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PRESS KIT

DADA MASILO / DANCE FACTORY JOHANNESBURG



SWAN LAKE

Dada Masilo

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Place des arts, Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier

The turbulent South African Dada Masilo presents a scathing version of *Swan Lake* that features a gay prince, everyone in tutus, mordant humour and strong emotions. This explosive fusion of classical and African dance is a compelling work by a significant artist.

SWAN LAKE

CREDITS

Premiere : National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, South Africa, July 2, 2010

Choreography Dada Masilo

Company The Dance Factory

Music Tchaïkovsky, Steve Reich, René Avenant, Camille Saint-Saëns, Arvo Pärt

Costumes Design Dada Masilo and Suzette Le Sueur

Costumes Confection Ann and Kirsten Bailes

Hats Confection Karabo Legoabe

Lighting Designer Suzette Le Sueur

Stage Manager François Saint-Cyr

Delegated Production Interarts Lausanne Emmanuel Journoud

Production The Dance Factory, Suzette Le Sueur et Interarts Lausanne, Chantal et Jean-Luc Larguier

Booking Scènes de la Terre, Martine Dionisio

Dancers Nicola Haskins, Dada Masilo, Ipeleng Merafe, Songezo Mcilizeli, Thabani Ntuli, Thamsanqa Tshabalala, Llewellyn Mnguni, Kyle Rossouw, Khaya Ndlovu, Nadine Buys, Zandile Constable, Cindy Okkers, Nonofu Olekeng, Tshepo Zasekhaya

ABOUT SWAN LAKE

Renowned for her galvanizing interpretations of great classical ballets, the young South African Dada Masilo makes her sensational debut in Canada with 13 electrifying dancers in a caustic adaptation of *Swan Lake*. Combining classical and African dance, she incarnates with fiery spirit the beautiful Odette, who as a victim of a sorcerer's curse is turned into a white swan each day at dawn. But in her version, Prince Siegfried falls in love neither with her nor her double. To the great sorrow of his parents, he succumbs to the charms of a decidedly male black swan, an attraction that proves fatal. Homophobia, forced marriages, the legacy of apartheid and the ravages of AIDS are evoked with humour, sensitivity and lucid intelligence in a vigorous work of astounding beauty.

Created in 1877 at the Bolshoi in Moscow and set to the music of Tchaikovsky, *Swan Lake* is a ballet that has inspired countless versions and performances of the piece. It is a ballet that has fascinated Dada Masilo since the age of 11. After taking on *Romeo and Juliette* as well as *Carmen*, in 2010 she perfected her fusion of classical and African styles in this revised tale of Siegfried, Odette and Odile. Between arabesques, bare feet striking the floor, clapping hands, swaying hips and voices punctuating the rhythm of the dance, she employs the metaphor of Tchaikovsky's homosexuality masked behind the impossible love of the original version, and introduces the theme of AIDS at the end of the piece. She thus confronts two major taboos prevalent in her native land. She also questions the heritage of the apartheid regime, combining more contemporary sounds with the original score and hijacking the codes of ballet. All the dancers are in tutus, torsos shimmering with sweat, and the lead is a well-built male dancer rather than a slender ballerina.

DADA MASILO – CHOREOGRAPHER

Dada Masilo grew up in the impoverished neighbourhood of Soweto, where she was born in 1985. She studied classical and contemporary dance in South Africa, followed by two years in Brussels at P.A.R.T.S, the famous dance school founded by choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. Combining her training with the traditions of African dance, she established a unique signature, captivating audiences with reworkings of major classics from the Western dance repertoire. She founded her own company in 2008 and became a celebrity in South Africa, and soon afterward became a star on the international scene. She has created a dozen choreographies and is the recipient of three awards.

Dada Masilo trained at The Dance Factory, the National School of the Arts and Jazzart (Cape Town) before working for two years at the renowned Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (P.A.R.T.S) in Brussels. She has been teaching at The Dance Factory Youth since 2006. Dada Masilo has danced for the choreographer PJ Sabbagha and has performed her own works on the African continent, in Mexico and in Israel. These include *Dying Dying Dead, I just want to be a princess for one day, The world, my butt and other big round things, Love and other four - letter words, Romeo and Juliet, Unravelling Carmen, Back, Umfula Wamadada, and Swan Lake.*

In 2008, Dada Masilo received the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for dance for the piece *Romeo and Juliet*. This work, performed in 2008 at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown and Arts Alive International in Johannesburg, was created jointly with PJ Sabbagha and Gregory Maqoma. In 2009, at the same two festivals, Dada staged *Carmen*, and enjoyed similar success with this work. In 2009, she was commissioned by FNB Dance Umbrella to choreograph *Unravelling Carmen*, then she performed *Romeo and Juliet* at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town. Following this, she spent a month in Israel, where she choreographed *Umfula Wamadada* (this was also performed at the FNB Dance Umbrella in 2010). In the same year she choreographed *Swan Lake* (preview at the Dance Factory then at the National Arts Festival), a piece which is now on tour throughout the world.

THE DANCE FACTORY JOHANNESBURG – COMPANY

The Dance Factory Johannesburg is the only dedicated dance venue in South Africa. When The Dance Factory was founded in 1992 by Suzette Le Sueur, it sought to create an accessible space for people from the townships and the suburbs but also a dance school in New Town, the cultural district of Johannesburg. They focus on taking very young people and taking them right through to professional careers. In the last couple of years they have focused on the presentation of the work of Dada Masilo, a rising young South African choreographer, and artist-in-residence at the Company. She has become very popular with audiences and there is a strong fraternity of audience who follow her around the country wherever she is performing. The work of Dada Masilo is now internationally recognized for her iconoclastic and mixed heritage vocabulary.

PRESS QUOTES

« Quasi-inconnue du public, la Sud-Africaine Dada Masilo, 27 ans, signe avec “Swan Lake” le spectacle le plus réjouissant de l’année. Triomphe à la Biennale de danse de Lyon puis au musée du quai Branly, cette relecture du “Lac des cygnes” ose le prince gai, les tutus aussi noirs que la peau des danseurs. Et l’humour ravageur... » – *Paris-Match*, Paris

« En une heure, on rit beaucoup, on pleure aussi : car Dada Masilo sait raconter une histoire et chorégrapier des pas des gestes. Le trio final sur la musique d’Arvo Pärt est magnifique. » – *Le Figaro*, France

« Les tutus du Lac des Cygnes comme on ne les as jamais vus ! La chorégraphe Dada Masilo allie fluidité du ballet classique et énergie de la danse africaine. » – *Télérama*, France

« La chorégraphie de Dada Masilo recèle une vigueur et des beautés stupéfiantes. Et son propos est traité avec une gravité émouvante et une concision impressionnante [pour le jeune] auteur qu’elle [...] est; avec une justesse de sentiments qui dénote chez elle une extraordinaire sensibilité, une lucidité remarquable. » – *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Paris

« Une fusion brillante des danses africaine et classique qui s’engage avec humour et énergie pour un monde sans frontières. » – *Le Dauphiné Libéré*, France

“This is not the first time that Masilo has tackled one of the great classics. Her courage in doing this pays off with ecstatic audiences. The exquisite dance piece is moving and thought-provoking.” – *Cue TV, New Zealand*

*This press kit consists of material provided by the company
and by research conducted by the Danse Danse team.*