

WELCOME NOTE:

Welcome and thank you for joining us for the inaugural Meraki Dance Festival!

52-year-old Jazzart Dance Theatre was the first contemporary dance company in South Africa and has been a pioneer and beacon of light in championing dance, changing lives, and expanding the Arts and culture offering within the country. As a company, we are here today because of many amazing people—dancers, directors, staff, students, parents, funders, partners, and audiences—who helped build Jazzart.

This first iteration of the Meraki Dance Festival is a bold step, a declaration that we believe in the transformative power of dance and the importance of striving for something greater. We've learned a valuable lesson – you can't cheat the beginning. There's no shortcut to building something from the ground up, no way to bypass the hard work, the planning, and the sheer dedication it takes to bring an ambitious vision to life.

"Meraki," as you may have seen in all our marketing efforts, speaks to doing something with soul, creativity and love. And that's precisely what this journey has been.

Our theme "celebrating dance" and its sub-theme this year, "Ambitious Pursuits," reflects the spirit of this festival. It's a call to action. It's an invitation to consider what it means to strive, to reach beyond the comfortable, to dare to imagine what's possible. It's about questioning the status quo and pushing the boundaries of what dance can be. We haven't just learned what it takes to launch a festival; we've learned the profound responsibility of fostering an environment where artistic ambition can flourish.

Over the next 3 days, we invite you to join us as we celebrate this spirit. Every dance you'll witness, every workshop you'll attend, every conversation you'll have, is a product of someone's ambition. Someone dared to choreograph that piece, someone dared to step onto that stage, someone dared to dream of a festival like this.

Thank you for engaging with these ambitious pursuits. Don't just observe; participate. Question, challenge, be moved, be provoked. Let this festival be a catalyst for your own am-

bitions, a reminder that the most significant journeys begin with a single, courageous step.

Thank you for being here with us at this pivotal moment. Thank you for being part of the beginning, for embracing the spirit of ambitious pursuits. Let the inaugural Meraki Dance Festival commence!

3 DAY LINE-UP









"DARK FLOCK" Dark Flock explores themes of resilience referencing the crow's im-

peccable will to live and thrive, no matter the environment or circumstance. The crow flies

high despite all the heavy, negative stigmatization it has been marked with, and teaches us

THE PROGRAMME

that life is not defined by what others may believe is the truth. Choreographer: MANACAN Music: MANACAN Jazzart Dancers: Chesney Stanfield, Emile Petersen, Savannah Petrus, Aphiwe Sodlamba, Milisa Mathiso, Neo Khema, Zachary Petersen

Music: Emo Adams

"ZIYAWA" This vibrant piece expresses our culture of inclusivity and acceptance ex-

pressed in a form that mirrors Cape Town's fun-filled energy!

al diversity and our country's shared vision of unity and hope.

Ntombezintle Ndindwa, Thimna Ndwe BABA YAYA - Chantal De Haan, Entle Matyatanga, Thandolwethu Ntebe, Zanele Mketsu,

Choreographer: Sifiso Kweyama

Dramaturg: Mhlanguli George

Zweli Mguli

Dancers Jazzart Trainees - Aidinn Steenkamp, Asive Mrauzeli, Leethon Dewee,

"I AM AFRICAN" The piece has been transformed since 2023 when first created and performed. It honours the interconnectedness of South Africa's diverse population, cultur-

Zachary Petersen, Aphiwe Sodlamba, Milisa Mathiso

Choreographer: Sifiso Kweyama

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Dramaturg: Mhlanguli George

"SAFE GROUND" Safe Ground is a heartfelt exploration of the comfort and relief

one navigate feelings of rejection and hardship.

Music: Tristan Barton & Abdullah Ibrahiem

found in community during times of personal struggle. It portrays how the support of caring individuals can make challenges more bearable, offering a sense of safety and be-

longing. Through its narrative, the piece emphasizes the power of togetherness in helping

Jazzart Dancers: Savannah Petrus, Chesney Stanfield, Emile Petersen, Neo Khema,

Music: Ezio Bosso Dancers Jazzart Trainees - Aidinn Steenkamp, Asive Mrauzeli, Leethon Dewee, Ntombezintle Ndindwa, Thimna Ndwe BABA YAYA - Chantal De Haan, Entle Matyatanga, Thandolwethu Ntebe, Zanele Mketsu, Zweli Mguli

"BATTLEFIELD" Battlefield explores the journey of breaking free from societal constraints. It embraces authenticity in a world that often dictates how we should feel and be and challenges us to reclaim our true selves.

Choreographer: Lihle Mfene Music: by Zoe Keating, Wolf Quan & Jon Blankenburg

Zachary Petersen, Milisa Mathiso

Dancers: Fanelo Ndweni & Isabella Redman

"GISELLE EXTRACT" An extract from "Giselle" a classical ballet that tells the poign-

ant story of a young peasant girl, Giselle, who falls in love with a nobleman, Albrecht, who

Jazzart Dancers: Savannah Petrus, Chesney Stanfield, Emile Petersen, Neo Khema,

disguises his true identity. When Giselle discovers his deception and learns of his engagement to another, she is heartbroken and dies from grief. In the second act, Giselle returns as a Wili, a spirit of women who died before their wedding. She encounters Albrecht, who mourns her loss, and despite Wili's intent to lead him to his death, Giselle's love ultimately saves him. The ballet explores themes of love, betrayal, and redemption through its haunting choreography and music. Music: by Adolphe Adam

"TABLE FOR TWO" Table for Two- An Adaptation from the award-winning, Table for Two, this excerpt delves into the evolving relationship between two individuals. The unspoken complexities of their connection following a pivotal moment of change are explored. Set around a dining table, a space where lives are shaped, celebrated and sometimes fractured- the main character's story unfolds as he experiences moments of tension, sorrow, passion, and vulnerability dealing with this change. Set to Ezio Bosso's 'Clouds, The Mind on the (Re)wind' and Max Richter's 'She Remembers'), the nuances of the small yet signifi-

cant moments of everyday life offer a reflection on the shifting dynamics of both charac-

ters' connection that is both intimate and universal.

Choreographer: Chloe Blair

Music: Ezio Bosso & Max Ritchter Dancers: Emile Petersen (Jazzart) & Tumelo Lekana (Joburg Ballet) "CHAPTER TWO" "A kinetic sculptural work created to a pulsating and percussive score. Beautifully articulated bodies in motion in a richly textured movement vocabulary imbued with November's strong rhythmically organic language. Interwoven with a central, gentle pas de deux juxtaposing this sensuous interlude with the intense and constantly moving sinuous opening and closing chapters."

Choreographer: Mthuthuzeli November

Music: Peter Johnson

Dancers: Mia Coomber, Kayla Schultze, Tayla de Bie, Gemma Trehearn, Aphiwe November, Gabriel Ravenscroft, Jan Kotzee, Julia O' Keeffe, Nicolas Laubscher, Kingsley Beukes

"IMVUKO" Imvuko ukuvuka, to wake up, meaning getting back to yourself, becoming aware, being conscious. Imvuko therefore embodies the spirit of awakening and rising. Imvuko is a profound concept that emphasises the interconnectedness of all individuals within a community. It underscores the idea that we are all part of a larger whole, and that our actions have the power to impact not only ourselves but also those around us.

Music: Chantress Seba

Choreographer: Lubabalo Pupu

Dancers: Lubabalo Pupu & Mbulelo Mzazi

"WORDS AROUND THE COLLAR" Words Around the collar is a dance piece set around the table. 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 the table.

Choreographer: Sbonakaliso Ndaba

Music: Mozart Dancers: Litha Makanda, Lusindiso Dibela, Sinazo Mxeli, Sonwabile Mhlonyane, Vuyol-

Lathitha Nomgca, Sinalo Vakala (Kiidy), Xola Sanezo Tyuka, Bartholomew Pietersen, Davidine Diamond, Inam Dyonasi "CAMISSA HERITAGE TOUR EXTRACT" Camissa Heritage Tour retraces

wethu Mdluli, Wanie Johannes, Asemahle Dayimani, Akhona Mpoza, Clayton Jannike,

South Africa's colonial past and its connection to the Netherlands. We tell the story of our Indigenous communities, the 'San' and 'Khoi', who inhabited South Africa's landscape dating back thousands of years. These communities resisted the scourge of the settlers and refused to work for the Dutch East India Company (VOC). This site-specific performance adapted for theatre takes the audience on a route within The Castle of Good Hope and other significant sites. Through this artistic and educative project, we bring an awareness to the narratives of the Indigenous People of South Africa, the history of slavery in the Cape and colonial legacies by The Netherlands to attention. When we remember we reconnect with who we are. CAMISSA, place of sweet waters, its presence reminds us that water still serves as the source for cleansing and healing.

Music: Mozart Dancers: Ashlynn Erasmus, Courtney Smith, Glen Arendse, Jonannes Tieties, Lucy Camp-

Choreographer: Luke De Kock

bell, Luke De Kock

Theatre that delves into themes of ambition, longing, and chasing after your dreams and desires. The piece looks at various aspects from struggles, setbacks, and triumphs, highlighting both good and the bad with striving for something unattainable. With 'The Pursuit' it is not just about reaching a destination but embracing the transformative power of the process itself. Choreographer: Figure of 8 Dance Theatre

"THE PURSUIT" 'The Pursuit' is a contemporary dance piece by Figure of Eight Dance

Music: Adrián Berenguer Dancers: Crystal Fink, Damian Jacobs, Jenna Wilkinson, Liam Frantz, Sasha Ngonyama

Choreographer: Shaun Oelf Music: Anne Müller, Nils Frahm, Ludovico Einaudi, Renė Aubry, Olafur Arnalds

"LIMITLESS SELF" Limitless Self, delves into the journey of self-discovery and the

Jazzart Trainees: Aidinn Steenkamp, Ntombezintle Ndindwa, Thimna Ndwe, Neo

Khema, Zachary Petersen, Aphiwe Sodlambe, Milisa Mathiso

various facets of our identity, emphasizing vulnerability and self-reflection.

"SCORN" This work explores addiction through the eyes of the user and the abuser. In

Choreographer: Gain Collective (Chesney Stanfield & Emile Petersen) Music: Recoil, Chee, Woodkid, Thomas Newman, Julia Newman, Daniel McCagh Dancers: Claudia House, Lee van der Merwe, Gaetan Musungaie, Kiera Bryan, Zoe

Aldridge, Nico Masepe, Kyla Brink, Savannah Petrus

the landscape of the scorned, the audience is sucked into the fray.

PERFORMING COMPANIES

Baba Yaya, Cape Ballet Africa, Cape Town City Ballet, Camissa Create, Imbewu

Dance Collective, Figure of 8 Dance Theatre, Gain Collective, Joburg Ballet,

CHOREOGRAPHERS BIOS

Born and raised in KwaZulu-Natal, Sifiso has risen as a prominent figure in South Africa's

dance realm, acclaimed for his choreography and teaching prowess. Commencing his jour-

ney at Phenduka Dance Theatre in Durban in 1989, he later joined Jazzart Dance Theatre in

1993, immersing himself in Contemporary African Dance under Alfred Hinkel's tutelage as company dancer. Sifiso's achievements include the recognition as one of South Africa's top ten choreographers in 2011 and in 2013 he was achieved the Choreographer of the Year

SIFISO KWEYAMA:

SboNdaba Dance

Award. From 2015 to 2020, he served as Jazzart's Artistic Director, contributing significantly to the company's evolution and presently spearheads Jazzart Dance Theatre's Training Programme. He is the founder of Yabantu Multipurpose and Performing Arts Theatre, empowering young talents in his KwaZulu-Natal village. His recent choreography dance pieces include Saffron, I am African, Ziyawa and Safe Ground.



stands for 'Ciara and Nathan'.

MANACAN: MANACAN is a South African Company based in London consisting of two artists, Ciara Baldwin and Nathan Bartman, who choreograph, compose, perform and tour their own

and musical styles ranging from African and hip-hop to contemporary, while continually learning from different styles, places and people, taking them to unique and often vulnerable places both physically and spiritually. All music is created and produced by MANACAN except where otherwise stated.

While touring internationally, they often give workshops and share their creative tools with

productions. MANA in the language KhoeKhoegowab means 'them that give' and CAN

They explore primal topics and express them through dance, physicality, vocals and music

- their style is earthy and influenced by their South African roots. They work with dance

all age groups and abilities, challenging people to push themselves further than their limits. They've toured countries such as South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania, The United States, Bel-

They work as a team on every project/class. Ciara and Nathan been together for over 9 years, making it easy for them to tag-team through workshops and they're experienced at

giving individual attention to students. They believe that there is power in unity, and this is

what they strive towards with MANACAN.

gium, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Ireland, Italy and The United Kingdom.



LIHLE MFENE:

Lihle Mfene, born and raised in Montagu South Africa, graduated from the Cape Academy of Performing Arts (CAPA) in 2020 and began his dance journey at Dancescape South Africa. Lihle's training spans across various disciplines including ballet, contemporary, jazz, hip hop, and African dance. During his final year at CAPA, Lihle had the opportunity to choreograph a creative piece for Dancescape South Africa, which was showcased at the 7th Biennale Tanzausbilding in Hamburg, Germany, held at the Kampnagel Theatre complex.

In 2023 Mfene joined the Jazzart Dance Theatre company and contributed significantly to their productions. His talent and versatility were highlighted in collaborations with SANDT, Cape Town City Ballet, Opera North and Phoenix Dance Theatre (UK), which were widely acclaimed successes. Subsequently, he furthered his artistic growth by attending the Bates Dance Festival in America, enriching his understanding of movement and artistic expression. Lihle is the choreographer of Battlefield, a dance piece he created for Jazzart Dance Theatre. He recently travelled with Jazzart on their tour to Pakistan as a dancer. Lihle is currently a dancer with Cape Town City Ballet.



LUKE DE KOCK:

Luke De Kock has established himself as a prominent figure in the dance and performance industry. With a dynamic career spanning various genres and platforms, he has made significant contributions as a choreographer, director, and performing artist.

Luke's choreography has graced international films including Universal Films "Honey 3", and Netflix "Runs In The Family". He has also featured in Cinderella "If The Shoe Fits", Bring It On "Worldwide" and Ridley Scott's "Raised By Wolves". His portfolio extends to commercial choreography for major brands such as Lays, BMW, Bell and Huawei, GLO Nigeria, Samsung, Castle Lite, Flamenco, Peek & Cloppenburg Düsseldorf, Liqui Fruit, Savanna Dry, Adidas Originals (Superstar, Samba and Gazelle), MTN, Nivea, Hennessy, Flying Fish, Accenture "Move The World", Hello Fresh, Adidas (AdiClub) and KFC. Notably, his versatility encompasses a range of dance styles from contemporary and hip-hop to tap and South African styles. In addition to his work on screen and stage, Luke has collaborated with renowned international artists. He performed alongside Toni Braxton during her Long As I Live Tour in South Africa, John Legend (Bidvest - "On Track") and worked with Lalah Hathaway as movement director during her tour to South Africa.

Theatre and Performance, Luke De Kock is also known for specializing in site-specific performance art focused on indigenous heritage, Cape slavery, colonial legacies, and cultural narratives. He created Transit-20, a short film and documentary with artists from the UK and South Africa and has been actively involved in international collaborations such as Sites of Memory's Future for The Past and AfroVibes Festival in The Netherlands.

A graduate of Jazzart Dance Theatre and the University of Cape Town, where he studied

His most recent directorial project, Camissa Heritage Tour has been performed at The Castle of Good Hope, Artscape, African Constellations, Infecting The City and Hazendal Festival. He also contributes to the arts and education landscape with his company Camissa Create's school lecture demonstration programme.



CHLOE BLAIR: Chloe Blair joined the Joburg Ballet Company as a dancer in 2018 and has since performed

ist roles such as the Peasant Pas de Deux in Giselle, Woodland Glade Fairy in Sleeping Beauty, Cupid in Don Quixote, Clara in The Nutcracker, and Flower Festival in Genzano, amongst others. Chloe has choreographed works for Joburg Ballet company, as well as associated dance academies, including works such as 'The Artist' and 'Fragments of Memories'. Her 2023 work 'Table for Two', staged at the Joburg Theatre as part of Joburg Ballet's 'Dialogues' season, earned her the 2024 Naledi Theatre Award for 'Best Choreography in a Dance, Physical Theatre, and Ballet Production'

in over 40 classical and contemporary works, and over the years has taken on various solo-



Africa. Mthuthuzeli started dancing at the age 15, Graduating in 2014, He was awarded at the South African International Competition 2012 and 2014 for best contemporary.

the South African International Competition 2012 and 2014 for best contemporary. Mthuthuzeli created his debut choreographic work in 2014 on the Cape Dance Company. He danced with Cape Dance company and in a South African production of West Side Story before joining Ballet Black September 2015. Since then, he has made multiple award winning/nominated works for Ballet Black since for stage and film 2016, which include the Laurence Olivier Award for INGOMA. He was awarded South Africa's Emerging Artist prize at Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees for his solo work. He has made two works for the Cape Dance Company, Visceral and The Rite of Passage. Mthuthuzeli has created short works for English National Ballet Emerging Dancer competition 2018 and 2020. He also created and danced for British Grime artist, Stormzy at Glastonbury Festival in 2019. He created a work commissioned by Cape Town Opera and Cape Town City Ballet for a film production of Pergolesi, Stabat Mater. He was also commissioned by The Grange Festival to create a work on the production of Precipice (2020). Fall For Dance North Commission a work 'My Mother's Son' performed by him and his brother Siphe November 2023. Mthuthuzeli has continued to make works around the world with The Washington Ballet (USA), Royal Ballet (UK),

Mthuthuzeli November is an award-winning choreographer born in Cape Town, South



LUBABALO PUPU:

Lubabalo Pupu is a 32-year-old dancer from Gugulethu, Cape Town. His passion for dance began at Chris Hani Arts and Culture Focus School under the guidance of Mam N Siwundla. After high school, he joined the Indoni Dance Art and Leadership Academy, training from 2013 to 2015 under Artistic Director Sibonakaliso Ndaba.

Lubabalo became a company dancer, performing extensively. In 2019, he joined Is'thatha Dance Project, where he danced and choreographed various works. His notable performances include "Danger In The Dark" (2019-2020), the National Arts Festival (FRINGE), stunt work in "The Woman King" (2022), "Figure of Eight (Embody You)" (2022-2023), and "Influenza Art (Fake News)" (2023).

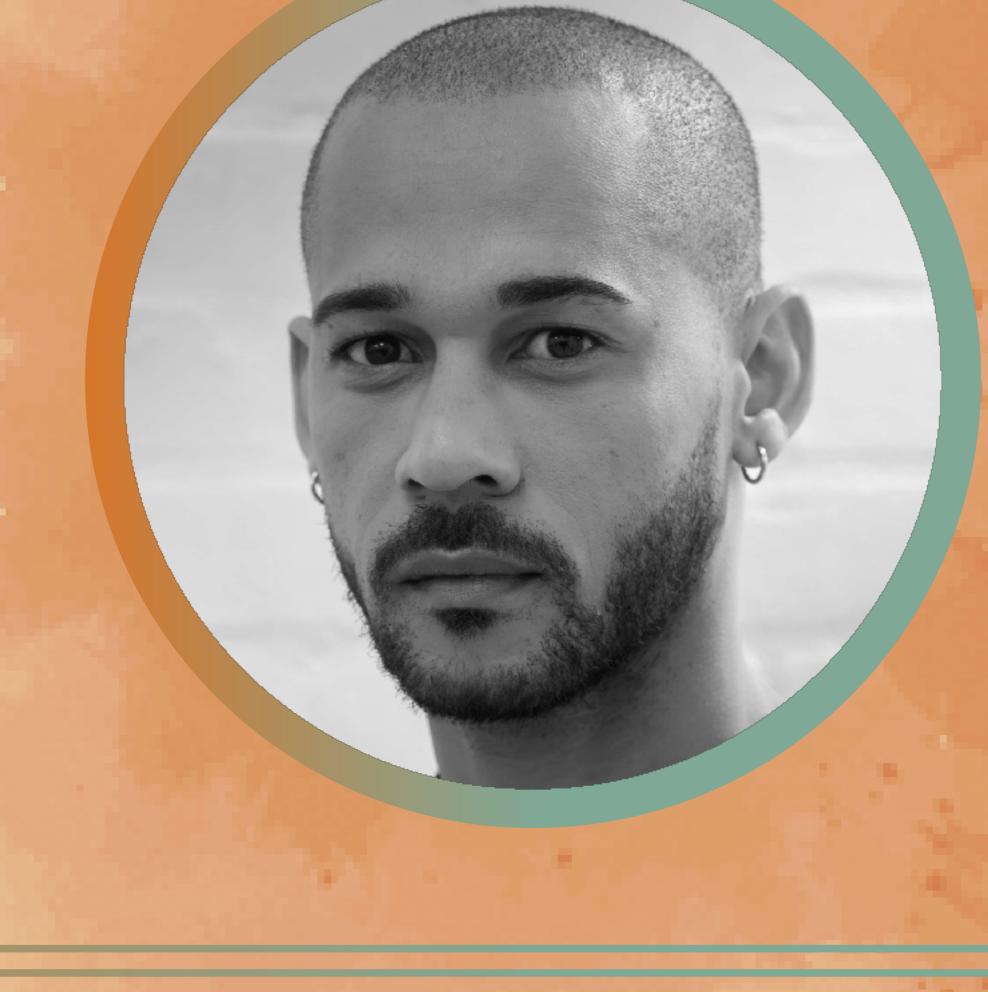
In 2022, Lubabalo co-founded Imbewu Dance Collective. He later joined Sibonelo Dance Project, performing in productions like INTUTHUKO Dance Festival, UBUNYE Dance Production, and UKUZINZA Dance Production. In July 2023, he performed at the China Xhinxhang 6th Annual Festival.

Lubabalo is a dedicated freelancer, teacher, outreach dance facilitator, and choreographer in Cape Town.



SHAUN OELF:

Shaun Oelf is a professional dancer, teacher, and choreographer from Karatara in Knysna. His career began when he was taught by the renowned duo Alfred Hinkel and John Linden, after which he joined the Jazzart Dance Theatre Company. Oelf has been the recipient of multiple awards and nominations as a dancer, actor, and for his other creative endeavours. In 2014, he won the Baxter Theatre Artist of the Year Award and was nominated for a Naledi Theatre Award in 2015 as Best Supporting Actor in Lara Foot's production of Fishers of Hope. In 2017 'What Remains' won the Best Ensemble at the 2018 Fleur du Cap Awards and nominated for a Fleur du Cap Award (2023), as Best Actor in Marc Lottering's Aunty Merle, Things get Real. Co-Writer and Performer in the award-winning production KARATA-RA (2022). Oelf has also completed his Artistic Residency at Jazzart Dance Theatre in (2021) In 2014, he launched the Cape Town based Figure of Eight Dance Collective (FO8) with co-founder, Grant Van Ster



Born and raised in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, Sbonakaliso Ndaba received her training at Jaz-

SBONAKALISO NDABA:

zart Dance Theatre in Cape Town under Alfred Hinkel. Throughout her career, Sbo Ndaba has danced and choreographed for numerous South African and international dance companies. She is the founding director of Phenduka Dance Theatre and Indoni Dance Arts Academy.

Currently, she serves as the Artistic Director of SboNdaba Dance, a non-profit company

co-founded with Jennifer van Papendorp and Paula Kelly in 2021, officially launched in 2022. The company is dedicated to strengthening the performing arts in South Africa. As one of the leading African Contemporary dance choreographers, Sbonakaliso Ndaba has received several awards in recognition of her work.



for five years before launching their own initiative. Through Gain Collective, the two seek to explore and teach their own unique style, honed over

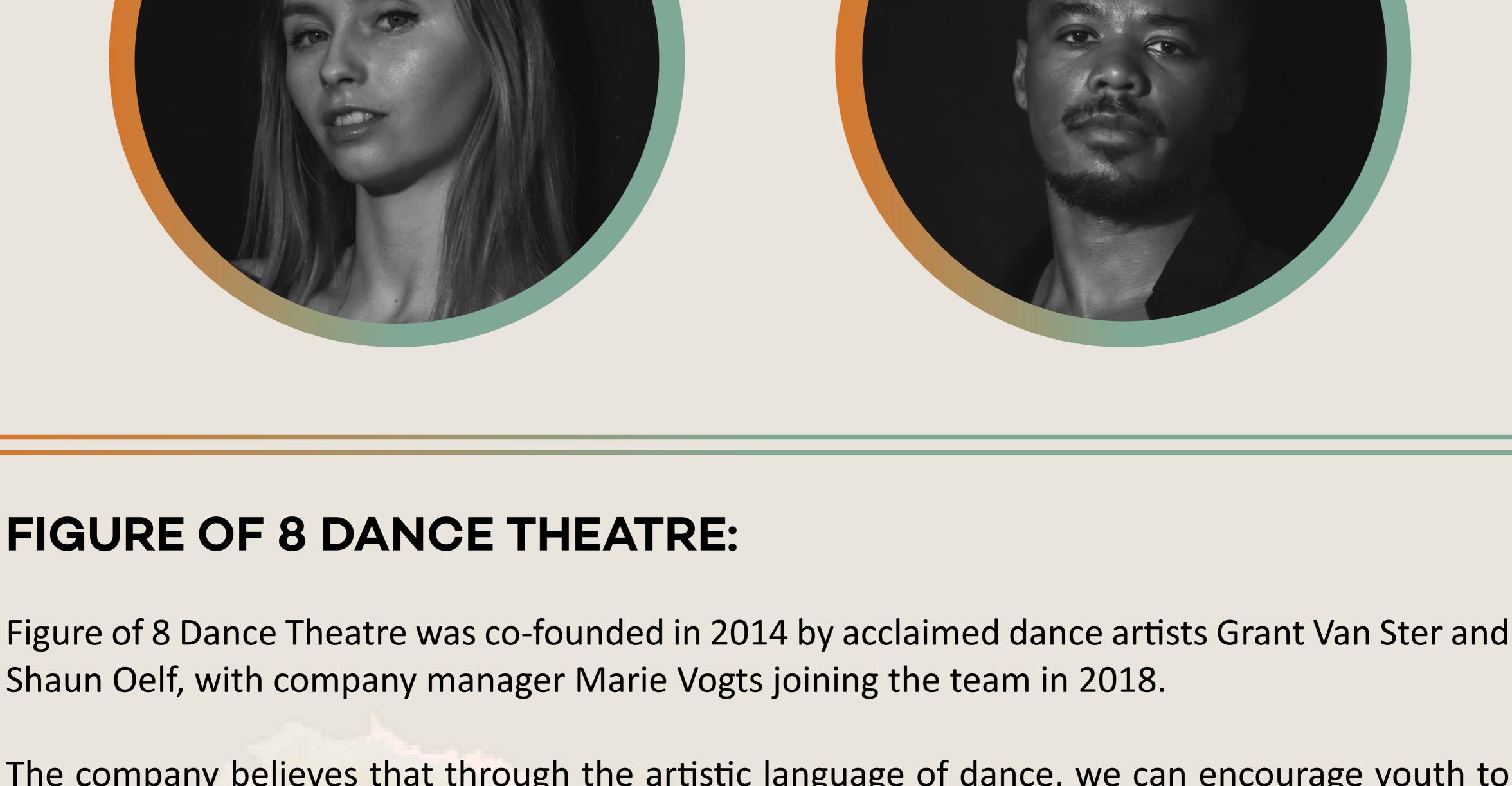
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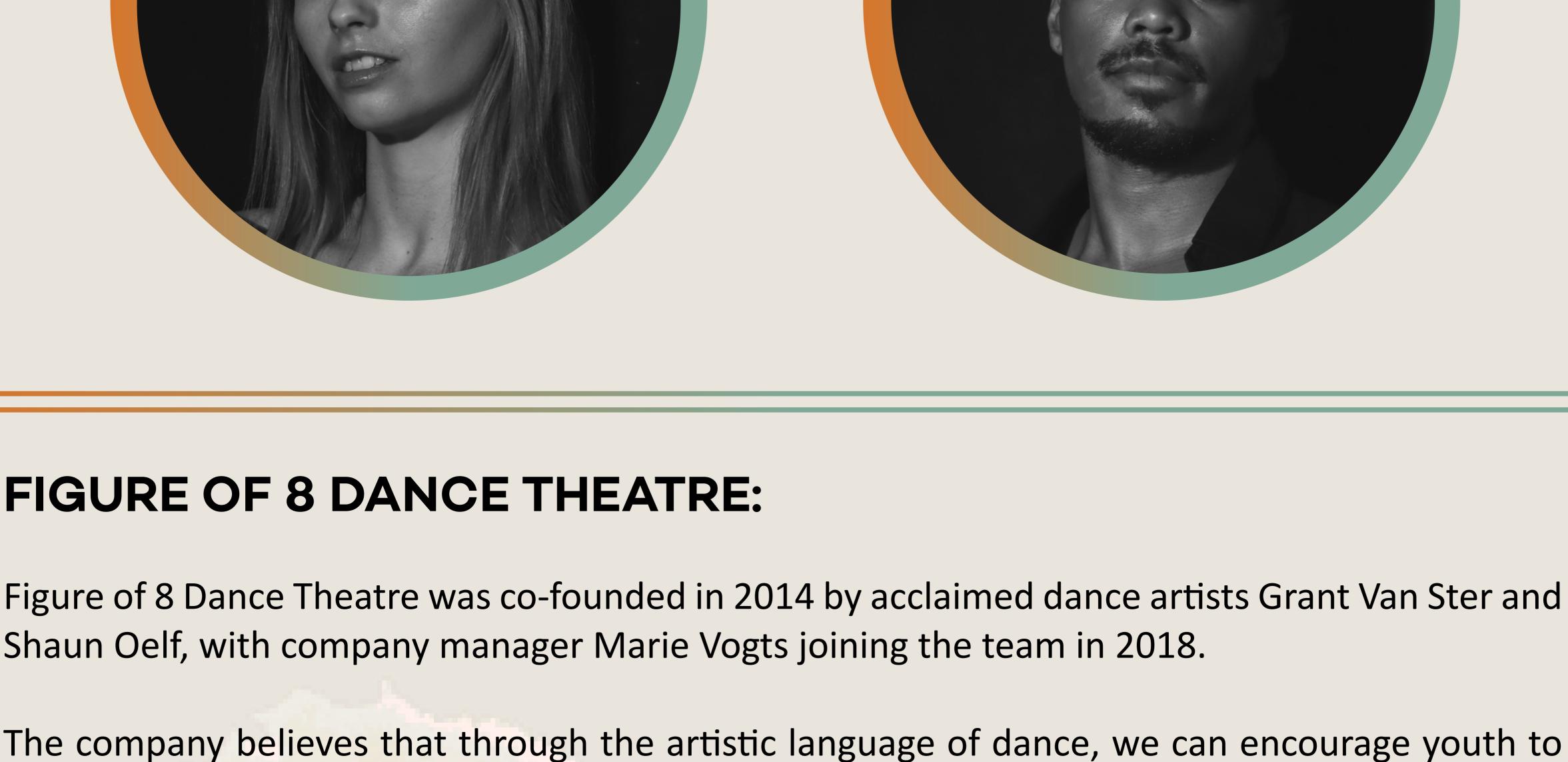
place artistry at the forefront of creation.

time and collaboration. As well as create fresh and dynamic works that push their creativity and

Gain Collective is a collaborative choreographic and performance based company formed by

Chesney Stanfield and Emile Petersen. The two trained, performed and choreographed together





become more self-aware, rise above challenges, and have the freedom to dream. The creative duo, Van Ster and Oelf, began their formal dance training under the directorship of South African dance icons Alfred Hinkel and John Linden.

Figure of 8 Dance Theatre has been acclaimed for the exceptional dance-theatre productions

they create, receiving Cultural Affairs Awards for Best Contribution in Dance, The Baxter Theatre

Artists of the Year Award, Best Dance Production at Toyota US Woordfees, the KKNK Arts Unlimited Young Voice of the Year Award, and additional nominations from Broadway World South Africa and the Fleur Du Cap Theatre Awards. Recently, they were nominated for three Naledi awards and won the Herrie Prize at KKNK 2024 for their groundbreaking work and contribution to the production 'Set in Motion'. Their annual International Dance Day celebrations in partnership with Suidoosterfees have become a highlight in their yearly program. FO8DT strives to develop, promote, and sustain the future of dance theatre. Their dedication to continued work focused on inclusion, equity, and diversity ensures their programs are welcom-

ing and accessible to all.





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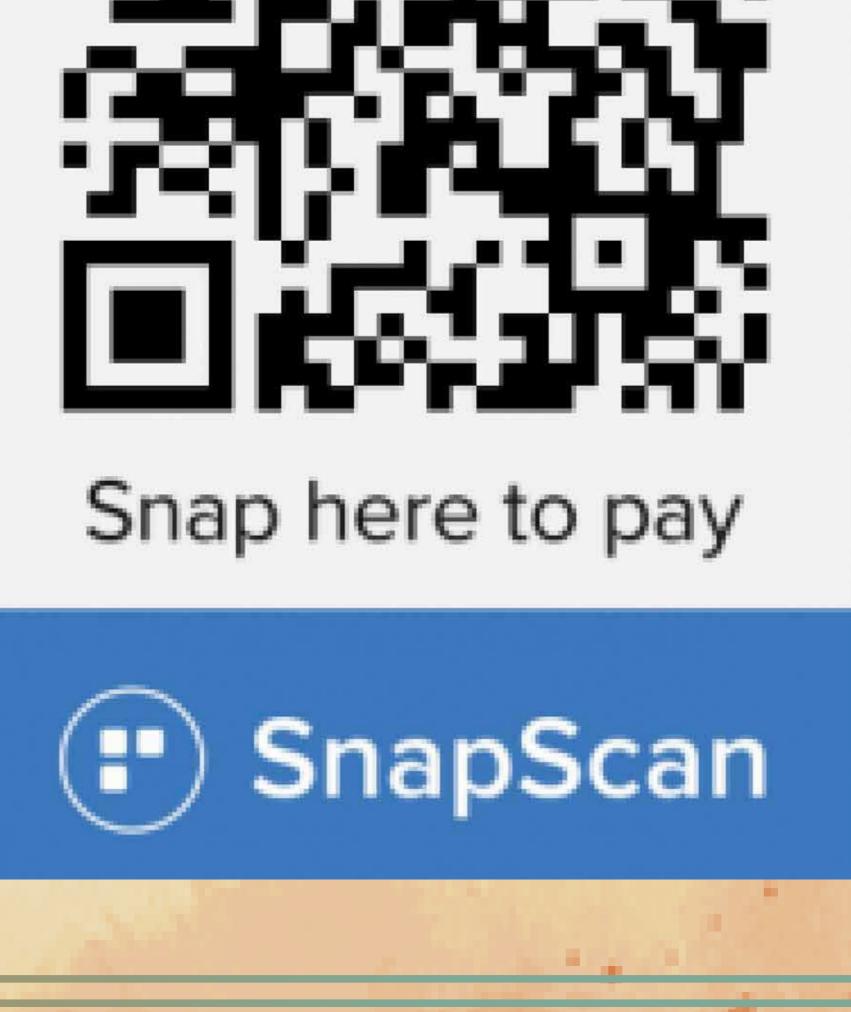
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