


**EDINBURGH
INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL**

SHONA THE MUSICAL CHOIR

—

Neo Vilakazi & Neo Productions

16 Aug 8.30pm

EDINBURGH PARK

The performance lasts approx. 1hr 15mins
with no interval.

Made possible through the
PLACE programme

Please ensure all mobile phones and electronic
devices are turned off or put on silent.

SHONA THE MUSICAL CHOIR

Neo Vilakazi in collaboration with
Neo Productions

Neo Vilakazi

Lyricist, Composer
& Artistic Director

Morgan Njobo

Co-composer & Choreographer

Ramcise Modie
(DJ Ramsy)

Co-composer & Band Leader

Neo Vilakazi
& **Kholwani Vilakazi**

Costume Design

Performers

Singers

Neo Vilakazi

Caesar Hurst

Kat Brooks

Khanyisani Beato

Morgan Njobo

Nandi Sawyers-Hudson

Oratile Letsholo

Phindile Duma

Rushand Chambers

Thanduxolo Boo

Zanele 'Zaney' Ndlovu

Band

Ramcise Modie (DJ Ramsy)

Bass Guitar

Franco Giovanetti

Keyboards

Matheus Barros

Electric Guitar

Peter Farrugia

Drums

David Luhanga

Djembe & Percussion

Neo Productions

Neo Vilakazi	Co-director, Lyricist, Composer, Artistic Director and Production Manager
Fiona Campbell	Co-director and Administration Manager
Blair Wycherley	Co-director and Development/ Marketing & Sales
Chantal Short	Wardrobe Manager
Sophie Knapper	Props Manager

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to The Biscuit Factory, Color Sound Studio, BTO Solicitors LLP, Papjgun Photography, My Zulu Hut, Ray-Z-Fine, Franco Giovanetti for music preparation assistance, the City of Edinburgh Council and all the other people who have helped get us here today!

PROGRAMME NOTES

I have always loved musical theatre. Singing, dancing, storytelling: it combines all of those elements in a way I think lends itself to African culture. But there are not many Africans who have had the opportunity to tell their stories through musical theatre. People think *The Lion King* is an African production – it's Disney! Beyond that you'll struggle to find an African-produced musical that most people would know.

Why? The barriers to entry are considerable.

The cost requirements are so onerous that it's very difficult for people from developing countries to gather the financial resources necessary to put on a show.

Shona the Musical Choir is an effort to represent Africa, to bring our music to a wider audience, to tell our stories and share our culture. Britain (and Scotland) is a multicultural, diverse society, but that diversity is not reflected on our stages. In the almost 30 years I've lived in Scotland, there have been very few African shows that make it to the festivals. It irks me! So for us to be given the opportunity to get on that stage, with all the international attention and prestige that comes along with it, is an amazing thing. We're really very grateful to be given the chance to participate.

For the people of the African diaspora, it's wonderful for our culture, our music and our vibrancy to be reflected on the stages of the International Festival and enrich the tapestry of what Edinburgh audiences will see. I'm buzzing to share it with you!

Neo Vilakazi

Writer, composer and producer, *Shona the Musical Choir*. From an interview with George Spender, 23 June 2021

George Spender

George Spender is the publisher of Salamander Street and former Editorial Director at Oberon Books and Publications Editor at the Edinburgh International Festival. As a freelance editor he has worked for Faber & Faber and Bloomsbury.

NEO VILAKAZI

Neo Vilakazi has over 20 years' experience as an artist and in delivering creative arts projects in both South Africa and Scotland. His experience working in both countries serves his projects immensely as he understands the cultural dynamics associated with collaborations across different cultures and communities. Vilakazi is expert in working with and managing artists and in discovering and nurturing new talent. As well as creating the script and acting as lead composer on *Shona the Musical*, he is responsible for overseeing all creative aspects of the project, from idea to on-stage performance, including this showcase of the *Shona the Musical Choir*.

MORGAN NJOBO

Morgan Njobo has worked in the arts sector for over ten years and has toured as lead singer of his group Simply Soweto Encha throughout Europe and beyond. He has established his own production company, now called Njobo Productions, which debuted at the 2015 Edinburgh Fringe Festival and appeared again the following year with the sell-out show *I am Rhythm* at DanceBase. He is familiar with all aspects of producing performance pieces internationally and has experience in both Western and African dance styles, music and song. Njobo has been Artistic Director of the Edinburgh Multicultural Festival since 2020.

RAMCISE MODIE (DJ RAMSY)

Ramcise Modie is a pre-eminent young Black producer, musician and DJ working in Edinburgh, sought out by many musicians working within Scotland's diverse music scene. He bases his composing process on the African aural tradition, allowing a recording team to revise material and fine tune songs in order to work out instrumentation and harmonies. For past projects, Modie has also created backing tracks for rehearsals and performances.

NEO PRODUCTIONS

Neo Productions is an Edinburgh-based multi-cultural theatre company established in 2004 to give the BAME population of Scotland opportunities to develop their on-stage and backstage skills, as well as to promote work by Black and minority ethnic artists. Neo Productions' first production was *Once Were Free*, performed at the 2004 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, followed by a workshopped performance of *Viva Mandela* at North Edinburgh Arts in 2007. Since then, the company has performed in various local venues, including the Festival Theatre Studio with *Shona the Musical* across three workshop performances in 2018.

Shona the Musical was selected by the Mercury Musicals Developments for the BEAM 2020 Showcase programme to be presented in front of industry experts, producers and investors at the Theatre Royal Derngate, Northampton, in March 2020, but unfortunately this did not take place due to the Covid-19 crisis. Since then, Neo Productions has taken part of the material from *Shona the Musical* and worked it into a Choir version, which was premiered in October 2020.

AUDIENCE SURVEY

We are delighted to welcome audiences back to live performances. The past year has been one of the most challenging in the International Festival's history, so your feedback is more important to us than ever. Anyone who completes the survey will be entered into a prize draw for a chance to win £200 in vouchers of your choice.

Visit eif.co.uk/survey to participate



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