

Vuyani Dance Theatre
Beautiful Me

Debut U.S. Tour Fall 2009

produced by MAPP International Productions



Artistic Direction, Choreography and Performance by Gregory Vuyani Maqoma

Artistic Input by Akram Khan, Vincent Sekwati Mantsoe and Faustin Linyekula

In *Beautiful Me* Gregory Maqoma, one of South Africa's leading choreographers, attempts to define, redefine and profess his own identity in relationship to history, humanity and nature. Maqoma begins with movement, text and music contributed by three master choreographers who have had great influence on him: Akram Khan's Contemporary Kathak; Faustin Linyekula's visual dance-theater; and Vincent Mantsoe's Afro-fusion. Through layering these distinct and diverse styles with his own unique lightness and humor, *Beautiful Me* becomes a living self portrait and a provocative exploration of kinetic African identity.

Accompanied on stage by four exceptional South African musicians (violin, cello, sitar and percussion), simple lighting and set design, *Beautiful Me* speaks honestly and directly about the process of finding one's authentic voice.

Influenced by his childhood in Soweto, early dance training at Moving Into Dance in Johannesburg and further studies in Brussels under Anna Teresa de Keersmaeker, Gregory Maqoma founded Vuyani Dance Theatre in 1999 in Johannesburg, South Africa. His works have earned him several national and international awards.

Beautiful Me is commissioned by the The FNB Dance Umbrella, Johannesburg, co-produced by Centre National de la Dance (France) with the support of Tilder, and Vuyani Dance Theatre (South Africa), with the support of AKCT Ltd.

MAPP International Productions, through The Africa Contemporary Arts Consortium, is producing the debut U.S. Tour of Vuyani Dance Theatre in *Beautiful Me* in the Fall of 2009.

For more information contact:
Emily Harney, Project Manager
MAPP International Productions
140 Second Avenue, Suite 502
New York, NY 10003
www.mappinternational.org
T: 646-602-9390 E: emily@mappinternational.org

ABOUT GREGORY MAQOMA

Gregory Vuyani Maqoma started creating dance work while in a youth club in Johannesburg. He began his formal training with Moving Into Dance Mophatong (MIDM), a Johannesburg based dance 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. In 1997 he was awarded a scholarship to attend a 5-week choreographic program, Dance Web, 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 Project.

Since then he has choreographed several works including: *Layers of Time*; *Rhythm 1, 2, 3*; *Rhythm Blues*; *...and denial, and silence and ignorance...*, commissioned by the Pretoria Technikon Dance Department; *Autumn Harvest*, commissioned by the International 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; *KETIMA*; and most recently *Beautiful Trilogy*, of which *Beautiful Me* is the final part.

His work has garnered him several awards including FNB Vita Pick of the Fringe Award; FNB Vita Pick of the Stepping Stones Award; 1998 FNB Vita Young Choreographers Grant; 2000 FNB Vita Choreographer of the Year; 2001 FNB Vita Best Choreography Award; and 2002 Standard Bank Young Artist for Dance Award. In 2002, he was nominated for the prestigious DaimlerChrysler Award, and in 2004 Maqoma was among the finalists selected as potential Protégés for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative.

Under Maqoma's direction, The Vuyani Dance Theatre Project has grown to include The Vuyani Ensemble, a project-based experimental jazz ensemble, which aims to create a language of music which is representative of the company vision and performance style, as well as an Outreach program to reach diverse communities.

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 Company. Additionally, Maqoma teaches and choreographs for other companies and institutions and gives workshops on African dance and culture and choreography internationally.

ABOUT THE MUSICIANS

Musicians **Isaac Molelekoa** (violin), **Bongani Kunene** (cello) and **Given Mphago** (percussion) have a history of collaboration with Gregory Maqoma. Molelekoa and Kunene played for the revisited *Rhythm Colour* in June 2006 and the revisited *Southern Comfort* at the Dance Umbrella Gala Night in February of 2008. Mphago performed as part of the original *Rhythm Colour* in 2002, and worked as company musician in 2004. He joined Molelekoa and Kunene for the revisited *Southern Comfort* at the Dance Umbrella Gala Night.

Both Molelekoa and Kunene trained in the African Youth Ensemble based in Diepkloof Hall, Soweto under the baton of Koloane Mantu. Given Mphago is a seasoned percussionist and protégé of world renowned South African Jazz musician, Phillip Tabane.

Sitar player, **Poorvi Bhana**, rounds out the ensemble. From a pioneering family of North Indian classical music in South Africa she has been playing sitar since the age of five. This is her first time working with Maqoma.

The music for *Beautiful Me* was developed by the four musicians in collaboration with Maqoma.