

# The National Arts Festival turns 50 and the mood is bold!

The 2024 National Arts Festival [programme](#) is live and available for browsing online and booking.



Image supplied. 2023 Standard Bank Young Artist for music, Zoë Modiga

Tickets remain exceptionally affordable, with prices ranging from R 30 – R 175, and can be found [online](#). The Festival takes place from 20–30 June 2024.

## Turning 50

It's come a long way from the cream, embossed programme and cash box-office that launched the National Arts Festival in 1974.

This year, the Festival turns 50, and the artistic community is looking back on where it has come from, reflecting on how it has grown and changed; and looking ahead to its future as an evolving country and its people.

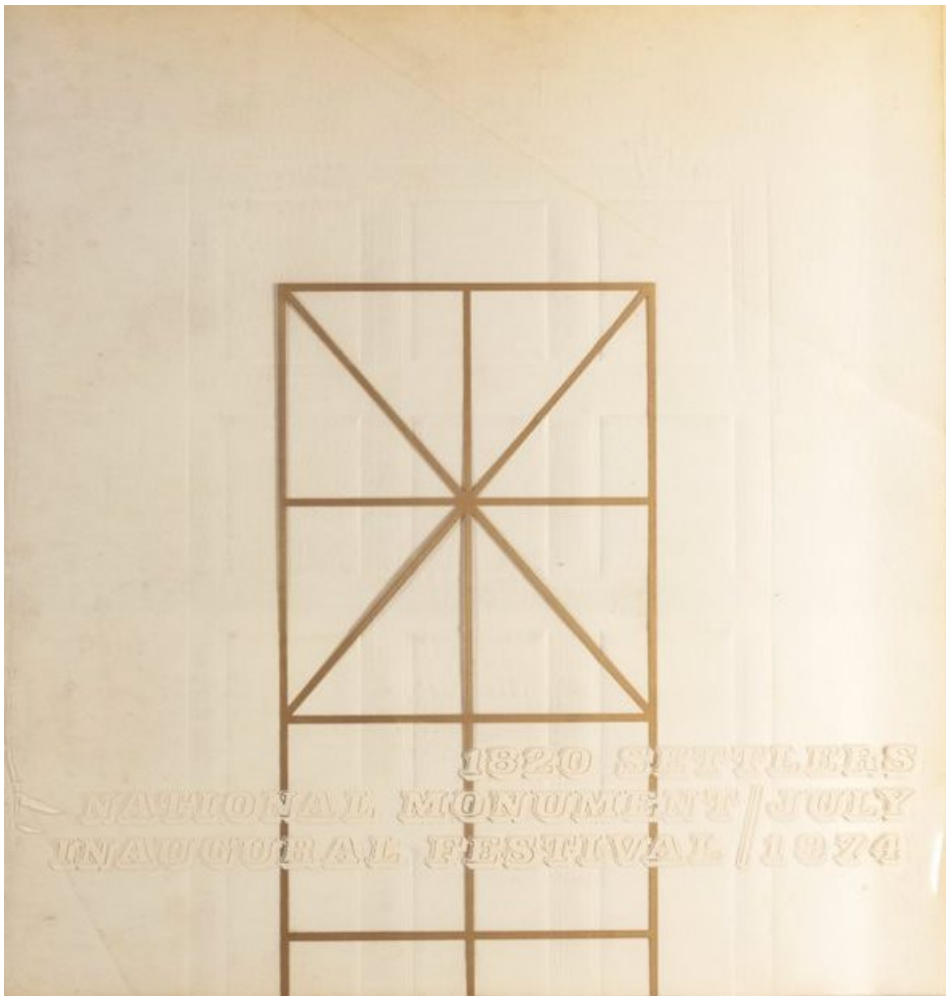


Image supplied. The first cover of the programme for the Inaugural Festival in 1974

The Festival is still a space for freedom of expression; a yardstick for the South African arts and an interdisciplinary platform for diverse new work.

## The mood is bold

Through its unrelenting gaze and interpretation, South Africa's creative community has always provoked, inspired, discomforted, entertained and healed. This year is no different.

From sweeping powerful works like the new Third World Bunfight's *The Stranger*, to Sibikwa Arts Centre's riveting revolutionary call *1789* and the return of Vuyani Dance's epic *CLON – A Requiem of Ravel's Bolero* – the mood is bold.

Collaborative work made possible by the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS) and The Embassy of France to South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi sees African choreographers and scenographers working with South African community-based

dance collectives, in a project called *Third Space*, to create new works that will be brought to the Festival.



Image supplied - Credit: Herman Verwey. 1789 by Sibikwa Arts Centre

## Marking SA's 30 years of democracy

The National Arts Festival's 50th anniversary takes place against the backdrop of South Africa marking 30 years of democracy.

*A Luta Continua: Reflecting on 30 Years of Democracy through the Constitutional Court Art Collection* is an exhibition that explores the interconnectedness of art and justice, human rights and democracy, at this key moment in South Africa's history and future.

The 2023 Standard Bank Young Artists will lead the charge into the unknown with brand-new works and boundaries redefined.

This year's cohort are Lorin Sookool (Dance), Darren English (Jazz), Zoë Modiga (Music), Angel Ho (Performance Art), Kgomotso 'MoMo' Matsunyane (Theatre) and Stephané Conradie (Visual Art).

Visual artists have harnessed the archive and memory to produce shows that speak to the National Arts Festival's history.

*In Mattering: 50 Years of The National Arts Festival*, curators Raphaela Linders and Viwe Madinda worked with writer Robyn Perros to create an exhibition that lifts archival fragments from each of the Festival's five decades.

## The Fringe

The Fringe will once again bring the unexpected, the surreal and the undiscovered to light, with shows from all over the country – some for their debut, others are much-loved returning favourites.

Returning artists include Sophie Joans, who went to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2023 with her multi award-winning play, *ÎLE* (Gold Standard Bank Ovation Award 2022), and now brings her new solo show, *Aïo*, a blend of clowning, technology and theatre to Makhanda.

The Eastern Cape's Sonwa Sakuba Institute will be supplying the family entertainment with Disney's *Moana JR*, while a host of comedians, including Yaseen Barnes, Khanyisa Bunu, Conrad Koch and Thato Mabelane will be back for the comedy fans.

30 Years of Democracy also forms an interesting frame for Mike van Graan's satirical work, *My Fellow South Africans*.

Music and magic, always a cornerstone of the Fringe, includes Festival legend and *Britain's Got Talent* alumni Brendon Peel, his frequent stage partner Li Lau and another Festival favourite Stuart Lightbody.



Image supplied. SA Industrial Theatre for Disability presents *Capable* on the 2024 Fringe programme

As always, works on the Fringe come from around the country. *Twisted Fates* is a play from the North West Province Development Agency that explores the intricate dynamics of inseparable twin brothers.

From KwaZulu-Natal comes Xola Mziwakhe's Zabalaza Theatre Festival best production nominee *Azania*, a poignant odyssey through hopes and heartbreak, while *Bonolo*, from Limpopo, tells the story of the complex relationship between a daughter and mother-in-law.

Out of the Free State comes Velaphi Mthimkulu's *Capable*, about a young man with albinism who is wanted for muti, and from Gauteng comes *Cantos of a Life in Exile*, a captivating journey of self-discovery for a South African born in exile.

The CPUT Performing Arts Society in the Western Cape will present Marysa Leukes in *It Went Above Your Head*.

Multiple works from the Eastern Cape showcase the talent and diversity in the Festival's home province. The Village Green market will be a bustling centre at the Festival in between shows, and venues across the town are gearing up to serve winter-warming food and live music.

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