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World-renowned cellist Dr Mhlambi set to enchant Cape Town with new musical masterpiece

4-6 April 2024 | 20:00 | Baxter Theatre | [Book tickets](#)

Musician, songwriter, cellist, and cultural intellectual Dr Thokozani Mhlambi is set to mesmerise Cape Town audiences with his latest musical production: *Hail to the King! A Musical Story*.

Fresh from a successful tour of the USA and Canada, Mhlambi brings a new production to town: a celebration of Africa's rich heritage and artistic excellence. *Hail to the King* promises to be an enjoyable performance for the whole family, incorporating storytelling elements, classical music, and African *izibongo* (poetry).

Mhlambi is an honorary research fellow at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative. Written, performed and produced by this multi-talented musician, this hot-property musical genius is ready to take the stage at the Baxter Theatre, on a three-day must-see show from 4 to 6 April 2024.

The 37-year-old KwaZulu-Natal composer is known for incorporating art with music, having held an artistic residency at the prestigious Cite International des Arts in Paris, France, and having his music used as a soundtrack for an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In this concert, Mhlambi will present a body of work fusing African and classical elements. It features himself on baroque cello and voice, plus other orchestral instruments. The cast also includes a vocal ensemble.

Hail to the King! A Musical Story is based on a site visit to the ancient Zulu capital of King Dingane. The story is a retrieval of the aura of the ancient capital of King Dingane, the Zulu emperor, in the 1830s. His capital, Umgungundlovu, was a site of fascination for African communities and European settlers alike. Reports of the capital travelled as far as the kingdom of Basotho, the Cape and many other places.

Mhlambi said his compositions to be showcased culminate years of work researching and developing the music. "This work was inspired by my involvement in the Five Hundred Year Archive project at UCT. For the music, I had to look at the works of historical predecessors like the late icons Prof Mzilikazi Khumalo and BP Tyamzashe – who were great composers in

the African tradition, fusing the old and new, African and modern elements, towards a whole new sound," he added.

After a Fellowship in Germany, Mhlambi presents a suite of new music composed for himself on the baroque cello, plus other instrumentalists and vocalists.

The work is made up of three main sections, including a meeting of the elephants, the unveiling of the royal woman, and the king's dance. "This is the first arrangement of my music for a full-string ensemble and vocal consort. Cape Town people are in for a treat, with me playing cello, singing, and directing the ensemble while the important historical message is told on stage," said Mhlambi.

The work is proudly supported by UCT, the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, and Afropolitan Explosiv.

So what makes the show different? "This is a full theatrical-dramatic production, which is different from Mhlambi usual offering of music. It shows my vision on a larger scale, which helps give visual imagery to the musical work unfolding. The show is highly interactive and uses lighting design," concluded Mhlambi.



Dr Thokozani Mhlambi

Photo: Supplied

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