

Best of Zabalaza 2020 winner *First Accused* to be staged at Baxter

Mava Silumko's *First Accused* will run for a limited period, with six performances only, at the Baxter Theatre Centre in Cape Town from 12 to 21 November 2020.

All performances will be limited to 50% capacity, with Covid-19 protocols in place as regulated at Level 1 during lockdown. These will include the availability of hand sanitisers, tracking and tracing recorded, wearing of masks and physical distancing. Patrons and audience members are advised to arrive at least an hour before the start of the performance to avoid delays.



Sinazo Guga, Buhle Sam, Lihle Qobongoshe - © Mark Wessels

The riveting play was selected out of 36 productions at the 10th annual Baxter Zabalaza Theatre Festival, which was held in March, just days before lockdown and the national state of disaster were announced.

First Accused looks at how the South African justice system fails the women who suffer emotional, physical or sexual abuse at the hands of their spouses. Femicide and gender-based violence against women and children, often perpetrated by their partners or spouses, have reached pandemic proportions in South Africa, making the timing of this production perfect, critical and vital.



Buhle Sam, Sinazo Guga, Lihle Qobongoshe - © Mark Wessels

The cast of four is made up of writer and director Mava Silumko with Buhle Sam, Sinazo Guga and Lihle Qobongoshe. Silumko, from Strand in the Helderberg, has been a participant at the festival for the past seven years. In 2017, he was awarded the Most Outstanding Artist winner of the Zabalaza Festival. Cast member Sinazo Guga has twice been nominated in the Best Supporting Actress (2017 and 2020).



2020 Baxter Zabalaza Theatre Festival winners announced

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“Winning the Best of Zabalaza for 2020 is one of my greatest achievements to date and, given that I have been participating in the festival since 2013, my dream and goal was always to receive this award,” says Silumko. “Over the years, I attended many workshops at The Baxter where I learnt so much about creating content and I am grateful that it has paid off. I hope that this production will help to create awareness around this scourge which has and continues to ravage South Africa. Enough is enough - we have been battling with this issue for too long now.”

Silumko started writing *First Accused* in 2018, after seeing how women and children are suffering from abuse and murders in South Africa. He started to do extensive research on the subject and at the time, the statistics showed that about 4,000

women were incarcerated for self-defence, making it 2.6% of the prison population.



Front Sinazo Guga, Lihle Qobongoshe, Buhle Sam, Back Mava Silirko - © Mark Wessels

“I am delighted to congratulate Mava and his cast on this important production, given the alarming rate of gender-based violence against women in our country. Furthermore, it is a sensitive and poetic work that tackles an out-of-control reality experienced by so many women daily,” says Zabalaza artistic director Mdu Kweyama.

Ticket prices for First Accused are R60 and booking is through Webtickets on 086 111 0005, online at www.webtickets.co.za or at Pick n Pay stores.

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