



**THEATRE / SOUTH AFRICA**

# **A Man of Good Hope**

**Young Vic and Isango Ensemble**

## **Education Resources**

2 hours 30 minutes including 20 minute interval

Suitable for Year 10 students and above

Compiled by Kimberley Martin, December 2018

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Arts Curriculum subjects, English and areas covered and relevant IB subjects  
*Suggested curriculum links presented in following colours:*

**ACARA**

Drama  
Music  
Dance

**SACE**

Drama  
Music  
Dance  
English

**IB**

Arts  
Individuals and Societies  
Language and Literature

**CAPABILITIES:**

Literacy and numeracy come in many forms – non-verbal, visual and embodied, the Arts provide opportunities for students to deepen their literate and numerate experiences. Viewing and experiencing performance requires Critical and Creative Thinking, and challenges Personal & Social viewpoints, Intercultural Understanding and Ethical Understandings.

# **Content Warnings**

## **Mild Language**

A reference to the lead character's Mother as a 'bitch'.

## **Dramatised violence**

Scenes include murder, violent robbery and looting.

## **Sexual references**

Traditional Somali female circumcision

## **Staging**

Inclusion of smoke and haze

Narrative includes the language of the Xhosa people

# Contents

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>Pg. 4</b>  | About   |
| <b>Pg. 5</b>  | Synopsis  |
| <b>Pg. 6</b>  | Themes  |
| <b>Pg. 7</b>  | Interview with Jonny Steinberg                            |
| <b>Pg. 9</b>  | Style and convention                                      |
| <b>Pg. 10</b> | Technical production                                      |
| <b>Pg. 12</b> | Curriculum: Provocations and activities pre and post show |
| <b>Pg. 17</b> | Meet the Company & Additional resources                   |

## About

This is based on a true story of one refugee's epic quest across Africa, adapted from a book written by Jonny Steinberg. The production comes to Adelaide from New York where it was received with unanimous acclaim, plus London and many other cities in Europe, Asia and Africa. This is not simply a story set to music; the music is an intrinsic part of the story. The Isango Ensemble was set up in 2000 by Mark Dornford-May and Pauline Malefane, and draws on the musical and acting talent of the townships surrounding Cape Town to create revelatory versions of *The Mysteries* and the award-winning *The Magic Flute* and now *A Man of Good Hope*, which tells the true story of Asad Abdullahi, as he journeys from north to south East Africa, taking him through childhood to adulthood.

The story is told through raw and honest performances from the 22 member cast along with powerful music that seems part opera, part musical.

# Synopsis

**IB MYP Arts Criterion D:** [Learn more](#)

After witnessing the murder of his mother in Mogadishu, 8-year-old Asad journeys from Somalia through six African nations, finding and losing relatives, growing up, marrying, making a family of his own and losing them too before finally reaching the outskirts of Johannesburg. As a young Somali refugee, despite his painful past he seems to have miraculous good luck and a brilliant head for business. After years as a young boy in an Ethiopian refugee camp he sets off for the promised land of South Africa.

Arriving in a South African township as a young man he finds there is a violent reality to surviving in the townships, and the challenges this presents.



Photo: Keith Patterson

**SACE Stage 1 English An1:** [Learn more](#)

*A Man of Good Hope* Chronicles one man's remarkable life as he crisscrosses some of the world's most charged contemporary issues: human trafficking, migration, poverty and xenophobia. It is a modern African odyssey, rich with fresh insights into resilience, survival and leavened by humour and the all-too-human idiosyncrasies of those he meets in his journey into the continent's south.

# Themes

**SACE Stage 2 English KU4:** [Learn more](#)

- **Survival** in the face of danger and desperation
- **Hope** and the holding onto it
- **Resilience**
- **Love and loss**



- **Family and cultural identity**
- **Friendship**

Photo: Keith Patterson

# Interview with Jonny Steinberg

**Author Jonny Steinberg talks about writing his book *A Man of Good Hope* on which Isango Ensemble's production is based, and its hero, Asad Abdullahi.**

*I had little idea that I would write a book about Asad Abdullahi when I met him. I had in mind a very different project, one that would take in many times, people, and places. I imagined that Asad would occupy ten, perhaps twenty pages of the work.*

*It was at our second meeting, I think, that the book I actually wrote was conceived. Asad and I were walking through the Company's Garden, one of Cape Town's oldest and loveliest public spaces, when Asad picked up a twig, snapped it open and smelt it. I will never forget the expression that came over him—the surprise, the wistfulness, the knowledge that what he was experiencing would soon disappear. The fragrance had transported him more than two decades back in time. He was six or seven years old in a madrassa in Mogadishu, Somalia copying out the Koran line by line. The smell of the twig had reminded him of the narcotic sap of the Agreeg tree he had used to bind ink; he was reliving a forgotten high.*

*I felt a whim rising. A man who can break at a twig and take me with him to another world, I thought, is a man about whom I ought to write a book.*

*When I met him Asad was hustling for a living. He'd leave his shack on the outskirts of Cape Town in the early mornings; hang out in the Somali section of Mitchell's Plain Township and ask the traders and businessmen he met there if they needed a delivery to be made. A man living that sort of life hardly had the time a writer demanded. And so I bought his time. I capitalized the business he wanted to start: selling cigarettes, mobile phone airtime, and frozen chickens from his shack. It cost me less than £400. In exchange, I acquired a subject sufficiently sedentary to interview for weeks and months at a time.*

*I was a white man in a good car and Asad was convinced that my presence in his shantytown home would attract men with guns. He refused to meet in his shack where he would have no forewarning of an attack. Instead he insisted that we talk in my car; there he had a 360-degree view and could see trouble coming. And so that is where we sat day in and day out for nearly a year.*

*When the first draft of the manuscript was written I asked him to read it. He refused. The story of his past was simply too sad, he said. I redoubled my efforts to get him to look at it, but he only dug in his heels. He simply would not. I was disconcerted. By the time I was done writing I had retraced most of his steps through the Horn of Africa, had found long-lost relatives of his in various parts of the world, and had discovered something of the lost genealogy of his family. Between my forensic interest in his history and his refusal to read about it was a chasm that made me immensely uneasy.*

*It took a long while for me to settle upon an explanation. Taking in his past as a narrative unspooling through time was simply unhelpful to him, I believe. More than that, it was destructive. To have this perennially rejected boy, forever kicked around like a stone, installed in his imagination, was to rob him of the wherewithal to live in the present. Better to see his past in flashes, to keep in his mind particular moments: moments of mystical feeling, of love, of the desire for revenge, moments when he was the one who decided what would happen next. Deep in our culture is the belief that unearthing memory is therapeutic. I think that Asad has taught me otherwise. He gave me the material to assemble a story about his personal history. But the story is not for him; it is for others.*



Photo: Keith Patterson

# Style and Conventions

**IB Diploma Theatre Objective 4:** [Learn more](#)  
**SACE Stage 1 Drama, An4:** [Learn more](#)

The set is cleverly mastered to evoke life in the townships, and the passing of time. Doors that have to be crawled through or climbed over or get slammed in the face are an eloquent recurring motif on the bare, raked stage, with its rusty, corrugated-iron horizon.

Mandisi Dyantyi's score is played on marimbas, which can sound, by turns, aggressive, bony and yet full of life. Music is a unique part of a story that is told through exuberant songs and dance. The tunes are clan songs, which serve as recognition and stir memories.



Photo: Keith Patterson

# Production

## Venue

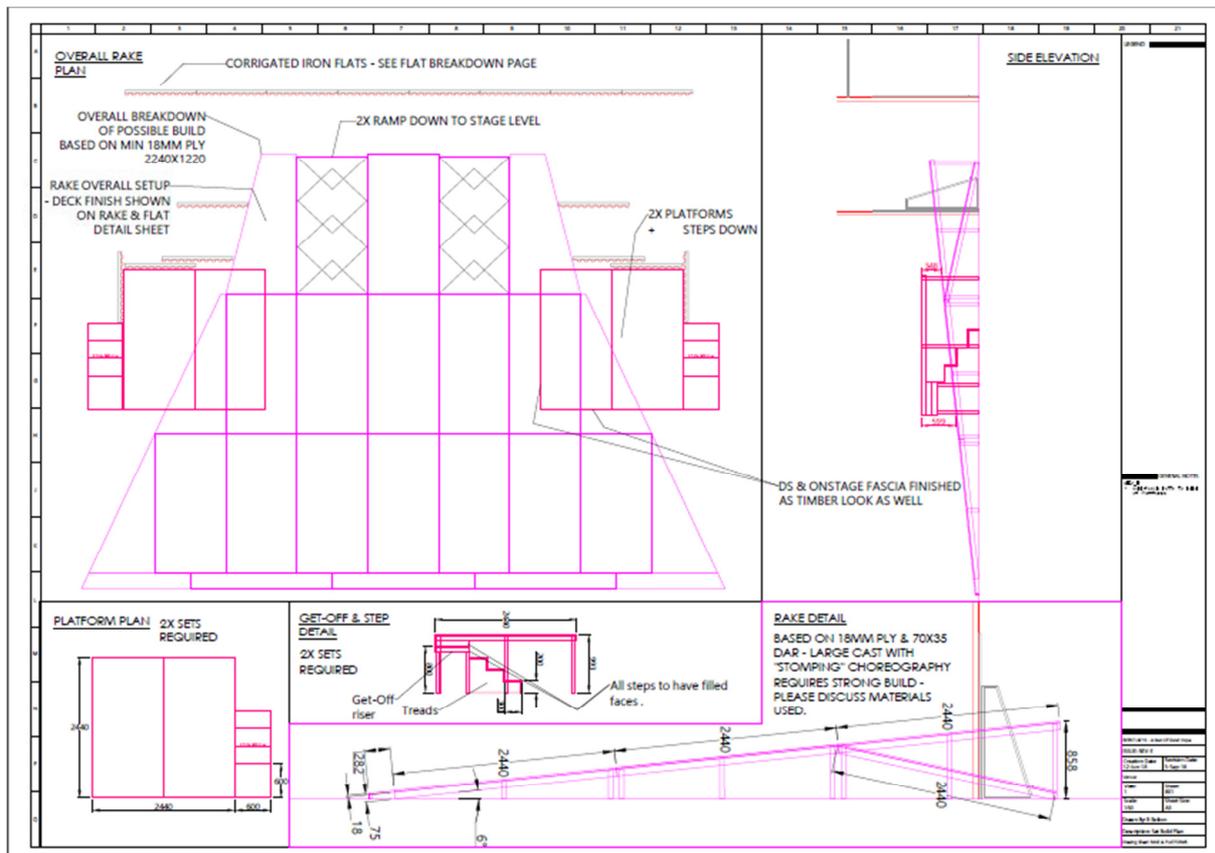
The Royalty Theatre, 65 Angas St Adelaide.

This is a 620 seat proscenium arch theatre with a raked stage as well as raked seating across two levels.

## Tech Insider

[SACE Stage 2 Drama KU1: Learn more](#)

Below are two of the rise, flats and rake plans with the technical and precise measurements of the set from all angles provided by the company. From this, the Adelaide Festival production team has re-created it in the Royalty Theatre exactly as it is staged elsewhere.

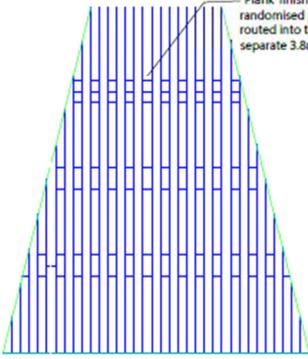
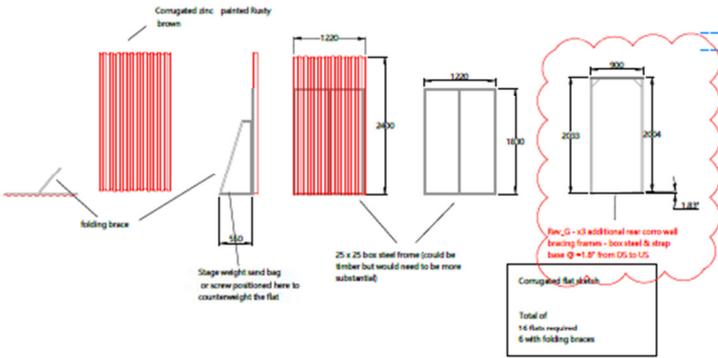


**FLATS & RAKE  
FINISH DETAIL**

DECK PHOTO/DRAWING NOTES - layout shown here is not required/important - ideally the finish should be close to this colour but more rustic/random in plank layout.



"Plank" finish would be randomised pattern textured or routed into the tops as a separate 3.8mm ply skin finish.

Corrugated zinc painted Rusty brown

folding brace

Stage weight sand bag or screw positioned here to counterweight the flat

25 x 25 box steel frame (could be timber but would need to be more substantial)

Corrugated flat skin

Total of 14 flats required  
6 with folding braces

2m, G - 13 additional rear corrugated wall bracing frames - box steel & strap base @ 1.8' from DS to US



Flat deck treatment for top of Juliette areas. AF supplied?

DS 2m drop to auditorium  
TBD railings on DS edge  
future STCSA use etc?

|          |     |
|----------|-----|
| Author   | ... |
| Checked  | ... |
| Drawn    | ... |
| Scale    | ... |
| Date     | ... |
| Project  | ... |
| Sheet    | ... |
| Revision | ... |
| Notes    | ... |

# Curriculum

## Pre-Show

The setting of *A Man of Good Hope* is post-apartheid in South Africa but it would be useful for students to understand the transition from that to a racially democratic South Africa and the considerations of economic freedom that promised.

**IB Diploma, Literature & Performance. Objective 1: [Learn more](#)**

From <https://www.sahistory.org.za>

Translated from the Afrikaans meaning 'apartness', apartheid was the ideology supported by the National Party (NP) government and was introduced in South Africa in 1948. Apartheid called for the separate development of the different racial groups in South Africa. On paper it appeared to call for equal development and freedom of cultural expression, but the way it was implemented made this impossible. Apartheid made laws forced the different racial groups to live separately and develop separately, and grossly unequally too. It tried to stop all inter-marriage and social integration between racial groups. During apartheid, to have a friendship with someone of a different race generally brought suspicion upon you, or worse. More than this, apartheid was a social system which severely disadvantaged the majority of the population, simply because they did not share the skin colour of the rulers. Many were kept just above destitution because they were 'non-white'

- [BBC Apartheid In-Short Clip](#)
- [YouTube aimed at a younger audience explaining Apartheid](#)

**What is a refugee?**

**IB Diploma Global Politics Objective 1**

From <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au>

'Refugee' is used commonly to refer to people who are forced to leave their homes for many reasons, including conflict and violence. Sometimes it is used to also refer to a person displaced due to a natural disaster environmental change.

The term 'refugee' has a more specific meaning under international law.

The most widely accepted legal definition of refugee is in the Refugee Convention, which defines a refugee as:

*Any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country.*

### **What is an asylum seeker?**

From <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au>

The term 'asylum seeker' is often used interchangeably with 'refugee', but means something different under law. Asylum seekers are the people who have sought protection as a refugee, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed.

However, under international law, a person is a 'refugee' as soon as they meet the definition of refugee, whether or not their claim has been assessed. If they are found to be refugees, then they are 'recognised refugees'.

### **Female Circumcision**

From [https://www.unicef.org/somalia/SOM\\_FGM\\_Advocacy\\_Paper.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/somalia/SOM_FGM_Advocacy_Paper.pdf)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is defined as procedures involving partial or total removal of female genitalia or other injury to female genital organs. In Somalia, FGM prevalence is about 95 percent and is primarily performed on girls aged 4-11. FGM can have severely adverse effects on the physical, mental and psychosocial wellbeing of those who undergo the practice. The health consequences of FGM are both immediate and life-long. Despite the many internationally recognized laws against FGM, lack of validation in Islam and global advocacy to eradicate the practice, it remains embedded in Somali culture.

## **Possible Prompt Questions for Students**

### **Before The Show**

Why might a child choose to run away? What added dangers are there for children who are separated from their parents/caregivers? What trials might the protagonist, Asad, encounter on his journey? How is this different from or similar to a child running away in South Australia? As a class, you could create a Venn diagram to display students' responses visually.

Discuss:

- What musicals the students have experienced and what do they remember
- How important is music and dance to the narrative of a musical

- Is there a close relationship of musicals to the genre of opera

Students could look at YouTube clips of the following to help spark ideas. Record their answers and revisit once they have watched *A Man of Good Hope* to see if their opinions have changed.

Students research traditional forms of storytelling that incorporate dance and music including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and those of Asia and Africa.

## Recent musicals

Australian Footage of MAMMA MIA! The Musical, 2018 - YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORhTkNDtAfI>

Wicked the Musical on Broadway - New York City - YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ledIDun1B4I>

## Opera

Nixon in China (Opera): Act I Scene 1 - News - YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Tv3hrZmcEk>

Dead Man Walking - The Opera - Sydney State Theatre ... - YouTube

Turandot Finale  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWwJA1b2I7g&list=PLJ5W8qhyuUiiJ0ZLAFd6kM8Y10dtlosk5&index=3>

Orfede ed Euridice  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJzghcvJOLE&list=PLJ5W8qhyuUiiJ0ZLAFd6kM8Y10dtlosk5&index=6>

## Post Show

**ACARA Drama ACADRR053:** [Learn more](#)  
**SACE Stage 1 Music RM2:** [Learn more](#)

How is *A Man of Good Hope* different from other musicals students may have seen?  
 Described as a play with music rather than a musical or opera, how did students perceive differences? What specific similarities and differences can they identify? What strengths do

these add to the performance? What theatrical and staging rules are broken that allows the audience to respond and receive the story differently?

The narrative structure of a hero's journey is one of the most popular forms of telling a story. You can find a detailed structure of the traditional hero's journey here:

<http://www.tlu.ee/~rajaleid/montaazh/Hero's%20Journey%20Arch.pdf> how does *A Man of Good Hope* use this structure and where does it vary from tradition?

## Activity Ideas

**ACARA Music ACAMUR105:** [Learn more](#)

**SACE Stage 2 Music UM1:** [Learn more](#)

### Students to discuss

How did the rhythm and intensity of the music add to the atmosphere on stage for the audience?

Students experiment with percussive and tonal quality of e.g. hands on desks, feet on floorboards, rulers tapping chair legs - the students will find many surfaces to create tone and rhythm! Extend students after some exploration by providing them types of atmosphere to create and distinguish between e.g. fear, joy, isolation, drudgery etc.

Considering this narrative is based on a true story, what untold elements from the hero's journey structure could be added to mix truth and fiction? In groups, ask students to examine the traditional narrative structure of a hero's journey (see pdf below) and write and/or perform stages that were not told in the performance students viewed.

<http://www.tlu.ee/~rajaleid/montaazh/Hero's%20Journey%20Arch.pdf>

## **Revisit the themes**

Students to discuss if having explored them prior to the production did this add/distract from the intent of the performers and the production.

- Survival - in the face of danger and desperation
- Hope – and the holding onto it
- Resilience
- Love and loss
- Family and cultural identity
- Friendship

## **Student Review**

For the student's review, points for them to consider in addition to normal review practice:

- How important was the music in adding to the narrative
- What impact was the dance in adding to the drama
- How successful was the use of the three stages of Asad's life in the telling of the story

For review writing format – see Review Writing Guide document

# Meet the Company

## About Isango Ensemble

From the website: <http://isangoensemble.co.za/>

Isango Ensemble is a South African theatre company that draws its artists mainly from the townships surrounding Cape Town. [Their] stage productions and films have played to sold-out audiences across the world, and [they've] received numerous international awards. Isango's productions re-imagine classics from the Western theatre canon, finding a new context for the stories within a South African or township setting thereby creating inventive work relevant to the heritage of the nation. [The] company's structure embraces artists at all stages of their creative development allowing senior artists to lead and contribute towards the growth of rising talents.

Founded in 2000 by Mark Dornford-May and Pauline Malefane, Isango draws its performers from once-disadvantaged townships to create performances with a strong South African flavour, often by re-imagining Western theatre classics within a South African setting. Isango has won international fame for its adaptations of classic operas such as the (Golden Bear-winning) feature film *uCarmen eKhayelitsha* and (Olivier Award-winning) *The Magic Flute* ('*Impempe Yomlingo*'), in contemporary South African township settings. Isango Ensemble first visited Australia when *The Magic Flute* was presented at the 2011 Melbourne Festival.

## Performers

Noluthando Boqwana - *English teacher*

Thobile Dyasi - *Abdi*

Ayanda Elekil - *Yindy's father*

Thandokazi Fumba - *Orange seller*

Zamile Gantana - *Rooda*

Siphosethu Juta - *Asad as a boy/Musharaf*

Sifiso Lupuzi - *Madoda*

Phielo Makitle - *Asad as a boy/Musharaf*

Zebulon K Mmusi - *Death*

Zoleka Mpotsha - *Asad as a youth*

Siyanda Ncobo - *Wedding dancer*

Cikizwa Ndamase - *Zulfa*

Busisiwe Ngejane - *Foosiya*

Sonwabo Ntshata - *Kaafi*

Luvo Rasemeni - *Zena*

Sindiswa Sityata - *Yindy's mother*

Masakane Sotayisi - *Assistant shopkeeper*

Luvo Tamba - *Asad as a young man*

Ayanda Tikolo - *Asad as a man*

## **Creative Team**

### **Mark Dornford-May / Adapter/Director/Co-founder**

Mark is co-founder and Artistic Director of Isango Ensemble. Born in Yorkshire and brought up in Chester, he has worked in South Africa with members of the company since 2000. Mark has directed all of Isango's stage productions; *The Mysteries – Yiimimangaliso, The Snow Queen, Der Silbersee, The Beggars Opera- Ibali Loo Tsotsi, Carmen, The Magic Flute – Impempe Yomlingo, A Christmas Carol – iKrismas Kherol, Aesop's Fables, La Boheme – Abanxaxhi, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists – Izigwili Ezidlakazelayo, Venus and Adonis, uCarmen, A Midsummer Night's Dream, A Man of Good Hope and Dancing the Death Drill-SS Mendi* and produced and directed all its films; *uCarmen eKhayelitsha, Son of Man, Unogumbe – Noye's Fludde and Breathe - Umphefumlo*

### **Mandisi Dyantyis / Music Director**

Mandisi is Associate Director and co-Music Director of Isango Ensemble and has been with the company since 2006. He has been co-Music Director and arranger / composer for all Isango Ensemble productions since 2006, including *The Magic Flute – Impempe Yomlingo, A Christmas Carol – iKrismas Kherol, Venus and Adonis, The Mysteries – Yiimimangaliso, Aesop's Fables* and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists – Izigwili Ezidlakazelayo*. Mandisi travelled to New York to work with Graduate Acting students of New York University's Tisch School of Acting, as they explored relationships between South African and American theatre methods. In 2012, Mandisi was the musical director and composer for Isango's *Venus & Adonis* which opened the Globe to Globe season at Shakespeare's Globe in London and subsequently returned to the Globe in May 2013. He arranged and directed the music for the films *Unogumbe* and *Breathe – Umphefumlo*. In 2015 he adapted Bizet's *Carmen* and Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Isango's USA Tour. In 2016 Mandisi composed and conducted the music for *A Man of Good Hope* which ran at London's Young Vic and New

York's BAM. 2017 saw the creation of Isango Ensemble's production of *Dancing the Death Drill- SS Mendi*, based on Fred Khumalo's book *Dancing the Death Drill*, for which Mandisi created new music as well as incorporating WWI songs.

**Pauline Malefane / Music Director**

Pauline is co-founder and co-Music Director of Isango Ensemble. She has worked with members of the company since 2000. She is also an advocate for The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. She saw world-wide success playing the role of Carmen, both on stage and in the Golden Bear-winning feature film *U-Carmen eKhayelithsa*, for which she won a Golden Thumb from Roger Ebert. She was awarded the Best Actress Award at the South African Film & Television Awards for the film *Son of Man*. She made her Proms debut at London's Albert Hall in 2006 with the songs of Kurt Weill. In the same year, she sang the role of Bess in *Porgy and Bess* at both Umea and Malmo in Sweden. In 2008, she was invited to give a series of master classes to the theatre and music students at UCLA. In 2009, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle, she sang a series of concerts with the Berlin Philharmonic, which were broadcast on German television. In 2012, Pauline played the role of Venus in Isango's *Venus & Adonis*, which opened the Globe to Globe season at Shakespeare's Globe in London. Following its success, she and the production returned to the Globe in May 2013. In 2013, she also played Noah in *Unogumbe*, an adaptation of Benjamin Britten's Noye's Fludde and in 2015, the role of Zoleka in *Breathe - Umphefumlo*. On Isango's USA Tour in 2015, she once again played Carmen and sang Titania in the new adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In 2016 Pauline created and played the roles of Yindy and Sadicya in *A Man of Good Hope* at London's Young Vic and New York's BAM.

**Lungelo Ngamlana / Choreographer**

Lungelo Ngamlana is an associate artist of Isango Ensemble. He joined the company in 2007 and has been the choreographer for all subsequent Isango Ensemble productions. His theatre credits include: *The Magic Flute – Impempe Yomlingo*, *A Christmas Carol – iKrismas Kherol*, *The Mysteries – Yiimimangaliso*, *Aesop's Fables*, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists – Izigwili Ezidlakazelayo*, *Venus and Adonis*, *La Bohème*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Carmen*, *A Man of Good Hope* and *Dancing the Death Drill-SS Mendi*. Prior to joining Isango Ensemble, Ngamlana worked as teacher, performer, and choreographer with many dance and theater groups, both at home in South Africa and internationally.

**Manuel Manim / Lighting Designer**

Mannie Manim is co-founder of the Market Theatre, and has been director of performing arts administration at the University of the Witwatersrand and director of the Baxter Theatre Centre. His career in theatre lighting and producing spans over 40 years and he has worked with Isango Ensemble since its first production more than 18 years ago. His accolades include: Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres from the French Government, Naledi Life

Achievement Award, Fleur du Cap Lifetime Achievement Award, Arts and Culture Trust Lifetime Achievement Award, and a Silver National Order of Ikhamanga.

**Lesley Nott Manim / Speech and Dialogue**

Lesley Nott Manim has worked in professional theatre, film, and television since 1975 as a performer and director, and vocal, acting, dialogue, text interpretation, and accent coach, for both South African and international productions. She has taught text interpretation at the Market Theatre Laboratory, voice classes and tutorials at the University of Witwatersrand, and text interpretation, accent, and performance skills at AFDA Cape Town. She has worked with Isango Ensemble since 2007 as speech, dialogue, and text interpretation coach.

**Jonny Steinberg / Author of the novel**

Jonny Steinberg is an award-winning South African author. His books include: *Midlands, the Number* (both of which won the Sunday Times Alan Paton Award), *Three-Letter Plague* (*Sizwe's Test* in the US, which was named one of Washington Post's Books of the Year and shortlisted for the Wellcome Trust Book Prize), *Thin Blue*, *Little Liberia: An African Odyssey in New York*, and *A Man of Good Hope*. In 2013, Steinberg was among the inaugural winners of the Windham-Campbell Literature Prizes, awarded by Yale University. He currently teaches African studies at the University of Oxford.

## **Additional Resources**

**Interview w John Steinberg, author of the novel**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X57zIUoym34>

**Asad's journey with animated map**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owcD4Bq5N1w>

**Article from NY Times: *End of Apartheid in South Africa? Not in Economic Terms***

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/24/business/south-africa-economy-apartheid.html>