

Bern, 23.01.2025

MEDIENMITTEILUNG SCHLACHTHAUS THEATER BERN

How do we make sense of the violence, that marks our history?

Isidlamilo – The Fire Eater

Empatheatre

Solo-Performance | Englisch, Zulu, Deutsche Übertitel | 90 min | ab 14 Jahren

Vom Innenministerium fälschlicherweise für tot erklärt, muss sich Zenzile ihrer Vergangenheit als eine der gefürchtetsten Auftragskillerinnen der Gegnerpartei Nelson Mandelas stellen. Mittlerweile über sechzig und Grossmutter, erinnert sie sich an die unglaublichen Ereignisse, die sie bisher verdrängt hatte.

Regisseur Neil Coppen und Schauspielerin Mpume Mthombeni verweben Zulu-Mythologie und magischen Realismus mit Südafrikas Vergangenheit zu einem aufwühlenden Theaterthriller. «Isidlamilo» basiert auf Lebensgeschichten von Frauen der KwaZulu-Natal Provinz, die im Rahmen eines Oral History Projekts gesammelt wurden.

Auf Englisch und Zulu, mit Deutschen Übertiteln.



© Suzy Bernstein / Val Adamson

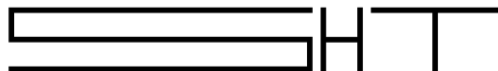
Zum Stück

«Isidlamilo» is an electrifying one-woman tour-de-force brought to life by acclaimed actress Mpume Mthombeni and writer/theatre-maker Neil Coppen through their company Empatheatre. Mthombeni, through a frank, comic and captivating storytelling, relays the death-defying life story of Zenzile Maseko. Maseko, a sixty-something Zulu grandmother, rents a cramped room in a Durban's women's hostel, and is haunted by her past working as an IFP assassin (fire-eater) in the build-up to the 1994 South African elections. When the home affairs mistakenly declare her dead and are unable to reverse the error on their system, Zenzile finds herself cast into the middle of a Kafkaesque nightmare, driven to desperate measures to prove she still alive and made, in the process, to reawaken parts of her identity and past that she has spent a majority of her adult life trying to suppress.

Maseko's story seamlessly propels us back and forth through time, traversing the shifting landscapes of KwaZulu-Natal and while charting critical events in the province's post-1994 trajectory through to its present day floods and insurrections. While the story offers a critical look at the eddying cycles of violence and revenge that play out across generations, it is most of all a story about redemption, regeneration and reinvention.

The script is written by Standard Bank Young Artist Award winner Neil Coppen in collaboration with Mthombeni, and is based on a range of testimonials shared with them during their Empatheatre research processes alongside the Urban Futures Centre (UFC). Together, the creative team have woven in elements of Zulu folklore, biblical mythology, magical-realist framings to make for an unforgettable theatrical experience that speaks to both the country's haunted past and present-day complexities.

Schlachthaus Theater



Together Mthombeni and Coppen alongside Dylan McGarry, are the co-founders of Empatheatre which sees the team forging creative responses to complex social concerns. The company was awarded the prestigious 2022 Bertha Artivism Award for their theatre and social-justice work. Mthombeni and Coppen have worked in close collaboration for the past 15 years creating and touring works both locally and internationally including the multi-award winning «Tin Bucket Drum» which went on to tour the country and world for several years.

→ Weitere Informationen finden Sie im [Dossier](#) von Empatheatre
→ [Hier](#) geht's zum Trailer

Vorstellungstermine

Mi 12.02.25 20:00 im Anschluss Entre Nous

Fr 14.02.25 20:00

Sa 15.02.25 20:00

Schlachthaus Theater Bern

Ausserdem

Künstler*innen-Gespräch «Entre Nous» Mpume Mthombeni, Neil Coppen («Isidlamlilo – The Fire Eater», SHT) & Ntando Cele («Wasted Land», DZ).

Mi, 12.02.2025 im Anschluss an die Vorstellung «Isidlamlilo – The Fire Eater» im Schlachthaus Theater

Eine Zusammenarbeit zwischen Schlachthaus Theater und Dampfzentrale Bern

Von und mit

Mit: Mpume Mthombeni

Regie: Neil Coppen

Autor*in: Neil Coppen, Mpume Mthombeni

Licht: Tina Le Roux

Sound Design: Tristan Horton

Bühnenbild: Greg King

Kostüm: Dylan McGarry, Neil Coppen, Wendy Henstock

Produktionsleitung: Tina Le Roux, Bryan Hiles

Rain SFX: Steven Woodroffe

Plakat: Dylan McGarry

Fotos: Val Adamson

Produktion: Empatheatre, National Arts Festival, South Africa

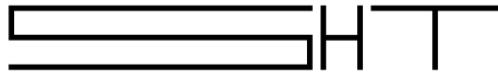
Kontakt für Medienanfragen:

Irene Salgado, Verantwortliche Kommunikation Schlachthaus Theater Bern

+41 (0) 31 312 96 47 | irene.salgado@schlachthaus.ch

Druckfähige Pressefotos:

<https://www.schlachthaus.ch/de/das-sht/medien/aktuelle-produktionen-84/>



Empatheatre

Empatheatre was founded by Neil Coppen, Mpume Mthombeni and Dylan McGarry in 2014. The company and methodology has been heralded for its unique approach which sees the creative team forging creative responses to complex social concerns while uniting a range of stakeholders including policy-makers, citizens, community based performers, storytellers, artists, musicians, activists, human-rights lawyers and academics. Empatheatre has been responsible for launching several ground-breaking Research-based theatre projects over the last decade in South Africa including Soil & Ash (focusing on rural communities facing pressure from coal-mining companies), Ulwembu (street-level Drug addiction and harm reduction advocacy), The Last Country (female migration stories), Boxes (homelessness and Urban land justice inequalities in the city of Cape Town) and Lalela ulwandle (an international project supporting sustainable transformative governance of our oceans). The company's work has toured internationally to Egypt, Rome, New York and Geneva. Empatheatre was recently nominated as The Daily Maverick's 2022 artists of the year and awarded the Bertha Artivism Award for their theater and social-justice work as well as the 2023 Fleur Du Cap award for innovation in South African Theatre. Empatheatre has also just been awarded the IbenScope grant from Norway to create a new work inspired by Ibsen's An Enemy of the People.

www.empatheatre.com

Mpume Mthombeni is an award-winning stage and film actor, theatre-maker, researcher and facilitator who hails from Umlazi, Durban. Mthombeni has taken on multiple roles over the years in theatre, radio, film and television, drawing international acclaim for her performance in «Tin Bucket Drum» which she toured to New York in 2012 garnering rave reviews. Some of Mthombeni's other theatre credits include «Animal Farm», «Soil & Ash», «NewFoundLand», «Ulwembu», «The Last Country» and «Lalela uLwandle». Her work with Empatheatre focuses on merging research and performance and she considers the theatre-maker's role in contemporary South Africa to be that of healer. Mthombeni is widely known and recognised for her roles in popular day time television series' «Imbewu» and «Durban Gen» where she plays Agatha.

Neil Coppen is a renowned and prolific storyteller and theatre-maker hailing from Kwa-Zulu Natal . Coppen has won several major awards for his writing, design and direction work including Standard Bank Ovation Awards, Naledi's, Fiesta and Kanna Awards, the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Drama 2011 and the 2019 Olive Schreiner Prize for Drama. He is one of the six South African playwright's to have been granted a staged reading of his work at The Royal Court Theatre.

Some of Coppen's most acclaimed works taught in schools and universities locally and internationally include «Tin Bucket Drum» (Published by Wits University Press), «Tree Boy», «Abnormal Loads» (published by Junkets), Izipopolo, and «NewFoundLand» (published by Junkets) and his adaptation of George Orwell's «Animal Farm» which toured South Africa for over five-years. In early 2020, Neil collaborated with Canadian First Nations dance company Red Sky Productions in Toronto on the premiere of a new work titled «AF». More recently Coppen directed an ambitious online performed reading and reimagining of «Hamlet» which was recently awarded the Naledi Award for best online performance 2022. Earlier this year Coppen alongside visual artist Vaughn Sadie and in collaboration with a community of Oudtshoorn based arts practitioners founded The Karoo Kaarte project (supported by the KKNK). Karoo Kaarte is a large-scale public participative storytelling and theatre project which headlined the 2022 KKNK festival and whose inaugural theatre production Op Hierie Dag was nominated for 7 Kanna awards.