

## **LUVO MARANTI IN AFRICAN CELEBRATION / OPERALIA**

15 September 2023

### **Peta Stewart**

Two performances coming up, both with the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra (CPO), couldn't be further from each other in culture and scope for tenor Luvo Maranti. He is singing in the CPO's *African Celebration*, which includes excerpts from *uShaka* the opera on 28 September 2023 at The Cape Town City Hall, and he is one of 34 finalists of over 800 entries to sing in Plácido Domingo's *Operalia*, which begins at Artscape with the preliminary rounds from 30 October.

Luvo wasn't always going to be a singer. In fact, he first studied human resources at the University of Fort Hare and worked as an intern at Abagold. He was invited to attend a master class with the late George Stevens in 2018, and unexpectedly sang for him. He so impressed George, who arranged for an audition at the SA College of Music at UCT.



Luvo Maranti see here in Opera UCT's *Tales of Hoffmann*.

### **Abagold Development Trust**

Luvo told his family that he wanted to change direction, even after he had been offered not one, but three jobs at the end of his internship. His parents weren't surprised, for his father was a conductor and composer as well as a businessman, and Luvo had grown up in the Eastern Cape in the rich choral tradition of the Old Apostolic Church – but they were concerned that his choice of career would not be able to support a family in the future.

If anything, his parents were somewhat to blame since it was they who gave the 12-year-old Luvo a Pavarotti CD, and he was hooked – singing throughout his schooling, being taught tonic sol-fa by his father, participating in choral competitions nationally and singing in the university choir.

Still, he had a hard path to walk, but not at all daunted, Luvo, who by then had moved to the Overberg to be with his family in 2019, set about supporting himself and with a staunch mentor in Tim Hedges, the CEO of Abagold, where he was still employed.

He was awarded a tuition bursary and through the Abagold Development Trust was able to fund his three-year degree. Luvo will graduate with his post-graduate diploma in music, studying with Violina Anguelov-Hobbs this year.

Luvo soon established himself as an accomplished tenor – he sang with the CPO in Hermanus at a pre-*Fynarts* launch concert – and was then able to fulfil a dream of helping others. Thanks to Hedges, a number of loyal supporters and the Abagold Development Trust, the Luvo Maranti Scholarship was established in 2022 for young budding arts students in the Overberg area, and the first grant was made this year to a young artist from Bot River called Ronaldo Bantom.



Tenor Luvo Maranti is singing with the CPO

### **Operatic arias**

Luvo sings in several languages – isiXhosa, isiZulu, English, Afrikaans, Italian and German, and French, which he sang as the lead tenor in the recent *Tales of Hoffmann* presented by Opera UCT. Now he is adding Spanish to his repertoire, for one of the songs he may sing at *Operalia* is a zarzuela, a form of Spanish musical theatre. Here Jeremy Silver is assisting him with his Spanish. For *Operalia* he will of course sing operatic arias too.

But back to *uShaka*. It made Luvo very happy that the choir and soloists were put together so well by two well-known and capable women in the music community – mezzo-soprano Bongiwe Nakani-Mcetywa and CPO youth development co-ordinator Nolizwe Monica Dadase.

“This work is so important – it’s a work that speaks about a rich history of Africanism. What makes me really excited is that this beautiful work will now be presented, I believe for the first time, in Cape Town, which in my opinion is the epicentre of music in this country.

“When Bongiwe approached me, I immediately said I would love to sing it – it’s a way of showing my other side – my people and my culture. It’s important for me to represent African music. This work is my roots. “

Luvo used to travelling – in the last few years he has sung several times in Italy and America and, before he was even asked to sing *Hoffmann* in the recent production here, he had sung an abridged version with Opera Carolina and in Vicenza in Italy.

### **Voice of Africa competition**

His career has already taken him far, and his plan to establish a good reputation to become a sought-after tenor while gaining financial support has worked well. During Covid he entered the online *Voice of Africa* competition and won the first round, then the next, and so on, until the final round in which he was awarded a special prize.

Meeting the generous David and Sue Sonnenberg of Diemersfontein has opened many performance opportunities for him, and his relationship with Abagold, where he coaches the company choir when

time permits, is stronger than ever. People began to notice him and this in turn has enabled him to raise funds for the Luvo Maranti Scholarship.

What's next? He would like to study and/or work abroad and is currently making applications to achieve his goal and then test himself against the rest. Toi toi toi, Luvo. With your talent and your compassion, you will go far!

**Who:** Tenor Luvo Maranti

**What:** An African Celebration at The City Hall; Placido Domingo's Operalia at Artscape Cape Town

**When:** 28 September, 7.30pm, pre-concert talk at 6.45pm, open dress rehearsal at 7pm on 27 September at The City Hall (not on the day of the concert)

**Tickets:** Artscape Dial-a-Seat 021 421 7695 and for both Dress Rehearsal for Africa Celebration on Wednesday 27 September at the City Hall at [Quicket](#)

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