



**ISANGO ENSEMBLE:
AESOP'S FABLES**

Tuesday, October 1, 2019, at 7pm
Tryon Festival Theatre

PROGRAM

ISANGO ENSEMBLE:

AESOP'S FABLES

based on the play by Peter Terson

Aesop's journey for freedom becomes a series of "chain breaking" episodes as he learns from the animals.

Based on a brilliant script by playwright Peter Terson, Isango's production was turned into a vibrant and powerful musical by Mandisi Dyantyis, Pauline Malefane, and Mark Dornford-May. Although Aesop and his master Escallywags are Greeks and are seeking favours from Zeus, King of the Gods, the production contextualises the story in the recent history of South Africa. Aesop was historically an enslaved man and in Terson's script he "learns that liberty comes with responsibility" as he journeys to Mount Olympus, meeting his animal characters on the way. Lungelo Ngamlana's inventive and beautiful dances add to the atmosphere of this powerful moral story.

Director

Mark Dornford-May

Music Director

Mandisi Dyantyis

Choreographer

Lungelo Ngamlana

Lighting Designer

Manuel Manim

Speech and Dialogue Coach

Lesley Nott Manim

Company Manager

Maris Sharp

Co-Production Manager

Sandile Mgugunyeka

Co-Production Manager

Andreas Ayling

Relighter

Jack Hathaway

Stage Management

Valencia Mgugunyeka

Chaperone

Nondibano Hintsho

CAST

Escallywags

Zamile Gantana

Aesop

Siphosethu Hintsho

Ants

Nombongo Fatyi

Nontsusa Louw

Zimkhitha Mathomane

Zanele Mbatha

Hermes

Zoleka Mpotsha

Tortoise

Thandolwethu Mzembe

Snails

Thandokazi Fumba

Siyanda Ncobo

Cikizwa Rolomana

Hare

Thobile Dyasi

Frogs

Sonwabo Ntshata

Melikhaya Ntshuntshe

Masakana Sotayisi

Philani Xhaga

Stork

Sinethemba Mdena

Goat

Mandisi Dyantyis

Wolf

Luvo Tamba

Zeus

Ayanda Tikolo

Isango Ensemble appears by arrangement with:

Columbia Artists Management LLC

Tim Fox/Alison Ahart Williams

5 Columbus Circle @ 1790 Broadway

New York, NY 10019

www.cami.com

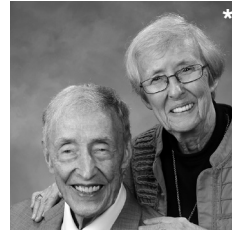
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INSTRUMENTS

MARIMBAS

The first instruments you'll notice onstage are marimbas. Not to be confused with xylophones, marimbas feature wooden bars mounted above resonators. Our resonators are made of wood, but traditionally they were made from hollowed gourds. Traditional marimbas are tuned to only play notes from a specific melodic scale; our marimbas are chromatic—like keys on a piano. Just as our singers have different vocal ranges, the marimbas they use come in four sizes corresponding to their pitches. Highest to lowest, they are soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.

DRUMS

Carved from wood or made from old oil drums and covered with rawhide (often goatskin), traditional drums are quite simply loud—you won't see many of them around the stage, but you'll definitely hear them. While it's the large interior cavity that resonates, the rawhide drumhead is tightened and tuned to a specific note using a series of ropes knotted all the way around.

FEET AND HANDS

The oldest percussion instruments of all, and ones that we use a great deal, are our hands and feet. Many times during the performance, clapping rhythms underpin the melodic tune. During the show's dance sequences, the stomping of the ensemble join the djembes in drumming and punctuating the rhythms of the music onto the wooden stage. The sound adds a rich musical quality to the dancing.

OTHERS

We use empty plastic drink bottles and drums made out of dustbins. Strangely enough we have to bring these dustbin drums with us wherever we tour. South African dustbins have a mix of rubber and plastic, which seems to be unique. Once we decided to save on costs and not to ship them over. It was disastrous—we broke UK dustbins to pieces every single night! Coins, chains and tin mugs are also all played during the show. Water is poured and "night" and "day" sounds are created by the company vocally.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

ISANGO ENSEMBLE is based in Cape Town. The core of the company was formed by director Mark Dornford-May and music director and singer Paulina Malefane in 2000 drawing performers from across the townships surrounding the city, embracing artists at all stages of their creative development. Its work to date has focused on reimagining classics from the Western theatre canon, finding a new context for these stories within a South African or township setting, and on creating new work relevant to the heritage of the nation. It is the mixture and clash of its cultures, races, and experiences that enables it to create work of the highest calibre.

In 2001, two of the ensemble's first stage productions toured from Spier Festival in Cape Town to Wilton's Music Hall in London. From there, *The Mysteries—Yimimangalisa* transferred to West End and *uCarmen* was performed at many of the world's major arts festivals. Other stage work includes co-productions with the Young Vic of *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo*, featuring Mozart's score transposed for an orchestra of marimbas, and *A Christmas Carol—Ikrismas Kherol*. These won several awards including *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo* winning an Olivier Award for Best Musical Revival and the Globes de Cristal for Best Opera Production following a sold-out season at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo* also played a season in the West End. In 2009, Isango played a second West End season of *The Mysteries—Yimimangalisa*. In the summer of 2012, *La Bohème—Abanxaxhi*, a unique partnership with The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, played at Hackney Empire in London for five weeks. Also In 2012, the company created a new stage version of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* in partnership with Shakespeare's Globe.

In 2016, Isango Ensemble adapted Jonny Steinberg's book *A Man of Good Hope* in co-production with the Young Vic, the Royal Opera, Répons Foundation, BAM, and Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg. The show ran for two months at the Young Vic in London in Autumn 2016 and then played at BAM, New York City's most prestigious international house in February 2017, Hong Kong Arts Festival in February 2018, and in Europe in May/June 2018 at Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen in Germany, and Bergen International Festival in Norway. In 2019, the production toured Adelaide, Auckland, several cities in France, and the United Kingdom at the Royal Opera House.

Isango also adapted Fred Khumalo's book *Dancing the Death Drill* about the sinking of the SS Mendi in 2019 and premiered *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill* at the Linbury Theatre, Royal Opera House in London in May 2019 and the production played the Brisbane Festival in September 2019. *St Matthew Passion* premiered at the Bergen International Festival in Norway and also played at the Brisbane Festival in September 2019. Isango has toured Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Martinique, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Films created by Mark Dornford-May and the ensemble include *uCarmen—eKhayelitsha*, *Son of Man*, *Unogumbe—Noye's Fludde*, and *Breathe—Umphefumlo*. The films have met with popular and critical acclaim, playing at festivals including The Berlin International Film Festival, LA Pan African Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival and others in Australia, the USA, the UK, Europe, and Africa. They have won the Golden Bear at The

Berlin International Film Festival as well as several Best Feature Awards.

In Spring 2019, Isango entered into a new partnership with Comic Relief.

ISANGO INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

Patron : Sir Ian McKellen

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Baroness Gail Behr, Sharon D. Clarke, Graham Devlin, Dame Linda Dobbs , Mike Downey, Andy Harries, Kwame Kwei-Armah, Sean Matthias, Professor Elelwani Ramugondo, Sir Simon Rattle, Ian Taylor, Rev Canon Mpho Tutu van Furth

ISANGO CAPE TOWN STAFF

Administrator : Megan-Leigh Adams

Finance: Andy Crabtree

Stage Technician: James Anthony

Admin. Assistant: Judy Roberts

For details about Isango Ensemble's shows and films, please visit the website:

<http://isangoensemble.co.za/>

PROFILES

CREATIVE TEAM

MARK DORNFORD-MAY (director) is Co-Founder and Artistic Director of Isango Ensemble. Born in Yorkshire and brought up in Chester, he has worked in South Africa with members of the company since 2000. Dornford-May has directed all of Isango's stage productions: *The Mysteries—Yiimimangaliso*, *The Snow Queen*, *Der Silbersee*, *The Beggars Opera—Ibali Loo Tsotsi*, *Carmen*, *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo*, *A Christmas Carol—iKrismas Kherol*, *Aesop's Fables*, *La Boheme—Abanxaxhi*, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists—Izigwili Ezidlakazelayo*, *Venus and Adonis*, *uCarmen*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Man of Good Hope*, *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill*, and *St. Matthew Passion*. He also produced and directed all its films: *uCarmen eKhayelitsha* (winner of the Golden Bear Award at the 2005 Berlin International Film Festival), *Son of Man*, *Unogumbe—Noye's Fludde*, and *Breathe—Umphefumlo*.

MANDISI DYANTYIS (music director) is Associate Director and Co-Music Director of Isango Ensemble and has been with the company since 2006. He has been Co-Music Director and Arranger/Composer for all Isango Ensemble productions since 2006, including *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo*, *A Christmas Carol—iKrismas Kherol*, *Venus and Adonis*, *The Mysteries—Yiimimangaliso*, *Aesop's Fables*, and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists—Izigwili Ezidlakazelayo*. Dyantysis travelled to New York to work with graduate acting students of New York University's Tisch School of Acting as they explored relationships between South African and American theatre methods. In 2012, Dyantysis was the Musical Director and Composer for

Isango's *Venus and Adonis*, which opened the Globe to Globe season at Shakespeare's Globe in London and subsequently returned to the Globe in May 2013. He arranged and directed the music for the films *Unogumbe* and *Breathe—Umphefumlo*. In 2015, he adapted Bizet's *Carmen* and Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Isango's US Tour. In 2016, Dyantysis composed and conducted the music for *A Man of Good Hope*, which ran at London's Young Vic, New York's BAM, and London's Royal Opera House. 2017 saw the creation of Isango Ensemble's production of *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill*, based on Fred Khumalo's book *Dancing the Death Drill*, for which Dyantysis created new music as well as incorporating WWI songs. In 2019, Dyantysis arranged Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* for marimbas and created new music for the show.

LUNGELO NGAMLANA (choreographer) is an Associate Artist of Isango Ensemble. He joined the company in 2007 and has been the choreographer for all subsequent Isango Ensemble productions. Prior to joining Isango, he was hosted by the Royal Opera House for the International Dance Fellowship in 2007. His theatre credits include: *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo*, *A Christmas Carol—iKrismas Kherol*, *The Mysteries—Yiimimangaliso*, *Aesop's Fables*, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists—Izigwili Ezidlakazelayo*, *Venus and Adonis*, *La Bohème*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *uCarmen*, *A Man of Good Hope*, *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill*, and *St. Matthew Passion*. Ngamlana currently teaches at NYU annually and before joining Isango Ensemble, he worked as a teacher, performer, and choreographer with many dance and theatre groups, both at home in South Africa and internationally.

MANNIE MANIM (lighting designer) is Co-Founder of the Market Theatre and has been director of Performing Arts Administration at the University of the Witwatersrand and Director of the Baxter Theatre Centre. His career in theatre lighting and producing spans over 50 years, and he has worked with Isango Ensemble since its first production more than 10 years ago. His accolades include: Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres from the French Government, Naledi Life Achievement Award, Fleur du Cap Lifetime Achievement Award, Arts and Culture Trust Lifetime Achievement Award, and The National Order of Ikhamanga, Silver.

PETER TERSON (playwright—*Aesop's Fables*) was born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and is a British playwright whose plays have been produced for stage, television, and radio. Most of his theatre work was first produced at the Victoria Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent in conjunction with director Peter Cheeseman. He also became an astute adaptor of novels by Arnold Bennett and Herman Melville. For the National Youth Theatre, his work focused on growing up in the working class culture of industrial England. Plays such as *Zigger Zagger*, about football hooligans and their pursuit of drink, sex, and trouble, and *The Apprentices*, showing the cruelties between young men learning industrial trades, presented a dismal view of life with few means of escape.

Works for television often took a more optimistic view, especially a series of plays centering on a trio of Yorkshiremen, led by Art (Brian Glover), and their humorous misadventures. Terson treated the situation of men dealing with life in the modern de-industrialized North in the play *Strippers*, which ran in London's West End. Terson is a prolific writer: over 80 of his plays have been performed, and there is a vast catalogue of unperformed scripts at the Victoria Theatre archive at Staffordshire University.

LESLEY NOTT MANIM (speech and dialogue) has worked in professional theatre, film, and television since 1975 as a performer, director, and vocal, acting, dialogue, text interpretation, and accent coach for both South African and international productions. She has designed and taught workshops and master classes in voice and acting as well as adjudicating drama festivals. She has been dialogue coach and casting assistant for television, film, and commercials. Manim has taught text interpretation at the Market Theatre Laboratory, voice classes, and tutorials at the University of Witwatersrand and text interpretation, accent, and performance skills at AFDA Cape Town. She has a private practice teaching individuals communication skills. She has worked with Isango Ensemble since 2007 as speech, dialogue, and text interpretation coach.

PERFORMERS

THOBILE DYASI was born in Pampierstad, Northern Cape, and joined Isango Ensemble in 2011. His theatre and opera credits include: *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo, Carmen, A Man of Good Hope, SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble) and *L’elisir d’amore, The Marriage of Figaro, Il viaggio a Reims, Adriana Lecouvreur, and La rondine* (University of Cape Town, where he took a performer’s diploma in opera).

NOMBONGO FATYI was born in Cape Town and joined Isango Ensemble in 2013. Her theatre and opera credits include *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill, The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo, A Man of Good Hope, and St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble).

THANDOKAZI FUMBA was born in Cape Town, Western Cape and joined Isango Ensemble in 2016. Her theatre and opera credits include *A Man of Good Hope* (Isango Ensemble), and she played Paulina in the Siyaya Traditional Group.

ZAMILE GANTANA was born in Kimberley, Northern Cape, and joined Isango Ensemble in 2000. His theatre and opera credits include *La Bohème—Abanxaxhi, The Mysteries—Yiimimangaliso, The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo, A Christmas Carol—ikrismas Kherol, Aesop’s Fables, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists—Izigwili Ezidlakazelayo, The Silver Lake, The Beggar’s Opera—lballi Loo Tsotsi, The Rocky Horror Show, uCarmen, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, A Man of Good Hope, SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill, and St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble). His film credits include *uCarmen, eKhayelitsha, Son of Man, Unogumbe—Noye’s Fludde, and Breathe—Umphefumlo*.

SIPHOSETHU HINTSHO was born in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, in 2004. He attends Rhodes High School and joined the Ensemble in 2016. His theatre credits include *A Man of Good Hope*.

NONTSUSA LOUW was born in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape and joined Isango Ensemble in 2011. Her theatre and opera credits include: *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo, uCarmen, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, A Man of Good Hope, SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill, and St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble).

ZIMKHITHA MATHOMANE was born in Cape Town and joined Isango Ensemble in 2017. Her theatre and opera credits include *A Man of Good Hope* (Isango Ensemble).

ZANELE MBATHA was born in Daveyton, Johannesburg, and joined Isango Ensemble in 2000. Her theatre and opera credits include *The Mysteries—Yiimimangaliso, The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo, A Christmas Carol—ikrismas Kherol, Aesop’s Fables, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists—Izigwili Ezidlakazelayo, The Beggar’s Opera—lballi Lotsosi, West Side Story, The Rocky Horror Show, uCarmen, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, A Man of Good Hope, and Dancing the Death Drill—SS Mendi* (Isango Ensemble) and *Qhamka Man of Men, Five Past Two, and Women Abuse* (Sibikwa Theatre). Her film credits include: *uCarmen, eKhayelitsha, Son of Man, Unogumbe—Noye’s Fludde, and Breathe—Umphefumlo*.

SINETHEMBA MDENA was born in Bisho, Eastern Cape, and joined Isango Ensemble in 2011. His theatre and opera credits include *The Magic Flute, La Bohème—Abanxaxhi, uCarmen, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill, A Man of Good Hope, and St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble). His film credits include *Unogumbe and Breathe—Umphefumlo*.

ZOLEKA MPOTSHA was born in Cape Town and joined Isango Ensemble in 2009. Her theatre and opera credits include *The Mysteries—Yiimimangaliso*, *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo*, *Aesop’s Fables* and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists—Izigwili Ezidlakazelayo*, *uCarmen*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *A Man of Good Hope*, *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill*, and *St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble). Her film credits include: *Unogumbe—Noye’s Fludde* and *Breathe—Umphefumlo*.

THANDOLWETHU MZEMBE was born In Cape Town and joined Isango Ensemble in 2017. His theatre and opera credits include *A Man of Good Hope*, *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill*, and *St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble).

SIYANDA NCOBO was born in Willowvale, Eastern Cape, and joined Isango Ensemble in 2013. Her theatre and opera credits include *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo*, *uCarmen*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *A Man of Good Hope*, *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill*, and *St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble). Her film credits include *Breathe—Umphefumlo*.

SONWABO NTSHATA was born in Umtata, Eastern Cape, and joined Isango Ensemble in 2007. His theatre and opera credits include: *The Mysteries—Yiimimangaliso*, *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo*, *A Christmas Carol—iKrismas Kherol*, *Aesop’s Fables*, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists—Izigwili ezidlakazelayo*, *uCarmen*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *A Man of Good Hope*, *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill*, and *St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble).

MELIKHAYA NTSHUNTSHE was born in Cape Town and joined Isango Ensemble in 2017. His theatre and opera credits include *A Man of Good Hope* (Isango Ensemble).

CIKIZWA ROLOMANA was born in Umtata, Eastern Cape, and joined Isango Ensemble in 2011. Her theatre and opera credits include: *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo*, *La Bohème—Abanxaxhi*, *uCarmen*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *A Man of Good Hope*, *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill*, and *St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble), and a concert for Bryn Terfel (Cape Town Opera). Her film credits include *Breathe—Umphefumlo*.

MASAKANE SOTAYISI was born in Cape Town, Western Cape, and joined Isango Ensemble in 2013. His theatre and opera credits include *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo*, *La Bohème—Abanxaxhi*, *A Man of Good Hope*, *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill*, *Venus and Adonis*, *uCarmen*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble). His film credits include: *Breathe—Umphefumlo*.

LUVU TAMBA was born in Cape Town, Western Cape, and joined Isango Ensemble in 2011. His theatre and opera credits include *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo*, *La Bohème—Abanxaxhi*, *Venus and Adonis*, *uCarmen*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *A Man of Good Hope*, (Isango Ensemble). His film credits include *Breathe—Umphefumlo*.

AYANDA TIKOLO was born in King William’s Town, Eastern Cape, and joined Isango Ensemble in 2013. His theatre and opera credits include *The Magic Flute—Impempe Yomlingo*, *La Bohème—Abanxaxhi*, *Venus and Adonis*, *uCarmen*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *A Man of Good Hope*, *SS Mendi—Dancing the Death Drill*, and *St. Matthew Passion* (Isango Ensemble); *Porgy and Bess*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Beethoven*, *Opera Extravaganza*, and *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*. His film credits include *Breathe—Umphefumlo*.

PHILANI XHAGA was born in Cape Town and joined Isango Ensemble in 2017. His theatre and opera credits include *A Man of Good Hope* (Isango Ensemble).