

Gregory Maqoma

Cion: Requiem of Ravel's Bolero

Start Time: 7.45pm

Duration: 1 hour 10 mins/no interval

Age guidance: 12+

Welcome

Welcome to the Barbican and this year's Dance Umbrella. As we celebrate our long-standing partnership, we are thrilled to bring this stirring performance of *Cion: Requiem of Ravel's Bolero* to London. We're delighted to welcome back dancer and choreographer Gregory Maqoma both to the Barbican and to Dance Umbrella, along with his stunning company Vuyani Dance Theatre and soaring choir. Hot on the heels of *Tree*, the hit show Maqoma recently choreographed for this year's Manchester International Festival, he now embodies a professional mourner, inspired by stories written by fellow South African, Zakes Mda. Responding to recent political events both in his own country and around the world, this absorbing production is a thought-provoking lamentation on life and loss.

Thank you for joining us this evening.

Toni Racklin, Head of Theatre and Dance, Barbican
Emma Gladstone, Artistic Director, Dance Umbrella

Director's note

Gregory Maqoma

The world has changed and we are constantly confronted by the scourge of violence against humans. I can't help wondering how much the idea of a post-human era has infiltrated our very definition of humanity. Therefore this show's message of death and its dire consequences must be communicated through a lament in order to tackle a universe where the age-old phenomena of greed, power and religion result in unnatural deaths. Toloki, the professional mourner, weaves through this virtual landscape of dissolution, bringing about catharsis. Paradoxically, this catharsis is a universal grief that conquers the sadness continuing to permeate the living who are plagued by deaths that are not their own.

The name of the piece, *Cion*, is as in Zion, the African church. It is set in a graveyard, a church where the body is religion and the voices are personal. For inspiration, it draws on creations by two artists: the character Toloki in South African author Zakes Mda's novels *Cion* and *Ways of Dying*, and music from French composer Maurice Ravel's

barbican

Bolero. The story is a universal one, encompassing both the past and the present, and it champions our ability to bend together to share the burden of grief. It is accompanied by the persistent cries of people in mourning and the a cappella music of Isicathamiya in our own languages, sung by an a cappella quartet to the creative arrangement and composition of Nhlanhla Mahlangu. The piece is performed by myself and eight dancers who are possessed by the spirits; they are one with the departed souls and finally bring their spirits to rest in order for peace and humanity to prevail.

Duration: 1 hour 10 mins, no interval

Age guidance: 12+

Presented by the Barbican and Dance Umbrella.

Co-produced by Vuyani Dance Theatre and The Market Theatre.

Creative team

Conceiver, Choreographer and Lead Dancer **Gregory Maqoma**

Dramaturg **Shanell Winlock**

Musical Director and Composer **Nhlanhla Mahlangu**

Composition Assistant **Xolisile Bongwana**

Costumes **BlackCoffee**

Set Designer and Technical Director **Oliver Hauser**

Lighting Designer **Mannie Manim**

Sound Designer **Ntuthuko Mbuyazi**

Props **Wesley Mabizela**

Dancers

Gregory Maqoma

Otto Andile Nhlapo

Roseline Wilkens

Thamsanqa Masoka

Thabang Mojapelo

Smangaliso Ngwenya

Itumeleng Tsoeu

Ernest Balene

Nathan Botha

Musicians

Siphiwe Nkabinde (Beatboxer)

Sbusiso Shozi

Xolisile Bongwana

Thabang Mkhwanazi

Vuyani Dance Theatre

Chairperson of the board of directors **Thandiwe Msibi**

Board members **Dr Thuthula Balfour-Kaipa, Vonani Mathebula, CA (SA), Dumo Mbethe, CA (SA)**

Executive Creative Director **Gregory Maqoma**

Chief Executive Officer **Lindiwe Letwaba**
Production & Marketing Manager **Siyandiswa Dokoda**
Patrons **Justice Edwin Cameron, Advocate Nomvula Mokhatla, Dr Sibongile Khumalo**

Vuyani Dance Theatre would like to extend its heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to the author of *Cion*, Zakes Mda, The Market Theatre and Showtex.

Cion: Requiem of Ravel's Boléro is supported by the Edwin Fox Foundation



About Dance Umbrella

Dance Umbrella is London's international dance festival. We shine a light on new choreography every October, sharing memorable shows from around the world with audiences across the capital.

We are committed to taking dance out and bringing audiences in by touring in inner and outer London, broadening definitions of contemporary dance, and developing partnerships with non-dance venues and organisations such as The Big Draw, the National Theatre, Battersea Power Station and local councils.

Founded in 1978, Dance Umbrella has reached audiences of well over a million people. Pioneering commissions by world class choreographers have been presented at sites ranging from the Royal Albert Hall and inner-city rooftops, to Tate Modern and outer London parks. Emma Gladstone was appointed Artistic Director and Chief Executive in 2013 and in addition to the festival, Dance Umbrella now runs digital projects, creative learning schemes and professional development programmes throughout the year. danceumbrella.co.uk

Selected lyrics from *Cion*

Original

Siyanamukela kwi ncindezelo

Yethu ejabulisalo

Evusa imihlaba yenkohlakalo

Esimweni esikuso

Uhambo lokufa

Ukufa ukufa komzimba

Ngoku phelele

Ngokuphelele

Nokubole kwe nyama

Ho dula - ho Falla
Di Tsheho - Di keledi
Bohloko - Lethabo
Tehleho - mopotso
Hobata - mofuthu
Mabitla - Malapa
Lififi - Lebone
Bothotho - Bohlale

Wena uhlekisa ngezikhalo zethu
Ndindedwa ndilhlwempu
Ndime qelele
Ndize ndalahlek' esibelekweni mna
Ngoba mna, ngoba mna nokufa oku.
Singumtya, nethunga, ukuphela komzimba.

Translation

We welcome you to our oppression
Our oppression that gives joy
That wakes the people who are corrupt

In the state that we are in
The journey of the living dead
And the death of the body
Death death in totality
Totally and the rotting of the flesh

To stay - to scatter
The smiles - the tears
Pain - joy
The loss - the gain
The cold - the warmth
The grave - the homes
The dark - the light
The foolishness - the wisdom

You who makes fun of our cries
I am alone, isolated and standing far
I even got lost in the womb
Because me and this death
We are the bucket and its handle

Zakes Mda

Author

Zakes Mda is a writer, painter and music composer, Professor Emeritus of English at Ohio University in the USA, and Extraordinary Professor of English at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. He has published 24 books, eleven of which are novels and the rest collections of plays, poetry and a monograph on theatre for development. His works have been translated into 22 languages and have won several awards in South Africa, the US and Italy. His memoir titled *Sometimes There is a Void: Memoirs of an Outsider* was the New York Times Notable Book for 2012. In 2008 *Cion* was one of the five novels shortlisted for the NAACP Image Awards which honour projects and individuals that promote diversity in the arts in television, recording, literature and motion pictures. He holds honorary doctoral degrees from five universities, including the University of Cape Town and Dartmouth College, and is an honorary patron of The Market Theatre in Johannesburg.

Gregory Vuyani Maqoma

Conceiver, Choreographer and Dancer

Gregory Vuyani Maqoma became interested in dance in the late 1980s as a means to escape the growing political tensions in his place of birth. He started his formal dance training in 1990 at Moving Into Dance where, in 2002, he became the Associate Artistic Director. Maqoma has established himself as an internationally renowned dancer, choreographer, teacher and director. He founded Vuyani Dance Theatre (VDT) in 1999 when he was undertaking a scholarship at the Performing Arts Research and Training School (PARTS) in Belgium under the direction of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker.

Maqoma is respected for his collaborations with artists of his generation like Akram Khan, Vincent Mantsoe, Faustin Linyekula, Dada Masilo, Shanell Winlock, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Nhlanhla Mahlangu and theatre director James Ngcobo.

Several works in his repertoire have won him accolades and international acclaim. This includes FNB Vita Choreographer of the Year in 1999, 2001 and 2002 for *Rhythm 1.2.3*, *Rhythm Blues* and *Southern Comfort* respectively. He received the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Dance in 2002. Maqoma was a finalist in the Daimler Chrysler Choreography Award in 2002 and in the Rolex Mentorship Programme in 2003. He is the recipient of the 2012 Tunkie Award for Leadership in Dance. In 2014 he received a Bessie, New York City's premier dance award, for *Exit/Exist* for original music composition. He served as a nominator in the 2016–2017 Rolex Arts Initiative as well as curating the 2017 Main Dance Program for The National Arts Festival. His works *Via Kanana* and *Cion: Requiem of Ravel's Bolero* are currently touring in Africa and Europe.

In 2017 Maqoma was honoured by the French Government with the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Arts and Literature) Award. In 2018 he was honoured by the South African Department of Arts and Culture with the inaugural Usiba Award for dedication to dance teaching. In 2018 Maqoma was one

of the selected visiting artists at the Virginia Commonwealth University Dance Department as well as a visiting teacher at Ecole De Sables – Toubab Dialaw – Senegal. Maqoma is part of the selection committee for Dance Biennale Afrique Festival, due to take place in Marrakech in 2020. In 2018 Maqoma collaborated with William Kentridge as a choreographer and performer in Kentridge's opera *The Head and the Load* which premiered at The Tate Modern Gallery in London in July and toured to Germany, Austria, Holland and New York. In 2019 Maqoma collaborated with Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah on the production *Tree*, produced by Manchester International Festival and the Young Vic.

Nhlanhla Mahlangu

Composer and Music Director

Exceptional vocalist, composer, theatre-maker, gravity-defying dancer and educator Nhlanhla Mahlangu is a graduate of the theory and practice of dance teaching at Moving into Dance, Mophatong. Recently Mahlangu has turned his attention to translating his prolific local and international career on stage into a Master of Arts by Creative Research at the University of Witwatersrand. Mahlangu can be described as a generous interdisciplinary collaborator who excels at conjuring original, complex and contemporary work rooted in traditional forms.

Born in Pholapark Squatter Camp in Apartheid South Africa in the late 1970s, Mahlangu started school during the national state of emergency in the 1980s. Mahlangu witnessed first-hand the conflicts between the African National Congress, Inkatha Freedom Party and The 'Third Force' of the 1990s. His seminal body of work, *Chant*, is shaped and inspired by these experiences.

In addition to his contemporary dance and musical ingenuity, Mahlangu is celebrated for his embodiment of Isicathamiya, an a cappella-type musical form combining vocals and movement. Mahlangu uses this practice as a way to process the history of South Africa, particularly the plight of migrant workers. These performances look to build social cohesion, heal the wounds of the past and encourage resilience in the new democratic South Africa.

Nhlanhla Mahlangu's prolific practice is one of interrogation, articulation, development and research. He has gained exceptional ground through his pivotal collaborations with luminaries the calibre of William Kentridge, Robyn Orlin, Richard Cock, Gregory Vuyani Maqoma, Sylvia Glasser, Vincent Mantsoe, Jay Pather, James Ngcobo, Victor Ntoni and Hugh Masekela, as well as his choral music and music-making approaches with his Hlabelela Ensemble and Song and Dance Works. Mahlangu was a Naledi award-winner for Best Choreographer in 2017.

Oliver Hauser

Set Designer and Technical Director

Oliver Hauser's passion for lighting, and his creativity, integrity and energetic work ethic have become well known in the South African live events industry.

Hauser has worked on over 250 productions since 2007 across a wide range of genres: drama, comedy, opera, musicals, avant-garde dance, contemporary music, conceptual performance and corporate events.

He has designed, co-ordinated and managed lighting for productions at prestigious venues in Barcelona, Paris, Zurich, Berlin, Beijing and in other cities internationally.

Some of his career credits include Gregory Maqoma's *Cion* (Set design and technical management), The South African Music Awards 2018, *Avenue Q* (South Africa), *Rock of Ages* (South Africa), Jonathan Roxmouth's *The Musicals in Concert* (2017 and 2018), *High School Musical* (Associate designer), *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, Eve Ensler's *Emotional Creature*, Molière's *Tartuffe*, *The Crucible*, Reza De Vet's *African Gothic*, *African Footprint* (Head of lighting), Gilbert & Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*, Athol Fugard's *Boesman & Lena*, *The Coloured Museum*, Percy Mtwa's *Bophala*, *Beautiful Creatures*, *One More Night* (A Phil Collins Tribute) and *Marat Sade*.

Ntuthuko Mbuyazi

Sound Designer

Ntuthuko Mbuyazi is a Durban-born sound addict. He achieved his diploma in Audio Engineering at Cape Audio College in 2010 and is currently The Market Theatre's Sound Technician. By 2016 he was fully launched in sound design and his work was nominated at the 2017 Naledi Theatre Awards for Best Sound Design for *6 Characters in Search of an Author*, directed by Sibusiso Mamba. He was further nominated in the 2018 Naledi Theatre Awards for Best Original Score/Arrangement/Music Adaptation for *Itsoseng*, directed by Lesedi Job. His latest achievement is a double nomination for the 2019 Naledi Theatre Awards for Best Sound Design for *Florence*, directed by Greg Homann and for Best Sound Design for *Shoes and Coups*, directed by Palesa Mazamisa. His sound design history includes *Four Women (Nina Simone)*, directed by James Ngcobo, *You Fool How Can The Sky Fall*, directed by James Ngcobo, *King Leopard*, directed by Lesedi Job, *Suddenly the Storm*, directed by Bobby Heaney, *When Swallows Cry*, directed by Lesedi Job, *The Suit*, directed by James Ngcobo, *The Suitcase*, directed

by James Ngcobo, *Train Driver*, directed by Charmaine Weir-Smith, *1 Night In Miami*, directed by James Ngcobo, *Meet me at Dawn*, directed by Lesedi Job, *Nongogo*, directed by James Ngcobo and *Cincinnati*, directed by Clive Mathibe. Designing has seen him tour China, Romania, Cape Town, Durban and Bloemfontein.



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