



Pendo Masote will soon perform in New York./SUPPLIED

## Passion for orchestra takes Masote to world stage

'Looking forward to working with new and familiar faces'

By Koketso Ratsatsi

When Pendo Masote heard about the opportunity of taking part in an orchestra group, he jumped at it and now his passion is taking him to the world stage.

He said he heard about the orchestra group through being a fellow of the Mzansi National Philharmonic Orchestra, the mother body of the Africa United Youth Orchestra (AUYO) project.

Masote and other members of AUYO are now preparing to perform in New York in August.

"When I heard about the opportunity to take part, I immediately jumped at it, as it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience," said Masote.

The group, made up of young people from different African countries, including Kenya, SA, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, will travel to its much-anticipated performance at the prestigious Carnegie Hall for the World Orchestra Week festival, which runs from August 1.

Hailing from Johannesburg, the 20-year-old said his first orchestral experience was around the time he was eight years old. He deems this moment as a privilege and hopes to learn from the tour as much as possible.

Masote was as part of his audition asked to prepare a piece of music either solo or accompanied between 3-5 minutes and then following this, they were asked to prepare several orchestral excerpts. One of the excerpts was Dvorak's Symphony No. 9, which is the piece they are set to perform on their tour to New York.

"Although it is not my first time outside

the country, it is my first time travelling to America, which I am super excited about. I have previously travelled to France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland.

"To be honest, I'm looking forward to working with a number of familiar faces, as well as some new faces, and learning as much as I can from them," said Masote.

Another member of the group, Oluwatosin Dansu said he started playing violin at the age of 12. He said he was looking forward to great performances and experiencing cultural differences as this will be his first trip to the US.

"I have high expectations of the tour. I envisioned flawless performances, enthusiastic crowds and unforgettable moments with fellow musicians. I imagine exploring new destinations, immersing myself in diverse cultures and creating lifelong memories," Dansu from Nigeria said.

"I look forward to collaborating with renowned conductors, soloists and musicians and strengthening bonds and camaraderie among orchestra members. This experience will make me connect with fellow musicians, industry professionals and potential mentors. I am glad and eager to be part of the experience."

He said in 2018, he auditioned for the Muson/MTNF diploma in music scholarship programme.

"I was awarded a scholarship to study music and violin performance, under the tutelage of Mr Kenny Davids."

AUYO, which is spearheaded by Bongani Tembe, is set to perform at the University of SA's ZK Matthews Hall in Pretoria on July 28.

"The Africa United Youth Orchestra represents a significant milestone in promoting unity, collaboration and excellence across Africa's diverse cultural tapestry."

"By bringing together gifted young musicians from different regions, the orchestra embodies the spirit of harmony and co-operation that knows no borders," he said.