questioned, new languages can be formed, and young creatives can begin to see themselves as part of the future of South African performance.

For me, this is the power of Theatre 101. It does not only prepare students for theatre. It invites them into it.

Jade Bowers



UJ Choir and The Bacchae: An African Choral Ballet

In the story of *The Bacchae*, UJ Choir serves as the voice of the community. It is a large-scale work and requires a community representation, and the choir helps bring that world to life.

This production has challenged us in entirely new ways. We have had to think about movement, storytelling, characterisation, and how we embody the people within the narrative. It is no longer only about singing; it is about becoming part of the story.

Over the past few years, the UJ Choir has broadened its approach to performance by exploring styles, genres, and multi-disciplinary works beyond our traditional practice.

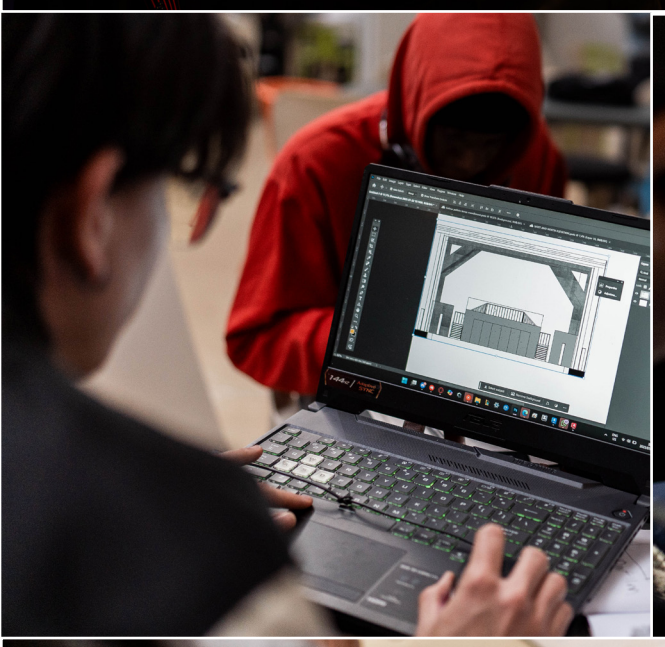
The collaboration between UJ Choir and Joburg Ballet is particularly meaningful because UJ does not offer performing art qualifications. Through projects like this, we are able to expose students to artistic experiences that extend beyond their fields of study. Students who may have joined the choir to sing are now engaging with dance, theatre, storytelling, and large-scale production processes. That exposure is incredibly valuable and fills an important need.

Beyond politics, language, race, and the things that often divide us, this process begins with people listening to one another. We come together around a shared purpose and create something meaningful collectively. Productions like this remind us of what is possible when people collaborate across different backgrounds and experiences.

Sizwe Mondlane















About UJ Choir

Rooted in the vibrant heart of Johannesburg, the University of Johannesburg Choir is a dynamic ensemble of 70 young voices united by the passion and spirit of the rainbow nation. Established in 2005 through the merger of the former RAU Choir and RAU Chorale, the choir comprises students from a wide range of academic disciplines that do not include music.

Over the past two decades, UJ Choir has grown into one of South Africa's most distinguished choral ensembles, proudly serving as a cultural ambassador on some of the world's most prestigious stages. Renowned for its artistic excellence and versatility, the choir has consistently captivated audiences across continents.

In 2015, the choir was awarded the Overall Grand Prix at the Slovakia Folk Competition in Bratislava. Their success continued at the 2018 World Choir Games in Tshwane, where they earned two gold medals in the Mixed Choirs category and winners in the Folk Music category with an outstanding score of 95%. Later that year, they enthralled audiences in China at the International Beijing Chorus Festival, further cementing their reputation as a world-class ensemble.

In 2024, the choir embarked on an exciting new chapter under the leadership of conductor Sizwe Mondlane. His artistic vision builds the choir's rich legacy while shaping a bold and

innovative future that honours tradition and embraces the possibilities of tomorrow.

With a discography of 14 acclaimed albums, the UJ Choir continues to demonstrate remarkable musical versatility and global excellence. Among its celebrated works is *Echoes of Heritage,* an award-winning project album that has amassed more than one million streams, showcasing the choir's commitment to preserving and sharing stories through music. In 2026, the choir expanded its global reach with the release of its latest album, *Spheres*, followed by the distinguished invitation to perform at the World Symposium on Choral Music in Macau, China, as the sole choir representing South Africa.

More than an award-winning ensemble, the University of Johannesburg Choir is a beacon of choral excellence, a platform for artistic growth, and a home where students find community and inspiration.

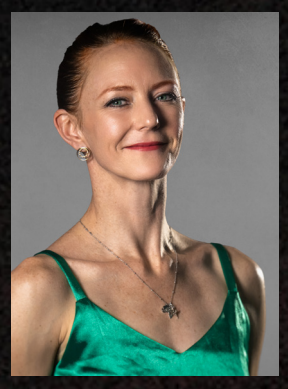
PRINCIPALS



Monike Cristina



Ivan Domiciano



Tammy Higgins



Ryoko Yagyu



Revil Yon

SENIOR SOLOISTS



Mario Gaglione

SOLOISTS



Bruno Miranda



Chloé Blair



Miles Carrott



Gabriella Ghiaroni



Darragh Hourrides



Tumelo Lekana

CORYPHÉES



Miguel Franco-Green



Gabrielle Fairhead



Latoya Mokoena



Thabani Ntuli



Savannah Jacobson

CORPS DE BALLET



Daria D'Orazio



Isabella Godinho



David Maluleka



Thando Mgobhozi



Rhulani Moloi



Botlhale Phalane



Kayleigh Smith

GUEST ARTISTS



Kitty Phetla



Somer February

APPRENTICES



Faakhir Bestman



Maxine Cooke



Owethu Jonas



Mthobisi Molopa

APPRENTICES CONT



Carina Vasconcellos



Jonathan Victor



Creagan Martin



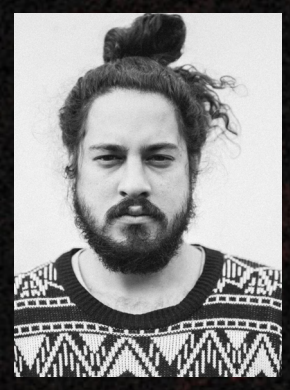
Mabel Mamabolo

CONDUCTOR



Eddie Clayton

ELECTRIC GUITARIST



Keenan Ahrends

VOICE SOLOISTS



Vhahangwele Moopo:
Alto



Thabiso Masemene:
Tenor



Christopher Vale:
Baritone



Philasande Malevu:
Tenor



Tebogo Makgwe:
Tenor



Merna Nicholls:
Soprano

UJ CHOIR:

Sopranos

Ruth Furber, Buhle Mashinini, Thando Fani, Amogelang Lebotse, Philippa Van den Berg, Mbali Mabaso, Lita Manata, Lopang Sebitloane, Anani Rathando, Nontsikelelo Mngenela, Leila Stark, Vongai Fundah, Nkanyezi Kunene, Sibusisiwe Mabena, Alizwa Mhlungu, Abby Moolman

Altos

Sindisiwe Lushaba, Buhle Shabalala, Zinhle Zondi, Abulele Nyembezi, Yamkela Duba, Olwethu Manyoni, Xolile Wutu, Kgaugelo Morele, Mathembandile Dlamini, Sandile Mkhwanazi, Dambisa Dube, Neliswa Mgabhi, Lakhe Nxitywa, Mintirho Mashaba, Bontle Loving, Sihle Klaas, Hloniphile Zungu, Ayabulela Mzozoyana, Akhanyile Ngqiyaza, Nontsikelelo April, Carmel Kalala, Malebo Ledwaba

Tenors

Wam Molosi, Kraus Diyoka Kalombo, Lithitha Mduba, Motheo Makofane, Keketso Nkonke, Musawenkosi Hadebe, Kamohelo Lebakeng, Ofentse Diale, Samuel Kimpinde, Kwanele Dlamini, Kevin Monga, Claypaul Shibalabala, Lesego Mathige

Basses

Franck Tamala, Nyasha Makoni, Mbali Dlova, Thato Makuse, Jonathan Ngoy, Tumelo Matube, Gareth Moyo, Celumusa Zwane, Bonginkosi Mlambo, Musa Tshehla, Thapelo Kalekale, Luyolo Mpiti, Blessing Chogugudza, Mzwandile Buthelezi, Manelisi Shongwe, Lindokuhle Mlonyeni, Sechaba Lebona, Anashe Makota

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Alice in Wonderland

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JOBURG THEATRE

the mandela at JOBURG THEATRE

JOHANNESBURG PHILHARMONIC

BONGANI TEMBE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

JOHANNESBURG PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

FIRST VIOLIN
Miro Chakaryan **
Tesmarie Kachelhoffer
Melale Mantu
Jonathan Mayer

SECOND VIOLIN
Daline Wilson
Bonolo Kgaile
Serge Cuca
Mlungisi Zulu

VIOLA
Esther Spies
Juretha Swanepoel
Kgaugelo Mpyane

CELLO/ DOUBLE BASS
Susan Mouton *
Peta-Ann Holdcroft
Jurgens De Lange

FLUTE
Malanè Hofmeyr-Burger

OBOE
Peter Jaspan

COR ANGLAIS
Lesley Stansell

CLARINET
Chrisna Smith

BASSOON
Penelope Fraser *

FRENCH HORN
Jerome Daniels

TRUMPET
Richard Kingon

TROMBONE
Etienne Mecloen

TUBA
Danel Mecloen

TIMPANI
Magdalena de Vries

PERCUSSION
Matthew Downey *
Mpho Chuene

KEY: ** Concert Master | * Principal | # Cadet

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Technical support provided by Vanessa Nicolau Theatre and Events (Pty) Ltd | **Production Manager for Joburg Ballet:** Vanessa Nicolau | **Production Manager for UJ Arts and Culture:** Karabo Legoabe | **Lighting Designer:** Oliver Hauser | **Stage Manager:** Vanessa Nicolau | **Followspotters:** Gugu Xabu, Jo Sathegke, Donald Gololo | **Stage Technicians:** Mike Mokwena, Lawrence Leburu, Cedric Mulauzi

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

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A Municipal Entity of the City of Joburg

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