Welcome this introduction to Mandela a new musical, the music and lyrics are by Greg Dean Borowsky and Shaun Borowsky with book by Laiona Michelle, directed by Schele Williams.

The audio described performances are on Monday the 19th of December and Tuesday the 10th and 24th of January at 7.30pm, with a touch tour at 6pm. Mandela will be described by Eleanor Margolies and Miranda Yates. All performances of the Mandela live streamed shows for Best Seat In Your House from the 19-23rd January are also audio described live. The performance lasts for 2 hours and 20 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.

The Young Vic’s website says – ‘***A new spirit has gripped our nation!
Together is where tomorrow’s promise lies*.** It's 1960. Young activist, Nelson Mandela, rallies the people of South Africa to protest against the racial segregation of apartheid. In 1962 he is arrested and sentenced to life in prison, where he will spend the next 27 years, taken from his wife and children, as the fight for freedom sweeps his country.’

The Young Vic website also warns that ‘**This show contains themes of racism and violence. There is use of prop guns and loud gunshot and bomb blast sound effects. The show also contains scenes with lit cigarettes, fog and haze, flashing lights, strobe lighting, and around 20 seconds of total darkness.**

Nelson Mandela was born in 1918 and died in 2013. This musical re-telling of his story begins just before the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 when the South African police in the township of Sharpeville opened fire on a crowd of protestors. 69 people were killed and many more wounded, some shot in the back as they tried to escape the bullets. The story then continues through Mandela’s arrest and subsequent 27 year incarceration up to his release in 1990.

The dimly lit stage is open to us as we come into the auditorium. A broad stage about 18 metres wide is at one end of the space facing thirteen rows of bench seats that slope up from the stage, with two further rows curving round on balcony level.

Set back a few metres from the front edge of stage is a large rectangular opening, about 10 metres wide and 7 metres in height, with a further space opening up beyond it, towards the back.

Behind the rectangular opening on the left another wall juts out for a couple of metres with a small platform just large enough for one person to stand on, this represents Mandela’s prison cell on Robben Island. Opposite on the right is a larger platform about 3 metres square that has 2 steps up to it from the stage floor, this represents Mandela’s home. The house is suggested by a framework of 2 partial walls each with a wooden beam angled to indicate a pitched roof. The wall nearest us has a drawer at waist height, used as a make-shift crib for Winnie’s baby to sleep in. Suspended from the beam of the roof behind is a small window with horizontal blind. Both the location of Mandela’s prison cell on the left and his home on the right glide into the space as needed and then at other times glide back to the side opening up the space.

The opening and the floor and walls are clad in deep reddish brown, reminiscent of the rich iron filled soil. In the walls and around the opening the reddish brown colour is broken by an abstract pattern of raised ribs, like the contours of parched earth. A coil of thick barbed wire stretches symbolically across the top of the opening. This abstract design continues in the floor as angular cracks in a drought ridden landscape. The cracks within the floor can be lit so that they glow blood red, warm orange or bright white.

A large screen stretches across the back of the space, and is lit to give a sense of the skyline; mottled warm browns and oranges evoking the heat and dust of the landscape. At other times a dark foreboding atmosphere is created with dim light as mist swirls across a turbulent sky. Running across the bottom of the screen is a rocky ledge. This represents the quarry where prisoners on Robben Island spend their days doing hard labour, breaking rocks.

Outside the main acting area, almost part of the audience area on the balcony level, there are boxes on the right and left of the balcony. A shutter slides up to reveal a small platform, fronted like the rest of the walls with brown parched earth. The South African Prime Minister addresses us from here with his sombre entourage listening intently. On stage level, the areas directly underneath these boxes represent homes in the townships – a single bulb hangs from above as people gather: a family on the left, a group of resistance fighters on the right.

There are 19 performers in the cast, all singers and dancers as well as actors. The members of the cast are black, unless otherwise stated.

At the centre of the story is anti-apartheid activist **Nelson Mandela**. In his early 40s at the beginning of the story, he is tall with a strong build. His black hair is worn short with a parting, and over the thirty years covered by the action, his hair greys. He also has a short beard. Mandela moves with a purposeful stride, and a quality of directness that reflects the urgency of the times. This energy relaxes into a tactile softness around his family. As a lawyer, Mandela first appears in an impeccably styled suit in navy blue with a lighter grid, later changing into a khaki camouflage trench coat, and then into a khaki prisoner’s uniform of knee-length shorts and shirt.

Mandela’s wife, **Winnie**, is an elegant woman in her late twenties with her hair parted and smoothed back. She first appears in a loose pale knee-length frock, heavily pregnant. For the trial, she wears a neat pencil skirt and jacket with a hat; later in the 1980s she dresses in more flamboyant style, with a dusky pink turban, matching knee-length leather coat and flowing turquoise trousers.

Mandela and Winnie have two children **Zeni** and **Zindzi**. They first appear at the age of nine and eight respectively, and wear simple cotton dresses or dungarees and pumps with white ankle socks. Winnie is also stepmother to Mandela’s older children Thembi, Kgatho & Maki. **Thembi** is a slim boy in his late teens, a head taller than his father, with a strong sense of responsibility. His hair is braided close to his head in cornrows, and he wears a cream shirt and tan trousers.

Mandela’s three closest friends and political allies are: **Oliver Tambo**, leader of the anti-apartheid struggle internationally. He’s a lightly built figure, wearing a grey three-piece suit, and accompanied by his wife who wears a wool coat in a soft shade of green. **Walter Sisulu** is a sturdy man with a bald head, who is put on trial and imprisoned alongside Mandela. **Ahmed Kathrada** (known as **Kathy**) is a dapper man of Indian heritage, who is also imprisoned at Robben Island. Ahmed’s girlfriend **Susan** is a white woman with long curly dark blonde hair worn loose, and wears a flowing dress in a floral print.

The members of the apartheid government of South Africa are all white and wear sombre business clothes. The **South African Prime Minister** is in his fifties, white with short brown hair. He wears a tailored dark three-piece suit with a tie and a pocket square. We also meet white male politicians from the UK and US, dressed in conventional business suits.

The ensemble is led by the **Praise Singer**. She is a striking woman in her forties, short and vivacious, wearing glasses with thick black frames, a colourful headwrap and a fitted dress with puffed sleeves of royal blue silk and a full skirt and bodice of blue and brown plaid. Other chorus members wear stylised garments in dusky oranges, greens and browns – a loose orange frock, or an orange top with green trousers.

We also meet members of the South African army who wear a navy uniform with peaked caps. Prison officers wear military-style beige jackets and peaked caps with a green and gold embroidered badge.

**Cast and Production Credits**

**Nelson Mandela** is played by Michael Luwoye

**Winnie Mandela** Danielle Fiamanya

Their children are:

**Zeni Mandela** Nomfusi Ngonyama

**Zindzi Mandela** Leanne Robinson

**Thembi Mandela** Posi Morakinyo

**Kgatho Mandela** Botlhale Phora

And **Maki Mandela** played by Sneziey Msomi who also plays **Albertina Sisulu**

Mandela’s political colleagues are:

**Oliver Tambo** played by Ntsikelelo Nicholas Vani

**Walter Sisulu** played by Akmed Junior Khemalai

**Ahmed Kathrada (Kathy)** is Shiv Rabheru

And **Joe Slovo** is played by Ryan O’Donnell

Activists and partners of the key male activists are the women:

**Adelaide Tambo,** played by Lerato Gwebu who also plays **Evelyn Mase**, Mandela’s first wife.

**Susan,** Kathy’s girlfriend isplayed by Kayleigh McKnight

**Prime Minister** isplayed by Earl Carpenter

**Warden** isplayed by Stewart Clarke

Other members of the ensemble are

**Vusi** played by Gregory Armand

**Bongani** played byZion Battles

**Nomsa** played by Hanna Dimtsu

**Praise Singer** is played by Prudence Jezile

**Gugu** played by Blue Makwana

**Kobus** played by Adam Pearce

**Piet** played by Will Richardson

The Choreographer is **Gregory Maqoma**

The Set Designer is **Hannah Beachler**

Costume designer is **Fay Fullerton**

Lighting designer is **Jon Clark**

Sound designer is **Paul Gatehouse**

Projection and Video Designer is **Akhila Krishnan**

Orchestrator **Sam Young**

Musical Supervisor **Benjamin Kwasi Burrell**

Musical Director **Sean Mayes.**

The book for *Mandela* is by **Laiona Michelle,** with music and lyrics by **Greg Dean Borowsky** & **Shaun Borowsky**, and additional Music & Lyrics by **Bongi Duma**.

It has been directed by **Schele Williams.**

That’s the end of this audio introduction to ***Mandela***. If you have further questions or would like to book for the touch tour, please contact the Young Vic box office on 020 7922 2922.