

PEN South Africa newsletter / Issue 06 2017

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Novelist Niq Mhlongo Writes about Learning the Marabi Dance

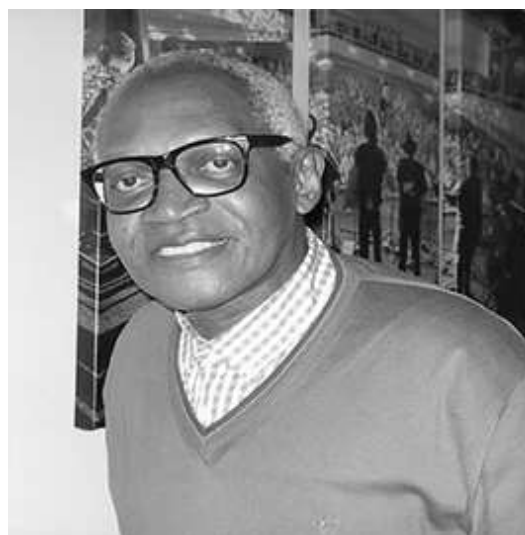
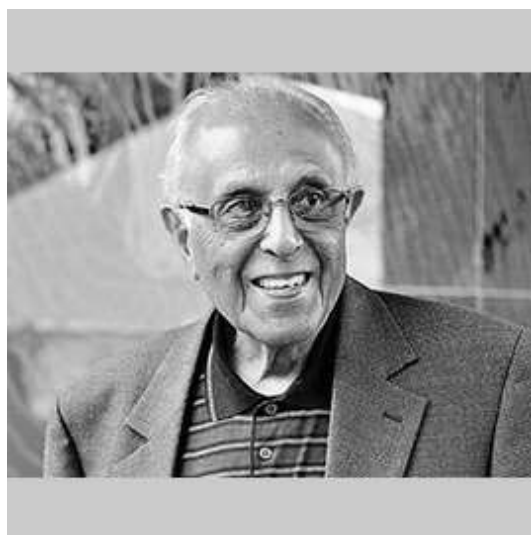
*PEN SA member Niq Mhlongo writes about *The Marabi Dance* by Modikwe Dikobe:*

There is a book that when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was your old friend or a relative of yours that you could call up on a phone and congratulate them on the excellent work. That is what Modikwe Dikobe's *Marabi Dance* did to me. The book left me with a sense of satisfaction and completeness.

While reading this book, I found my mind flying freely like a bird in the sky, into the past that I have only heard of. It was an escape to a nostalgic past that I've never lived. I could hear the voices of the elders in the stokvel parties in Soweto as they fondly talked about the past. I could visualize them talking about the 'olden days' music groups such as the Manhattan Stars and The Harlem Swingsters. I could picture them doing their mesmerizing Marabi Dance at jazz sessions.

The book *Marabi Dance* is like an intimate and engaging diary of survival, history of the subalterns, their communality, ubuntu, and culture. It vividly explores the township or slum life of the 1930's and 1940's in the squalid Doornfontein area in Johannesburg. Without romanticizing the past, it describes the triumph of the human spirit over adversities such as overcrowding, unemployment, patriarchy, segregation, influx control, police raids and gangsterism. Through this book you get a sense of how life used to be like back then for black people in slum areas such as Vrededorp, Prospect Township, Doornfontein, George Goch, City Suburbs, New Clare, and Sophiatown. This is before these black people were forcibly removed to modern townships such as Soweto...[read more](#)

*(Image courtesy of **Blank Books**)*



RIP Ahmed Kathrada

Former political prisoner and anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Kathrada passed away at the age of 87 this week. Read his obituary "[Ahmed Kathrada: A life built on eradicating racism and inequality](#)" by Ryland Fisher and the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation's statement, "[Kathrada passes on](#)".

Conversations with a Gentle Soul is Kathrada's most recent book, published this year and co-written with Sahn Venter. Here Venter bids farewell to Kathrada and shares an excerpt from the book...[read more](#)

(Image courtesy of [South African History Online](#))

PEN SA AFRICA PULSE

Anania Sorri, an Ethiopian journalist, was released from prison and a group of African activists, lawyers and artists have created an online platform that provides a safe and secure way for whistleblowers on the continent to share sensitive documents and evidence with journalists and authorities...[read more](#)

World Poetry Day 2017: Interview with Enoch Meyomesse

In celebration of World Poetry Day 2017, held on 21 March, PEN International interviewed Cameroonian poet Enoch Meyomesse, who was one of the imprisoned poets that PEN campaigned for two years ago on World Poetry Day. He has since been released and is living in Germany. This year PEN campaigned on behalf of [Amanuel Asrat](#), [Dareen Tatour](#), and [Liu Xia](#).

"Poetry is a formidable weapon hidden in the pen" - Enoch Meyomesse...[read more](#)

(Image courtesy of [PEN International](#))

UPCOMING EVENTS

Take a look at the literary events happening in April, including book launches for Jim Pascual Agustin and Fred Khumalo, a book tour for Unathi Magubeni, the launch of Short Story Day Africa's new anthology [Migrations](#) and Omphile Molusi's play *Itsoseng* showing in Johannesburg...[read more](#)

South African comedian John Vlismas has shared his concerns about the Hate Speech Bill and Privacy International has raised concerns about state-sponsored surveillance in Kenya...[read more](#)

NEW MEMBERS' TITLES



New titles by PEN SA members include [How Many Ways Can You Say Hello?](#) by Refiloe Moahloli and [SPIRE](#) by Fiona Snyckers, the sequel to her suspense novel [Now Following You](#), which was long-listed for the Sunday Times Literary Award. Newly joined member Mohale Mashigo's debut

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

The theme has been announced for the 2017 Short Story Day Africa Prize...[read more](#)

Dinaane Debut Fiction Award...[read more](#)

The Imbewu Trust's SCrIBE Scriptwriting Competition...[read more](#)

Bridport Prize for Poems, Short Stories and Flash Fiction...[read more](#)

Manchester Writing Competition: Fiction and Poetry...[read more](#)

CONGRATULATIONS!

Fred Khumalo was awarded a Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) Multilingualism Award for his book [#ZuptasMustFall, and Other Rants](#)...[read more](#)

Lara Foot received the Best Director Award and Ameera Conrad received the Special Encore Award at the Fleur du

novel [The Yearning](#) was published last year...[read more](#)

WELCOME!

Welcome to new PEN SA Professional members Refiloe Moahloli and Mohale Mashigo.

AWARDS NEWS

The 2017 Man Booker International Prize longlist has been announced...[read more](#)

The shortlist for the Brunel International African Poetry Prize 2017 has been announced...[read more](#)

Cap Theatre Awards...[read more](#)

Nick Mulgrew has been longlisted for Edge Hill University's Short Story Prize for his debut collection of short stories, [Stations...read more](#)

Simone Haysom, Michael Schmidt and Jamala Safari are among the 24 recipients of the Academic and Non-Fiction Authors' Association of South Africa's (ANFASA) Grant Scheme for Authors...[read more](#)

PEN SA Executive Vice-President Mandla Langa has completed Nelson Mandela's sequel to *Long Walk to Freedom*. Pan Macmillan South Africa will be publishing *Dare Not Linger: The Presidential Years* by Nelson Mandela and Mandla Langa on 19 October 2017...[read more](#)

Sisonke Msimang's memoir, *Always Another Country*, will be published by Jonathan Ball in October...[read more](#)

[Send us your news](#)

Had a book published recently? Attended or participated in a festival? Won an award? Achieved a personal milestone of note? We welcome any news of your

activities for future issues of the PEN SA newsletter.

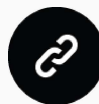
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