

Stars align for Opera UCT at Plácido Domingo's Operalia 2023

 By [Terry Levin](#)

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Many people may know Plácido Domingo as one of the three tenors from the 'opera supergroup' that rose to household fame in the late 1990's. Domingo, the creator of Operalia, the world's premier opera competition, will be present in the opera house from 30 October to 5 November 2023. The competition is designed to identify and honour up-and-coming stars worldwide.



UCT Opera graduates taking part in the Operalia Competition under the conductorship of Plácido Domingo, at Cape Town's Artscape Theatre from 30 October - 5 November 2023. Pictured: Sakhiwe Mkosana (baritone); Nonbulelo Yende (soprano); Luvo Maranti (tenor); Siphokazi Mbiteno (mezzo soprano) and Thando Mjandana (tenor).

The huge news is that no less than five of the 34 successful applicants are alumni of Cape Town's Opera UCT, as is the honour of the competition being hosted in Cape Town at The Artscape Opera House for the first time in its 30-year existence.

Bizcommunity spoke to Jeremy Silver, director of Opera UCT, who has worked with four of the five local candidates, about why the global opera world such as the Royal Opera House, London and Juilliard School in New York, has eyes on South Africa's wealth of operatic talent.

"At the moment, we very much have the eyes of the opera world abroad on us, particularly in the UK. Next week, I've got the Royal Opera House coming out, I've got people from Juilliard coming. They're all looking. They're all wanting to see who we've got next, and I think we're very fortunate that we're in that sort of spotlight, it's fantastic," says Silver.

He explains that while Opera UCT is a training institution, really the only one on the continent, and also the oldest opera establishment, having been around for over 70 years and offering the full range of skills that opera singers need to have, its public face is always performing, so they have recently rebranded to be recognised as a public performing institution as well as a training one.

The five UCT alumni that audiences can expect to hear at the Operalia competition are:

Luvo Maranti (Tenor)



Luvo Maranti. Image supplied

Hailing from the Eastern Cape and currently based in Hermanus, Overstrand, Luvo Maranti is immersed in the opera milieu. Not only is he a talented tenor, but he is also proactive in forging his own career path, raising his own sponsorship, and managing all aspects of his promising career trajectory.

Sakhiwe Mkosana (Baritone)



Sakhwe Mkosana. Image supplied

Also blazing his own trail, via his home in Queenstown and the University of Fort Hare, is UCT alumni Mkosana, currently snapped up on the Young Artist's Programme in Frankfurt.

Nombulelo Yende (Soprano)



Nombulelo Yende. Image supplied

If the name Yende sounds familiar, it is probably because she is the younger sister of Pretty Yende, a former Operalia winner, who has become a household name locally and around the world, performing at the most prestigious opera houses and at the coronation of King Charles in May this year. Yende is also a resident of Frankfurt.

Siphokazi Molteno (Mezzo Soprano)



Siphokazi Molteno. Image supplied

Formidable South African mezzo-soprano Siphokazi Molteno is said to be poised to become one of the most important voices of her generation. She's gone straight to the Metropolitan Opera in NYC, making her debut as Flora in their 2022–23 season of *La Traviata*.

Thando Mjandana (Tenor)



Thando Mjandana. Image supplied

Thando Mjandana was a member of the Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, UK and is now busy pursuing a freelance career.

Silver elaborates on the rigors of training that he helps UCT students to hone. It's not only about voice and vocals; to make it on the global stage requires the ability to master the multiple languages of opera, such as Italian, German, and French as well as act, to fully convey the range of human emotions that are the essence of the operatic genre.

"There seems to be a huge amount more raw talent in this country than in other countries... with great vocal riches, great vocal potential, great instincts for opera and a love for opera... Like nowhere else in the world. It's quite extraordinary," adds Silver.



Plácido Domingo's Operalia comes to Cape Town

23 Oct 2023



The Operalia competition is a great marketing opportunity for South Africa and our opera singers, as much as our rugby team, are proving one of our most valuable resources. A good reason for getting down to Artscape to support the hard work of our disproportionately large pool of operatic talent is the knowledge that they will likely soon be snapped up internationally.

Another reason is that our unique brand of South African diversity is reinventing opera before our eyes, leading the way for international companies to expand their own cultural diversity

As the only opera school on the continent, UCT could be said to be driving these trends. Especially if you are a storyteller, content creator, cultural influencer, or brand, infinite opportunities exist to catch this wave and support the artists, musicians, and educators who work so hard to make us proud on a global stage.

From 30 October to 5 November, don't miss Operalia, the world's foremost opera competition, taking place on our doorstep in Cape Town for the first time.

Ticket details

Booking for the preliminary rounds and finals is through Artscape Dial A Seat 021 4217695, on the Computicket website [here](#) and at Computicket outlets.

There are two quarterfinals on 30 October and 31 October at 3pm and 2pm respectively and the semi-finals on 1 November at 4pm are R400. If still available, a combination ticket for all the preliminary rounds costs R500; tickets for the final round on 5 November are R1500.

The award ceremony takes place immediately after the judges' deliberations when the final candidate has sung.

The final round of the competition will be livestreamed by medici.tv free of charge; the semi-finals will be streamed on the Operalia [Facebook](#) page.

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