

## All Performance Companies Biographies and Synopsis (in order of the programme)

### Sbonakaliso Ndaba



Title of performance: **Words around the collar**



### Biography:

Sbonakaliso Ndaba is a distinguished South African dancer, choreographer, and educator whose work is rooted in African identity and storytelling. Born in Durban, her passion for dance began in childhood and led to her discovery by Alfred Hinkel in 1992, launching her training at Jazzart Dance Theatre. She co-founded PHENDUKA Dance Theatre and later returned to Jazzart as a teacher and choreographer. In 2015, she co-established Indoni Dance, Arts and Leadership Academy, offering vocational training to youth from under-served communities. In 2022, she co-founded SboNdaba Dance, a Cape Town-based non-profit focused on full-time

dance training and original choreography. Her work has reached global audiences, including performances in Australia and Shanghai, China. It has featured in widely viewed music videos like “Yamore.” Ndaba’s career spans over three decades, marked by a commitment to cultural heritage, youth empowerment, and a contemporary African aesthetic that continues to shape South African performance.

**Synopsis:**

We sit around the table when we build empires, and when we destroy them. Laws are passed, lives bargained, and futures sold—all in the same breath. The good and the bad, the innocent and the guilty, all bound by the weight of decisions made around that table."

The performance reflects Sbonakaliso Ndaba’s choreographic approach, grounded in care, community, and peace education. It celebrates individuality while fostering trust, respect, and togetherness, with contact and partnering work that build confidence and transform the dancers into a caring family.

First Performed: Meraki Festival, Artscape, 1 March 2025.

## Desiré Davids



Title of performance: **"#1Fragment QUI EST-CE"**. Choreographed and performed by **Desiré Davids**. Music: Benoit Bottex (France / South Africa)



### Biography:

“Desiré Davids also marked the dance festival of Seine Saint-Denis. She resolves the divide between tradition and modernity by freely drawing from all repertoires, classical, contemporary, traditional, etc. An inventive and technical dancer, she shines in her singularity. If women are counted in the companies of the African continent, she, for her part, gives without counting.” *Libération June 6, 2005*

Born in South Africa, Desiré obtained a teaching diploma from the University of Cape Town Ballet School (in 1990), as well as a certificate in performing arts specializing in dance (in 1991). From 1992 to 1998, she worked as a soloist and principal artist for two leading South African dance companies, 1996: she founded with her compatriot Boyzie Cekwana, The Floating Outfit Project, recognized as one of Africa's most innovative and forward-thinking

companies, Montpellier Danse, Biennale de la danse de Lyon, Les Rencontres chorégraphiques internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis, Festival d'Avignon, Centre national de la danse de Paris and Théâtre de la Ville... Desiré has performed in many leading festivals and theatres in France, but also in Denmark, Sweden in the USA ... and has worked with, among others, Robyn Orlin, Salia nĩ Seydo, Opio Okach, Faustin Linyekula, Vincent Mantsoe and Pascal Montrouge.

For her personal creations, Desiré has benefited from numerous residencies, in particular the exchange program between the Departmental Theaters of Reunion Island and the Centre National de la Danse, Pantin (Paris) as well as a **6-month residency grant in 2014** at the **Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart, Germany**. In 2015/16 she strengthens ties with other female choreographers from the African continent, Gaby Saranouffi (Madagascar) and Edna Jaime (Mozambique).

She relocated to France in 2017 and premiered her solo "*TRANSIT*", during the Festival *Question de Danse* at KLAP, Maison pour la Danse in Marseille on 7 October, followed by presentations at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town-South Africa, Théâtre Liberté in Toulon-France, Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo in July 2018...amongst others.

With her new structure KoKerBoom/ Cie Desiré Davids she favors collaborations and interdisciplinary exchanges. Performances blend several disciplines, contemporary dance blends with theatre, live music, installations, exhibitions, and visual arts. Her piece, "*XV DE DANSE*", was commissioned for the official welcoming ceremony of the SPRINGBOKS (South African rugby team) in Toulon for the 2023 RUGBY WORLD CUP.

Including young dancers who are beginning to create their own work is a deliberate choice by Desiré Davids. This intention extends the mentoring program led by the choreographer as part of The Floating Outfit Project in Durban, South Africa. In **2025 Cie Desiré Davids** was a recipient of the **IF EXPORT 2025** funding from the French Institute in Paris for their International tour to the Southern African and Indian Ocean regions.

### **Synopsis of performance:**

In *#1 FRAGMENTS*, Desiré Davids, accompanied by live sound artist Benoît Bottex, presents a 20-minute dance/music duo that reflects on identity, intersectionality, and liminality. Drawing from her 2010 work *Who is this beneath my skin?*, she revisits personal and political experiences as a mixed-race South African woman now living in France. The performance, part of her 2025 Southern African tour, invites audiences into an intimate exploration of self and community, followed by open discussions on shared journeys and collective belonging.

## Smeetha Maharaj and Nateshwar Dance Company

Photo

### Biography:

Smeetha Maharaj is a pioneering South African dance educator, performer, and choreographer, widely recognized as one of the first to teach Kathak in South Africa. Trained under Guru Nataraj Gopi Krishna in Mumbai, she founded the Nateshwar Dance Academy in 1980 and the Nateshwar Dance Company in 1998, with branches in Johannesburg and Cape Town in 2025. Maharaj teaches Kathak, folk, and Bollywood dance, blending classical discipline with expressive freedom. Her classes, held weekly at Kendra Hall in Durban, attract diverse age groups and promote cultural connection. She has choreographed acclaimed productions such as *Chalo Cinema*, and *Ticket to Bollywood*, and works closely with the Indian High Commission to foster intercultural dialogue. A founding member of the South African Indian Dance Association (SAIDA), Maharaj has shaped the national dance landscape through education, performance, and mentorship. Her daughter continues her legacy, and her work remains central to preserving and evolving Indian dance traditions in South Africa.

## **Sara Matchett**



Title of Performance: **An Apprenticeship with Sorrow**



### **Biography:**

Dr Sara Matchett (Performer and Writer) Sara Matchett is an award-winning Theatre Director and Associate Professor at the Centre for Theatre, Dance & Performance Studies (CTDPS) at the University of Cape Town (UCT). She is also an Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework® the Regional Co-ordinator of the Fitzmaurice Institute for Africa, and an Advanced Breathwork Practitioner with Breathwork Africa ([www.breathworkafrica.co.za](http://www.breathworkafrica.co.za)). Her teaching profile centres around practical and academic courses that include voice, acting,

performance-making, applied theatre, and performance analysis. She is especially interested in transdisciplinary modes of creating. Her research explores the body as a site for generating images for the purpose of performance making and specifically focuses on investigating the relationship between breath and emotion, and breath and image, in an attempt to make performance that is inspired by a biography of the body. Her particular interests are in embodied practices that focus on presencing, co-sensing, co-laboring and co-generating as a way of transforming egosystems to ecosystems. As co-founder and Artistic Director of The Mothertongue Project women's arts collective, Sara has experience in the field of theatre and performance as a performance-maker, performer, director, and facilitator.

### **Synopsis:**

*An Apprenticeship with Sorrow* invites audiences into a visceral meditation on collapse—personal, collective, and planetary. Drawing from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the production weaves physicality and voice to explore loss, memory, and resilience. Inspired by lived experiences with dementia and the broader unravelling of ecological and social systems, it reframes grief as a profound act of emergence. What can collapse teach us about interconnectedness and regeneration? This work invites us to stay with the trouble and reimagine loss as a pathway to hope and solidarity.

### **Nina Callaghan**



Title of the performance: **An Apprenticeship with Sorrow**

### **Biography:**

Nina Callaghan is the Co-Director of the Centre for Sustainability Transitions at Stellenbosch University (SU). She is seeking better questions and practice for development, politics, education, family-making and being together on this mysterious planet. Her MPhil builds

theory for relational governance practice, focusing on partnerships, strategic coalitions and institutional work to shape governance outcomes for transition. She is currently a PhD candidate extending her inquiry into ways to navigate planetary collapse, with questions framed around embodied sustainability. She has co-edited a book on state capture, *Anatomy of State Capture* (Callaghan, Foley & Swilling, 2021) and co-authored book chapters for *The Oxford Handbook of the South African Economy*, (Oqubay, Tregenna & Valodia, 2021) and *The Evolving Structure of South Africa's Economy: Faultlines and Futures* (Mohamed, Ngoma & Baloyi, 2023). Nina serves as the Transformation Committee Chair for the faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at SU. She is a lecturer for the Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Development. Nina has previously worked as a director of the NGO, Children's Radio Foundation, as a broadcast journalist and has experience as a theatre performer

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*Sara Matchett - Writer, Performer & Set Designer and Sound Designer and Creator (together with Mangaliso Ntekiso)*

*Nina Callaghan - Writer, Performer & Set Designer*

*Lwanda Sindaphi - Director, Set Designer & Lighting Designer*

*Nicola Pilkington - Video & Projection Designer*

*Mangaliso Ntekiso - Sound Designer & Creator (together with Sara Matchett)*

*Ropafadzo Chatindo - Stage Manager & AV Operator*

*K.C. Motseki - Assistant Stage Manager & Sound Operator*

## **Lwanda Sindaphi**



Title or performance: **An Apprenticeship with Sorrow**

### **Biography:**

Lwanda Sindaphi is an award-winning, published playwright, theatre director, and poet with an Honours degree in script writing from the University of Cape Town and a certificate in physical theatre from Magnet Theatre. He has 10+ years of experience in the South African theatre industry. He is well-versed in adopting contemporary performance techniques and avant-garde theatre methodology to produce ground-breaking productions. Lwanda is a collaborative leader with a proven track record of delivering stellar live and site-specific performances. He is also an accomplished poet, delivering performances at Grounding Sessions, Naked Word Festival, and Badilisha Poetry. Lwanda has extensive international experience as a performer and director, travelling to France, Germany, Switzerland, Dubai, and Mauritius. Selected theatre credits include KUDU (3 Fleur Du Cap Awards), Esiseleni Sedini, Ingqanga, and Songs of this Soil (NAC Trade Fair award for Best Playwright) as writer, director, and contributor. In 2023 he directed Naida Davids' What Remains as well as Woza Albert for AFDA, Cape Town. More recently, Lwanda won the award for Best Actor and Best Production for his autobiographical play, Purpose at the Zabalaza Theatre Festival, Baxter. He currently lectures at the Centre for Theatre, Dance & Performance Studies at UCT and serves as the Creative Director of Lingua Franca Spoken Word Movement. He is director of An Apprenticeship with Sorrow (2025).