

A woman with dark hair, wearing a red off-the-shoulder dress with sheer polka-dot sleeves and a matching belt, stands in a theater. The theater has red seats and a chandelier hanging from the ceiling. The background is dimly lit, focusing on the woman and the text.

SONTI MNDEBELE

My Biography

*“For everything you take from life you must
be prepared to give back in the best way you can”*

- Sonti

BIO

I am Sonti Mdebele, an Afro Jazz singer, songwriter and entertainer with a passion for music, fashion and life. Here I tell a little bit about myself as a musician.

My musical journey began from my school days and I later became a professional singer in 1974, soon after, I had to go into exile in 1976 and lived in Botswana and later moved to Germany. At the time, it wasn't easy but my gift and love for music has always been a thread that held my life together while away in foreign lands for over 30 years.

Being a musician has given me an opportunity to share and make special appearances on stage with International music icons like Peter Gabriel, Tina Turner, Stevie Wonder, Lionel Ritchie, Elton John, Sade, Paul Simon and Donna Summer.

In 1980 while in Germany, I worked with the South African German based musical group "Sounds of Soweto" and stayed with them for 2 years before





moving to London to join the legendary "Ipi ntombi" Musical for a tour of West Africa. I then met Hugh Masekela through Julian Bahula in London in the 80's and he invited me to join him on his tour of the UK, Europe and USA.

While on tour with Hugh Masekela I met Miriam Makeba in Washington DC and from that moment I was blessed with a rare and humbling experience of working with two South African legends for over 10 years.

Other highlights of my career outside South Africa was the world tour with Paul Simon - the Graceland Tour in 1987

where I performed to audiences in Europe, Canada, Russia, Australia, Africa and the USA. I also appeared at the Grammy Awards with Paul Simon.

In July 2012, we celebrated the 25th Anniversary of Graceland Tour together with Paul Simon in Europe and the USA.

I also performed before Her Majesty, The Queen of England, Prince Phillip, Prince Charles and President Nelson Mandela on the occasion of his state visit to the UK at the Royal Albert Hall.

In 2001, I coached and mentored the cast of "Umoja" in the West End, London.

Apollo Theatre and Madison Square Garden in New York with Bruce Springsteen, Billy Joel and Grace Jones. I have toured extensively with my band performing in Ghana, Nigeria, Gabon, Togo, Sierra Leone, United Kingdom, Belgium, Greece, France, Hungary, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands.

I am now back home in South Africa where I belong to share my music with my people. Since my return I performed on various platforms, also performed at Botswana at 50 years, Ghana at 60 years South Africa woman's day in Sweden, Germany also Cape Town International Jazz Festival, Belgium-Gent festival, Belgrade, Budapest Hungary, Holland.





PERFORMANCES

- Sonti has performed before her Majesty - The Queen, The Duke of Edinburgh, The Prince of Wales and President Nelson Mandela on the occasion of his state visit to London at the Royal Albert Hall.
- The experience that Sonti gained through these performances secured her audiences in Britain, Europe, USA, Africa, Canada and Australia and also every musicians dream, an appearance at the Grammy Awards.
- Venues at which she has performed include Wembley Arena, The Apollo Theater and Madison Square Gardens.
- On tour with the Paul Van Kernen Quintet and the South African musicians Feya Faku, Sydney Mnisi and Bheki Khoza in the Netherlands.
- Participation in the Music and Migration Concerts with Hugh Masekela and his band in London, Paris and Budapest
- Performances in Maputo, Mozambique invited by the South African High Commissioner
- Performances at the A.U and U.N in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Performances at the National Achievement Award in Sierra Leone
- Performances with various artists in Nigeria, Ghana and Mozambique
- Performed at the 25 anniversary celebration of Graceland Tour together with Paul Simon in Europe and the USA.
- Recently at the 14th Cape Town International Jazz Festival, Cape Town.
- Performed at the Siyabakhumbula Awards - Gallagher Estates
- Siyagiya Festival - Durban
- Women Economic Empowerment Conference at the Durban ICC
- Jamaican 50th Independence Anniversary - Pretoria
- Performed at the Ghana @50 Independence Anniversary - Accra and also at the Dinner Gala for Heads of States.



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WHAT MESSAGE DOES YOUR CURRENT ALBUM CARRY?

They are my way of sharing the joys and richness of life and helping you through the worse parts. I have known great happiness in my life and I know God teaches you to appreciate the good and also tests your worthiness for it, by putting you face to face with so many challenges and much sadness. If life is a journey then look on my music as a map telling you about its landmarks the heights and the lows.

“African music at its best is too great a joy not to be shared with the world. People now accept that man's journey began in Africa. It is our responsibility as Africans to show the world that we are its rock solid cultural, foundation as well”

- I thank God daily for my voice and music, and I know it is His will and my duty to share it with the world. They are my gifts, and they have been given to me to give to you. I have had these experiences which have tested and enriched me.
- I realised that I could put my feelings into words. Being South African I was nurtured in a tradition of music which cannot be surpassed.
- African music is my blood, my breath, my mother, my father and my child. It is around me and in me at the same time. It brings me joy, it sweetens sadness, it heals me.
- It has been with me since birth and I am so happy to have brought the soul of my people, my continent, to the people in Europe, America and to people all over the world. African music at its best is too great a joy not to be shared with the world.
- This album is dedicated to my late parents and brother. You passed away while I was in exile and in my songs I express my gratitude for your education, and wherever I go you are always in my heart.



MY LATEST OFFERING: “BACK WHERE I BELONG”

- This album is dedicated to my late parents and brother. You passed away while I was in exile and in my songs I express my gratitude for your education, and wherever I go you are always in my heart.
- In this album I also pay tribute to Mama Africa, Miriam Makeba, for letting the world hear Africa's voice. Her influence embraced a continent and inspired me.
- To all my fans I say 'Thank-You thank- You thank-You!' Without your love and appreciation none of this would be possible. I will sing for you with all my heart and soul.



A woman with dark hair, wearing a silver sequined top and dark pants, is sitting in a bright blue armchair. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a brick wall with a window. The floor is dark with a patterned rug. The overall lighting is warm and focused on the woman.

SONTI AND THE COMMUNITY

Sonti has helped a variety of charity organisations with fundraising for good causes, especially for vulnerable children, orphans and young women. Furthermore, she has also hosted youth workshops and coaching adult choirs as well as mentoring new artists in Africa and Europe.

"An inspired and inspiring performer dedicated to sharing the wonders and delights of African music, song and dance with the world. An artist whose ambition and achievements place her amongst the Brightest Stars in the African Sky"



MY TRIBUTE TO MAMA AFRICA

- I grew up in a family that loved music and I was introduced to the music of Miriam Makeba at the age of five by my parents who always played her records all the time. I fell in love with her music, and since that age until I met her in 1984 she remained an idol whom I modeled my singing and musical career around.
- I first met Miriam in Washington DC while I was on tour in the United States of America with Hugh Masekela. The meeting was a dream come true. We performed for an audience of about 3000 with Miriam being part of the audience, without me being aware that my idol was present.
- I was pleasantly surprised after the show when she came to the back stage to meet us. My idol was right in front of me. I had dreamed of this meeting for years and had over the years seen her on television, read almost all the articles written about her in magazines and newspapers, I almost fainted.
- She hugged me and in her forever humble way introduced herself. It was a moment I will never forget or trade for anything in this world. She then uttered the words that signaled the start of a mother, sister and friend relationship that will span over three decades.
- She requested Hugh Masekela to allow me to perform with her whenever I was not busy with his shows. This was not a very difficult proposition since most of their bookings were combined and I had the rare privilege of performing most of the time with two of our musical icons.
- Since that precious moment in Washington, I have had the privilege to perform with her around the world for almost fifteen years.
- I learnt a lot from her, the lessons ranged from dealing with normal life experiences, handling the media, audience, stage craft, overall performance and the love and appreciation for music and fans.
- Today I can proudly say that I am what I am because of the teachings I got from Miriam Makeba, and it is my life's pledge to continue to sing, protect and prolong her rich legacy.
- In all the time I have shared the stage with Miriam Makeba, I have learnt at her feet to sing and perform almost all her songs with the grace and finesse that has always been distinctively Miriam.

I miss her deeply, may her soul rest in peace



SON

"BACK WHERE I BELONG"
Sana Midebel





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