

Vrystaat Arts Festival 2022

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In July, the Vrystaat Arts Festival successfully presented the first ever Mini-Market, on the Bloemfontein campus of the University of the Free State (UFS). Now the festival team is getting ready for a significantly larger festival, which will also take place on the UFS campus from **2-8 October 2022**.



This Free State-based festival is an Afrikaans cultural festival, which also forges creative connections with Sesotho and English cultures as well as national and international creatives. The festival has an enormous artistic offer this year, from flagship theatre-dance-and-music productions in Afrikaans, English and Sesotho to literature, arts and crafts, sound art, and visual and experimental art.

Nowadays, the Vrystaat Arts Festival is one of the most important art festivals on the African continent, presenting a large variety of national and international productions and projects.

Hans steek die Rubicon oor offers theatre-lovers a superb comedic drama about growing old. This comedy, based on Rudie van Rensburg's eponymous novel and starring Charlie Bouguenon, promises to be fun for all ages.

Elzabé Zietsman plays a key role in the psychological thriller, **Tom gaan plaas toe**, a drama that investigates a family's dysfunctional relationships and a legacy of lies and traumas. **Hans steek die Rubicon oor** and **Tom gaan plaas toe** are both generously supported by the National Afrikaans Theatre initiative (NATi).

And still the rain kept falling softly... received generous financial support from the Flemish Government in southern Africa. The play was written by the Flemish writer, actor and theatre-maker, Peter de Graef, and will be directed by Stef de Paepe, Flemish dramatist and screenwriter. Gerben Kamper and Peter Taljaard were responsible for translating the text and the cast consists of John Paka and Boitumelo Mohutsioa.

Well-known Bloemfontein theatre-maker, writer and director, Nico Luwes, brings two productions to the Vrystaat Arts Festival this year. The thoughtful **Aku vang 'n ster** is a suspenseful drama set in the inhospitable Northern Cape. In comparison, **Waaiohoek se Vinkel en Koljander – 'n musikale klug** tells the story of twin brothers Koljander and Vinkel, who are accidentally separated in the Cape as six-year-olds. **Waaiohoek's Vinkel and Coriander** promises top-notch family fun.

In collaboration with the University of Johannesburg, the festival presents **The Paper Double-Bill**. Two new South African texts, and thus two new plays, with two actors, one set and one director include **Papercuts**, exploring themes of love, loneliness, and womanhood, as well as **Waiting for Lift-Off**, about two sisters trying to connect with each other across oceans.

Various interdisciplinary art projects investigate gender-based violence. The multimedia art installation **She had a name** pays tribute to and aims to recognise every woman who loses her life because of gender-based violence. **Till Death Do Us Part** involves multimedia performance art and examines intimate relationship violence, whereas **Yekabani le Panty (Whose Panty is it)** is a site-specific, performance artwork, which investigates the patriarchal structures imposed on womxn and that are especially prevalent in a South African context.

An absolute highlight on the music programme is **Droomland – Solo-Klavierkonsert**. Du Preez Strauss was the associate music director and orchestra conductor for Disney's *The Lion King* musical for twelve years. Come and experience your favourite childhood memories in **Droomland**, remade with piano interpretations and Afrikaans storytelling. This contemporary musical is family entertainment for all ages.

Another highlight is a performance by **Dan Patlansky** who returns to entertain South African audiences with an electric full orchestra. Patlansky offers a modern twist on what he loves the most: blues music.

The Vrystaat Arts Festival presents a newly created **Blêrkas** this year, on the red brick parking area behind the Odeion Theatre. The Blêrkas will play the host to a wide variety of exciting local and national musicians, including The Mojo Hands, Liv Die, Safety First, Belinda van Zee & Amy Aldeia, Rise in Red, Black Cat Bones, Van Pletzen, Francois van Coke, Angie Oeh, and Bouwer Bosch.

Two equally striking yet very different visual art exhibitions are Pitika Ntuli's pioneering solo exhibition **Azibuyele Emasisweni (Return to the Source)** and the **Taalgenoot and André Badenhorst** photo exhibition. In **Azibuyele Emasisweni**, which will be on display at Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Ntuli uses 45 sculptures made of bone to "predict the state of the nation in a season of lawlessness".

In contrast, the **Taalgenoot and André Badenhorst** photo exhibition presents a variety of printed cover photos, as well as photographs from photo stories, in the foyer of the ATKV-Boeke-oase. These photos have appeared in the award-winning magazine since 2016 and include pieces by, among others, Bibi Slippers, Gerald Rudolf, and Rayton Rodeo.

The films included in the annual film festival will be shown, as per usual, at the Film Studio of the Visual Media Hub on the UFS-campus. Film highlights include the German drama **Breathing** (2012), the Spanish-Bolivian film **Even the Rain** (2011) starring Gael García Bernal, the Italian fantasy drama **Happy as Lazzaro** (2018), the French period drama **Portrait of a Lady on Fire** (2019), and Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar's 2019 award-winning **Pain and Glory** with Antonio Banderas and Penelope Cruz.

In collaboration with the Sustaining Theatre and Dance Foundation (STAND), the Theatre and Dance Alliance (TADA) and NATi, the Vrystaat Arts Festival presents the Pen to Paper-project. **Pen to Paper** involves a search for texts by South African playwrights that have not been performed before nor seen as full productions on stage. The project aims to introduce new and contemporary texts to audiences and potential directors, to help develop the texts, as well as to launch a national touring programme.

This year's **Vrynges** includes powerful and meaningful pieces that address complex topics such as suicide, discrimination,

and mental health. Productions explore identity, conflict, gender, and politics in nuanced ways. **A Broken Sarafina (An Ongoing Discourse)** tells a relevant and contemporary story, staged by students from different faculties from the University of the Free State (Bloemfontein campus).

In **Mothers' Grimm**, Goldilocks, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Evil Queen, Rapunzel, and Anansi all come together in this coming-of-age story about growing up. In contrast, **T!kam** tells a story that takes place after the murder of a transgender man in a Namaqualand community. **T!kam** is a verse drama that exposes LGBTQIA+ violence with Esme Marthinus and learners from Hoërskool O'kiep in the cast.

The **Vrystaat Literature Festival** is bursting at the seams again this year! Some of the leading Bloemfontein-based as well as prominent South African writers and poets on the programme to look forward to include Dianne du Toit Albertze, Annerle Barnard, Hannes Barnard, Zelda Bezuidenhout, Susan Coetzer, Pieter Fourie, Herman Lategan, Maretha Maartens, SJ Naudé, Elias P. Nel, Zarine Roodt, Madelein Rust, LindieStander, Zirk van der Berg, Amos van der Westhuizen, Irma Venter, Fanie Viljoen, Adele Vorster, and Chris Vorster.

Various panel discussions form part of the programme, including the UFS's annual **Thought Leader**-series, facilitated by Pieter du Toit. Turksvy Publications (Hannes Visser, Marlene Malan, and Daniel Hugo) brings an interactive workshop presented over two days, called the **Turksvy skryfskool vir skrywers ontwikkeling**.

The **Tribute to Heroes**-series will be presented at NALN again and this year we pay tribute to Jaap Steyn, Anna M. Louw and Elsa Joubert. The always popular **Ruda-om-11**-series, with award-winning journalist, Ruda Landman also returns with Landman interviewing, among others, Max du Preez, Charne Kemp, and Julian Jansen.

The **De Schrijverswerf**-project aims to establish a community of writers, poets and theatre-makers who are connected to the Dutch-speaking community through their language. This language commonality includes participants from the Netherlands, Flanders, Suriname, and South Africa. Four exciting project outputs, namely a **Letter Exchange**, a musical intervention called **Lullabies, Folktales, Children's Songs and Nursery Rhymes**, a visual art exhibition **Tussen media, over talenheen** comprising a striking presentation of poetry on canvas, and finally a week-long writer's laboratory, **Schrijvers-Zwervers**, with the final product to be presented on the last day of the festival.

Project partners of De Schrijverswerf include The Dutch Language Union in the Netherlands, Flanders and Suriname, and the Flemish Government in southern Africa.

Visit the Vrystaat Arts Festival's website at www.vrystaatkunstefees.co.za to view the festival programme. Entrance tickets to the festival grounds and theatre productions are already for sale at www.webtickets.co.za.

For more information about this year's Vrystaat Arts Festival, feel free to email mark@vrystaatkunstefees.co.za.

° **SoCreative Summit returns to Johannesburg for a free exploration of creativity** 29 Apr 2024

° **450 emerging creatives shortlisted for the Debut Programme** 12 Apr 2024

° **14 SA creatives join Cultural Producers Programme** 12 Mar 2024

° **Cultural Producers called to become the creative leaders of tomorrow** 22 Jan 2024

° **Basa hosts 'My Debut Story' panel discussion: Celebrating the success of emerging creative entrepreneurs** 27 Oct 2023

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