

CONTENTS

The Play	1	Timeline	4	Important Questions	8
Meet the Team.....	2	Music of Makeba	6-7	Additional Resources	9
Historical Context	2-3	Activities	8	Attending the Theatre	9
Theme Snapshot	3	Glossary	8		

THE PLAY

At her final concert, South African musical legend and activist Miriam Makeba delivers the performance of her life, raising the conscience and the consciousness of a people. But the ancestors are calling—transporting her through the music and fractured memories of her past on a spiritual journey of reconciliation. Written and performed by international music sensation Somi Kakoma, this world premiere musical is an electrifying portrait of a revolutionary artist’s singular voice and vision.

Under the direction of NYTW Usual Suspect & former 2050 Fellow Lileana Blain-Cruz, the rolling world premiere production of Dreaming Zenzile will bring together seven producers including Octopus Theatricals, National Black Theatre, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, McCarter Theatre Center, Arts Emerson, Apollo Theater and New York Theatre Workshop. The soul-stirring production includes a live jazz band playing original music and reinterpretations of Makeba’s remarkable catalog.

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**May 17, 2022 -
June 26, 2022**

DREAMING ZENZILE

Based on the life of
Miriam Makeba

By
SOMI KAKOMA
Directed by
LILEANA BLAIN-CRUZ
Choreography by
MARJANI FORTÉ-SAUNDERS
Music Direction by
HERVÉ SAMB

**NATIONAL
BLACK
THEATRE**

**NEW YORK
THEATRE
WORKSHOP**

A co-production with National Black Theatre

MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM



SOMI KAKOMA
Creator & Performer

Somi was born in Illinois to immigrants from Uganda and Rwanda. Known in the jazz world simply as 'Somi', she has built a career of transatlantic storytelling, and is the first African woman ever nominated in any Grammy jazz category (2021, Best Jazz Vocal Album for Holy Room; 2021 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Jazz Vocal Album). Somi's

previous albums include Petite Afrique (2018 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Jazz Album) and her major label debut The Lagos Music Salon feat. special guests Angelique Kidjo and Common. Both albums earned her ECHO Award nominations in Germany for Best International Jazz Vocalist. Somi recently announced a new studio album honoring the great South African singer and activist Miriam Makeba, to be released in July 2021. Somi is a Soros Equality Fellow, a USA Doris Duke Fellow, a TED Senior Fellow, a Sundance Theatre Fellow, and a former artist-in-residence at Park Avenue Armory, Rauschenberg Residency at Captiva, Baryshnikov Arts Center and UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance. Somi holds undergraduate degrees in Anthropology and African Studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a Master's degree in Performance Studies from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and is the founder of Salon Africana, a boutique cultural agency and record label.

LILEANA BLAIN-CRUZ
Director



Lileana Blain-Cruz is a director from New York City and Miami. Recent projects include: Anatomy of a Suicide (Atlantic Theater Company); Fefu and Her Friends (TFANA); Girls (Yale Repertory Theater); Marys Seacole (LCT3, Obie Award); Faust (Opera Omaha); Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine (Signature Theatre); Thunderbodies and Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again (Soho Rep.); The House That Will Not Stand and Red Speedo (New York Theatre Workshop); Water by the Spoonful (Mark Taper Forum/CTG); Pipeline (Lincoln Center Theater); The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World (Signature Theatre, Obie Award); Henry IV, Part One and Much Ado About Nothing (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); The Bluest Eye (The Guthrie); War (LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater and Yale Rep.); Salome (JACK); Hollow Roots (the Under the Radar Festival at The Public Theater). She was recently named a 2018 United States Artists Fellow and a 2020 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist. She is currently the resident director of Lincoln Center Theater. She is a graduate of Princeton and received her MFA in directing from the Yale School of Drama.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

APARTHEID AND A SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY OF OPPRESSION

To fully understand the Miriam Makeba's legacy and the impact that she had in and beyond South Africa, it is important to first understand the basics of the South African apartheid and the subsequent anti-apartheid movement.

Apartheid, most commonly translated as "seperateness" or "apartness" in Afrikaans, was a system rooted in racist, segregationist, and oppressive policies enforced against non-white South African citizens that spanned just under 50 years. Under the National Party, South African legislation was dominated by the beliefs, politics, and social views of the country's minority white population. Although the apartheid government officially lasted from 1948 - 1994, the irreversible social and economic impacts of the time period continue to effect the country today.



ORIGINS OF APARTHEID

Although apartheid technically began in 1948 with the election of the Afrikaner National Party, it's origins can be traced all back to the Dutch colonization of South Africa.

While the abolition of slavery in 1834 made it possible for black citizens and the formerly enslaved peoples of the country to slowly progress towards a more just South Africa, the spirit of racism and white supremacy loomed. After years of veiled racist legislature and an economy that stifled the financial gain of non-white South Africans, the 1913 Land Act was passed, which put into place the first legislature forcing black Africans to work in reserves, and marking the start of legal and blatant segregation in the country post-slavery.

PHYSICAL SEGREGATION

Much like Jim Crow era America, apartheid segregated black and white citizens. However, the South African government was particularly interested in classifying the different races. According to the Population Regulation

Act of 1950, South Africans could be divided into 3 subgroups: white, black (or natives), and coloured. By their definition, the term "white" referred to citizens whose parents were both white and possessed the "habits, speech, education, and demeanour" of a white person. Meanwhile "black" or "native" spoke to native members of African tribes. "coloured", however, was a bit trickier to describe. Technically, the term encompassed citizens of mixed decent. However, when that definition proved difficult to understand, the government created tests to differentiate between the racial groups. One of these was called the Pencil Test, in which a pencil was shoved into a subject's hair. If their curls were tight enough to hold the pencil, the subject was classified as black, while looser curls that couldn't hold pencils would identify coloured persons. The seemingly radom nature of this testing often divided members of families into different racial groups.

These race markers determind where citizens were to live, and where children could attend school. In many cases, apartheid forced black and coloured South Africans out of their homes and into poverty.

MOMENTS THAT MARKED THE MOMENT

South Africans fought against apartheid utilizing a number of methods, ranging from peaceful protests to more targeted uprisings. The general resistance to the apartheid government led to an increase in police brutality incited by government officials, which only fueled the vigor of the anti-apartheid movement.

Tensions came to a head in March of 1960, when a non-violent protest became the site of death for over 60 South Africans, wounding 180 more. This pivotal event would go on to be known as the Sharpeville Massacre.

Another moment that would go on to spark international debate was the Soweto Uprising of 1976, a protest organized by black children pleading to the government for an education comparable to that of white students in the country. During the protest and subsequent massacre, thousands of black children were killed at the hands of South African police.



These tragedies prompted the creation of anti-apartheid military sectors. Among their founders was Nelson Mandela, a major opponent of the apartheid government, and the eventual President of South Africa.

GLOBAL RESPONSE

Following the massacres in South Africa, apartheid garnered a mixed reaction from other countries. While a few countries, such as Switzerland, were defenders of the South African government, many others used their resources to pressure the government to abandon its policies. Apartheid protests were held internationally, and a number of countries began to boycott South African goods altogether.

After facing mounting pressure from countries abroad, apartheid officially ended in 1994, when the all-white government was replaced by a nonwhite majority.

THEME SNAPSHOT

ACTIVISM THROUGH ARTISTRY

By sheer fact of who she was, Miriam Makeba was inherently political. As a black woman born and raised under an apartheid government turned international music star, Makeba had the platform, perspective, and passion to make a difference. She popularized several anti-apartheid songs, such as "Meadowlands", and "Ndodemnyama we Verwoerd". Makeba also became an unabashed advocate for Africans living under oppressive governments, and thus, became widely known by her nickname, "Mama Africa".

As her activism caught the attention of the South African government, much of Makeba's music was banned in the country, and she was eventually exiled altogether. Her outspoken and rebellious attitude surrounding apartheid donned Makeba a symbol of the government's cruelty, and she testified before the United Nations in 1962 and 1964. Makeba would go on to win the Dag Hammarskjöld Peace Prize in 1986, and in 2001 she was awarded the Otto Hahn Peace Medal, "for outstanding services to peace and international understanding."



MAMA AFRICA'S WORLD: A TIMELINE

Zenzile Miriam "Mama Africa" Makeba was a gifted, bold, and beautiful singer, songwriter, and truth teller. She touched the spirits of many on an international scale. Her life was a walk in truth through time, space, and music.

1932

Zenzile Miriam Makeba is born on March 4 in Prospect Township, South Africa.



1960

Following the deaths of two uncles in the Sharpeville Massacre, Makeba becomes an outspoken critic of apartheid and the white-minority government of South Africa



1960

Releases her first studio album, Miriam Makeba



1964

Releases her second studio album, The World of Miriam Makeba

1966

Receives the Grammy Award for Best Folk Recording, with Belafonte, for An Evening with Belafonte/- Makeba. The album includes several songs critical of the South African government.



1948

The National Party gains power in South Africa and immediately begins enforcing existing policies of racial segregation, known as apartheid, including the use of passbooks, which every black South African over age 16 was required to carry at all times.

1956

Releases her first solo album, "Lovely Lies," which gains international recognition and becomes the first South African record to land on the Billboard Top 100 list.

1962

Performs for US President John F. Kennedy at Madison Square Garden with Harry Belafonte.

1963

The March on Washington occurs, with 250,000 people gathering to draw attention to the inequalities that exist in the United States.



1966

Marries political activist Stokely Carmichael in March, which causes her popularity in the United States to significantly decline. When she and Carmichael travel to the Bahamas, Makeba is banned from returning to the US.

1949

Marries her first husband, James Kubay. They are married for two years. One year later, Makeba gives birth to her only child: a daughter, Bongi Makeba, who would follow in her mother's musical footsteps. Later, Makeba gives birth to her only child: a daughter, Bongi Makeba, who would follow in her mother's musical footsteps.

1953

Records her first hit, "Lakutshon' llanga," with the Manhattan Brothers - a jazz group who sang a mixture of 1949 South African songs and popular songs



1963

Testifies before the United Nations about the effects of apartheid, asking for sanctions against South Africa's Nation Party. Her music is banned in South Africa, her citizenship is revoked, and she is exiled.

1963

Nelson Mandela, a founder of the military wing of the African National Congress and a substantial anti-apartheid activist in South Africa, is imprisoned.



1966

MAMA AFRICA'S WORLD: A TIMELINE

Content curated by The Reperatory Theatre of St. Louis and McCarter Theatre Center (Designer Carolina Vargas; image curation Paula T. Alekson).

1967

Releases the album Pata Pata. The title track becomes a worldwide hit.

1987

Joins Paul Simon's Graceland tour, which concludes in Zimbabwe and is filmed for theatrical release as Graceland: The African Concert.



1990

After nearly 30 years, Nelson Mandela is released from prison and continues working to reform the South African government and end apartheid.

1968

Martin Luther King is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

1987

After 21 years of exile, she finally returns to the United States.



1990

Nelson Mandela persuades Makeba to return to South Africa. She does so on June 10th, after nearly 28 years in exile.

1990

After falling and suffering from a heart attack during a concert in Castel Volturno in Italy, Miriam Makeba dies on November 9.



1968

Lives in Guinea and records new songs, some of which are critical of the U.S. and its racist laws and practices. She performs in Europe and Asia, as well as in many countries in Africa, and becomes known as "Mama Africa."

1975

Appointed Guinea's official delegate to the United Nations.



1990

Releases her final studio album, Reflections.

DISCUSS:

Now that you have learned a bit more about the life of Miriam Makeba, turn to a partner and discuss these pivotal moments in Makeba's timeline. Which of these historical moments were you already familiar with? Which are you learning about for the first time now? Which of the historical figures on the timeline do you recognize? Are there any events that you were surprised to read? Which of the events listed would you identify as pivotal in Makeba's life? How did they change the trajectory of her life?

Which events do you expect to see represented on stage in *Dreaming Zenzile*?

THE MUSIC OF MIRIAM MAKEBA

In her lifetime, Miriam Makeba released over 23 studio albums and 5 live albums. She also won one Grammy award and multiple South African Music Awards. Below, let's take a look at some of Miriam's most recognizable musical moments.



1



2



3



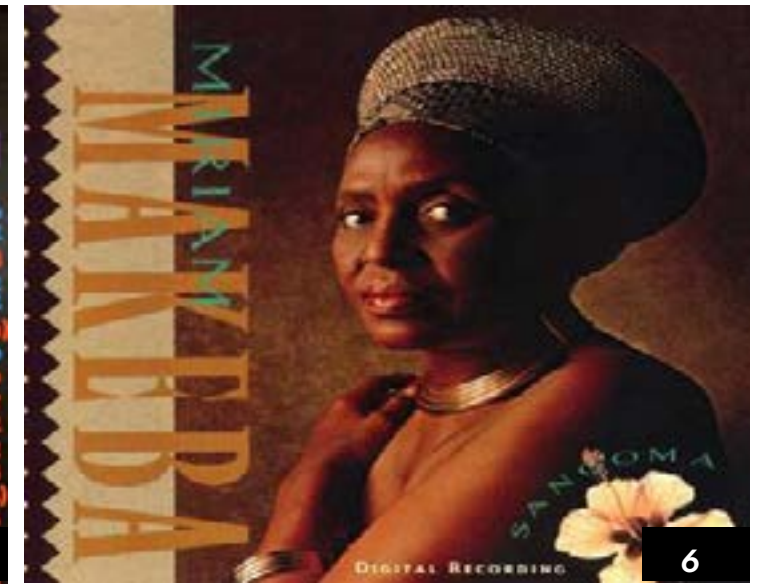
4

1. Following the success of her first single, Miriam Makeba released her self-titled debut album in 1960. Among the tracklist was one of Makeba's most recognizable musical renditions, titled "Qongqothwane", or "The Click Song".
2. In 1963, Miriam released her third studio album, titled *The World of Miriam Makeba*. This album would go on to be her first to reach the billboard top 100 in the US albums category, debuting at #86.
3. 1965, Miriam Makeba released an album alongside American singer, songwriter and activist, Harry Belafonte. *An Evening with Belafonte/Makeba* peaked at #85 on the Billboard charts and went on to win the 1966 Grammy award for Best Ethnic or Traditional Folk Recording.
4. The album *Pata Pata* was released in 1967, and introduced the world to Makeba's most popular song – "Pata Pata". The album peaked on the US charts at #74.

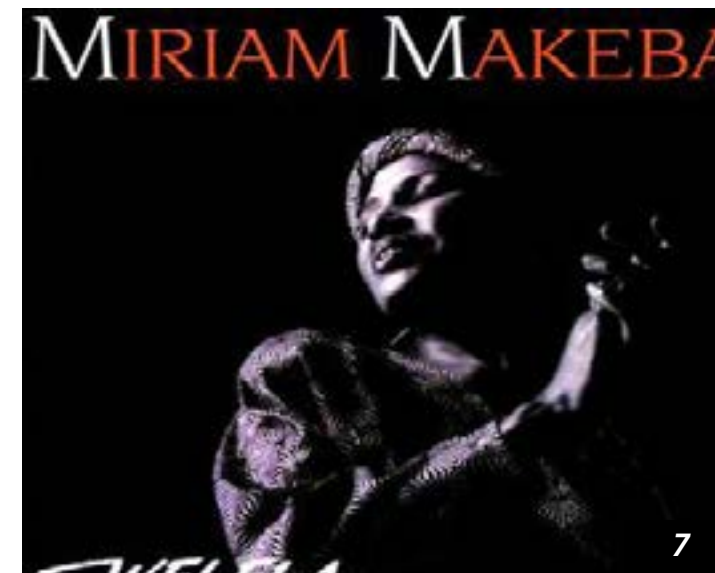
THE MUSIC OF MIRIAM MAKEBA



5



6



7



8

5. In 1975, Miriam released *Miriam Makeba & Bongi*, the first album featuring the vocal stylings of her daughter, Bongi Makeba.
6. After an almost decade long hiatus, Makeba released the album *Sangoma* in 1988.
7. In 1990, Miriam released the album *Welela*, which was fully recorded in Italy, and would become the highest charting album of her career, debuting at #6 on the US Billboard charts.
8. In 2004, Miriam released her final studio album, aptly titled *Reflections*. The album reached #12 on the Billboard charts, and won 3 prizes at the South African Music Awards in 2004.



DID YOU KNOW?

Miriam Makeba was posthumously honored with the "Mama Legend" award at the MTV Africa Music Awards in 2010 for her lifetime of impactful and iconic work in the music industry.

ACTIVITIES

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY: FREE WRITE

Find the playlist of Miriam Makeba's music included in the "Additional Resources" section of the study guide. Randomly select a song.

As you listen, answer some or all of the questions below:

1. How does the song make you feel? How do you think the song is *supposed* to make you feel?
2. What instruments or sounds do you hear? How do they impact the overall feeling of the music?
3. What does the song remind you of?

After your free write is done, look up the lyrics of your song and listen again. How does your experience hearing the song differ when you read the words as you listen?

Take it a step further! Create a poem, monologue, short story, or song of your own inspired by the song you chose.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY: HISTORICAL THEATRICALITY

While writing *Dreaming Zenzile*, performer and creator Somi Kakoma had to spend time researching the life and times of Miriam Makeba in her journey to create a piece that both accurately reflected Makeba's experiences, and made them an exciting and understandable piece for audiences. In this activity, you will do the same!

As you can see in the Miriam Makeba timeline included above, Makeba had quite an eventful life! Looking at that timeline, select a moment that feels particularly theatrical. Now, put on your playwrighting hat. In under 4 pages, create a short scene that theatricalizes the moment of your choosing. There are no limits to how you can approach writing your scene, but try your best to make it as historically accurate as possible!

Feel free to reference Google or other online resources as a way to get a more in-depth understanding of your event and the historical figures in it.

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY: VISUALIZE YOUR PIECE

One critical element in the storytelling of *Dreaming Zenzile* is the set and projection design of the piece. Along with the performers and band, the projections throughout the show are a crucial to setting the scene for an audience.

For this activity, I want you to refer back to your discussion about arts and activism. Who are some of the artists that you identified as making an impact through their work? Select one artist who is interesting to you.

Once you have chosen your artist, consider the questions below:

1. Does your artist have an iconic feature, look, or pose?
2. What pivotal, historical, or impactful moments were they involved in?
3. If you were to create a play about this artist, what projections or images would you include to best convey their story?

GLOSSARY

- **Exile** (noun) - the state of being barred from one's native country, typically for political or punitive reasons.
- **Sharpeville** (noun) - a town in South Africa: scene of riots in 1960, 1984, and 1985
- **Tone** (noun) - the general character or attitude of a place, piece of writing, situation, etc.
- **The National Party** - South African political party, founded in 1914, which ruled the country from 1948 to 1994. Its following included most of the Dutch-descended Afrikaners and many English-speaking whites.
- **Activist** (noun) - a person who campaigns to bring about political or social change.
- **Advocate** (noun) - a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy.
- **Legacy** (noun) - anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor.
- **Colonization** (noun) - the action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area.
- **Jim Crow** (noun) - the former practice of segregating black people in the US.
- **Oppression** (noun) - prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control.
- **Nelson Mandela** - a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary and political leader who served as the first president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999.
- **Afrikaans** (noun) - a language of southern Africa, derived from the form of Dutch brought to the Cape by Protestant settlers in the 17th century, and an official language of South Africa.
- **Ancestor** (noun) - a person, typically one more remote than a grandparent, from whom one is descended.
- **Debut** (noun) - a person's first appearance or performance in a particular capacity or role.
- **Billboard Chart** (noun) - The Billboard charts tabulate the relative weekly popularity of songs and albums in the United States and elsewhere.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. In what ways can an artist or influential figure directly or indirectly enact change in their community?
2. How may your identity and sense of belonging be shaped by global conflict?
3. How may learning about the historical events of the past impact we function and behave in a modern day society?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



MUSIC OF MIRIAM MAKEBA

A playlist of the music included in *Dreaming Zenzile*
<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3SiOFVcw56yqWATZs50ohj?si=1415afe61cab49ff>

VIDEO

Apollo Livewire: Bridging the Diaspora
<https://player.vimeo.com/video/688521557?h=2e83ffab8a>

'Dreaming Zenzile:' Somi Kakoma and Miriam Makeba
['Dreaming Zenzile:' Somi Kakoma and Miriam Makeba](#)

FILM

Mama Africa, a documentary on the life of Miriam Makeba
<https://www.allarts.org/programs/all-arts-documentary-selects/mama-africa-8fnr3m/>

BOOKS

Playing the enemy : Nelson Mandela and the game that made a nation
<https://www.amazon.com/Playing-Enemy-Nelson-Mandela-Nation-ebook/dp/B001FE4I6C>

Trevor Noah, Born a Crime
https://www.amazon.com/Born-Crime-Stories-African-Childhood-ebook/dp/B01DHWACVY/ref=sr_1_1?crd=

ATTENDING THE THEATRE

PUNCTUALITY

Arrive 30 minutes early. This will give you plenty of time to find your seat and read the program.

COVID PROTOCOL

All attendees will be required to show a photo ID and proof of full vaccination. Come prepared with your paper vaccination card, or proof of vaccination or an NYC-approved COVID app. Additionally, a mask must be worn over the nose and mouth at all times inside the building and theatre.

RESTROOMS

Go before the show and/or during intermission. You may be held in the lobby for a portion of the performance if you decide to leave your seat and you don't want to miss out!

TECHNOLOGY

Turn off all electronics, including your cell phone. Absolutely no photos or videos can be taken inside the theatre. Production photos from the show will be on our website! Also, be sure to connect with us through social media (@nytw79) after the play!

REFRESHMENTS

Food and drinks are not allowed in the theatre. Make sure to eat before the show. Stay hydrated so that you can stay focused during the performance.

EXPECTATIONS

Theatres can be dark spaces or have minimal light. For your safety, walk, do not run inside the theatre and keep your hands and feet to yourself. During the performance, listen and give your full attention and respect to the actors. Feel free to laugh, cry, or applaud throughout if you feel moved to! The goal is to engage with the actors and not distract their performance-- we don't want anyone to miss any of the action. Above all: *remember to have fun!*

We're so glad that you will be part of our audience! Enjoy the show!

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