

Open Book Youth Fest 2025 Participants

aBantu chorUS

As aBantu chorUS, we do what we've always done: we sing together as a people to make sense of all that we face, both what we welcome and what we struggle to accept.

We are the brothers and sisters that our African visionaries invite us to be. While not all of us are musicians, music is our shared passion and our co-conspirator in peaceful resistance, innovation, and being well together.

Our music hails from all parts of Africa and beyond. We sing the songs that our parents taught us, that were taught to them by theirs. We sing the songs we learn from those we meet on our travels. And we sing the songs that come to being through our very members.

Mia Arderne

PRH

A Thousand Eyes on You

Mia Arderne is a Cape Town-based writer. Her debut novel, *Mermaid Fillet*, was published by Kwela, NB Publishers. This magical realist novel was long-listed for the Sunday Times-CNA Literary Award in 2021. *Mermaid Fillet* was taught as a prescribed text at the University of Cape Town in the English Literary Studies curriculum (2023 and 2024).

Her latest book *A Thousand Eyes on You* was published by the LAPA imprint of Penguin Random House South Africa in 2024. This urban fantasy weaves indigenous mythology into a Young Adult romance.

Mia completed her MA in Creative Writing at UCT. She has bylines in the Mail & Guardian, Daily Maverick, New Frame, and Ground Up among others.

Zizopho Bam

Self

Sunflowers for my Lovers

Zizopho Bam is an award-winning poet celebrated for her exploration of love, longing, loss and healing. Inspired by the body and its experiences, she weaves personal stories into captivating works of art. Her acclaimed debut collection, *Sunflowers For My Lovers*, showcases her unique talent for reimagining narratives.

Bam's performances have graced prestigious stages like Open Book Festival, The National Arts Festival and Poetry Africa, where she judged the 2023 National Poetry Slam Competition and the Standard Bank Staff Poetry Competition this year. Her creative ventures include co-curating and co-writing the Theatre of the Oppressed play, "The Pot of Pap at The End of The Rainbow Nation", for Food Agency Cape Town.

A passionate advocate for community and artistic collaboration, Bam curates poetry events in Cape Town, including Slam City, a slam competition fostering camaraderie and healthy competition among

poets in the city. She has also collaborated on stage with bands like iPhupho L'ka Biko and Kujenga, facilitating a conversation around their much-praised album, "In The Wake."

Bam's exceptional talent has garnered notable awards, including the 2020 New Coin Prize, the 2021 NewContrast National Poetry Prize, and the 2023 Thomas Pringle Award. Her self-published poetry collection is available at most independent bookstores nationwide. More about Zizipho Bam at www.zizophobam.com.

Meridian Berndt

Zeitz MOCAA

The Stories that Ran Away

South African by birth, MERIDIAN BERNDT grew up in a family of artists, activists and storytellers. After receiving her degree in Environmental Science and Social Anthropology from the University of Cape Town, she left the city to travel and live in beautiful wild places, seeking harmony with the natural world. This journey led her to the study of African traditional medicine through a renowned lineage of spiritual teachers. Currently, she also works as a professional artist in the film industry, which she sees as another form of storytelling. The Zeitz MOCAA Series of children's picture books - *The Stories that Ran Away* - are Meridian's first published works.

Subi Bosa

New Africa

Wrong!

As a child Subi drew pictures all the time. In every room of the house- sometimes on the walls. His mother still tells everyone "... he knew how to draw before he could properly hold a pencil," and throughout his life in South Africa, Subi has been known for drawing fun pictures and comics, which he did throughout highschool and university. After studying Architecture he realised his passion was in illustration and became a freelancer, working with self publishing authors worldwide and was awarded a Mo Siewcharran Publisher's Prize for Illustration in 2020. In 2022 *The Girl With 21 Questions*, a picture book illustrated by Subi and published by Pan MacMillan, won the gold Pendorring award for best designed picture book. His Wordless comic 'Miyayu' had its first issue released in 2021, published by Imagnry House and the book's fame sparked the Kingsmead Book Fair to invite Subi to host a comic making workshop which was a great success. Subi is based in Cape Town, South Africa, producing picture books, comics, graphic novels and a podcast for creatives titled 'Subi and Kate Circling Back'. He is currently working on his debut graphic novel which will be published in August 2025.

His art and illustration work is represented internationally by The Bright Agency.

<https://thebrightagency.com/us/childrens-illustration/artists/subi-bosa>

Books Illustrated:

(Through Pan MacMillanSA)

The Girl with 21 Questions by Boitumelo Mothupi

Wonderfully Made by Tshwanelo Serumola

(Through BookDash)

Yes you Can! By Xolile Sepuru

Come Stay With Me by Nasrin Siege I Don't Want To Go To Sleep by Sarah McGregor

The Things That Really Matter by Refilwe Moahloli

(Through Wimpy)

Nanana Boselesele by Lebohang Masango

Various Books illustrated internationally [https://www.amazon.com/Books-Subi-Bosa/s?](https://www.amazon.com/Books-Subi-Bosa/s?rh=n%3A283155%2Cp_27%3ASubi+Bosa)

[https://www.barnesandnoble.com/s/subi+bosa?](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/s/subi+bosa?Nrpp=20&page=1)

[Nrpp=20&page=1](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/s/subi+bosa?Nrpp=20&page=1)

Website: www.subibosa.com Instagram: @subi_bosa Twitter: @BosaSubi

Makhosazana De Wette Dlodla

PRH

It's Wonderful Me!

With a career spanning over 20 years in media and advertising, Makhosazana De Wette Dlodla established a reputation for driving revenue, forging strong client relationships, and developing impactful strategies for leading brands as an Account Manager in the Cape Town Media Industry.

After stepping away from the corporate world, Max as she is affectionately termed, focused on personal growth and entrepreneurial ventures. This included owning and operating a guest house in Riebeek Kasteel with her life-partner of over 30 years, offering exceptional hospitality and fostering strong community connections.

As an author, she published "*Hello! My Name is Bongji*" through Ndalo Media, and "*It's Wonderful Me!*" along with a companion colouring book, both published by Penguin Random House SA.

Today, Max continues to inspire through speaking engagements, book signings, and community-driven projects, blending corporate expertise with a deep commitment to sustainability, education, and personal development.

Diana Ferrus

New Africa

The Boy Who Loved to Dance

Diana Ferrus was born in Worcester in 1953. She matriculated at the Esselen Park High School in 1972. In 1973 she came to study at the University of the Western Cape. Diana received a fellowship to study at the University of Utrecht in 1998.

Diana is internationally known and acclaimed for the poem that she wrote for the indigenous South African woman, Sarah Baartman, who was taken away from her country under false pretences and paraded as a sexual freak in Europe. This poem touched the heart of the French Senate and upon hearing it they voted unanimously that her remains should come home. This poem is published in the French Law, a first in French history. Diana's work has had and still has a bearing and influence on matters of race, sex and reconciliation.

In 2012 Diana received the inaugural Mbokodo Award for poetry. She has also received an award from the Western Cape Provincial Government for her work with women. In 2008 the Klein Karoo

Kunstefees also awarded her for her contribution to the development of Afrikaans. She has published 3 books, *Ons Komvandaan, I've come to take you home* (2010), and *Die vrede kom later* (2019). In 2020 she received the Freedom of the Town award from the Breede Valley Municipality together with 11 other prominent Worcestererians. In 2022 the University of Stellenbosch bestowed an honorary doctorate on her. Other awards include The Legends Award by Kyknet; A lifetime achievement award by SBA (Stigting vir Bemagtiging deur Afrikaans); Prestige Award by the ATKV.

Xolisa Guzula

Dr Xolisa Guzula is a Senior Lecturer in Applied Language and Literacy Studies with a focus on multilingual and multiliteracies education at the University of Cape Town. She specialises in multilingual education, especially in teaching children to speak, read and write in two or more languages. She is one of the founders of a network of reading clubs growing across the country starting from the Vulindlela Reading Clubs to Nal'ibali Reading Clubs and the Stars of Today Literacy Club. She has written several children's books including the recent series, *Imbokodo: Women who Shape us*. She has translated many children's books from English to isiXhosa including books by award winning authors such as Astrid Lindgren's *Brothers Lionheart*, Niky Daly, Sihle-isipho Nontshokweni and Refiloe Moahloli and Nicholas Maritz' books. She won an IBBY/Exclusive Books award for best translation of *The Elders at the Door* by Shale and Maryanne Bester to linkonde eMnyango. Her translation of Wendy Hardie's book, *The Singing Stone/Ilitye Eliculayo* made the honour list of IBBY 100 recommended books across the world. Xolisa is a member of Bua-lit Language and Literacy Collective (www.bua-lit.org.za), working on social justice in language and literacy education.

Kirsty Jean

Self

Bo and the Whale Shark

Kirsty was born in a remote part of Zimbabwe and spent her early years living in a fishing village on the shores of lake Kariba. Here she experienced the untouched wilderness of the Zimbabwean bush, exploring and swimming in the lake, and riding on the back of a motorbike through herds of prolific game with her mom, dad, and Auntie Annie. These early years left an indelible mark on her life and her love of adventure and the desire to connect with nature. Her favorite recreational activity is scuba diving where she gets to explore the magic of the underwater world.

This is her first illustrated children's book and it was inspired by her youngest son Beau who was obsessed with sharks. Whilst researching for this book she began to understand the plight of sharks and saw the magnitude of destruction happening to our oceans and wanted children to learn about the importance of sharks and the vital role they play in keeping oceans healthy. And she wanted to use her art to make a difference.

Website: earth-warrior.com

IG: kirsty-jean.art

Siphokazi Jonas

PRH

Weeping Becomes a River

[Siphokazi Jonas](#) is a multi-award-winning poet, playwright, actor, and producer based in Cape Town, South Africa. She holds an MA in English Literature as well as an undergraduate degree in Drama and English. Her awards include a producer SAFTA for Best Short Film, Most Innovative Young Artist by the Western Cape Cultural Affairs Awards, and 100 Sunday World Unsung Heroes. As writer and performer, she has produced numerous poetry and theatre shows, and co-produced two short films. Her most recent stage production, *#WeAreDyingHere*, was performed at Artscape Theatre, Joburg Theatre, and at the HerStory International Theatre Festival to positive reception. The production was adapted into an award-winning short film, which has screened at numerous international film festivals. She is also a co-producer, writer, and co-star on the award-winning short film *Amagama ka Nokutela*, on the life of Nokutela Mdimba-Dube. Jonas has been a featured act at poetry sessions and festivals around the world including conferences and festivals in Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia, and Nigeria. She was selected as the first Featured Poet at the Poetry Africa Festival in 2021

Alex Latimer

Various

[Alex Latimer](#) is an award-winning South African writer and illustrator. His picture books for children have been published and translated around the world. He has written one novel, *The Space Race*, and has co-written two others, *South* and *North* – both with Diane Awerbuck under the pen name Frank Owen. His debut short story collection, *Love Stories for Ghosts* was published in 2024. His story 'Extinction' was shortlisted for the 2019 Commonwealth Short Story Prize.

[Instagram @alexlatimer.author](#)

Athambile Masola

Ilifa - UHlanga

Noni Jabavu - NB

Imbokodo Series - Jacana

All that I Am

Together Apart

Dr Athambile Masola received her PhD from Rhodes University. Her dissertation was an exploration of black women's life writing with a particular focus on Noni Jabavu and Sisonke Msimang's memoirs. Her primary research focuses on black women's life writing and historiography. Her research is also informed by the early 20th century newspaper archive in South Africa (particularly written in isiXhosa). She is primarily concerned with the nature of erasure and the ways in which multiple forms of reading a variety of texts can inform archival research.

Her debut poetry collection, *Ilifa*, was published in 2021. Together with Makhosazana Xaba, she introduces *Noni Jabavu: A Stranger At Home* (published through Tafelberg in 2023), and co-authored the *Imbokodo: Women Who Shape Us* series with Xolisa Guzula. Most recently she has collaborated with Xolisa Guzula on *All that I Am* as well as on *Together Apart*.

Rozelle Meyer

Self

Leaving the Nest

Rozelle Meyer is a South African Native children's story teller who focuses on the well-being of children through nature immersion and the elementals, to strengthen their core and care for their immediate outdoor environment through fynbos stories and their indigenous culture and heritage.

Refiloe Moahloli

Pan Macmillan

All That I am

Refiloe Moahloli is passionate about writing stories that bring out the best in the human spirit, stories where children and the inner child in adults can identify and celebrate themselves. Refiloe grew up in Mthatha in the Eastern Cape. She has a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Information Systems from the University of Witwatersrand and spent the early part of her career navigating the corporate world. An eye-opening assignment to Mumbai eventually led to her pursuing her dream of becoming a full-time writer. She currently lives and works in Johannesburg.

Instagram: [@refiloemoahloli](https://www.instagram.com/refiloemoahloli)

Salamina Mosesese

NB Publishers

Cook-off at Gogo's Spaza

Salamina Mosesese has over 22 years of experience in media and entertainment as an actress, MC, TV host and film producer. She has a BA degree in Corporate Communications from UJ and a post grad diploma in Business Management. She is a well-known face on television as presenter of *Top Billing* and for her role in series like *Sewende Laan*, *Soul City* and *Erfsondes*. She is managing director at Sorele Media and co-founder of AzaTV. Most recently she produced and starred in the popular South African feature film, *Baby Mamas*. She is married to actor and musician Howza Tsepo Mosesese. They live in Johannesburg with their two daughters. Inspired by her daughters and after completing a writing course with SA Writers College, Salamina has finally decided to write her first children's book.

Thandiwe Nqanda

Self

No Time to Mourn

Thandiwe Nqanda is a South African-born performance poet and author. In her years of writing, she has partaken in both local and international projects, such as 16DaysOfActivism16Poets, performed her poem 'Energy' on totallyradio in Brighton, UK (2021), participated at Word N Sound Poetry Slam in 2020 and being Former Guest Poet of State of the Nation Address, SONA (2022, People's Voice). She is the co-writer and performer of a choreo-poem play titled, 'Grieve, that is how you survive', that debuted at the National Arts Festival, Makhanda 2024. Her audience reach is inclusive of various African countries such as Zimbabwe and Namibia, and extends as far as the UK, USA, Australia and Germany. Her gift of writing has driven her into composing and curating 'IT IS TIME', a musical poetry show in which has afforded her the opportunity to work with various respectable artists in the jazz industry.

