

# Meet the 2019 Standard Bank Young Artist Award winners

The National Arts Festival (NAF) has unveiled the five recipients of the 2019 Standard Bank Young Artist Awards (SBYA). Each of the recipients - Mandla Mlangeni (jazz), Kitty Phetla (dance), Megan-Geoffrey Prins (music), Amy Jephta (theatre) and Gabrielle Goliath (visual art) - have been acknowledged for their artistic innovation in their respective fields.

Each of these young artists will receive a cash incentive, as well as a commission to premiere a new work or exhibit on the main programme of the 2019 National Arts Festival, taking place in Makhanda (Grahamstown) from 27 June-7 July 2019.



Back: Mandla Mlangeni, Gabrielle Goliath, Kitty Phetla - Front: Megan-Geoffrey Prins, Amy Jephta

These five young stars join a long list of illustrious SBYA alumni who have attained dizzying creative and professional heights over the years. Since 1981, the ranks of SBYA winners have included Sibongile Khumalo, William Kentridge, Mbongeni Ngema, Pieter-Dirk Uys, Johnny Clegg, Vincent Mantsoe, Gregory Maqoma, Janice Honeyman, Helen Sebidi, Lara Foot, Darrell Roodt, Robyn Orlin, Jerry Mofokeng, Andrew Buckland, Sam Nhlengethwa, and Marthinus Basson.

These luminaries, and many other SBYA alumni, have gone on to forge successful and sustainable careers in the arts. They have created work that contributes meaningfully to important national topics, often challenging the status quo in the process. Fêted on the world's stages and screens, in international galleries and concert halls, many are still actively working in – and enriching – South Africa's creative economy. In fact, an SBYA alumnus from 2001, artist and theatre-maker Brett Bailey, currently chairs the National Arts Festival artistic committee who have the responsibility of selecting the SBYA winners.

## The young artists class of 2019

Mandla Mlangeni is a jazz trumpeter and composer who has become a popular fixture on local and international stages since being selected for the Standard Bank National Youth Jazz Band in 2006. A gifted bandleader, Mlangeni has carved out a name for himself with various bands and ensembles, including the Amandla Freedom Ensemble, with which he has released two albums.







Kitty Phetla

Kitty Phetla is the principal dancer and choreographer at Joburg Ballet. She has toured and performed extensively on stages across the globe. A career highlight was dancing *The Dying Swan* solo for Nelson Mandela and the Dutch royal family, but one of her most noteworthy recent performances was her Queen Modjadji-inspired *Rain Dance for Cape Town, in situ* at the then-parched Theewaterskloof Dam.

Megan-Geoffrey Prins is a pianist whose prodigious talent was evident early on – he had performed with all South Africa’s major orchestras by the age of 14. Today, while studying for his doctorate in music in Cleveland, he traverses the world as a solo performer and chamber musician, often returning home for concerts, teaching engagements and community outreach initiatives.



Megan-Geoffrey Prins

Amy Jephta is a playwright who has also built a reputation as a filmmaker, activist, and academic. A champion of theatre by and for women, she has been a driving force in local and global initiatives promoting opportunities for women playwrights. Aside from her theatre work, she wrote the script for the film *Ellen – The Ellen Pakkies Story* and is editing a collection of plays by African women.



Amy Jephta



### Amy Jephta on writing the screenplay for *Ellen: The Ellen Pakkies Story*

Daniel Derksen 6 Sep 2018



Gabrielle Goliath is a multidisciplinary artist who is known for sensitively negotiating complex social concerns in her work, particularly relating to gender-based and sexual violence. Among this PhD candidate’s long-term performance projects is her *Elegy* series, where each iteration marks the absence of a woman or LGBTQI+ individual who has been raped and killed in South Africa.

National Arts Festival executive producer Ashraf Johaardien notes: “There are so many young South Africans producing incredible, important work that every year the festival’s artistic advisory committee has its work cut out when deliberating on who should win. Foremost in the committee members’ minds is how these creative upstarts have already seized the baton and taken the initiative to produce outstanding work – we are simply giving them an additional platform and the enhanced profile to reach even greater heights.”

“For almost 40 years, the SBYA recipients have produced work that captures the zeitgeist, sometimes at the risk of incurring the ire of political or corporate power elites. They upset apple carts. They are bold and unapologetic in their creativity, as they train their gaze on making sense of the here and now. They are the artistic conscience of our times, and what they reflect and refract through their lenses has the power to ignite conversations and shift perceptions, to provoke and to entertain. As we celebrate 45 years of NAF next year in the newly renamed Makhanda, we look forward to the fresh and bold insights that the 2019 crop of SBYA winners will bring,” adds Johaardien.

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