

What to expect at the 48th National Arts Festival

The National Arts Festival has announced its return with an immersive in-person event for 2022.



Image supplied: A scene from Daniel Buckland's *Urban Cricus*

The Festival plans to re-emerge with a carefully focused and curated experience enhanced by an irrepressible burst of Fringe spontaneity and creativity where experimentation, expression and visibility will contribute to re-igniting the South African arts ecosystem.

Artistic director Rucera Seethal said, “There is a broad offering. Yes, we’ve tightly curated the programme, but also catered for everyone, and included some surprises and provocations too.”

Dance, theatre, visual arts, music, film, illusion and edgy, new cross-genre and interactive arts experiences will form part of the programme. The Festival will also host a residency programme that brings artists to Makhanda for a period of time prior to the event to work on collaborative projects and engage with Makhanda’s local scene.



What to expect at the 2022 Cotton Festival

1 Apr 2022



The Schools Festival aims to reignite the Festival’s long-time role as a winter holiday destination for young people and the ever-popular free Sundowner Concert will be staged daily at the Monument.

The Village Green will be back in action with food trucks, craft vendors and a festive outdoor seating area for warming up winter bodies in the sunshine between shows. Despite the lockdown years, Makhanda’s restaurant scene is still robust and growing – and The Long Table will be back, as the town welcomes the return of their valued annual visitors.

A peek into the 2022 programme

The much anticipated works of the 2021 Standard Bank Young Artists, Buhlebezwe Siwani (Visual Art), Thando Doni (Theatre), Cara Stacey (Music), Vuma Levin (Jazz), Gavin Krastin (Performance Art) and Kristi-Leigh Gresse (Dance) will bring fresh perspectives from some of the country’s most innovative creatives.

2021 Standard Bank Young Artist for Theatre, Thando Doni's new work, *Ngqawuse*, questions the decisions of our past and how those decisions affect us today. The play is influenced by the story of Xhosa prophet, Nongqawuse, whose visions spurred the cattle killings of 1856/7 and resultant famine. Borrowing aesthetics from African ritual, music, song and dance, Ngqawuse's story is one of love and sacrifice, doom and misery and asks questions of what we are left with, what to do with the untreated wounds of our history.



Image supplied: The 2021 Standard Bank Young Artists

Gavin Krastin (2021 Standard Bank Young Artist for Performance Art), a resident of Makhanda, is known for creating collaborative opportunities for artists. He will stage *12 Labours*, a reimagining of the Twelve Labours of Hercules, in which the conventional masculinities and heroism of old are localised and adapted into twelve acts focused on repairing and maintaining the infrastructure in Makhanda – acts of service as performance art.

With a title inspired by a phrase from the 1992 Brenda Fassie song *iStraight Le Ndaba*, Koleka Putuma's poetry collection *Hullo, Bu-bye, Koko, Come In* has been adapted into a stage play of the same title in a multimedia exploration of poetry, sound, and projection mapping. The piece considers archives, names, lives and legacies of in/visibility, memory, and black women in performance. Created and performed by Koleka Putuma, the work will also feature visual design by Inka Kendzia and composition and sound design by Mr Sakitumi.

Sello Maake kaNcube makes a welcome return to the Festival, directing *Bloke & His American Bantu*. Written by author and academic Siphiwo Mahala, it's a two-man play that reimagines the camaraderie between prominent intellectuals, Bloke Modisane and Langston Hughes, writers and activists from Sophiatown and Harlem (New York) respectively. Performed by

duo Anele Nene (Bloke) and Josias Dos Moleele (Langston), the play shines the spotlight on the role of artists and intellectuals in forging international solidarity during one of the darkest hours in the history of South Africa.



Image by Evaan Jason Ferreira: Gavin Krastin's *12 Labours*

The Eastern Cape Philharmonic Orchestra will present *Homeland*, bringing together the talents of Tim Moloi, Gloria Bosman and Monde Msutwana to pay tribute to some of the greatest songs and song-writers from South Africa. Famous songs by Vusi Mahlasela, Alan Silinga, Johnny Clegg, Miriam Makeba, Brenda Fassie and Mafikizolo, are given a new life by the Orchestra and soloists, who will have you on your feet, dancing and singing along, as we move through the years re-visiting these great moments from our musical history.

Dance piece *Mnquma*, performed by Xolisile Bongwana, with additional choreography from David April, traces the quest of a man reconnecting to his roots and reclaiming the legacy of his ancestors. *Mnquma* is strongly associated with original music compositions by Bongwana, Elvis Sibeko and No-Finish, a traditional Xhosa musician who achieved much recognition throughout her lifetime and is regarded as the master of 'uhadi' music.

Wezile Harmans' performance, *We Regret to Inform You*, explores the notion of a 'daily hustle' against the backdrop of South Africa's increasing unemployment rate. Seen through the stages of our personal vulnerability as individuals living without work, looking for work, getting work, fighting to keep work and losing the position that was supposed to give us stability in the face of disorienting bureaucracies.



Image supplied: Wezile Harman's *We Regret To Inform You*

Families can expect experiences suitable for children too, including Cirque du Soleil alumni Daniel Buckland's, *Urban Circus* - a love letter to the thrilling acrobatics of big city life. A talented troupe of Johannesburg's hottest circus artists will take the audience on a wheel-spinning, nail-biting, day-dreaming escapade through the city.

Urban Circus shows the City's inhabitants as they try to strive, survive and thrive in a delicate and dextrous dance through the intoxicating frenzy of urban life.

Little ones will be spellbound once again by the hugely popular free Children's Concert, in which children are taught the names, sounds and roles of instruments in a fun, interactive way.



Tag hosts Italian lifestyle event sequel

31 Mar 2022



The Festival will also present a programme of comedy and music as well as a professional programme for artists to reconnect and engage on a number of topics. International producers have been invited to the Festival and will be scouting for work to present on stages and at festivals abroad.

The Festival will take place in Makhanda from 23 June - 3 July. The full programme and ticket sales will be available [here](#) from 3 May 2022.