FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

South African State Theatre Welcomes Kamanee Govender for Conversations with the Author: Stern Gods

Pretoria, South Africa – The South African State Theatre (SAST), through its Conversations with the Author (CWTA) programme, welcomes writer and filmmaker Kamanee Govender for an engaging conversation around her powerful debut novel, Stern Gods, on 22 October 2026 at 18:00 at the Intimate Theatre.

Set during the turbulent State of Emergency in 1980s apartheid South Africa, Stern Gods follows eleven-year-old Kaathi Pillay, a clever and spirited young girl growing up in the Indian township of Bombayville. While she finds joy in school and friendship, her childhood is also shaped by a volatile home, an abusive uncle and the rigid expectations of her upbringing.

When Kaathi's best friend Losh experiences sexual violence and is silenced by her family, Kaathi's determination to seek justice sets in motion a devastating chain of events. Yet amid pain and loss, Stern Gods becomes a compelling portrait of resilience, survival and a young girl slowly finding the strength to rebuild herself.

Through Kaathi's story, Govender confronts the "stern gods" of religion, patriarchy and the apartheid state. The novel explores intergenerational trauma, fractured families and the enduring consequences of oppression, while illuminating the experiences of Indian South Africans under apartheid and the histories shared across South African communities.

Govender is a writer, filmmaker and Creative Director with more than 20 years of experience in advertising and marketing. Stern Gods marks her debut as a novelist.

The CWTA session offers audiences an opportunity to meet the author behind this thought-provoking work and engage in an important conversation about childhood, memory, identity, survival and why confronting the past remains essential to imagining a different future.

Event Information

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Event: Conversations with the Author – Stern Gods

Author: Kamanee Govender

Date: 22 October 2026

Time: 18:00

Venue: Intimate Theatre, South African State Theatre, Pretoria

Genre: Fiction

Audience: Adults

Books will be available for purchase.

#SternGods #KamaneeGovender #SouthAfricanLiterature #AfricanLiterature #CWTA

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