

Nduduzo Makhathini Rituals radiate spiritual sonic adventures: a weekend at Glenelly Wine Estate (March 2022)

Jazz pianist and prophetic word artist, Nduduzo Makhathini, brings a spiritual sonic adventure that resounds within nature's endowed hills of Glenelly Estate Wine Cellar in Stellenbosch this weekend (March 11-13, 2022). The occasion at 'Jazz and Vines' presents Makhathini's themes of **"Singing as a way of Being in the World"**, the title of his three offerings, blessed by nature's fruits of the vineyards. A philosopher and healer, now on the U.S. jazz label, Blue Note, Makhathini delves into African cosmology to uncover that healing Spirit of Ntu which he draws from his immediate Zulu culture. He would like others to benefit from this, too.

To support his musical lineup is a stellar band of notables: Young Robin Fassie Kock on trumpet and flugelhorn, Ariel Zamonsky on double bass, the creative whisks of drummer Ayanda Sikade, and the equally moving Gontse Makhene on percussion.

Makhathini follows upon his latest albums, and talks about what a post-colonial South Africa looks like, and speaks of the continuing burning fires leaving ashes: *"The fires are symptomatic of people's tiredness, people being promised post-1994 free education, free health care, housing... without these promises being fulfilled."*

His thesis: Much healing is needed. One remedy is to sing rituals that evoke African spiritual connections. Hence, a three-part series of sonic rituals, one for each evening this weekend. *"The symbolism of these rituals will be anchored on the trinity that governs an African worldview. We have been told from the wise ones that an African world is made up of the living, living-dead (ancestors) and the ones-not-yet-born as being in a constant counterpoint,"* he explains. *"These rituals are meant to connect people with the spiritual world and the environment we live in."*

Makhathini's concerts on each night consisted of three choreographed presentations:

Concert 1 on Friday evening deals with **Preparation** which explores 'ukuphahla' when a traditional healer is preparing to accept a calling to heal others. The symbolic colour for this concert is red, a symbol of light, and features singer **Thandiswa Mazwai**. *"This performance will explore the language of the spirits there by inviting through ukuphahla to guide us on a journey ahead,"* explains Makhathini.

Concert 2 on Saturday evening deals with **Elsewhere** meant to take the audience on a journey towards the unknown where healing resides, and where the healer finds his/her training. The artistry of singer **Asanda Msaki Myana** expects to deepen this auditory and spiritual journey with the colour green symbolising spiritual growth.

Concert 3 on Sunday afternoon entitled **The Return**, with Makhathini's wife and singer, **Omagugu Makhathini**, *"captures a celebratory spirit and new knowledge of self,"* explains Makhathini. The symbolic colour is white, for purity.

All three singers have commendable accolades behind their artistry.

Thandiswa Mazwai has a long, illustrative performance history ranging from a leading kwaito band, Bongo Maffin, to Afro-pop, to world music and jazz, with two Sama Awards for Best Female Artist and Best DVD (2010), ***Best of the Forgotten Free***. She performed at the FIFA 2010 World Cup Opening Ceremony, and at a host of world festivals mixing with such genres as her traditional Xhosa

rhythms, reggae, mbaqanga, funk, and jazz. Born a soul rebel during the youth uprisings of 1976, Mazwai doesn't hide her political activism in her music. She has toured worldwide, picking up themes of liberation from Cuba, West Africa, Black America, and the Congo.

Originally from East London, **Asanda Msaki Myana** combines soulful folk with symphonic movements, Xhosa lyrics, and African poly-rhythms. Her debut album, **Zaneliza: How the Water Moves**, talks about the wave-like rhythms between loss and hope, and was co-produced by Makhathini under her own label, One Shushu Day Artistry, in 2016. Her work in visual design has also added interesting artistic highlights to her compositions and performances, often with stunning costume designs and sculptures. In January 2022, Msaki unveiled her 12-piece exhibition at the Nirox Sculpture Park in Krugersdorp, Gauteng, where she has been artist in residency. In her soon to be released sophomore double album, **Platinumb Heart**, Msaki has produced a sonic and visual exhibition that speaks to themes of protest and love which she threads through this album.

The imaginative **Omagugu Makhathini**, spirit side kick to husband Nduduzo, will end the weekend series on Sunday, no doubt with an energetic, yet soulful singing ritual of joy. Voice coach and choir conductor, singer/songwriter Omagugu has experienced a wealth of exposure with both domestic musicians including national bands and specific jazz groups as well as tours overseas to USA, Europe, and a world jazz cruise. She released her debut album, **Uthingo LweNkosazana**, in 2018, and hopes to release her next album this year. Her contributions are befitting to end what should be a highly inspirational connection with Spirit and Nature as singing becomes a therapeutic way to live, and **Be**, in this world.

As Makhathini explores the depth of Being, the spirit of Ntu arises as a musical therapy.

"As an artist I have argued that my artistic practice enunciates from a cosmological standpoint. In other words, the articulation of my sound is a result of deep mediations and engagements with the worldview described above. Ultimately, the music I will be presenting seeks resonance with the greater ancestral paradigms, spirit worlds, the environment, and all living things."

Those attending one or all concerts at the beautiful Glenelly Wine Estate will have experienced an upliftment and sense of harmony in one's soul from the sounds of this musical Healer with his very capable musicians and singers.