Zwakele Tshabalala

Tenor

With a ringing tenor voice “as bright and agile as a trumpet” (Der Standard), South African Zwakele Tshabalala is fast becoming an important artist of the next generation. From the title role in Dutch National Opera’s world premiere performances of *Anansi*, Sportin’ Life in Matthew Wild’s new production of *Porgy and Bess* for Theater an der Wien, to Hot Biscuit Slim in English National Opera’s iconic production of *Paul Bunyan*, Zwakele continues to delight audiences and critics alike with his inimitable charisma and full-bodied voice.

Born in South Africa, Zwakele joined the Drakensberg Boys Choir at a young age and was then a member of the South African Youth Choir. An invitation to join the South African College of Music followed, where he studied for a performance diploma in opera under the supervision of Virginia Davids and Khamal Khan. Zwakele made his operatic debut at the opera school, as Giuseppe in *La traviata* and in 2016 was the winner of The Schock Foundation Prize for Singing at the University of Cape Town. In 2019 Zwakele was awarded a full scholarship to study at The Royal College of Music, London and during this time highlights included Beethoven’s Symphony No.9 under Marin Alsop at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Dominique You in Amy Beach’s chamber opera *Cabildo* at Wilton’s Music Hall, London, and the role of Rodolfo (*La bohème*) in *Abracadopera!* for Sky Arts and Sky Kids.

This season Zwakele joins the English National Opera as a Harewood Artist, singing the role of the Son in the UK premiere of Jeanine Tesori’s *Blue*, in a new production by Tinuke Craig and conducted by Matthew Kofi Waldren. He also joins the production of Jake Heggie’s *It’s a Wonderful Life* under Nicole Paiement. Elsewhere, Zwakele makes his anticipated BBC Proms debut in Beethoven’s Symphony No.9 with the Chineke! Orchestra under Kevin John Edusei.