

| Soulpepper |

# SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD

BY ATHOL FUGARD, JOHN KANI,  
AND WINSTON NTSHONA



Illustrations: Gracia Lam Design: lighthupesky.ca

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Welcome to our production of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* written by the remarkable Athol Fugard, and the two groundbreaking actors who were the original performers in the play, John Kani and Winston Ntshona. We are thrilled to be bringing back director Mumbi Tindyebwa Otu who has helmed this wonderful production, and to welcome Tawiah M'Carthy and Amaka Umeh who are making their Soulpepper debuts.

Although this play was first produced over fifty years ago the courage of the writers who brought this story to life during apartheid South Africa continues to inspire. When they first toured this show to international praise they returned home to South Africa only to face a shutdown of their production by police. Their call for freedom was so powerful that it threatened and fractured the systems around them. Their work reminds us of the impact our voices can have on the world. We are grateful to get to share it with you here on our stage.

We hope you enjoy the performance, and look forward to seeing you back here this summer.

**GIDEON ARTHURS**

Executive Director,  
Soulpepper Theatre Company

**WEYNI MENGESHA**

Artistic Director,  
Soulpepper Theatre Company



“Survival can involve betrayal of everything—beliefs, values, ideals—except Life itself,” Athol Fugard wrote in his *Notebooks 1960-1977*.

What must one do in order to survive? How much will it cost them?

In apartheid, a system that robbed Black South Africans of their very dignity and humanity, the question of survival is very real and dangerous and in some ways, unfathomable, but also with so many universal echoes that personally resonate with me as a woman, as a mother, as an African, and an immigrant.

I fell in love with this play when I first read it a few years ago because of the rich humanity of the characters, the incredible writing, the theatricality, and the potency of its themes and its message.

I think something that a lot of people forget is that apartheid in South Africa was not that long ago. What is even less talked about is how South Africa’s apartheid laws were inspired by Canada’s own policies towards Indigenous people.

How can we learn from our past to move forward; what histories do we choose to forget, and which ones do we choose to actively remember? And how is our survival linked to the oppression or liberation of those beside us and around us? These are all questions that the team has been wrestling with during our rehearsal process as we have dug into this beautiful material the last few weeks.

I hope that what you witness today makes you consider your own history, and your own lived experience, and how it correlates or intersects with the experiences of those around you.

**Mumbi Tindyebwa Otu**

Director, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*





Dumelang batho ba heso. I am delighted to make my Soulpepper debut as an assistant director and dialect coach, for *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, a play I have a personal connection to and its historical context, having lived through the apartheid era in South Africa. This allowed me to bring my unique perspective and experience of a time in South Africa of great resilience in the mists of a chaotic world. A world where a person's worth is based on the colour of their skin, an enforced system of racial segregation and discrimination that was based on the idea of white superiority and black inferiority. Styles says "we own nothing except ourselves...There is nothing we can leave behind when we die, except the memory of ourselves." This play deals with important themes of resilience, identity and reconciliation, particularly in the context of apartheid-era South Africa. Ironically living in Canada and the history here, living in a country where the apartheid was birthed, to control and dehumanize the Indigenous people also feels quite unsettling.

These themes are still relevant today, themes of being displaced in your own land because of colonial rule and genocide. Through storytelling we can explore and confront these issues in a meaningful way, and work towards creating greater awareness and understanding. By telling stories that highlight the experiences of marginalized and oppressed communities, we can help to foster empathy and compassion, and ultimately work towards creating a more just and equitable world.

Sizwe Banzi probes the question of how much is your name worth? But if we dig deeper the play makes me think of the power of Black identity and its value. I think about the proverbial deaths of Black persons across the diaspora daily. Forced to modify our behavior in order to avoid being perceived as aggressive or threatening. The thought of being less to have more, in a world that was not built for us to succeed is truly death! These thoughts lead me to ask this question: What is the value of a black human's life in this world?

It's always wonderful to have people who provide us with the encouragement and assistance we need to achieve our goals. special thank you to my parents Abiel and Caroline for sharing their knowledge and history with me throughout this process. My partner for her continued support. Mumbi for fostering a culture of respect and collaboration by approaching this process with empathy and compassion.

Examining and learning from past stories of oppression is crucial in order to move forward and create a more just and equitable future. It is important to acknowledge the pain and trauma that has been inflicted upon marginalized communities throughout history, and to honor their struggles and resistance. Through this process of looking back, we can gain a deeper understanding of the systemic roots of oppression and work to dismantle them. It requires a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths and to listen to the perspectives of those who have been marginalized. Soulpepper Theatre, thank you for creating spaces for these stories to be shared and heard.

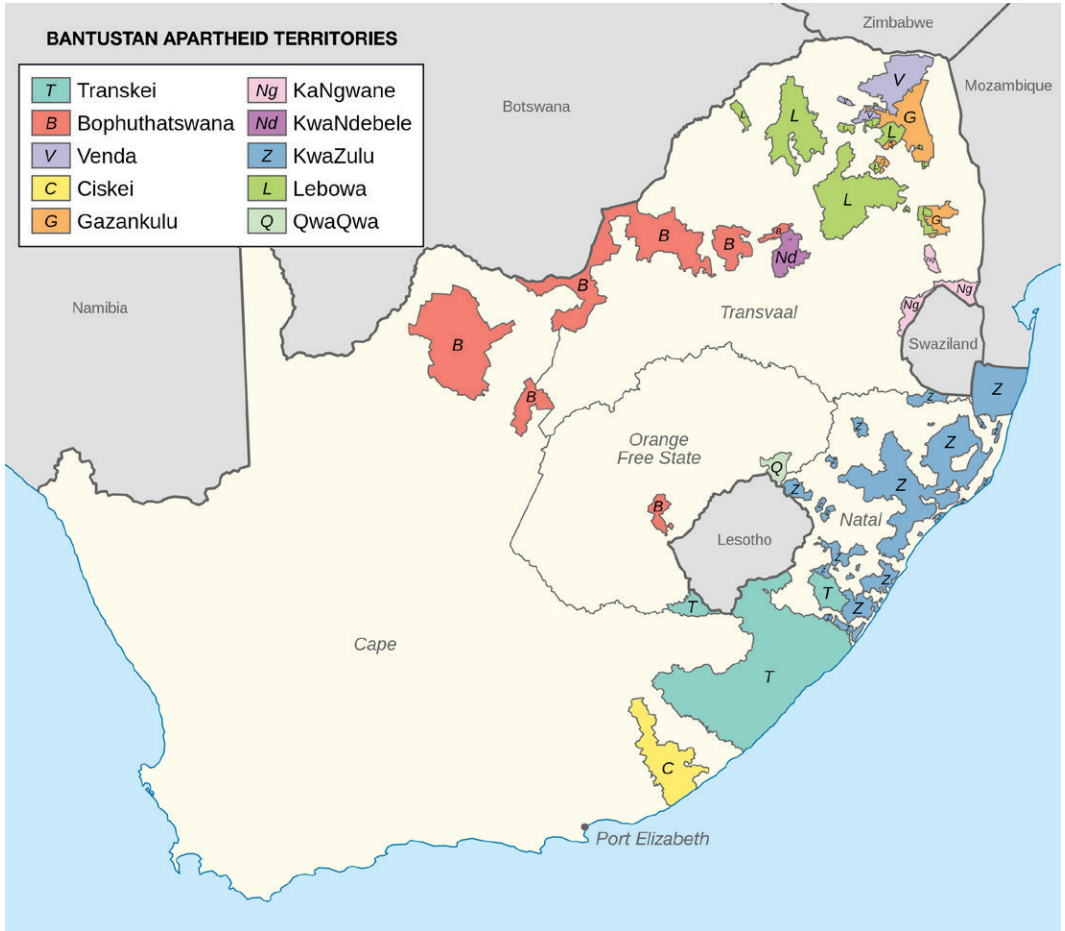
**TSHOLO KHALEMA**

Assistant Director, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*



# Apartheid Era South Africa

This map illustrates Bantustan territories and provinces in apartheid-era South Africa. Bantustans were regions established by the Dutch colonial government to restrict the freedom of movement and exclude political participation of Black South Africans. Ownership of land by the Black majority population was fragmented and restricted to certain areas totaling about 13% of the country.



# Present Day South Africa

This map illustrates the political geography of present-day South Africa. On the eve of the 1994 general election, South Africa's former Bantustans were eliminated, and the four existing provinces were divided into nine.



**Apartheid** – separateness or apart-ness racial segregation system enforced in South Africa between 1948 and 1994.

A few years ago, John Kani directed a production of this play that starred his son. At the beginning of rehearsal, he asked the cast: What is this play about? His son answered, “It’s a South African classic about identity, with two great parts.” Kani erupted. “This play is blood, sweat and tears! This is revolution!” He was referring to both the conditions under which he, Fugard, and Ntshona created the story, and its impact on audiences. The play lives within a larger movement of liberation.

In 1972, when it premiered, there had never been a multi-ethnic theatre in South Africa. Sizwe Banzi is Dead was presented to a mixed Black and white audience, and the actors were promptly arrested. Kani spent 23 days in solitary confinement.

#### 4 Designated Racial Groups under apartheid:

- Africans/Black (Zulu and Xhosa, among others)
- Coloreds (Black, Malayan, and white descent),
- Asians (Indian ancestry)
- Whites (Afrikaaner, Dutch, European, English)

Created through improvisation in a whirlwind 21 days, the play is set in Port Elizabeth, the oldest township in South Africa. At the centre of the story is a pass, or “identity book.” Every Black and Coloured citizen was required to carry one at all times. A potent government weapon, it restricted employment and travel within the country. Kani says: “It was 92 pages of a nightmare. You could never get it in order.”

**Sizwe:** ‘the nation’

**Banzi:** ‘broad or large’

Sizwe comes to Port Elizabeth to look for work, but he’s refused an official permit for his identity

book, so he cannot stay. We meet him in Styles’ photographic studio, a business Styles owns, making photographs to link families and provide a record for future generations. But Sizwe’s photo is particular: only blood, sweat, tears, and courage make it possible. After all, identity is not just knowing your name, it’s knowing who you are.

## Playwright Biographies

### John Kani

Kani is a legend in South Africa. Film credits include T’Chaka in the Marvel Black Panther series, and Rafiki in The Lion King. His play, Kunene and the King was co-produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Fugard Theatre in 2019.

### Athol Fugard

Fugard is a playwright, novelist, actor, director, and teacher. His film adaptation of his novel Tsotsi won the 2005 Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. He lives in South Africa.

### Winston Ntshona

Born in Port Elizabeth, the actor-writer met John Kani in high school. They shared a 1975 Tony Acting Award for their performances in Sizwe Banzi Is Dead, a first for Black actors. He died in 2018. All 3 men were awarded the Order of Ikhamanga in Silver for their contributions to South African cultural life.

Background Notes by Paula Wing





## CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

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### Cast

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**Tawiah M'Carthy**  
Sizwe

**Amaka Umeh**  
Styles/Buntu

### Creative Team

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**Athol Fugard**  
Playwright

**Ken Mackenzie**  
Set Designer

**Tim Lindsay**  
Assistant Sound Designer

**John Kani**  
Playwright

**Ming Wong**  
Costume Designer

**Sarah Miller**  
Stage Manager

**Winston Ntshona**  
Playwright

**Raha Javanfar**  
Lighting Designer

**Victoria Wang**  
Assistant Stage Manager

**Mumbi Tindiyebwa Otu**  
Director

**Richard Feren**  
Sound Design and Composition

**Special Thanks:**  
**Paul Dejong**

**Tsholo Khalema**  
Assistant Director & Dialect Coach

**Mafa Makhubalo**  
Movement Director

### Production

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**Gunes Agduk**  
Lighting Operator

**Erin Halls**  
Stitcher

**Bill Stahl**  
1st Carpenter

**Paul Boddum**  
Head Scenic

**Ellie Koffman**  
Head of Wardrobe

**Dalton Villeneuve-Marini**  
Deck Hand

**Chris Blanchenot**  
Scenic Painter

**Lisa Nighswander**  
Head of Props

**Brian Hawkshaw**  
Deck Operator

**Greg Chambers**  
1st Props Builder/Buyer

**Kalina Popova**  
Assistant Head of Wardrobe

**Andy De Vries**  
Head Carpenter

**Andres Castillo-Smith**  
Audio Operator

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A special thank you to Ruth Kagiri (Mrs. Matothlana), the Muhiteka Family and Mafa Makhubalo for generously contributing their portraits for our set design.

**Running Time:**  
**1 hour and**  
**45 minutes**



**RICHARD FEREN** was born in Toronto and raised in Guelph and Toronto, ON. SOULPEPPER 2023: Sizwe Bansi Is Dead FOR SOULPEPPER: Betrayal (2019); Copenhagen (2019); Animal Farm (2018); CAGE (2017). OTHER THEATRE: Controlled Damage, Grand Ghosts (The Grand Theatre); Public Enemy (Canadian Stage); Hamlet (Stratford); The Cold War (VideoCabaret). FILM & TELEVISION: composed scores for 8 feature films, numerous shorts. OTHER: 7 Dora Awards; 1999 Pauline McGibbon Award; first sound designer shortlisted for Siminovitch Prize, 2012.



**RAHA JAVANFAR** was born in Tehran, Iran and raised in Toronto, ON. SOULPEPPER 2023: Lighting Designer: Billie, Sarah, and Ella: Revolutionary Women in Jazz, Sizwe Banzi is Dead. Performer: Detroit: Music of the Motor City. FOR SOULPEPPER: Lighting Designer: The Brothers Size, The Big Easy, Route 66, Porgy and Bess, The Canadian Pacific Railway, Manhattan Concert Cycle: Vol 2 Midtown - 42nd Street and Broadway, Vol 3: Uptown -To Harlem. Performer: The Golden Record, Rose, 88 Keys, The Promised Land: Steinbeck Through Song, The 27 Club, Riverboat Coffee House: The Yorkville Scene. OTHER THEATRE: Performer: Now You See Her (Quote Unquote Collective); Lighting Designer: Aurash (Tirgan Festival); Projections Designer: Der Freischutz (Opera Atelier), Projections Designer: Tafelmusik; Performer and Co-Creator: Now You See Her (Quote Unquote Collective/Buddies in Bad Times Theatre/WhyNot). OTHER: Bad Luck Woman & Her Misfortunes (Front woman/bassist); The Double Cuts (fiddle); Zuze (electric violin); Graduate of the Ryerson Theatre School. Raha is a co-recipient of a Siminovitch Protege award for lighting design, a Dora nominee for playwrighting, and a Maple Blues Award nominee in music. She teaches lighting design at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson).



**TSHOLO KHALEMA** is a South African man of Trans Experience, who resides in Tkaronto. Tsholo is a multi-hyphenate of the arts who makes it his duty to ensure his culture and passion for social justice is interwoven into his artistic practices. SOULPEPPER 2023: Tsholo is thrilled to be making his Soulpepper debut as Assistant Director and Dialect Coach for Sizwe Banzi is Dead. Other Theatre: Actor: Ancestor in The First Stone, with New Harlem Productions; Simone in Lilies or The Revival of a Romantic Drama. Director: Why Not Theatre, ThisGen Directing program. Film & TV: Y The Last Man, Sort Of. Other: Facilitator for VUKA at Theatre Passe Muraille.



**TIM LINDSAY** was born in Toronto. SOULPEPPER 2023: Sizwe Banzi is Dead FOR SOULPEPPER: The Conjuror (2014). OTHER THEATRE: Turn the Page (Sheridan); Detroit (Coal Mine); Sunday in the Park with George (Eclipse); pool (no water) (Cue6); Sea Sick (The Theatre Centre); After Miss Julie (Red One); Hedwig & The Angry Inch, Hard Core Logo: Live (BFL Theatre); six plays for Kat Sandler's Theatre Brouhaha. PODCASTS & AUDIOBOOKS: Feedback (Upcoming, Cue6 Audio); First Drafts 2023 (Musical Stage Company); All Over the Map, The Hatbox Letters, Cascade (Penguin Random House Canada)



**TAWIAH M'CARTHY** is a Ghanaian born, Toronto based theatre practitioner, notable as a director, playwright and performer. His creator/playwright/performer credits include Maanooma, My Brother (Blue Bird Theatre Collective/Canadian Stage), Black Boys (Saga Collectif), Obaaberima (Buddies in Bad Times Theatre) and Y n Ara Asaase Ni, 21 Black Futures (Obsidian Theatre). Tawiah's directing credits include Fairview (Canadian Stage/Obsidian Theatre), Death and the King's Horseman (Stratford Festival) and Rihannaboi95 (Young People's Theatre). He is a founding member and co-artistic director of Blue Bird Theatre Collective. Tawiah has worked with various organizations across Canada including Soulpepper Theatre, Factory Theatre, National Arts Center, Shaw Theatre Festival and MTSpace. Tawiah is a Dora-nominated playwright and performer.



**KEN MACKENZIE** was born in Toronto, ON. SOULPEPPER 2023: Set Design: Sizwe Banzi is Dead. FOR SOULPEPPER: Where the Blood Mixes, King Lear, Queen Goneril (2022), Jesus Hopped the A Train (2020), Almighty Voice and his Wife (2019), Betrayal (2019), La Bete (2018), The Royale (2018), Animal Farm (2018). OTHER THEATRE: Is God Is (Canadian Stage), Sherlock Holmes and the Raven's Curse (Shaw Festival), The Events (Necessary Angel), Stars: Together (Crow's Theatre). OTHER: Ken is an Assistant Professor at the University of Saskatchewan in the department of Drama and has been the president of the Associated Designers of Canada.



**MAFA MAKHUBALO** SOULPEPPER 2023: Movement Director: Sizwe Banzi is Dead. Movement poets: folk forms from the Regions of African tradition, African contemporary, and Western-Contemporary. Mafa is influenced by his understanding of dance as an accumulation of memory and the history of his culture. Past credits include: Ontario Dance Weekend, International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD) in Toronto, Dance Immersion Showcase, and FFDN signature program 2020; Mentor: Vibes Arts Cohort 2 (2020-2021); Choreographer in Residence: Ballet Jorgen Canada (2020-2021 & 2023); Choreographer: 11:11, Theatre Passe Muraille (2020-2021), Juries for Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council, Toronto Arts Foundation, TAC Open Door grant.



**SARAH MILLER** was born and raised in St. Catharines, ON. SOULPEPPER 2023: Sizwe Banzi is Dead. FOR SOULPEPPER: Innocence Lost, Of Human Bondage, Spoon River, A Christmas Carol, Hosanna, The Heidi Chronicles, Angels in America. OTHER THEATRE: I Send You This Cadmium Red (Art of Time); Fall on Your Knees (Canadian Stage/Grand/NAC/Neptune/Vita Brevis Arts); A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline (Capitol Theatre); MixTape (Crow's Theatre/Grand); Bang Bang (Factory Theatre); The Runner (Human Cargo/RMTC); Harry Potter and the Cursed Child (Mirvish); Orestes, Yaga (Tarragon Theatre); Freedom Singer (Project Humanity).





**MUMBI TINDYEBWA OTU** SOULPEPPER 2023: Director: *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*. FOR SOULPEPPER: Director: *The Brothers Size*, *Oratorio: A Theatrical Mixtape*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The 27 Club*, *Porgy and Bess*. Assistant Director: *For Colored Girls*, *It's A Wonderful Life*. OTHER THEATRE: Director: *Is God Is*, (*Obsidian*, *Canadian Stage/Necessary Angel*), *21 Black Futures* (*Obsidian/CBC*), *Post Democracy* (*Tarragon*), *Trout Stanley* (*Factory*), *We are Proud to Present* (*UTSC*). OTHER: Artistic Director, *Obsidian Theatre Company*. Founder and Artistic Director, *IFT Theatre*. Recipient of a *Dora Award*, *Toronto Theatre Critics Award*, *Canadian Screen Award*, *Pauline McGibbon Award*, amongst others.



**AMAKA UMEH** was born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria and Calgary, AB. SOULPEPPER 2023: *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*. FOR SOULPEPPER: Dialect Coach for *'da Kink in my Hair* (2022); *1851: Spirit and Voice*, *Her Words Festival*, *Around The World in 80 Plays* (2021). OTHER THEATRE: *Fall On Your Knees* (Eastern Canadian tour); *Death and the King's Horseman*, *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*Stratford Festival*); *The Wolves* (*Howland Company/Crow's Theatre*). FILM: *The Stranger's Case* (*CBC Gem*). OTHER: Umeh has received two *Dora Mavor Moore Awards*, a *BBPA Harry Jerome Award*, and a *Toronto Theatre Critics' Association Award*.



**VICTORIA WANG** is a Toronto based stage manager, producer, arts administrator and multidisciplinary artist. SOULPEPPER 2023: Assistant Stage Manager: *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* Other Theatre: *Fairview* (*Canadian Stage and Obsidian Theatre*), *My Sister's Rage* (*Tarragon Theatre*), *Alice in Wonderland* (*Bad Hats*), *The Runner* (*Human Cargo*), *Solitudes* (*Aluna Theatre*), *Hilot Means Healer* (*Cahoots Theatre*) Other: Victoria is a certified yoga instructor.



**MING WONG** is a Toronto costume designer, stylist, and wardrobe technician. She has worked on a variety of projects ranging from dance, theatre, film, and television. SOULPEPPER 2023: *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*. FOR SOULPEPPER: *Pipeline* (2022). OTHER THEATRE: *Is God Is*, *Canadian Stage/Obsidian/Necessary Angel*; *Hamlet 911*, *Stratford Festival*; *Orphans for the Czar*, *Crow's Theatre*; *Trouble in Mind*, *Shaw Festival*; *Hansel und Gretel*, *Canadian Opera Company*; *Julius Caesar*, *Crow's Theatre/ Groundling Theatre*. DIGITAL: *Alice in Winterland*, *Ross Petty Productions*; *New Monuments*, *Luminato/Canadian Stage*; *Savitri*, *Against the Grain*; *Alice in Wonderland*, *Bad Hats Theatre/ Soulpepper*. OTHER: Winner of the 2021 *Virginia & Myrtle Cooper Award in Costume Design*.

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ON STAGE

JUNE 6

—

JUNE 17

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# SCOTT JOPLIN'S TREETONISHA

*Originally written by Scott Joplin (c. 1911), Treemonisha is a 21st century reimagining of the sole surviving opera by the "King of Ragtime."*

**DIRECTED BY  
WEYNI MENGESHA**

PRODUCED BY VOLCANO THEATRE, IN ASSOCIATION WITH SOULPEPPER THEATRE, CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY AND MOVEABLE BEAST

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Credit: Dahlia Katz

Soulpepper

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ON STAGE

JULY  
—  
AUGUST



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