



August 2015

the mighty song!

MAITISONG 2015 MID-YEAR REVIEW



**Gao Lemmenyane,
Maitisong Director**

Time flies when you are having fun. The first half of the year has come and gone. It was only yesterday when we got back from the December break with a slow start of the year's activities and earnest festival preparations. From mid-February onwards a buildup of world class entertainment started. Former Maru-a-Pula School student **Bokani Dyer** and his band graced the Maitisong stage, courtesy of Botswanacraft Marketing. The show was opened by Soul Connect, a newly established band made up of two MaP alumni - pianist Laone Thekiso and drummer Khaya Groth. **Joburg Ballet** raised the bar and set the tone for the Maitisong Festival. Sponsored by the Israeli diamond company Diacore, the supporters of the Gaborone Diacore Marathon, Joburg Ballet presented three magical and breathtaking performances, one by invitation only and two public performances. This troupe of super flexible male and female dancers pranced gallantly like race horses, twirled like a tropical tornado, leapt skywards with super splits mid-air and distorted pointed feet swirling on the dance floor as they spun. It was electrifying. A personal favourite was the Dying Swan performed brilliantly by Kitty Phetla.

Another annual feature at Maitisong is the **Ditshwanelo Film Festival**. This year the festival was headlined by the harrowing documentary of the August 12th 2012 killings of striking miners in Marikana, South Africa.

Then followed the biggest arts festival in the land - **Maitisong Festival**. Under the theme 'Elevate', the festival proved to be a hit with Gaborone audiences. They thronged the four festival venues to receive doses of music, dance, theatre, poetry and visual art presented by the crème de la crème of Botswana alongside the world's best. The festival began with a well-attended opening night featuring an eclectic fusion of house music, marimba, percussion, opera, poetry, piano, setinkane (thumb piano) and energetic dancers setting the stage ablaze. A remarkable experience of pure joy and merriment was in the air over the following four days. The 2015 Festival has been widely celebrated (see 'Festival Voices' in this newsletter) as a great come back after many years in the doldrums. Special thanks to the



Mophato and Sky Blue Dance Hub opening the Festival



Moratiwa performing in the Maru-a-Pula School gardens on Festival opening night



Donn Swaby, Donald Molosi and Zanele Tumelo in 'Today It's Me'

sponsors and partners : Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture, Gabz FM, US Embassy Botswana, Portuguese Embassy, Thapong Visual Arts Centre, Mantlwaneng, Molapo Piazza and The Business Weekly & Review. Sincere gratitude to Head of Communications Alastair Hagger and his assistant Aaliyah Mussa for their relentless effort in marketing and advertising the festival, The Company@Maitisong for your belief in my vision and creative energy and commitment week in and week out, all the consultants for the various art forms, performers, interns and all those that made the festival what it was. We are eternally grateful.

The 2016 festival dates are set for 11-16 April 2016.

Hot on the heels of Maitisong Festival was **choral music** in the month of May featuring KTM Choir, Ramotswa based Andante Chorus and Maikano Serenaders, who featured jazz sensation Shanti Lo.

Clayton Ndlovu directed Maru-a-Pula School students in **Kurana**. The elaborate and bright set illuminated the theatre, creating a sense of an ancient city. The spoken word crowned the month of June in an event named **Verbal Emancipation**. The strong arts programme at Maru-a-Pula School can be credited for the abundance of talent that we see at these student shows.

The second half of the year has an equally exciting line-up of events. This time of the year, the arts scene is dominated by the **President's Day Competitions** launched over 8 years ago. On July 4th choral music lovers and spoken word enthusiasts thronged Maitisong to witness the



Marang Molosiwa in 'Ketswakae', Maitisong Festival 2015

below, clockwise : Dasha Kelly at Festival 2015; Born Around Here; Kurana; Verbal Emancipation; Tutti and Soli

photo : Thato Nishabele



photo : Teto Mokaila

battle of the regions. MaP Music Department showcased students' work at **Tutti and Soli** on the 16th.

The finale for the **President's Day Traditional Musical Instruments** was on 17th July. Winners were appreciated and incentivized at the glittering event on the 21st July at GICC in the presence of His Excellency President Khama, the Chief Patron of these arts competitions.

As if not to be outdone, little people from **Northside Primary School** hosted other private schools in an evening of orchestra on July 28th.

August

Indian dance will be presented on the 8th August. The Indian community in Botswana are regular users of this wonderful facility.

September

Organised by Leap Frog Advertising, The annual **Gaborone International Cultural Week** will stage Choral music at Maitisong on 3rd September. This is part of a week-long line up of art activities that include music, poetry and comedy.

October

Hot off the tour from Artscape in Cape Town, the new play by The Company@Maitisong, **Born Around Here**, directed by myself and featuring Marang Molosiwa, Itseng Modukanele and Kabelo Mojuta, will have a home coming run from 7 - 9 October. The story sheds some light on the contribution that Botswana made towards the realization of South Africa's democracy. It will be reworked and performed at Artscape with a Cape Town cast.

10th October will see the battle of theatre giants : Gabriel Phunya Modise of Tsoga Africa locks horns with John Marumo. Billed as **Makgaolakang** (The Ultimate Battle) it promises the best of community



photo : Dean Chalmers



photo : Thato Nishabele



photo : Alastair Hagger



photo : Li Bo

theatre.

The **death penalty debate** presented by Ditshwanelo will once again challenge your position on capital punishment. Join everyone for free on the 12th October.

17th October : The hip hop outfit **TNT**, the champions of the Festival Dance Off, will stage a show.

18th October : International wordsmith **TJ Dema** and her organization Sauti Arts and Performance Management are billed.

November

1st November : KTM Choir presents the popular **Local Composers Show** (LCS).

13 -14 November : **Risa Ballet**, who opened for the acclaimed Joburg Ballet in March, will once again have their annual showcase.

This month will end with the annual charity spectacular, the **President's Concert**, which promises an eclectic fusion of local music, theatre and poetry. Catch the President's Concert on the 27th November.

December

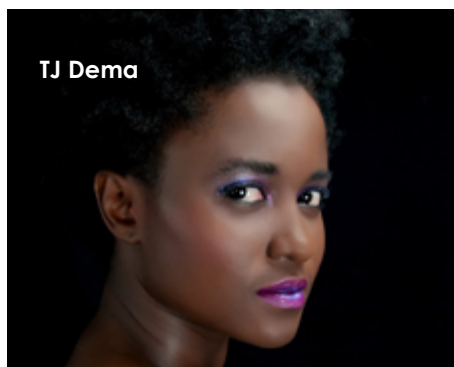
Gospel music winds down the year with **Pastor Shumie Odirile** in Concert on December 5th and the Hope Christmas Carols.

The lineup of activities at Maitisong in the second half of the year is proof that the cultural scene is alive and well in Botswana. We will keep you posted through our website, Facebook page, Twitter and email list. We look forward to seeing you at Maitisong. Feel free to give your email address to our friendly front of house staff for inclusion in our email list, or simply drop an email to info@maitisong.org with "Add Me" in the subject line.



photo : Alastair Hagger

TNT



TJ Dema

photo : Petra Rollinec



Festival Voices - reviews and reflections, Maitisong Festival 2015

"For four glorious days, people flocked to enjoy the event-packed festival, tantalised - and inspired - with the possibilities the arts can offer in Botswana "

~ David Slater, Peolwane

"The peak of the opening ceremony was when DJ La Timmy took to the decks with Mophato Dance Theatre, Sky Blue Dance Hub and Mobini dancing to the tunes, something that left the audience enthralled "

~ Daily News

"Dasha Kelly's slam poetry is not your everyday poetry recital; the slam is more than engaging, highly interactive, and the visual sounds of her lyrical words can be understood at any level of human comprehension "

~ The Monitor

"Sky Blue Dance Hub - 'X' - A colourful spectacle that had the audience so glued to the stage they could not even blink "

~ Mmegi

"Zeus Unplugged - The live performance was an intimate and interactive session that offered his fans an opportunity to go down memory lane with the musician "

~ Botswana Gazette

"Mophato Dance Theatre - Inyaya - This is a thematically poignant work which deserves viewing across the country and the world "

~ Afrolutionist

"'Today It's Me' - Molosi is a very, very smart young man who understands how to use his clout to not only draw attention to fundamental subject matter, but also how to create commercial work with a message "

~ Afrolutionist

"Hip-Hop Dance Battle - All the dancers made the show worthy with their tremendous energy and flexibility. The energetic youth spoiled the audience with their beautiful dance moves from Hip Hop to Latin dance "

~ The Monitor

"The Metrophones graced the stage with their soulful sounds. The nine-piece band delivered a heart-warming jazz performance "

~ Mmegi

"CAFCA - The sound was certainly unique, and it blended jazz-fusion with classical in an electrifying and fascinating way "

~ Mmegi

"Bhudaza - With his infectious and popular singing, Bhudaza got everyone dancing, bringing a fantastic finale to the four-day Maitisong Festival "

~ Mmegi

"It was a wonderful honor to headline Maitisong 2015 with my production, 'Today It's Me', and to see a lot of other good work at the festival. Thank you Maitisong for giving Botswana artists the opportunity to perform locally and network internationally at the same time with artists you invite from the world over "

~ Donald Molosi

"Sharing the stage with vastly talented, experienced and respected actors in 'Today It's Me' was an amazing experience and the audience was deeply moved by the show. Rave newspaper reviews and Facebook posts testify to that "

~ Teto Mokaila



Opening Night, Maitisong Festival 2015

photo : Monirul Bhuiyan



Festival Voices - Maru-a-Pula School Student Arts Journalism

MaP Journalists Mallika Senthil and Nandini Kochar were given full access to this year's Maitisong Festival and each wrote two articles - one for the Festival edition and one for this edition of The Mighty Song - as part of a long-term MaP project to foster excellence in arts writing in Botswana

LUISA SOBRAL -THAPONG VISUAL ARTS CENTRE

Mallika Senthil

On an open starry night, traditional and jazz music mingled in the air in perfect harmony - jazz harmonizing in Luisa Sobral's colourful, emotion-expressing voice, the traditional accompanying the rhythmical beat of dancers' feet.

On the 23rd of April, Luisa Sobral - jazz singer and two-time Golden Globe nominee - together with a group of traditional dancers and marimba players filled the Thapong night with music from very different eras. To kick off the night, the traditional performers staged an exquisite marimba and traditional dance performance that had more than one camera rolling, and definitely more than one head moving to the irresistible beat. Following them up were Luisa Sobral and her team - João Salcedo, Carlos Miguel and João Hasselberg, playing the piano, drums and upright bass respectively. Luisa Sobral herself played a collection of instruments like the harpsicle, xylophone, guitar and banjo as she sang a collection of English and Portuguese songs like

'Clementine' and 'Sr. Vinho,' mainly from her second album, 'There's a Flower in My Bedroom'. Sobral also spiced up some of her up-beat songs by adding in a dance-routine that brought out the occasional laugh or hoot of encouragement from the audience. "Other than writing my own songs I like to alter songs by other musicians," she explained, surprising the audience by performing her jazzy rendition of Britney Spears' 'Toxic'. The unique factor about Luisa Sobral's time on stage was the way she involved the audience in her performance; her bubbly personality and infectious enthusiasm could get even the reluctant people in the crowd to sing or mumble along, be it Portuguese or English songs. At one point, she turned the crowd into eager music students singing a cappella parts and choruses in Portuguese. As the end of her performance neared, the audience became reluctant to see her leave the stage, so they called out 'encore' - not once but twice! Sobral, with her sparkling personality, jumped back on stage with her ever-present smile and extended the crowd's time in musical heaven.



photo : Dean Chalmers

LEBOGANG DISELE : "DANCE IS A PARADOX"

Sky Blue Dance Hub performer shares her festival thoughts

Nandini Kochar

Actress, dancer and voiceover artist, Lebogang Disele, is an avid performer and quite a prominent figure in the local industry. From completing her BA Honours in Drama and her Masters in Dramatic Arts, to working as a Drama teacher and radio presenter, Disele has many feathers in her cap. Although her strengths lie in directing, acting and professional development, Disele is also a seasoned dancer and an accomplished member of the Sky Blue Dance Hub - the first female-led contemporary dance entity in Botswana that offers mobile dance classes, workshops and performances.

"We principally specialize in contemporary, hip-hop and Latin dance forms, and try to fuse all the genres together in order to create something distinctive," says Disele. The two-year-old dance troupe premiered their latest production 'X' at the Maitisong Festival this April. The explosive and abstract dance piece is based on the unknown, and the dark secrets we try to conceal about ourselves. "The production mainly consisted of contemporary but also had a strong Latin Ballroom influence, so the moves were fast, sharp and dramatic," says the dancer. Disele believes that her passion and love for the performing arts is what drives her and gives her the energy to keep on pushing against the tides. "Rehearsals for the Maitisong Festival were exhausting, challenging and demanding," she recalls, "but the entire experience was



photo : Alastair Hagger

transformational and enriching." Every dancer has a unique description of what dance means to them. For Lebogang Disele dance is a form of expression and freedom. "Dance for me is many things: it's beauty, it's craze, it's unexplored space - dance is a paradox."

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