

**BUKELANI LIVING COLLECTION PRESENTS**



# CULTUREFEST '26

## OUR HERITAGE, OUR STORIES

Festival Programme • 27 August - 12 September 2026



**Stories we inherit. Stories we live. Stories we create.**

A Bukelani Living Collection Event Production

# THE CULTUREFEST STORY

## From a festival day to a cultural journey

*CultureFest has grown into a platform where heritage is discovered, interpreted, performed and carried forward.*

CultureFest began in 2022 at the BAT Centre in Durban as a one-day celebration of creativity, culture and performance. It created a stage where artists and communities could gather, perform and share the stories that shape who we are.

Since that first edition, CultureFest has grown in both purpose and reach. Subsequent editions have been staged at the Courtyard Theatre at Durban University of Technology, which has become the festival's principal theatre home.

**CultureFest is no longer simply a festival day.**

In 2026, the festival has evolved into a four-month journey that begins in schools and communities before reaching the theatre. Through CultureLab and Ocean Stories Lab, learners spend months discovering their voices, exploring heritage and identity, engaging contemporary social and environmental questions, and creating original performances.

Their stories are first shared within their own school communities before travelling to the CultureFest stage, where school, community and professional productions meet in one living programme.

## The purpose of CultureFest

CultureFest creates spaces for stories to be discovered, developed, performed and passed on. It recognises culture not only as something inherited from previous generations, but as something each generation interprets, questions and creates anew.

The festival brings together young people, schools, artists, communities and cultural practitioners to celebrate heritage while making space for new voices, new forms and new possibilities.

## CULTUREFEST '26 THEME

### Our Heritage, Our Stories

**Our heritage lives in our languages, music, dance, traditions, places, memories and ways of seeing the world.**

Our stories are how we carry that heritage forward. Some stories celebrate where we come from. Some challenge us to examine where we are. Others invite us to imagine where we might go next.

CultureFest '26 brings these stories together - from rural Zulu traditions and contemporary questions of freedom, to young people speaking with the Ocean, African identity and cultural encounters between Africa and India.

### How the festival has evolved

**2022**

#### THE BEGINNING

First CultureFest staged at the BAT Centre, Durban, as a one-day cultural and performance event.

**2024-2025**

#### FINDING A HOME

CultureFest moves to the Courtyard Theatre, DUT, strengthening its identity as a platform for community and professional performance.

**2026**

#### THE JOURNEY EXPANDS

CultureFest grows into a four-month journey, with CultureLab and Ocean Stories Lab taking the festival into schools before the final theatre programme.

**DISCOVER → CREATE → SHARE → CELEBRATE**

## FESTIVAL JOURNEY

### Four moments. One living stage.

CultureFest '26 moves from its public launch into school-based showcases before the full festival company gathers at the Courtyard Theatre. Each stage brings young voices, cultural memory and contemporary performance into conversation.

**27 AUG**

#### **FESTIVAL LAUNCH**

Durban Botanic Gardens, Durban | 10h00-13h00

Unveiling the theme, festival journey and participating programmes.

**08 SEP**

#### **SCHOOL SHOWCASE DAY I**

Okumhlophe Secondary School + AJ Mwelase Secondary School | 10h00-11h00

CultureLab and Ocean Stories Lab productions presented in their school communities.

**09 SEP**

#### **SCHOOL SHOWCASE DAY II**

Maritime School of Excellence + St Leo Primary + Umuziwabantu Primary | 10h00-11h00

The Ocean Speaks and two CultureLab showcases take centre stage.

**12 SEP**

#### **FESTIVAL DAY**

Courtyard Theatre, Durban University of Technology | 11h00-15h00

All five schools perform, followed by featured productions and the festival finale.

### Festival venues

Durban Botanic Gardens • Okumhlophe Secondary School • AJ Mwelase Secondary School • Maritime School of Excellence • St Leo Primary School • Umuziwabantu Primary School • Courtyard Theatre, DUT



## OPENING MOMENT

# CultureFest '26 Launch

### DATE

27 August 2026

### VENUE

Durban Botanic Gardens

### TIME

10h00-13h00



The festival begins in the gardens: a gathering of learners, educators, artists and partners. Through inkondlo, performance and conversation, CultureLab, Ocean Stories Lab and Amawundlu Productions open the road to CultureFest. The 2026 theme - Our Heritage, Our Stories - and the festival programme are then unveiled.

## SCHOOL SHOWCASE DAY I

**Tuesday, 08 September 2026**

### TIME

10h00-11h00

### PROGRAMME

CultureLab + Ocean Stories Lab



*Okumhlophe CultureLab production*

## Are We Really Free from Apartheid?

### OKUMHLOPHE SECONDARY SCHOOL • CULTURELAB

Friends divide over whether democracy has delivered true freedom. One side celebrates political rights; the other points to poverty, inequality and the unfinished damage of apartheid. Through debate, humour and reflection, the learners discover that freedom opened a door - and their generation still has work to do.





## A Conversation with the Ocean

AJ MWELASE SECONDARY SCHOOL • OCEAN STORIES LAB

A young boy meets the Ocean, embodied by a chorus. Through dialogue, dance, music, choral verse and poetry, he encounters marine life and hears both the beauty and the pain of the sea. The story imagines a future in which people listen, act and care for the ocean.

## SCHOOL SHOWCASE DAY II

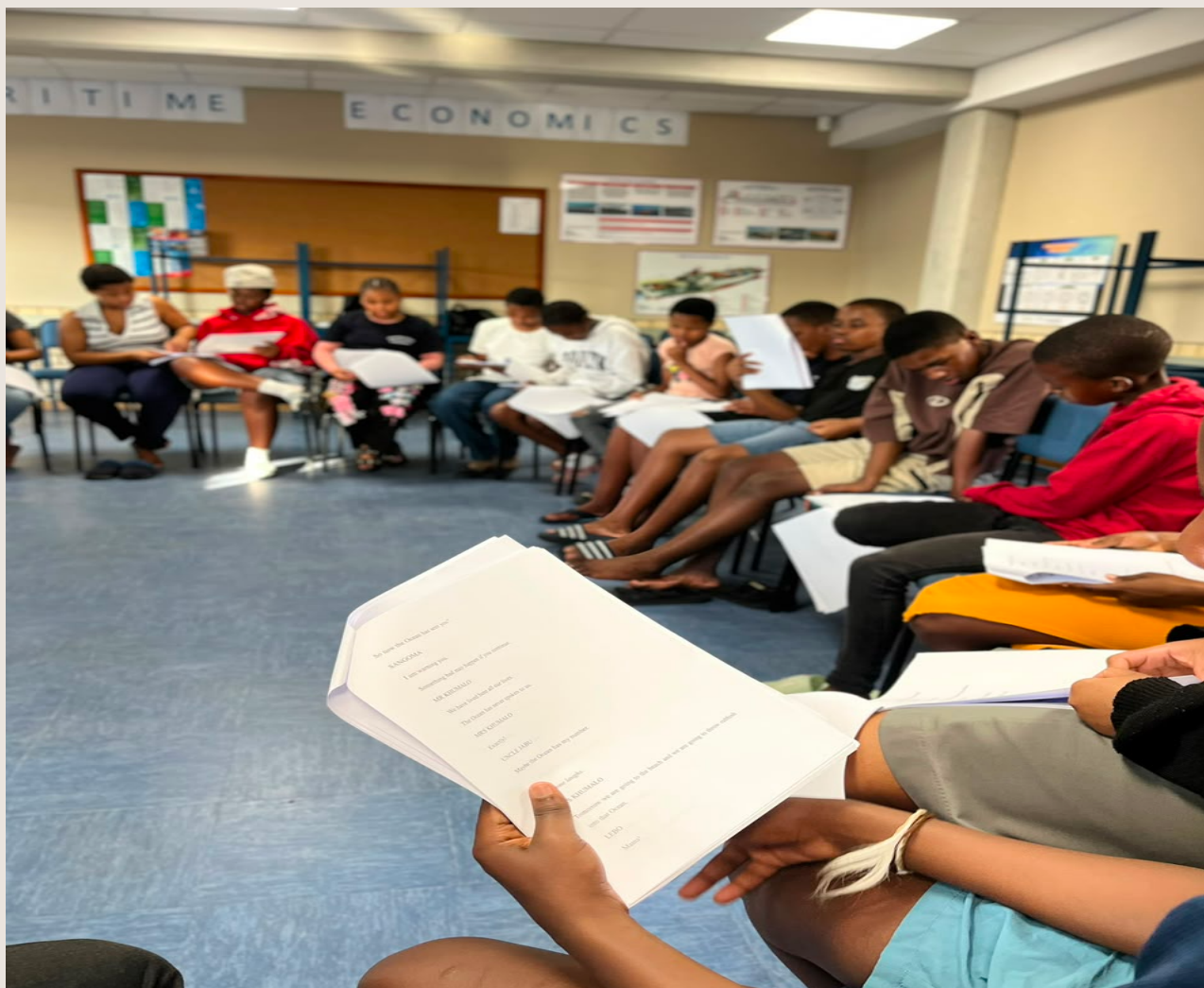
# Wednesday, 09 September 2026

### TIME

10h00-11h00

### PROGRAMME

Ocean Stories Lab + CultureLab



## The Ocean Speaks

### MARITIME SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE • OCEAN STORIES LAB

After the Khumalo family ignores a warning and continues to pollute the sea, the Ocean responds. A traditional healer helps the family hear the suffering beneath its anger. The production explores responsibility, consequence and the interconnectedness of all living things. The Ocean is not silent - we have simply forgotten how to listen.





## St Leo's Got Talent: Culture in Motion

ST LEO PRIMARY SCHOOL • CULTURELAB

Poetry, gumboot dance and choir meet the energy of a live talent show. The Triple T, Amalalavuka and The Superstars compete before celebrity judges - until the finale transforms competition into a collective celebration of heritage, unity and possibility.



## Beauty of Our Heritage

UMUZIWABANTU PRIMARY SCHOOL • CULTURELAB

A 20-minute cultural journey told through movement and performance: maidens at the reed dance, girls fetching water at the river, young men approaching in courtship, acceptance of the maiden and the celebration of a traditional wedding.

## FESTIVAL DAY

# Courtyard Theatre • Durban University of Technology

### DATE

12 September 2026

### DOORS

10h30

### PROGRAMME

11h00-15h00

## *CultureFest Fringe*

**11h00** Opening and festival welcome

**11h10** Okumhlophe Secondary School - Are We Really Free from Apartheid?

**11h25** AJ Mwelase Secondary School - A Conversation with the Ocean

**11h40** Maritime School of Excellence - The Ocean Speaks

**11h55** St Leo Primary School - St Leo's Got Talent: Culture in Motion

**12h10** Umuziwabantu Primary School - Beauty of Our Heritage

**12h25** Transition / interval

## *CultureFest Main Stage*

**12h40** Vande Mataram Productions - featured cultural performance

**13h00** Nqiqome KwaNdlovu - Ubuhle Bensindiso Ministries

**13h22** Beyond Labels - Untitled Music Ensemble (12 minutes)

**13h40** My Name is Africa - Amawundlu Productions

**15h00** Festival close

**Five schools. Four featured works. One living stage.**

*Programme running times are indicative and may be refined during final technical rehearsals.*

## FEATURED CULTURAL PERFORMANCE

### Vande Mataram Productions



A vibrant encounter with Indian classical and contemporary performance traditions. Vande Mataram Productions brings colour, rhythm, movement and cultural exchange to the CultureFest stage - expanding the festival's conversation between Africa and India.

12h40 • COURTYARD THEATRE, DUT



## STAGE PLAY

# Nqiqome KwaNdlovu

UBUHLE BENSINDISO MINISTRIES



Returning home to his rural community after spending the school holidays in the suburbs, a young man finds himself caught between family expectations, traditional processes and the unexpected choices of the heart.

The overseer of the maidens has already imagined a future for him - she wants him to marry her niece. But when he falls for another maiden, her plans begin to unravel. Determined to secure the match she wants, the aunt sets out to discredit the young woman and turn others against her.

Set within a rural Zulu community and unfolding through traditional courtship and cultural processes, Nqiqome KwaNdlovu is a story of love, reputation, family influence and choice. It explores what happens when the expectations of others meet a heart that has already made its own decision.

13h00 • COURTYARD THEATRE, DUT

## MUSICAL PERFORMANCE • 12 MINUTES

# Beyond Labels

UNTITLED MUSIC ENSEMBLE



### What happens when we stop putting music into boxes?

Beyond Labels brings older and contemporary musical genres into conversation in a vibrant 12-minute performance celebrating music without boundaries.

Rather than treating old and new as opposites, the ensemble creates a musical bridge between generations - allowing familiar sounds to meet contemporary expression and different genres to share the same stage.

Under the CultureFest '26 theme Our Heritage, Our Stories, Beyond Labels reminds us that musical heritage belongs not only to the past. It continues to live, mix, change and find new voices.

13h22 • COURTYARD THEATRE, DUT



## FESTIVAL FINALE

# My Name is Africa

AMAWUNDLU PRODUCTIONS



A flagship musical-theatre production presented through collaboration between Vusani Isizwe Mawundlu Youth Development Organization, Amawundlu Productions and Bukelani Institute. Sixteen multidisciplinary artists blend storytelling, traditional drumming, live music and fluid choreography in a vibrant celebration of continental heritage.

### FINAL ACT

13h40

### RUNNING TIME

80 minutes

### FESTIVAL CLOSE

15h00

**The final word belongs to Africa.**

## CultureFest '26 Team

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER & CREATIVE  
DIRECTOR

Vincent Zulu

PRODUCTION OFFICER

Wandile Dlamini

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Nomzamo Ngoza

BRAND OPERATIONS ASSOCIATE

Sifiso Mbili

CREATIVE ADVISORS

Amawundlu Productions

EXECUTIVE SUPPORT

Mphumuzi Makanya

Nonjabulo Zulu

Management & MELA Contributors

Aphelele Nocuze

Lindokuhle Gumede

Mthembeni Makanya

Seluleko Mthimkhulu

Nolwazi Nyawose

Lungisani Shinga

## With appreciation

To the participating schools, educators, learners, artists, production teams, venues, partners and communities whose time, creativity and trust make CultureFest possible.

**A Bukelani Living Collection Event**

**A BrandsHatch at Bukelani Institute Production**



# CULTUREFEST '26

## OUR HERITAGE, OUR STORIES



**12 SEPTEMBER 2026**

**COURTYARD THEATRE • DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

**11h00-15h00**

Presented by Bukelani Institute