

Walk Press Release

Walk is a performance piece created in response to Indian artist Maya Krishna Rao's *The Walk*. Rao crafted *The Walk* after the rape and murder of Jyoti Singh Pandey, a 23-year-old student who was tortured, raped and killed by 6 men on a Delhi bus in December 2012. A few months later, we decided, with Rao's permission, to create our own version of *Walk* as a response to the gang-rape and murder of Anene Booysen, a South African teenager, in 2013. The unimaginably horrific assault and deaths of these two womxn was a catalyst to create *Walk* as a way to honour their memories and to talk honestly about rape culture.

The process of making *Walk* allowed for the emergence of a series of performed installations, which involve the audience and the performers walking through the pieces together. Although in both South Africa and India there were similarities in public reaction to Jyoti and Anene's cases, India's civil response seemed of much greater magnitude compared to South Africa. Despite South Africa celebrating 20 plus years of democracy, coupled with a constitution that is a shining example to other countries, violence against people who identify as womxn and gender non-conforming is still prevalent. One ponders whether, as a nation, South Africans have become numb to the violence imposed on womxn and trans people on a daily basis. Have we gone so far as to normalise it? These questions urge us as performance-makers to create work that stirs, that questions, that galvanizes people into action.

Our vision for *Walk* is centred around a sparse aesthetic that foregrounds the figure of the womxn. Its focus is very much on the seven performers and considering the unavoidable, physical fact of their bodies – a fact which we understand rape culture to seek to obfuscate or erase.

Walk has performed at various venues and festivals around the world including the GIPCA Live Art Festival, Cape Town 2014; DFL Sex Actually Festival, Johannesburg 2014; Cape Town Fringe Festival 2014; The International Women's Playwrights' Conference, Cape Town 2015; Freedom and Focus Conference and Festival, Dublin 2016; Vifa Festival, India 2016; the International Festival of Kerala, India 2018; The National Arts Festival, Makhanda 2018; and the DFL Transforming Arts / Transforming Lives Conference and Festival, Johannesburg 2018.

Excerpts from reviews:

"This is a stark, deeply moving and absolutely vital addition to the discourse about the levels of sexual violence in this country and others." - Tracey Saunders, Cape Times, 23 September 2014.

"Walk captivates. Powerful images are created using water, bubble wrap, bandages, a silky nighty." - Sarah Robson, Critter, 26 September 2014.

"Walk is an unsettling reminder of how the marginalisation of women goes hand in hand with how a country views its own place in the world." Vikram Phukan, The Hindu, 25 April 2018.

"The installations remove the expectation of super-human strength we place on victims, but brings us closer to the truth: all humans hurt. And bleed. And pray, just like we do. Being a stone's throw away from the performers, yet being unable to help, emphasises just how much society still stands on the sidelines to watch." Zondelela Njaba, Cue Media, 30 June 2018 .

“No show at the National Arts Festival lashes out more at the negative side of masculine behaviour than *Walk* in which the audience bears witness to scene after scene of women violated by male aggression, bigotry and condescension.” Anton Krueger, Business Live, 10 July 2018.

Bios of performers:

Genna Gardini

Genna Gardini is a writer, theatre-maker and lecturer from Cape Town. She has an MA in Theatre-making from UCT and is currently a PhD candidate at Queen Mary University of London. Her debut collection of poems, *Matric Rage*, was published by uHlanga Press in 2015. Gardini has won multiple awards for her work as a writer and theatre-maker, including Standard Bank Ovation Awards and the DALRO New Coin Poetry Prize. Gardini and Gary Hartley co-founded the queer theatre company Horses' Heads Productions in 2013. She works as a Drama lecturer at CityVarsity Cape Town and is the Poetry Editor for *Prufrock*.

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Accomplished dancer. Competent, dynamic, energetic, lateral thinker, focused, autonomous, imaginative, scholastic, creative, with more than 20 years of professional practical experience. Lecturer in Dance and Theatre, PhD candidate, UCT Drama Department specialising in Dance and Performance. Qualified Masters in Dance. Proven success in staging complex theatrical concepts. Accomplished in conveying charged emotions through dance and translating artistic devices into efficient performance methodologies for dancers, actors and singers. Skilled in structuring academic movement-based/performance courses for universities and grass-root programs nationally and internationally. Fluent in English and Afrikaans with excellent conversational and adequate writing abilities in German, Japanese and French.

Koleka Putuma

Award-winning poet and theatre practitioner Koleka Putuma has taken the South African literary scene by storm with her bestselling debut collection of poems *Collective Amnesia*.

Since its publication in April 2017, the book is in its 9th print run and has been prescribed for study at tertiary level in South African Universities and Gothenburg University in Sweden. It was recently translated into Spanish and released in Madrid by Flores Rara.

Collective Amnesia was named 2017 book of the year by the City Press, one of the best books of 2017 by The Sunday Times, and named one of ten outstanding African books translated into Spanish by El País in Madrid. She is a 2018 Forbes Africa Under 30 Honoree. Recipient of the 2018 Imbewu Trust Scribe Playwriting Award. She was recognized as a Rising Star at the 2017 South African Mbokodo Awards. Recipient of the 2017 CASA playwriting award. She is the recipient of the 2016 PEN South Africa Student Writing Prize. She has been named one of the young pioneers who took South Africa by storm by The Sunday Times, one of 12 future shapers by Marie Claire SA, the groundbreaking new voice of South African poetry by OkayAfrica, and one of 100 young people disrupting the status-quo in South Africa by independent media. She has recently been appointed as the theatre producer for Design Indaba.

Lukhanyiso Skosana

Lukhanyiso is a fourth year Theatre and Performance student, specialising in Theatre-Making.

Originally from Port Elizabeth, she has been involved in a number productions: *Hairspray* portraying the character of Seaweed, *Noises Off!* portraying the character of Gary Lejeune and also *Shrek the Musical* as the character Donkey. While at high school she received the award for best actor

for three years in a row as, a R10 000 textbook bursary from the Clover Showtime Awards. Lukhanyiso was an Eastern Cape Children's Choir member for several years, four of which were spent as a soloist for the choir. She went on two International Euro tours with the choir in 2010 and 2012. At UCT she was in Love like Blue in 2017 and is currently on the road with The Mothertongue Project's Womb of Fire. She wishes to complete her studies at UCT and go on to do Postgraduate studies.

Sara Matchett

Sara holds a PhD in Theatre and Performance from the University of Cape Town. She is a Senior Lecturer and Head of Theatre in the Centre for Theatre Dance and Performance Studies at the University of Cape Town. Her teaching profile centres on practical and academic courses which include, voice, acting, theatre-making, applied theatre, and performance analysis. She is especially interested in interdisciplinary modes of creating. Her research focuses on explorations into breath as a catalyst for making autobiographical performance, with particular focus on the relationship between breath, emotion and image. As co-founder and Artistic Director of The Mothertongue Project, a women's arts collective, Sara has experience in the field of theatre in South Africa, Singapore, India, Kenya and Indonesia as a theatre-maker, performer, director and facilitator. Sara is also an Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework® and the Fitzmaurice Institute's regional director for Africa and India.

Siphumeze Khundayi:

Siphumeze Khundayi is an art - maker and activist interested in creative ways of bringing together dialogue and artistic practice in relation to African Queer identity. This links to the work she does as artistic director of [HOLAfrica!](#) an online platform that raises awareness on issues of African women sexuality. She has featured various solo and collaborative works within theatre spaces as well as in a number of festivals including Artscape Women's Festival, Drama 4 Life: Sex Actually festival, GIPCA Live Art, Cape Town Fringe, Infecting the City, and Abilities Festival. Siphumeze has a background in playback theatre and drama therapy being a part of Drama 4 Life Playback Theatre and having worked in Zakheni, a Drama Therapy organization, as a drama practitioner.

Vathiswa Nodlayiya

Vathiswa has a wealth of experience as a dancer, teacher and choreographer. She has grown as an artist and received the privilege of working with accomplished choreographers and directors such as Mark Fleishman, Alfred Hinkel, John Linden, Mandla Mbothwe, Sibongile Khumalo, Neo Muyanga, Lara Foot, Sbonakaliso Ndaba, Jenny Reznik, Mamela Nyamza, Jason Jacobs, Mhlanguli George, Maxwell Xolani Rani, Thando Mthi, Jacqueline Manyapel, Ina Wichterich and Mzokuthula Gasa.

She has also received the honour of performing in several highly prestigious platforms nationally and internationally in theatres locally and abroad.