



PRESS RELEASE

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***Pantsula, My World* – a cultural preservation project honouring township legacy**

The Institut Français d'Afrique du Sud (IFAS) is proud to announce the launch of *Pantsula, My World*, a landmark cultural preservation and transmission project taking place from July to August 2026.

The project documents and preserves Pantsula dance and culture, an unmistakably South African expression of music, movement, language, fashion and lifestyle. Born in the townships in the 1980s, Pantsula was never only a dance. At the height of apartheid, it became a form of cultural protest, a creative language through which young South Africans claimed dignity, joy and freedom in the face of oppression.

Pantsula was viewed with suspicion by a government that recognised its power as a form of expression it could not control, emerging from communities it was trying to crush. In Katlehong, Soweto, Alexandra and townships and villages across South Africa, dancers asserted their humanity, creativity and refusal to be defined by the dehumanising logic of racial administration.

It is from Pantsula that kwaito drew its swagger, Amapiano drew its soul, and generations of Black South African artists drew identity, confidence and style. Before the world recognised the force of South African township culture Pantsula reigned supreme.

Pantsula, My World was founded by Buru Mohlabane, who sadly passed away in December 2025 before his ambitious vision could fully materialise. His dream was to record Pantsula's dance methodology and train a new generation of facilitators to carry it forward.

Mohlabane spent his life building the methodology, pedagogy and vision that would allow Pantsula to be recognised as an authentically South African cultural form from which an entire global musical and dance lineage descends. In his memory, the *Pantsula, My World* festival will be staged in Katlehong, Ekurhuleni, Buru's hometown, on 6 August 2026, as a celebration of culture, community and legacy in the township that raised him.

In the build-up to the festival, a series of activations will formalise, document and transmit Pantsula as a living cultural practice for the next generation of South Africans and for the world. They include:

- Masterclasses led by practitioners trained in Buru Mohlabane's methodology
- School outreach programmes bringing pantsula into classrooms across Johannesburg
- Facilitator training that equips a new generation, 60% of whom are women and girls, to carry the tradition forward
- Workshops, roundtables, and focus groups that deepen the cultural, historical, and political conversation around pantsula's significance

IFAS has supported Pantsula for almost 30 years working closely with Via Katlehong Dance company to cement Pantsula as a recognised dance genre in South Africa and France, supporting the development of a Pantsula methodology is the natural next step as part of their commitment to South African cultural programmes.

The Man Behind the Dream

Buru Mohlabane was one of the most significant Pantsula artists South Africa has produced. As co-founder of the world-renowned Via Katlehong Dance company in 1992, he understood that Pantsula was not a subcultural curiosity, but the source code of South African popular culture carrying within it a movement vocabulary, rhythmic architecture and deep community ethic. Buru devoted his life to ensuring that this story and practice would not be lost. He developed a dance methodology of extraordinary sophistication and passed it on to others. *Pantsula, My World* takes that transmission forward: formalising it, documenting it and preparing it to travel beyond borders.

Why this project matters now

The global appetite for South African culture has never been greater. Amapiano fills dancefloors from Lagos to London to Los Angeles. The world is listening, watching and asking: Where does this sound come from? Who built this movement? What is the root?

The answer is Pantsula. Through dance, documentation, education and celebration, *Pantsula, My World* positions Pantsula not as a heritage artefact in a museum, but as a living practice with a documented methodology, a trained cadre of facilitators and a body of scholarship that secures its rightful place in the global cultural record.

“We are honoured to be the institutional home for this project,” says IFAS Director, Jean Spiri. “Buru Mohlabane’s vision was that Pantsula belongs not only to the township, but to the world. It is precisely the kind of cultural ambition that IFAS exists to support and amplify. This is what cultural partnership looks like when it is done with integrity.”

Ntokozi Mohlabane, Buru’s wife comments: “Pantsula is a world in which my husband wanted to make a difference. This was his passion that we spoke about morning, noon and night. His dream was to build a legacy not only for his kids but also for his community. His love for the arts especially Pantsula was so big that he felt that it was a shame that in Pantsula was not recognised as a formal dance. It was his fervent wish to see Pantsula recognised and respected. For him, dance was a path for his community to have an escape, where children of all ages will come and dance, learn new languages, meet new people and have a good foundation, values and principles. I am delighted that IFAS rose to the challenge along with the collaborators of Buru to ensure that we complete his unfinished tasks.”

About the French Institute of South Africa

The French Institute of South Africa is the cultural arm of the Embassy of France in South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi. Based in Johannesburg, it supports artistic, cultural and academic cooperation across the region. Since its inauguration on 12 May 1995, it has facilitated exchanges between institutions, artists and researchers in Southern Africa and France.

As the project unfolds, audiences, schools, practitioners, cultural institutions and the media are invited to follow, participate in and help carry forward a legacy that belongs to South Africa and speaks powerfully to the world.

- Follow *Pantsula, My World* across all platforms as the project unfolds

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Hashtags: #PantsulaMyWorld | #BuruMohlabane

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