

arts centers and universities. Each member has made a long-term commitment to multi-directional equitable cultural exchange and is dedicated to working with African artists who are interpreting contemporary life through traditional, popular and/or contemporary forms. Designed to initiate, develop and sustain a dynamic exchange of arts and ideas between artists, arts organizations and public communities throughout the United States and the African continent, Consortium programs are rooted in experiential opportunities that nurture dialogue and exchange, allowing for organic connections to evolve.

Consortium members include: The August Wilson Center for African American Culture (Pittsburg, PA); Bates Dance Festival (Lewiston, ME); Center for World Arts at University of Florida (Gainesville, FL); The John F. Kennedy Center (Washington, DC); MAPP International Productions (New York, NY); National Black Arts Festival (Atlanta, GA);

New Jersey Performing Arts Center (Newark, NJ); Seattle Theatre Group (Seattle, WA); Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, MN); VSA Arts of New Mexico (Albuquerque, NM) and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco, CA).

UPCOMING EVENTS AT REDCAT

October 28: John Hollenbeck & The Claudia Quintet

October 30–31: *The Golem* with a live score by Brian LeBarton

November 6–8: *Ramayana: An Indian Epic*: Balinese music and dance

November 4: Dancing on Site and on Camera: A conversation and screening with Joanna Haigood, Stephen Koplowitz and David Rousseve

November 11–14: Anna Halprin and Anne Collod, with Morton Subotnick:
parades & changes, replays

GREGORY MAQOMA/VUYANI DANCE THEATRE: *BEAUTIFUL ME*

October 21–24, 2009 | 8:30pm
October 25, 2009 | 3:00pm

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

CALARTS



GREGORY MAQOMA/VUYANI DANCE

THEATRE: *BEAUTIFUL ME*

Choreographer & Performer	Gregory Maqoma
Artistic Contributors	Akram Khan Faustin Linyekula Vincent Mantsoe
Director	Gerard Bester
Music composition & performance	Poorvi Bhana Bongani Kunene Isaac Molelekoa Mandienkosi Nhlapo
Radio Text	Wole Soyinka (from a speech given at the Africa Remix exhibition at Centre Pompidou, Paris, France in June 2005)
Costume	Sun Goddess
Lighting Designer	Michael Mannion
Technical Director	Enid Molapo
Company Manager	Nonku Thabede
U.S. Tour Producer	MAPP International Productions

Beautiful Me was co-produced by Centre National de la Danse (France) with the support of Tilder and Vuyani Dance Theatre (South Africa) with the support of Akram Khan Charity Trust Ltd. Lead commissioning support was provided by FNB Dance Umbrella, Johannesburg, South Africa.

This debut U.S. tour of Beautiful Me is produced by MAPP International Productions in association with The Africa Contemporary Arts Consortium – a coalition of 11 diverse arts institutions, advancing a dynamic exchange of arts and ideas between artists, arts organizations, cultural and other institutions of Africa and the United States.

These REDCAT performances are funded in part with generous support from The George and MaryLou Boone Fund for Artistic Advancement, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Ovation TV.



Bongani Kunene (Cello) began studying as a 13 year-old under the mentorship of David Koloane in the African Youth Ensemble in Diepkloof Soweto. His skill as a musician allows Kunene to transmit afrofused sounds from the cello. He first became involved with Vuyani Dance Theatre in 2006 as a musician for the dance work *Rhythm Colour*, a piece featuring 10 dancers in memory of the student uprising in Soweto on June 16 1976, which was staged both in local theatres as well as at the exhibition area of the Apartheid Museum at Gold Reef in Johannesburg.

Isaac Molelekoa (Violin) began studying as a 9 year-old under the mentorship of David Koloane in the African Youth Ensemble in Diepkloof Soweto. He is also a member of Mathaka String Quartet, whose repertoire is grounded both in classical music as well as the various genres that inform current South African music. He first became involved with Vuyani Dance Theatre in 2006 as a musician for the dance work *Rhythm Colour*, a piece featuring 10 dancers in memory of the student uprising in Soweto on June 16 1976, which was staged both in local theatres as well as at the exhibition area of the Apartheid Museum at Gold Reef in Johannesburg.

Mandienkosi Nhlapo (Percussion) is an accomplished percussionist in the Johannesburg scene. Since 2006 he has been playing with the resident band at Gold Reed City, a center of cultural tourism in South Africa. Nhlapo performed in the recent versions of *Beautiful Me* at FNB Dance Umbrella Festival 2009. He was also crucial in the development and performance of the music for the recent Vuyani Dance Theatre premiere *Skeleton Dry*.

MAPP International Productions based in New York City, works in close partnership with diverse artists and arts organizers throughout the world to develop functional and sustainable environments for artists to create, premiere and tour performing arts projects. MAPP provides support and opportunities for challenging artistic voices to be fully heard and engaged by bringing together arts, humanities and public dialogue.

MAPP International is co-directed by veteran arts producers and managers, Ann Rosenthal and Cathy Zimmerman, who have developed 27 multi-disciplinary projects and produced well over 50 multi-city tours with U.S. and international artists from 15 countries in Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe and the Caribbean. Working on behalf of artists and their organizations, Rosenthal and Zimmerman have raised and managed more than \$4 million from foundations, corporations, government agencies and co-commissioners for the realization and distribution of new work.

The Africa Contemporary Arts Consortium, founded in 2004, is comprised of 11 diverse and dynamic arts organizations including festivals, residency centers, performing and visual

commissioned by the International Theatre School Company in Amsterdam; *Revolution*, for the Dunhill Symphony of Fire in Lagos, Nigeria; *Southern Comfort*; *miss thandi*, a moving tribute to Raymond Matinyane commissioned by FNB Vita Dance Umbrella 2002; *Ék se...Hola*; *Rhythm Colour*; *Rephrase a replay* for Jazzart Dance Company in Cape Town.

In 2004 Maqoma premiered *KETIMA* with VDT and toured extensively in Mexico, the UK, Switzerland, the Netherlands and South Africa. Starting in 2005, he embarked on the *Beauty Trilogy*, of which *Beautiful Me* is the final part. In 2008 –2009 *Beautiful Me* has toured in Greece, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, Africa and the US.

Maqoma's work has garnered him several awards including 1994 FNB Vita Pick of the Fringe Award; 1995 FNB Vita Pick of the Stepping Stones Award; 1998 FNB Vita Young Choreographers Grant; 1999 and 2000 FNB Vita Choreographer of the Year; 2001 FNB Vita Best Choreography Award; and 2002 Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year for Dance. In 2002, he was nominated for the prestigious DaimlerChrysler Award, and in 2004 was among the finalists for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. He was named MEC Choreographer of the Year in 2006 and 2007 and *Beautiful Me* won the MEC Most Original Presentation of Work in Contemporary Style Award, among many others.

In addition to working as a choreographer, in 2002 Maqoma co-produced *New Directions*, a dance program for the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, together with Moeketsi Koena, Sello Pesa and Mandla Mcunu. In 2003, he acted as Artistic Leader for Afro-Vibes Festival based in Holland. Currently he is Associate Artistic Director for Moving Into Dance Mophatong.

Apart from creating and producing work for both Moving Into Dance and the Vuyani Dance Theatre, Gregory teaches and choreographs for a wide range of companies and training institutions including the Pretoria Technikon, The Dance Factory, Ballet Theatre Afrikan (Gauteng), Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre (Durban), the UCT School of Dance, Cape Performing Academy (CAPA), South African Ballet Theatre (SABT) and Tswane Dance Company. He has studied the History and Anthropology of Dance and also presents international workshops on African Dance, culture and choreography.

Poorvi Bhana (Sitar) is from a musical South African Indian family, and has played with several choreographers in South Africa. She is currently studying Fine Art at Pretoria Technikon, Tshwane University of Technology. In September 2008, Bhana appeared as one of the musicians in an internationally renowned Johnny Clegg and Savuka show that took place at the Nelson Mandela Theatre in Johannesburg. *Beautiful Me* is the first work that she has performed with Vuyani Dance Theatre.

PROGRAM NOTES

Conversation with Father (opening lines of *Beautiful Me*)

Baba ndiyi peacock	<i>Baba I am a peacock</i>
ndiyi peacock	<i>I'm a peacock</i>
ndinemibala emihle	<i>I have beautiful colors</i>
Ombomvu	<i>Red</i>
Omnyama	<i>Black</i>
Omhlophe	<i>White</i>
Bengingathanda ukusondela kuwe	<i>I would like to get closer to you</i>
Ndiphupha ngidiza	<i>I dream of flying</i>
Ndine minwe e nhlano	<i>I have five toes</i>
Ndifunda ngawo	<i>I count with them</i>
Kunye	<i>One</i>
Kubili	<i>Two</i>
Kuthato	<i>Three</i>
Kunne	<i>Four</i>
Kunhlano	<i>Five</i>
Bengingathanda ukusondela kwakhona	<i>But I would like to get closer again</i>
Ndiyandiza	<i>I fly</i>
ndiphupha ngindiza	<i>I dream of flying</i>
Ndiyandiza	<i>I fly</i>

Talking (R)Evolution One Artist at a Time: Gregory Maqoma

by Joan Frosch

Numbers of international choreographic experimentalists are in development of critical discourses that illuminate their inventive practices. An elite group of those artists bring their critical discourses into deep conversation and negotiation with choreographic exploration: South Africa's Gregory Maqoma is one such artist. The results are startling. "Identify a moment that really tickles you—a highlight. If I had to lose everything, I would keep this," Maqoma advised his repertory class at Bates to choose the conceptual foundation for their work. Rather than "set" the key to creative work, he further advised them to "set it with possibilities" of change, growth, and discovery. "The possibilities are endless," he then clarifies the point with a sharp upward movement of his shoulder articulating to a hand gesture that, well, seems endless. The 34-year old dancer/choreographer challenges top speed with utter relaxation, and strong directional movement with light and exquisitely changing focus. He embodies a clear knowing, juxtaposed with a sincere and fully committed questioning of self. Freshness and openness to the discovery of a moment unknown and never anticipated proves his deep engagement in creative

process and his bold trust of the same. He counseled the students to “... feel the vibration of your own movement.” Contained, precise, purposeful, simultaneously efficient and generous, and often delicious, Maqoma’s movement is lively conversation with himself, his past, his future, and his audience.

Maqoma appears to be a source of soft power: with a delicate change of his focus, the world changes, to a better, more alive place. Indeed, *Beautiful Me* is part of a trilogy that explores the ultimate beauty of humanity. In this masterful work, Maqoma deploys articulate and fiercely authentic dancing, cultural borrowings and insightful movement quotations, gentle humor and searing wit. The work melts frozen images of “African dance” and points to a new way of being an artist in the world. He muses mid-movement that he “... sells exotic stories to survive.” This “exotic story” poses new questions for the dance burgeoning in the postcolonial moment and new lenses are de rigueur.

“I am constantly expected to conform to stereotypical perceptions of the Western world and of African traditionalists,” Maqoma has commented. *Beautiful Me* not only unpacks such stereotypes, but offers the alternative views of a fully enfranchised individual actor/dancer who owns and/or appropriates culture as he sees fit. He calls the world as he sees it. As if to press the point of believing that “... people of different backgrounds can transcend cultural barriers and create a new and dynamic culture,” Maqoma took the extraordinarily open-minded/hearted step to invite other choreographers to contribute to this truly global work. In *Beautiful Me*, choreographers Faustin Linyekula, Akram Khan, and Vincent Mantsoe provided stimuli for building movement conversations to stretch boundaries and actively reformulate African identity as a wide open question.

In fact, the work has the feel of Maqoma in dialogue with not only his contributing choreographers, but with his history, the musicians, and the audience. There is a sense that we all count in this conversation/negotiation of self with the world. As Maqoma explores his relationship to the Kathak-inspired dance of Khan, we discover that we are reflecting not only on Maqoma but on cultural expectations as he dances outside the frame of our standard lenses. He quotes Linyekula in word and deed. He inhabits magical moments of Mantsoe. Maqoma cyclonically blurs movement and culture into a new space—a rectangle of white light where he asserts with ease that he is more than we had first understood. He invites the audience to peel off the skins of the stereotypes they hold. Raw, real, yet still playful and engaging, Maqoma propels us further along the interconnected trajectory of the 21st Century. He uncovers, he experiments, he investigates humanity in ways that are now no longer “other” to him—or to us—and... he is beautiful.

Maqoma creates a complex choreographic rendering of postcolonial subjectivity.

Beautiful Me is situated in the filigreed interplay of playfulness and gravitas, collaborative music and movement of varied signatures, voices, sounds and presentations, and History/history/his story (including Wole Soyinka’s exploration of the artist in society). Maqoma is at the center of a kaleidoscope, as is each person in the greater scope of humanity. Maqoma shows us that he who negotiates for her/himself a transformation into subject can no longer be objectified and becomes a... subject of beauty.

I would argue that Maqoma’s framing of beauty may be particularly notable in response to the prevailing methodological and theoretical lacunae in the study of African performance, where instead of unique and extraordinary subjects people may be viewed as cultural masses, or “herds,” in Linyekula’s term. These undifferentiated groupings can be facily (mis)categorized and ontologically imprisoned in an web of “African aesthetics.” As Mbembe posits, “To be sure, there is no African identity that could be designated by a single term or that could be named by a single word or subsumed under a single category. African identity does not exist as a substance.”

In one part of the full-length version of *Beautiful Me*, Maqoma poses questions to the Pope (“Have you seen God?”) and to George Bush (“Why don’t you pull the trigger yourself?”). Well, I have many questions for Maqoma and will start with this one: “Can we still see the beauty when the curtain goes down?”

Joan Frosch is the co-founder and co-director of the Center for World Arts at the University of Florida, Gainesville and the producer of award winning films *Movement* (R) *Evolution Africa* and *Nora*.

Reference: Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

BIOGRAPHIES

Gregory Vuyani Maqoma (Choreographer and Performer), originally from Gauteng, South Africa began creating dance for the Joy Youth Group during his school years. He began formal training with Gauteng’s Moving Into Dance Mophatong (MIDM) school and company in 1990. A year later he was accepted as a member of the company and in 1994 he created his first work for them titled *Here, Where and There*. In 1997 he was awarded a scholarship to attend a 5-week choreographic program, DanceWeb, in Vienna and in 1999 he received a scholarship to study at P.A.R.T.S (Performing Arts Research and Training Studios) in Brussels under the direction of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. While in Brussels, Maqoma formed Vuyani Dance Theatre (VDT).

Since then he has choreographed several works including: *Layers of Time; Rhythm 1, 2, 3; Tales of the Mud Wall*, a collaboration with Faustin Linyekula (Democratic Republic of Congo) performed at the International Tanzwochen Wein in Vienna and at the Johannesburg Dance Umbrella; *Rhythm Blues; ...and denial, and silence and ignorance...*, commissioned by the Pretoria Technikon Dance Department; *Autumn Harvest*,