

Shannon Mowday

 By [Martin Myers](#)

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In Cape Town, this weekend, Shannon Mowday's *Lila* will be on at the Nassau Centre, Groote Schuur High School, Palmyra Road, Newlands.



Shannon Mowday. Image credit: CF Wesenberg.

Supported by Norway Music, the musicians include Mowday (soprano, alto, baritone and bass saxes, bass and contra-alto clarinet, composition), Helge Lien (piano), Johannes Eick (six-string acoustic bass) Erik Nylander (drums) and Asle Karstad (sound design).

Lila had its debut performance on the Oslo Jazz Festival 2019, followed by performances in Norway and South Africa.

I spoke to Shannon, last week.

■ ***When are you happiest?***

I am happiest when I am with my six-year-old son and exploring life through his eyes.

■ ***What does music mean to you?***

To express myself creatively is as important as breathing, and if I am not able to, I am extremely grumpy.

■ ***What is the most enjoyable aspect of your work?***

Opening minds to possibility, blasting through brick walls of expectations, changing perceptions, having people join me on a life's journey.

■ ***Are you famous?***

There was a time I was on a few popular musical TV shows and people would recognise me in the street and make comments.

■ ***What drives you: ego or humility?***

Of course, I would like to believe humility, as I consider myself to be someone who often tends to swim 'upstream', I don't do things as they have perhaps been 'done' before and I want to bring about change. It requires some 'boldness' or consciousness of self – which, I guess, means I have to believe in what 'I' am.

■ ***Any funny moments on stage?***

My first attempt at using a loop pedal on a gig while wearing very inappropriate shoes – where the heel just broke as I lent on it using the pedal. Quite an art to balancing on a broken heel with a baritone sax around my neck.

■ ***Your heroes?***

My son; Dad; Sibongile Khumalo (who never ceases to inspire me); my babysitter – when I have a gig.

■ ***Which living person do you admire most and why?***

Bishop Desmond Tutu. I believe he is a man who offers insights through personal experience and 'real' life scenarios and offers so many perspectives on all levels whilst accepting he is so very human. I relate to 'everyday' people who do remarkable things and make greatness possible for all-by being himself.

■ ***What is your most treasured possession?***

My son's teddy bear.

■ ***It's your round, what are you drinking?***

Single malt whisky – preferably one of the peaty ones.

■ ***Dream gig to do?***

To unite the musicians I have worked with throughout the world and present a large ensemble with my music

▣ ***What makes you stand out?***

I have incredible energy and passion for things, especially creativity. Either it inspires you or blows you away but through my desire to be the best version of myself, I try to inspire others to do the same. I always push my boundaries and want to explore new things and territories.

▣ ***Nicknames?***

Shannonball.

▣ ***If you were not a musician, what would you do?***

I have always been fascinated by the medical world, especially the brain and genetics. Something between neuroscience and genetic engineering.

▣ ***Pick five words to describe yourself:***

Energetic, sensitive, powerful, relentless, courageous (might be summed up for most as stubborn).

▣ ***Five favourite albums of all time:***

Somethin' Else – Cannonball Adderley

Bach: The Goldberg Variations – Glenn Gould

Jazz på Svenska – Jan Johansson

Symphonic Dreams – Gerry Mulligan

Live in Mode - Chick Corea and the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra

▣ ***Greatest movie ever made:***

ET.

▣ ***What song changed your life?***

Joni Mitchell – “Both Sides Now”.

▣ ***Who do you love?***

My son, my family, friends, a reed – when it works properly.

🎵 **What is your favourite word?**

Haha! Anyone who knows me knows it is an expletive not for public print.

🎵 **Favourite fashion garment:**

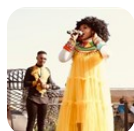
A pair of Levi's.

🎵 **Top of your bucket list:**

Legoland in Denmark (haha yes, it's all from a six-year-old's perspective right now).

🎵 **Your greatest achievement?**

If we talk about life, my son. In music, perhaps making the bold move to Norway and truly getting to know me as a creative being. Having some success in that honesty without compromise. In terms of accolades, the Standard Bank Young Artist for Jazz 2007.



Past and present Young Artists for Jazz to participate in 2019 Standard Bank All-Star Jazz Band

10 Sep 2019



🎵 **What do you complain about most often?**

Closed-minded people and attitudes; ignorance through lack of willingness to see other perspectives; 'systems' (especially educational) without room for change, respect and considerations for all.

“ *"I think its important for us to see different perspectives" - Shannon Mowday, 2007 [#SBYA](#) for jazz*

Watch this video for an insight into the international collaborations that happen at [#SBJF](#) in Makhanda at this year's [#NAF2019](#) [#jazz](#) [#festival](#) [@youthjazz](#) [@artsfestival](#) [pic.twitter.com/cMowfCnW7Q](#) — Standard Bank Arts (@StandardBankArt) [July 1, 2019](#) ”

🎵 **What is your fear?**

Not enough time with my son; to read all the books I want to; and make all the music I want to

🎵 **Happiness is:**

Being in myself and aware of who and what is around me – absolutely present. When playing music, to be conscious and reactive to every sound I hear. Friday night pizza and movie with my son; absolute happiness.

🎵 **On stage, I tend to:**

Stare at the ceiling when I talk.

🎵 **The best life lesson you have been taught:**

There is this expression that as one door closes another opens, but my Dad says, sometimes you have to actively close one for another to open. Things don't just 'happen' by themselves – if you want things to change you have to actively be involved in making them change and sometimes that means 'closing' a door to allow for it to happen.

▣ ***Where would you like to be right now?***

In bed. As a single mom and active musician, there are always too few hours in a day – sleep always seems to be the last priority.

▣ ***Do you do charity work and, if you do, what do you do?***

I think charity comes in various forms – so I mainly offer my services in whatever form I can. I used to do quite a lot of teaching on music-related projects when I lived in South Africa. Now I try and work with mobilising young musicians to meet and share different perspectives on music and life between Norway and South Africa – and my company finances some of that. Actually, on Wednesday, 3 October 2019, I will be part of a charity to raise money for three young people who need financial assistance for medical expenses.

▣ ***Wishes and dreams:***

That there were better and more permanent solutions to the issues of abuse against woman and children. To help establish a network of young musicians internationally – to not only share creative ideas but offer different perspectives on life. Recording and playing more with my current projects – *Lila* and *Chi*.

Stay tuned to Shannon's upcoming music and performances on [Facebook](#).

ABOUT MARTIN MYERS

Co-owner at Triple M Entertainment, founder Music Exchange, manager Sipho Hotstix Mabuse

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