

Sydney Mavundla's Bio

Instrument: Trumpet

- Born in Johannesburg and grew up in Barberton (Mpumalanga).
- Started learning trumpet at the age of 14, his father being his first teacher. In 1986 he was introduced to Prince Lengoasa who was his first formal teacher and later that year he studied with Brian Thusi in Durban. Through Brian he got a chance to play with Mario Monteregge's Music Unlimited Big Band. In 1989 he then moved to Johannesburg where he did grade 12 and took some theory lessons with Cyril Khumalo at AMDA later trumpet lessons with Allan Wright.
- He entered the Natal University for B Mus. Degree in jazz studies in 1992 under the directorship of Professor Darius Brubeck. During that time, he took trumpet lessons from Michel Schneuwly (Principal trumpet player KZNPO) and arranging from Chris Metz. In 1995 he won a scholarship to study in the USA Florida International University (Miami) with the renowned Cuban trumpeter Arturo Sandoval and John Bailey (USA). He took conducting lessons from Dr Richard Holtz and Mr Ivor Bosanko (USA).
- In classical field he has worked with Johannesburg Music Initiative (JMI), Kwa Zulu Natal Philharmonic Orchestra (KZNPO), Johannesburg Festival Orchestra (JFO), and the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra (JPO)
- Sydney also formed part of the teaching staff at the annual youth jazz festival in Makhanda (Grahamstown) Where he also played trumpet in the Awesome Big Band made up of local and international musicians.
- Sydney participated at the jazz summer workshops for the youth, hosted by Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) as part of the teaching staff
- He has toured extensively in and out of Africa. Presently Sydney is working with different set ups including his own Quintet.
- A debut album (LUHAMBO) was released around December 2016 and got a South African Music Awards (SAMA) 2017 nomination.
- A new album (Dirge for our fathers) was released in April 2024, Radio Metro FM awards 2025 nomination. Winner of Backing vocalist and session musician awards (BVMS) 2023

Please refer to the links below.

<https://youtu.be/q1QgzsSU1zY?si=7tguPv5Gj2n4HAPD>
<https://youtu.be/tjJVr96A9LE?si=3TDq4s2vVQoQLxM3>
<https://youtu.be/ZEx19D39LHg?si=6hkBmtyake4JUrgA>
<https://youtu.be/hrygkzMmUqc?si=H2Fw5ogc00Xjbbfo>
<https://youtu.be/UaYeL6E0Lu4?si=WYEX65vy4kbON9HJ>

Song List (Dirge for our fathers)

1. Lockdown jam, 2. Dirge for our fathers (Vocal), 3. DR. NB Thusi, 4. Lament for the innocent 5. Umgqungqo wethu
6 Dirge for our fathers Interlude. 7. Dirge for our fathers (Instrumental) 8. Scullery department

Band

Sydney Mavundla Trp / Vocals. **Afrika Mkhize** Pno. **Amaeshi Ikechi** Bass. **Peter Auret** Drums. **Sydney Mavundla, Zandile Mavundla, Busa Mavundla, Mbonge Mavundla & Lunga Radebe** Singing and clapping track 3.

Copyright © 2023 **Sydney Mavundla** (Poisonous Horns Music) All rights reserved. Recorded, at **Sumo Sound Recording Studio**. Engineered by **Peter Auret** and **Luyanda Molao**. Mixed and mastered by **Peter Auret**. Sleeve designed by **Marcus Wyatt**. and Photos by **Marcus Wyatt** and **Romy Brauteseth**. Liner notes and language advisor **Lunga John Radebe** Produced by **Sydney Mavundla, Peter Auret** and **Afrika Mkhize**. All Songs composed by **Sydney Mavundla** except Scullery Department by **Kippie Moeketsi**. For bookings: sydpoison@gmail.com

Appreciations

Ko-Mavundla bephelele, my hamble appreciations to you all. I couldn't ask for a better supporting family like you my good people. Zandile, Busa, and Mbonge Mavundla you are highly appreciated and thanks for your participation in the studio for Dr. Thusi's tune, ngiyabonga kakhulu. To my parents Hezekiel and Busisiwe Mavundla and my siblings who never stopped supporting me since my childhood, words cannot express my love and appreciation for your love and support given to me, be blessed always. Afrika, Peter and Okwarachuku, this recording's success is through your willingness to support and make this project the success it is, thank you and thank you very much (Izandla zedlula ikhanda). Peter, I cannot never forget the amount of time you have dedicated to this project, thank you so much. Lunga your support is so amazing and humongous in the studio and anywhere else, Ngiyazibongela kakhulu Bhungane, Makwande. To all the supporters of music, Siyabonga kakhulu for the enthusiasm, love, and support. Thanks for the question asked all the time in the corridors we always meet "when is the next one coming" hope you enjoy this one.

Dirge for our father – Liner Notes

As the last tendrils of twilight wove themselves into the dusk of that august day in May, I found myself enveloped in an ambience fortified with gratitude. I was nestled in the comforting cradle of Peter Auret's studio, the birthplace of the record Dirge for our Fathers. Sydney and his ensemble had kindly invited me to bear witness to this sacred creation, and as the symphony unfolded, I realised that this album was more than mere music; it was an act of deep respect and an acknowledgment to the pathfinders who had illuminated Sydney's artistic path.

Dirge for our Fathers signifies much more than an assemblage of melodies – it embodies Sydney's ebullient love for life, with each note humming with vibrancy, and every composition pulsing with a generous spirit that transforms music into an intimate language of the heart. A dirge is traditionally defined as a mournful song or a lament for the dead, but in this context, it stands as a sonorous prayer of deep reverence, capturing Sydney's profound humility and thankfulness. Though this song is a homage; it is also a plea to the late global icon, Hugh Masekela, a figure who effortlessly bridged traditional African music and jazz, dismantling walls, and captivating hearts along the way. Sydney implores Masekela to deliver his heartfelt appreciation to the departed titans of jazz - legends like Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Bheki Mseleku, Lulu Gontsana and others. This composition paints an image of the eternal impact these celestial maestros have had on his musical evolution, and in doing so, it becomes a sanctified conduit – a spiritual bridge connecting the earthly and the divine, entrusted with the noble task of perpetuating wisdom and artistry across generations.

Another offering that dovetail beautifully with the overarching theme of reverence is the tune, Dr NB Thusi. This song is a moving homage to Bhut' Brian (as he was affectionately known), a mentor, and father figure to Sydney. Thusi's extraordinary generosity and kindness shaped not only Sydney's musical journey but also his personal growth. He welcomed Sydney into his home and heart, providing guidance and support at a pivotal time in Sydney's life. He has been a beacon of light for countless other musicians as well, nurturing their talents and enabling them to contribute significantly to the canon of South African jazz. Sydney's tribute to Thusi is deeply personal and heartfelt, a testament to the enduring bond they share.

The record also highlights a range of influences and styles, underscoring Sydney's versatility, and depth as a composer. Umgqungqo, for instance, is an exploration of rhythm changes, capturing the ebb and flow of life's dynamism. Afrika's genius here is luminescent. His deft fingers dance across the keys, at some point constructing an intricate sequence of fourths that casts a captivating spell of harmonic tension. It's a mesmerising dance of audacious creativity, wherein each note swells into a symphony, revealing the profound depths of his musical intellect and innovation. Then there's Lockdown Jam, composed during South Africa's first lockdown. The tune draws inspiration from Miles Davis's modal style in Kind of Blue while resonating with the uncertainties of the current era. Peter's work here on the cymbals is impressive - a delicate dance of paradoxes, each clash a sensitive whisper resonating with powerful presence, blended with shimmering silence. And who could overlook Sydney's soul-stirring wail soaring over a cascade of high Gs in Lament for the Innocent? This haunting ballad, crystallized in the simplicity of repetition, was captured in a single, raw, and passionate take.

Sydney's horn, like a sage's call, echoed across the studio, intertwining with the evocative dance of Afrika Mkhize's keys, the rhythmic symphony of Peter Auret's drums, and the subtle yet distinctively soulful sound emanating from Amaeshi Ikechi's bass. Simply put, this sound was nothing short of a conversation across time, a stirring tribute to the timeless maestros of jazz, and a poignant reminder of the sacred lineage to which Sydney belongs. Each note, every modulation, served as a testament to their indelible influence, reverberating with profound respect of their gifts to the world of music. As nighttime fell over the now musically brim studio, I was filled with an awe that transcends words. I am, to say the least, inordinately fortunate to have partaken in this journey. Having watched this quartet perform in

various settings, even within the confines of my own lounge before an intimate gathering of discerning listeners, I can safely say that *Dirge for our fathers* is a triumph - a harmonious paean that binds the past, the present, and the future in a dance of unity through the universal language of music. Sydney's reverence for the forefathers of jazz, and his boundless generosity ooze in every bar, and form the backbone of this album. Each solo is a heartbeat echoing through the annals of jazz as a global phenomenon. It is an invitation to partake in a living, breathing history that continues to evolve. And as you listen, you will inevitably become part of this history - a part of this ever-evolving story that is the spirit and legacy of this music.

Yours in the reverence of jazz,

Lunga John Radebe

Dramaturge

Trumpeter Sydney Mavundla to honour Bra Hugh at the 'Jazzy July' concert

Jazzy July is back at the Market Theatre with a star-studded line-up that includes Sydney Mavundla, Carlo Mombelli, Billy Monama and Marcus Wyatt. Kicking things off this Friday, July 8, is legendary Trumpeter Sydney Mavundla, who is thrilled to make his debut solo performance at the Market. In a conversation with IOL Entertainment, Mavundla says he is looking forward to engaging fully with the audience for the first time in two years. "I'm very excited to be back on stage, playing to a live audience. My band and I are looking forward to this experience. "More than anything, I believe we're going to have a good time, enjoying good music. "When I started, my band used to be a sextet and then a quintet and this time I'm bringing only four people on stage, which is a new experience. And we will be bringing new music as well." The muso adds that this celebration of jazz is his way of remembering and celebrating the lives of musical legends, who contributed to the transformation of this country. "I'll do a special tribute to all the Jazz legends including Hugh Masekela, and all the musicians that are no longer with us. "I met Bra Hugh in 1992, during my first year of varsity. We reconnected again many years later when I moved back to Joburg. "We worked together over the years. I recorded two of his albums. "In the song that I recorded for him, in my new album, I'm saying to Bra Hugh, 'know that you are loved,' and tell the others the same. "My forthcoming album talks about our forefathers who paved the way for us, it's a dedication to all the Jazz legends.

Sydney Mavundla joins New York Jazz veteran, Jeff Siegel live in concert

JOBURG – Jeff Siegel performances to feature South-African trumpeter Sydney Mavundla.

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 Sydney Mavundla performs at Oliver Mtukudzi's memorial celebration. Photo: Mpho Moloto

A stone's throw away from the world renowned Vilakazi Street, Just Badela Food and Wine is a township restaurant with a refreshingly ambient global appeal and is a perfect getaway to experience Soweto.

The restaurant will enthral patrons to a world-class performance by New York jazz veteran, consummate drummer and educator, Jeff Siegel and the Jeff Siegel Sextet featuring Sydney Mavundla on 21 June.

Patrons will be sure to experience the high-energy post-bop ensemble which features a line-up of compelling, virtuoso musicians with a wealth of experience among them. Four years ago, the band leader Jeff Siegel first had the opportunity to visit South Africa and perform in the Grahamstown Jazz Festival and the National Youth Jazz Festival.

“

“Because African music is the root of what we play as jazz musicians, there was a feeling of being home while I was there,” said Siegel.

”

The collective musical invention combines the dynamic players along with their stunning arrangements as presented on each of the group’s releases. On piano, the group features Francesca Tanksley, whose work has ranged from touring with the Billy Harper Quartet to performances with the late Melba Liston. On bass is Jeff’s long-time collaborator Rich Syracuse who, along with Siegel, performed in the Lee Shaw Trio for many years as well as a decade with Nick Brignola. Erica Lindsay, on tenor saxophone, has performed with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers and Dizzy Gillespie to name a few.

The percussive partnership of Siegel and African Dance percussionist extraordinaire, Fred Berryhill, creates the perfect rhythmic foundation on which the ensemble is built. The percussionists combine the rhythms of Africa with all of the subtleties of swing to create a unique and dynamic sound perfect for the compositions at hand. The performances will feature South African trumpeter Sydney Mavundla who started playing the trumpet at the age of 14 and brings a rich international experience to the concert.



34th Annual UKZN Jazz Jol headlined by Sydney Mavundla

02 Nov 2024 17:00

34th annual UKZN Jazz Jol on Saturday, November 2nd, 2024. Proceeds from the event accrue to the Ronnie Madonsela scholarship that supports jazz students at the University and the jazz and jazz education outreach activities of the CJPM.

Headlined by Sydney Mavundla

The headline act for the Jazz Jol is trumpeter, Sydney Mavundla. He will feature music from his latest release, Dirge for our Fathers. His band is a star lineup of Afrika Mkhize on piano, Amaeshi Ikechi on bass and Peter Auret on drums. The Jazz Jol will also feature items by the UKZN Vocal Ensemble and the UKZN Jazz Staff and Student Ensemble which will feature original compositions by Mari, Gonsalves, Mashiloane and Chemane.

Made possible with gracious assistance from the KZN Performing Arts Trust and Mzansi Philharmonic Orchestra



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FRIDAY / 26 MARCH 2025

Sydney Mavundla: When every day is Sunday

By Lesego Chopape

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Blowing up a storm: Sydney Mavundla released his second album, titled Dirge for Our Fathers, last year.

A typical Sunday in most South African households and neighbourhoods is bursting with vibrancy, tradition and the warmth of community.



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The air smells of Sunday lunch — tender meat roasting in the oven, the pungent aroma of gravy thickening on the stove and the sweetness of mealie bread fresh out of the pot.

Children play barefoot on the streets, their laughter echoing as the sound of a kettle blends with the soft murmurs of adults deep in conversation.

On the pavements, some people are parked in the shade, hunched over their plates as they nurse the effects of their weekend revelries —the infamous “babbelas”.

Others are doing laundry, washing windows and putting up freshly cleaned curtains, their movements steady and ritualistic.

And then there is Gogo, in her Sunday church uniform, holding the hands of her grandchildren as they walk to the nearest taxi stop.

They’re headed to church, where the sound of hymns will intertwine with the jazzy undertones of the nation’s heartbeat.

Imagine all of this, set to the soulful and improvisational rhythm of South African jazz — a sound as rich and layered as the country’s history.

This is the South Africa we know and love — a place where music flows through the streets, finding its way into the daily rhythm of life.

However, Sydney Mavundla, a passionate jazz musician, has posed a thought-provoking question: “Why should jazz music be played mostly on Sundays? Why can’t jazz, a genre that speaks to the soul, be appreciated every day of the week, just like any other form of music?”

Mavundla, whose connection to jazz runs deep, has spent a lifetime answering this question through his music.

From the early days of church services, to sharing stages with legendary musicians, he is living proof jazz is not just for Sundays — it is an expression of life itself, meant to be heard, felt and appreciated every day.

Mavundla’s musical journey began in the church — a place where music has the power to transcend the ordinary and touch the divine.

He reflects on how his musical roots trace back to his father, who not only influenced him, but also encouraged him to pursue his passion.

“Music for me started in the church and my dad being a colonel in The Salvation Army — he was my first teacher,” Mavundla recalls.

But it wasn’t just his father’s influence that shaped his path. It was a man named Brian Thusi, a jazz musician with whom Mavundla would spend nearly every school holiday.

Thusi’s presence in his life was the spark that ignited his love for jazz.

By 1992, Mavundla’s commitment was unwavering. With the full support of his parents, he pursued a degree in jazz studies at the University of Natal.

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significant impact on the South African jazz scene.

He released his debut album *Luhambo* in 2016. The title, meaning “journey”, captures the essence of his personal and musical evolution.

The album is more than a collection of tracks; it is a reflection of his life’s work, from playing music in the church to performing on the grandest stages in South Africa.

Luhambo embodies Mavundla’s reverence for the genre, its history, and the profound emotional connection he shares with his listeners.

Mavundla’s second album *Dirge for Our Fathers*, released last year, marks an even deeper time of reflection in his career.

This album was not only a creative endeavour but also a tribute to those who came before him — the legends whose music, wisdom and artistry paved the way for his generation and beyond.

Dirge for Our Fathers has been nominated in the 2025 Metro FM Awards’s best jazz album category, a recognition that speaks to the impact of Mavundla’s contribution to the genre.

“I feel like a winner already — even if I don’t get the trophy, the recognition on its own is enough” he says.

The album’s title is significant — a “dirge” is a mournful song that honours someone who has died; a reverent acknowledgement of their legacy.

Mavundla’s use of the term speaks to the respect he has for the elders in the jazz community, as well as his gratitude for their sacrifices.

He embodies the Zulu proverb *indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili*, which means, “the way is asked from those who have gone before”.

This principle of respecting the past, and learning from it, is woven into the fabric of his work.

For Mavundla, respect is a cultural value and the foundation upon which the future of jazz in South Africa rests.

He is convinced that the relationship between the younger and older generations is vital for the genre’s survival.

“I believe in the philosophy of the young and the old coming together to make beautiful things,” he says, emphasising that respect is key to achieving this harmony.

Dirge for Our Fathers is a living testament to this philosophy — a work that speaks to the interconnectedness of generations.

One of the defining characteristics of jazz music is its ability to connect with listeners on a deeply spiritual level.

Jazz isn’t just about notes on a page; it’s about feeling the rhythm in your bones, surrendering to the music and letting it take you to places you never imagined.

Mavundla describes the live experience of jazz as something unique, something that consumes everyone in the room.

“Jazz is really special to see live,” he explains.

“There comes a point when the music just engulfs everyone and, when you do come to, you realise how spiritual the sound is.”

This spirituality is rooted in improvisation, a core element of jazz that allows musicians to express themselves in the moment.

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He composed a song for Masekela, speaking not only to him, but also to all the jazz legends who paved the way for him.

“Jazz music allows me to tell my story the best way I know how,” he reflects.

As well as being about his legacy, Mavundla’s passion for jazz is about ensuring that the next generation of musicians is equipped to carry the genre forward.

He speaks with pride about the younger artists who are emerging on the scene, such as Linda Sikhakhane, whose quest for knowledge and mastery keeps the genre alive and well.

“I see young people who are very hungry for this knowledge of jazz music,” Mavundla shares.

“I get calls from young people who want to come and get a lesson with me, and that tells me that sharing knowledge means that we are on the right path.”

In many ways, the growth of jazz in South Africa is a reflection of the growth of the nation itself — a continuous journey of self-expression, honouring the past, and embracing the future.

For Mavundla, this is more than music — it is a lifelong journey of connection, respect, and a celebration of the rich culture that defines South Africa.

And if there’s one thing Mavundla has made clear, it is that jazz will not only survive — it will thrive, echoing through the streets of South Africa every day, not just on Sundays.

Tags: Abdullah Ibrahim, Andile Yenana, Dirge For Our Fathers, Friday, Hugh Masekela, JAZZ, Khaya Mahlangu, Linda Sikhakhane, Luhambo, MUSIC, Sydney Mavundla, Themba Mkhize



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