

Zabalaza Theatre Festival to showcase 150 artists, 40 productions

The annual Zabalaza Theatre Festival will be held at the Baxter Theatre Centre in Cape Town from 10-17 March 2018. This year's festival will feature nearly 150 artists in more than 40 theatre productions and events.

The award-winning actor and director Mdu Kweyama has been appointed as curator of this year's festival and he joins the team which is spearheaded by artistic director Bongile Mantsai along with coordinator Zoleka Helesi, administrator Lauren Hannie, and Monde Myataza from sales and marketing. Kweyama has a master's degree in directing from UCT, is the 2016 Fleur du Cap New Director award-winner, and a former Baxter artist-in-residence. Some of his work at the Baxter in recent years include Reza de Wet's *Missing* and *Woza Albert*.



Carlo Daniels in Klippies - image by Sithembile Junior

Family Carnival Weekend

Now in its eighth year, the Zabalaza Theatre Festival kicks off with the newly imagined Family Carnival Weekend which takes place all day on Saturday, 10 and Sunday, 11 March. This year's festival will see all the venues and spaces at the Baxter once again pulsate with vibrant works and fresh new talent and activities for the entire family. These include a jumping castle and face painting for the young ones, food, clothing and accessories stalls and a host of other fun activities over the two days.

There's comedy, *oMpondo Zihlanjiwe*, on Saturday, 10 March at 7pm, with 13 stand-up comedians performing in isiXhosa. The show is headlined by Siya Seya and Khanyisa Bunu, with comedians from Polokwane, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and Cape Town, featuring the future of South African comedy.

Real Art Wednesdays

The RAW (Real Art Wednesdays) showcase on Sunday, 11 March and Friday, 16 March will feature singers, bands,

dancers, rappers, poets and beatboxers, all taking to the stage to entertain audiences.

Other performances on the weekend line-up include six productions from the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport's (DCAS) Game Changer and After School Programme with participants from schools in the Overberg, Cape Winelands, Central Karoo, and Eden Districts, as well as six productions from the Best of the DCAS Drama Festivals, selected from the Cape Winelands and Eden Districts.



Sibongiseni Nonbeleko, Siyanthanda Poni in The Tie - image by Sithembele Junior

Main festival

The main festival, with some 28 productions on the line-up, runs from 12-16 March with daily shows at 10.30am, 12pm, 2pm, 4pm and 7pm throughout the week. The full programme is available from the Baxter website at www.baxter.co.za. These productions were chosen from the four mini-festivals, which took place over two weekends during February in Khayelitsha, Delft, Athlone, and Langa.

The festival will culminate with the award ceremony on Saturday, 17 March, where awards will be handed out to artists and productions in various categories and the Best of the Zabalaza Festival winner will be announced.

Platform for Special Talent

One of this year's highlights is the introduction of the Baxter's brand new Platform for Special Talent, made possible through funding from the City of Cape Town. This vital initiative emerged from a need to 'bridge the gap' between opportunities for young, new theatre-makers and for well-known established ones. The aim is to develop and sustain theatre in South Africa by identifying talented theatre practitioners and providing them with a platform to improve and expose their artistic portfolio to a greater audience. These artists are creating excellent work and this initiative will provide them with opportunities to enhance their skills through mentorship and immersion in a professional theatrical space, designed to enrich their experience and skills as they build viable careers in the performing and creative arts environments.



Lwanda Sindaphi, Qondiswa James in *Sleeping with the Enemy* - image by Sithembile Junior

Baxter CEO and artistic director Lara Foot has once again introduced the Zabalaza Challenge where she has bought 40 tickets at only R30 each to the performances at this year's festival and she challenges individuals, businesses, and the public to join her. "I would like to invite you to invest in the future of our theatre-makers, by joining me in this challenge," says Foot. "These tickets will be given to learners who cannot afford to buy any. Furthermore, the takings at the door go straight back to the young artists who are presenting their work at the festival. This money, therefore, goes back into the community so that more plays can be produced by these talented artists." To join the challenge go to www.baxter.co.za/ZabalazaChallenge.

City Varsity bursary

Continuing its mission of creating further and on-going developmental prospects for young artists, another important addition this year, is a three-year bursary from City Varsity to any of the participants on the main programme and who apply to Zabalaza. The successful recipient will visit the Cape Town campus during 2018 and meet with curriculum advisors to decide on a course of their choice. A one-year internship at The Fugard Theatre has also been made available for a lucky incumbent selected by the Zabalaza team to hone their craft and gain further insight into the operations of the theatre.

"Our gratitude always to our partners, benefactors, and supporters, who continue to believe and invest in the work that Zabalaza does," says festival curator Mdu Kweyama. "We are super excited about the programme and I would like to welcome all the performers and theatre-makers to the 2018 festival. We are especially proud of the new additions to the

line-up and, in particular, the opportunities that we are able to present to the artists.”

Tickets cost just R30 for any production, except for the RAW (Real Art Wednesdays) showcases on 11 and 16 March which are R50 and the comedy showcase *oMpondo Zihlanjiwe*, on Saturday, 10 March at 7pm, which is R80.

Booking for the eighth annual Zabalaza Theatre Festival from 10 to 17 March, is through Webtickets on 086 111 0005, online at www.webtickets.co.za or at selected Pick n Pay outlets. Visit the Baxter’s website www.baxter.co.za for the full programme.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>