

Dirk Badenhorst
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To Whom It May Concern,

I had the pleasure of working with Mark Cheyne, the principal composer for the full-length ballet The Gold Rhino of Mapungubwe, which I devised and produced and which premiered in 2023.

From the outset, Mark proved to be an exceptional creative collaborator. He took great care to understand my vision for the ballet and composed a score that not only supported but elevated it. His music was highly imaginative, and it brought the choreography to life in a truly compelling way. As this was a narrative ballet, the score played a vital role in storytelling and Mark's brilliance in this regard was evident throughout. The creation of a brand-new ballet is quite a daunting process for both composers and choreographers.

Working with Mark made this journey significantly easier and far more user-friendly. One of his most valuable qualities was his ability to understand our needs even when we didn't speak in musical terminology. We could speak in the language of ballet -describing mood, movement, or timing - and he would immediately grasp what we wanted and how long we needed it. This intuitive understanding made the creative process seamless and rewarding.

He was always receptive to feedback from myself and the choreographers, consistently collaborative while maintaining his artistic integrity. In many cases, his first drafts were spot on, making the process not only efficient but almost magical.

Mark also worked seamlessly with the other contributing composers, most notably indigenous instrument specialist Mpho Molikeng. The ballet required a traditional orchestral score enriched by authentic African musical traditions. Mark collaborated extensively with Mpho to create a richly textured and evocative musical tapestry that achieved this beautifully. Integrating indigenous

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instruments into a classical orchestral setting posed challenges, but Mark overcame them with patience, creativity, and expertise.

From a production standpoint - managing budgets, meeting deadlines, and navigating logistical complexities - Mark was professional, reliable, and highly resourceful. His experience working with orchestras, musicians, and composers was invaluable to the success of the production. He directed the recording sessions with great skill and produced a magnificent soundtrack, which has since been used in performances both in South Africa and internationally and is now available globally as a recorded album.

I can recommend Mark Cheyne without reservation as a composer, music producer, and musical director. He is a rare talent, and I look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with him again in the near future.

Sincerely,



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