

THIRST

by James Ngcobo
Choreography by Gregory Maqoma

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A magical, theatrical, innovative piece of theatre based on Baldini's *The Water Carriers*, enriched by dance, physical theatre, song, African storytelling and a lively ensemble of performers. THIRST is a mythic tale resonating with the past and the future, delivering an ecological message particularly pertinent to our times.

The play follows the fortunes and misfortunes of three "water carriers", who come from a village that has run out of water. They are sent on a long and eventful journey to find the source of the dried-out river, meeting a number of mysterious characters, riddles and provocations along the way.

Thirst draws on Nguni mythology to create a family show suitable for audiences of all ages.

Nominated for the Naledi Award 2010 for Best New South African Play



Review THE GUIDE

James Ngcobo / Gregory Maqoma

These conjurers of flesh and bone, these sorcerers of primal spirits, these bearers of ancient tales, bring great gifts. James Ngcobo, inspired by Theatre Talipot's *The Water Carriers*, has crafted a creation myth which not only taps into ecological sources, but into the African oral tradition, which ignites into beguiling theatre. The touchstone for these fables, washed up on the primordial tide of memory, is the Man who honours the stories his Zulu grandmother told him by telling them to a plant he carries with him on his journey through life. Bheki Mkhwane, in arguably the performance of his already distinguished career, thrillingly transforms from the imbongi sage into characters, human and animal, as part of the narrative he unleashes.

Together the writer/director and choreographer Greg Maqoma have invented an unique performance style: Thirst pulses with succinct symbolism and potent imagery. The synergy between verbal text (with some poetic excerpts from *The Water Carriers* translated from the French), ritual and choreographic action is breathtaking. The deaths of the first two water warriors (a riveting Sphelele Nzama and Nhlanhla Mahlangu) are turned into instant rock art paintings by Wesley France's superb lighting.

A vibrant visual language is forged out of pared-down physicality and ingenious vocabulary to Kanif's intriguing soundscape. The allegory about the monkey/men who pollute the rivers with the blood of war, bringing on the wrath of Nomkhubulwane, the Zulu goddess of rain and nature, doesn't rely on the obvious.

Every shard of a broken clay pot, every grain of sand, every fighting stick, every foot stamp, counts in this inspirational theatre piece which goes a long way to quench anyone's thirst for fresh theatrical expression.

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