

Standard Bank Ovation Awards' winners announced

The winners of the 2018 Standard Bank Ovation Awards were announced at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown on 7 July 2018. The awards recognise stand-out performances, innovation as well as successful challenges to the boundaries of creativity.

“From the solo performers, carrying their set in a hold-all, to the epic four-dozen strong cast of the Amandla Danca Teatro ZA company for *Emathongeni*, with their van laden with instruments and costumes, the fringe had it all and continues to be the largest platform in South Africa for artists to share their wealth of talent and audiences to bask in the magic and wonder of it all,” says Tracey Saunders, convenor of this year’s awards.



Gold Standard Bank Ovation Award winners and panel - image by Jan Potgieter

Because of the emphasis on excellence, the Ovation Awards help audiences, and producers, to identify quality work on the fringe. The awards also act as a bridge between the fringe and the main programme, with all winning productions invited to put forward proposals for the arena programme.

Saunders works with a panel who, between them, see almost every new production on the festival fringe. “As has been evident in recent years, the fringe reflects the zeitgeist of the nation and one was left with very little doubt that we are a country reeling under the tyranny of male violence and sexual assault. Theatre and even dance productions addressed these themes, some more successfully than others. There were those who simply mirrored our society back at us, an uncomfortable experience for 60 minutes in a darkened theatre. Others presented causes, motives and possible solutions and one walked out of the venue with a faint glimmer of hope.”

Since the awards' inception in 2010, there have been 167 Standard Bank Ovations awarded, with the majority of those - 105 - for theatre. A total of 57 silver awards and only 17 golds have been awarded.

This year's gold Ovation Winners reflect the success of art forms that fall outside the traditional definitions of theatre, says Saunders.

In *J Bobs Live*, Jefferson Tshabalala presents "a game show style, interactive, hilarious and thought-provoking event, which encourages self-reflection and a deeper appreciation of the challenges that South Africans face".

“👏👏 The winners are out! 👏👏

Congratulations to this year's GOLD OVATION AWARD winners! You are AMAZING! [#OvationAwards18 #NAF18 pic.twitter.com/MkZrHzD2Fk](https://twitter.com/MkZrHzD2Fk)— NationalArtsFestival (@artsfestival) [July 7, 2018](#) ”

Medumo Ya Borwa celebrated the history of the monarchy in a feast of song and dance with an aesthetic that made use of South African traditional attire, and *Sullied*, which although primarily a dance piece, wove poetry and spoken word in between the carefully choreographed movements, stitched with pain and wrapped in kangas.

"One of the characteristics of work that struck a nerve was that it wasn't presented exclusively in English but also in Xhosa, Pedi, Sotho, Tswana," says Saunders. "Each and every one of the official languages resonated across the stages and if you were looking for a whirlwind tour through the regions of South Africa, a ticket on the Fringe would have guaranteed you that."

This year, the student work that was staged alongside other fringe productions held its own and a number of works presented by recent alumni of tertiary institutions were deeply satisfying and highly entertaining.

"While awards are essentially a subjective measure of an art form which is essentially immeasurable, they are not infallible. But given the continued success of various award winners over the years, the Ovations are as a reliable predictor as any of who and what to watch."

Gold Standard Bank Ovation Award winners

Medumo Ya Borwa - Best African Song and Dance Thriller
J Bobs Live: Off The Record – Jefferson Tshabalala
Sullied – Kirsti-Leigh Gresse

Silver Standard Bank Ovation Award winners

Blue Period Of Milton van der Spuy – Hexagon Theatre
The Revlon Girl – Search for Productions
Emathongeni – Amandla Dança Teatro ZA
Marene – Marene
Hachetman

Standard Bank Ovation winners

Andy Ndlazilwana

Deceptive Delights with Stuart Lightbody – Stuart Lightbody
Duo KP
Gary Thomas: Moodship – Gary Thomas
Gaslight – Laine Butler
I'm HIV and Living – Thando Mbulelo Mbanjwa
Letters With Ma'Sisulu – FMA-Neo Motsatse
Medusa Incarnate – Kate Pinchuck in collaboration with The Furies
Nomabotwe Sings
Phokwane Chronicles – Galeshewe Theatre Organisation
Sainthood – Tiisetso Mashifane wa Noni
Silkworm – Contagious
The Dead Chant In Death – Tshwane University of Technology
The Island – Paxinos Productions and CYBTT
Tswalo – Theatreduo
Unono Obuyile – Lumunyano Dance Group

Encore awards

Standard Bank Ovation encore awards recognise merit and potential in works that can be developed.

Best Friends/Worst Enemies
Choir Boy
Ingoma
Lift Club
Love In the Time of Revolution
Motswadi
New Year's Resolution
Satanic Dagga Orgy
Udaka
Merit
Devils At a Dead End

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