

# THE NEXT WAVE

*Six South African Artists Rewriting the Cultural Script*

Forty years is a significant milestone in any creative journey. For the Standard Bank Young Artist Awards, it's a moment to reflect on the remarkable legacy of artists who've come before – and to shine a spotlight on the extraordinary individuals now shaping the future of South African art. From the quiet power of poetry to the bold urgency of contemporary dance, the 2025 cohort is as daring as it is diverse – six artists whose voices carry weight, wonder, and the promise of transformation.

Since its inception in 1984, the Standard Bank Young Artist Awards have stood as a benchmark of excellence in South African arts. Now in its 40th year, the awards continue to honour the trailblazers of tomorrow – visionaries who not only mirror the world around them but reimagine it entirely.

Standard Bank and the National Arts Festival have championed artists who disrupt, provoke, and inspire. These awards have recognised over 180 outstanding talents – a roll call that includes household names like William Kentridge, Andrew Buckland, and Mbongeni Ngema – and this year's winners add new momentum to that legacy.

From homegrown stages to international acclaim, the 2025 winners bring a sense of urgency, reflection, and global resonance.

## ASANDA RUDA - DANCE

From her early training in Soweto's community halls to standing ovations across Europe, Ruda's work tells stories of land, liberation, and lived experience. Her solo piece Kemet

(Black Lands) – developed during a residency at Hellarau's Pan-African platform – is a stirring meditation on history and identity. Based in Paris

as part of the Centre national de la danse x Cité internationale des arts programme, Ruda continues to shape movement into meaning.



*Calvin Ratladi*



#### **CALVIN RATLADI - THEATRE**

Ratladi's work is a multi-hyphenate creative with an eye for immersive storytelling, and it refuses to be boxed in. A SAFTA-winner and multiple Ovation Award recipient at the National Arts Festival, his productions have travelled to stages in Germany and Luxembourg. With each performance, Ratladi expands the language of South African theatre, fusing disciplines to create intimate and expansive experiences.

#### **SIYASANGA "SIYA" CHARLES - JAZZ**

Juilliard-trained and magna cum laude to boot, trombonist Siya Charles has already carved out a space in global jazz circles. Her collaborations span icons like Hugh Masekela to Grammy-winning contemporaries, but it's through the Siya Charles Sextet that her voice comes fully into its own. Her music honours tradition while boldly stepping into the new - assertive, sensitive, and unmistakably hers.

*Siyasanga "Siya" Charles*







Muncy

#### MUNEYI – MUSIC

Steeped in oral tradition, Muncy's sound is a delicate weave of memory and meaning. His lyrics – often inspired by his grandmother – explore loss, love, and identity with an honesty that transcends language. Firmly rooted in his Tshivenda heritage, his songs echo folklore rhythms, yet speak to contemporary experiences with rare emotional clarity.



#### NYAKALLO MALEKE – VISUAL ARTS

Maleke's drawings do more than depict – they map. Her intricate, conceptual works explore movement, memory, and spatial vulnerability. With a Master's degree from Switzerland's édhéa and a growing presence across European galleries, her work interrogates the boundaries of the medium while inviting viewers to reimagine their own relationship with space and self.

#### MODISE SEKGOHE – POETRY

Sekgohe's performances aren't just spoken word – they're acts of transformation. A theatre-maker, voice artist and poet in equal measure, he manipulates sound, silence and rhythm with startling effect. From Washington, DC, to Brussels and Gothenburg, his performances pulse with intensity, reshaping how we understand poetry as a living, breathing art form.



*Nyakallo Maleke*


#### **MORE THAN AN AWARD**

Being named a Standard Bank Young Artist is more than a badge of honour. Recipients are given not only financial support and mentorship, but the chance to showcase their work at the National Arts Festival in Makhanda. It's a platform that launches careers, builds audiences, and often sets the stage for international opportunities.

Monica Newton, CEO of the National Arts Festival, reflects: "These awards have always been about what's next. They celebrate possibility, originality, and resilience. We are deeply proud to continue our partnership with Standard Bank in this mission – and to support the next generation of artistic leaders."

#### **A LEGACY THAT LIVES ON**

Standard Bank's sustained support of the arts has become a cornerstone of South Africa's cultural ecosystem. For four decades, it has offered more than funding – it has offered faith in creativity as a driver of social imagination and cultural progress.

As the 2025 Standard Bank Young Artists prepare to bring their work to life in Makhanda, they step into a tradition of excellence – but on their own terms. They are rewriting the story in their own voices. And we are all the richer for it. 



*Modise Sekgothe*

by *the national arts festival*