

PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

Under the Shade of a Tree I Sat and Wept

A landmark international collaboration between theatre artists from Kosovo and South Africa comes to Johannesburg

The Market Theatre, Johannesburg, 9-19 April, Opening night 10 April

Written by Jeton Neziraj | Directed by Blerta Neziraj | Dramaturg: Greg Homann

Performed in English, Albanian and South African Languages



Watch a short [TEASER](#)

Selected photos can be found [HERE](#)

Following its world premiere in Kosovo last year, this landmark coproduction comes to Johannesburg, the first production from the country to play an extended run in South Africa.

Under the Shade of a Tree I Sat and Wept reflects on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the blood feud reconciliation process in Kosovo. Critics hailed the show as “deeply complex” (Theatre Times) and “heartfelt” (SEEstage). Acclaimed playwright Mark Ravenhill described it as “moving and thought provoking.”

Written and directed by two of Kosovo’s leading theatremakers, Jeton Neziraj and Blerta Neziraj, working in tandem with Greg Homann, artistic director of the Market Theatre, the show features a cast of Kosovar, Albanian, North Macedonian and South African actors.

Now it comes to South Africa for 10 performances only at The Market Theatre. After its South African run, the production will embark on a major European tour to countries including Norway, Italy, Germany and Portugal, with more dates planned, including performances at the Théâtre de la Ville Paris in May 2027 and a run at New York’s internationally renowned LaMAMA Experimental Theatre Club also in 2027.

“The process of creating Under the Shade of Tree I Sat and Wept has been a true sharing between South African and European voices. It has brought together three of our actors and a South African composer with their Balkan counterparts, allowing for an exchange of histories, rhythms, and lived experiences that demanded listening and understanding. It is through this dialogue of cultures that this dynamic work finds its deepest resonance.”

Greg Homann, Artistic Director of the Market Theatre Foundation, Johannesburg

About the show

In 1990, with war on the horizon, a group of former political prisoners, students and intellectuals from Kosovo initiated a historical movement for **blood feud reconciliation**. Up until this point, hundreds of families in Kosovo were in a state of enmity and blood feud. The cycle of vendetta had taken the form of a vicious circle, with feuds passed down from one generation to the next and the number of murders in some feuds sometimes amounting to thirty.

What started as a small reconciliation movement, quickly transformed into a public national forum, with mothers, fathers and family members taking to the stage in front of an audience and forgiving the blood of their beloved to the family of their murderer. Many public sessions took place and hundreds of families reconciled during this process. 1,275 blood feuds and conflicts were resolved in total. Over half a million people attended the last public session of reconciliation.

On the other side of the globe, in 1995 the South African government initiated the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, aiming to heal the country and reconcile the people, by creating a space for them to confront the truth of crimes committed against them during apartheid, Victims and perpetrators were put in front of each other, in a ‘trial’ where terrible truths from these periods of violence, oppression and persecution were revealed.

Under the Shade of a Tree I Sat and Wept pays tribute to the unbreakable human spirit in the face of horror, and the courageous pursuit of forgiveness against bloodshed. Through archival material and newly collected testimonies, artists from South Africa and Europe reflect on the lessons offered by Kosovo’s 1990 Blood Feuds Reconciliation Campaign and South Africa’s 1995 Truth and Reconciliation Campaign. Through humour and piercing performance, the exceptional cast of performers takes you into the heart of a commission, mirroring the pain victims felt when confronting those who have committed horrors, while exposing how systems of violence break generations. The result is a moving, irreverent and aesthetically rich journey through the complexity of national acts of healing.

The director is **Blerta Neziraj**, whose productions for Qendra Multimedia have toured internationally to places including Lausanne, Milan, Vienna, Firenze, Hamburg, Lyon, Sarajevo, Bern, Paris and New York. As an alumna of the Lincoln Center Theatre Directors Lab, she has been directing shows in Kosovo and internationally. She has received various prizes and awards, locally and internationally, including the "Best show" at the 56th Kontrapunkt International Festival (Poland, 2022) and "The Best show" at FIAT (Montenegro, 2023). The Guardian has described her as *"one of the country's leading directors."*

The playwright is **Jeton Neziraj**, who has written over 20 plays. His plays have won numerous prizes and have been performed in theatre festivals throughout Europe and in the US and he has been described by German theatre magazine *Theater der Zeit* as the ‘Kafka of the Balkans’

The dramaturg is **Greg Homann**, the current Artistic Director of the iconic Market Theatre Foundation in Johannesburg, South Africa. He has been a leading figure in the South African theatrical landscape for well over a decade.

Artistic team

Performers: **Gontse Ntshegang (South Africa)**, **Amernis Nokshiqi (North Macedonia)** **Ilire Vinca (Kosovo)**, **Kensiwe Tshabalala (South Africa)**, **Arben Bajraktaraj (Kosovo/France)**, **Les Made (South Africa)**, **Bongile Gorata Lecoge-Zulu (South Africa)** | Composer: **Gabriele Marangoni (Italy)** | Stage Designer: **Theun Mosk** | Ruimtetijd (The Netherlands) | Choreographer: **Jochen Roller (Germany)** | Costume Designer: **Blagoj Micevski (North Macedonia)** | Video: **Besim Ugzmajli (Kosovo)** | Lighting Design: **Vincent Longuemare (Italy)**.

Co-produced by:

[Qendra Multimedia](#) (Prishtina, Kosovo), [The Market Theatre](#) (Johannesburg, South Africa), [São Luiz Teatro Municipal](#) (Lisboa, Portugal), [Teatro Della Pergola](#) (Firenze, Italy), [Theater Dortmund](#) (Dortmund, Germany), [Black Box Teater](#) (Oslo, Norway), [Mittelfest](#) (Cividale del Friuli – Italy), [Théâtre de la Ville](#) (Paris, France).

In cooperation with:

[Ruimtetijd](#) (The Netherlands), [La MaMa](#) (New York, USA), [Gjilan City Theatre](#) (Gjilan, Kosovo), [Sens Interdits Festival](#) (Lyon, France).

Under the Shade of a Tree I Sat and Wept

The Market Theatre

136 Lilian Ngoyi St, Newtown, Johannesburg

9-19 April 2026

Opening night: 10 April at 19.00

Press contacts:

- Qendra Multimedia: info@qendra.org
- Bongiwep Potelwa (The Market Theatre): bongiwep@markettheatre.co.za

For further information, visit: Markettheatre.co.za

Future tour dates

- Black Box teater / Heddadagene festival - Oslo (Norway) – 12 & 13 June 2026
- Mittelfest at Cividale del Friuli (Italy) - 19 July 2026
- Rijeka summer fest - Rijeka (Croatia) - 22 July 2026
- São Luiz Teatro Municipal – Lisbon (Portugal) - 23 & 24 October 2026
- Teatro Della Pergola in Firenze (Italy) – May 2027
- Théâtre de la Ville Paris (France) – 10-12 May 2027
- Dortmund City Theatre (Germany) - June 2027
- La MaMa in New York (USA) – tbc (9 shows) 2027
- Mesina (Italy), Lyon (France) – April – October 2027

Supported by: Goethe-Institut, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Kosovo, The Sigrid Rausing Trust, Rockefeller Brothers Fund.