



A Match Made in HEAVEN

The recent wedding of Ndalo Media MD Khanyi Dhlomo and McKinsey & Company Management Consultant Chinezi Chijioke was romantic, moving – and every bit as special as the couple whose union it consecrated. Enjoy your front-row seats!

A magical, hot summer's day in Franschhoek; a silk chiffon, jewel-encrusted Elie Saab wedding dress and a bride and groom who matched each other flawlessly in charm and panache.

The marriage of Khanyi Dhlomo and Chinezi Chijioke on 20 December seemed an obvious choice for one of the most memorable weddings of the year, mainly for its festive, but down-to-earth atmosphere and delicious touches of luxury.

The event at the graceful, treed Allée Bleue wine estate was also a stylish homage to the whirlwind four years that Khanyi and Chinezi spent getting to know each other, in equally stylish destinations across the globe, having met while Khanyi was studying for an MBA at Harvard Business School.

A particularly thoughtful touch was the Memory Lane cards that the couple penned and placed on the tables – 25 of their most exciting experiences and trips together. It was just one example of how, even though the event involved more than 300 guests, the couple and their team of organisers managed to create a tender, personalised day of celebration.

It started in the late afternoon as guests made their way down to the estate's lavender and rosemary fields for the traditional ceremony. White parasols – handed out to the ladies as wedding favours – blinked in the sun as everyone took their seats.

An elegant, long white aisle led to a breathtaking

gazebo of dusty pink and cream roses. Khanyi, radiant in her Grecian-inspired dress, was given away by her eldest brother, Lwazi.

Chinezi says his bride's smiling face as she walked towards him was what he'll always remember best about the day.

"I wasn't prepared for how happy a moment that would be for me. In a day full of wonderful memories, that was by far the highlight," he says.

He also has fond memories of asking Khanyi's mother, Venetia, for her blessing before proposing to Khanyi three days later. "I intended to speak to Khanyi's mother before leaving to spend a month with my parents in Nigeria, but a mutual friend gave me the good advice that you can't ask a mother to keep that secret for a month. So I waited and spoke to her when I got back – and, thankfully, she gave me her blessing," he recalls.

Many of the guests, if they didn't already know each other, had met the previous day at a relaxed garden barbecue at Franschhoek's famed Dieu Donné restaurant, so the atmosphere was one of convivial warmth.

Pastor Nkosi Khanyile presided over the wedding vows with humour and sensitivity, while guests alternated between gales of laughter and tears.

The ceremony included a beautiful reading on marriage from the writings of Khalil Gibran, as well as a traditional Apache (Native American) marriage ➤

blessing, read by Khanyi's friends, Sthu Zungu and Wendy Tlou.

Khanyi's mother and Chinezi's mother, Mary-Ellen, also joined the couple at the flower altar for a candle-lighting ceremony in honour of Khanyi's late brother, Mpumelelo and father, Dr Oscar Dhlomo.

Former *Idols* star Brandon October concluded the formal rites with moving renditions of the hymn *You Raise Me Up* and the Louis Armstrong classic, *What a Wonderful World*.

After the ceremony, guests moved to a swish cocktail area, with white leather couches sprawled under the trees, for champers and a bit of live jazz.

Guests Given and Ipeleng Mkhari posed laughingly for pictures at the open-air bar, while King Kgosi Leruo Molotlegi, head of the Royal Bafokeng nation, stood nearby. Other well-known faces included Tim Modise, Augustine and Bally Chuene, Nkhensani and Zam Nkosi, Sandile Zungu, Sizwe Nxasana, Dr Judy Dlamini, KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, and Sonia and Leslie Sedibe.

The party then moved to a specially-erected marquee for the reception, which was open to the breeze and glass-topped for star-gazing. Hannes Loubser, from planning company Wedding Concepts, said there was a collective dedication to "creating simply the best wedding ever."

"The combination of the Western Cape scenery, the landscaping of the venue and the added décor elements created a truly exotic look. The weather was so amazing on the day that guests literally kicked off their shoes as they savoured the canapés and cocktails while taking in the sounds of the jazz band," he says.

Giant chandeliers, printed with the signature paisley pattern that decorated the wedding invitations, hung from the rafters and single, superbly illuminated blooms radiated in vases alongside rose centre-pieces. The menu incorpo- ➤



TWO HEARTS, ONE WHOLE

The following extract from Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet* was read by Chinezi's friend, Adam Rambert

*Love one another, but make not a bond of love:
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores
of your souls.*

Fill each other's cups, but drink not from one cup.

Give one another of your bread

But eat not from the same loaf.

Sing and dance together and be joyous,

But let each one of you be alone,

Even as the strings of a lute are alone

Though they quiver with the same music.



1. Two of the bridesmaids' dresses, designed by Durban-based designer Gideon. 2. (From left): Flower girls Thando Mtshali (Khanyi's niece) and Minenhle Sibisi with bridesmaid Nolwazi Dhlomo on their way to the ceremony. 3. Chinezi, just before leaving for the wedding ceremony. 4. Khanyi with her mother, Venetia Dhlomo. 5. Chinezi with his brother and best man, Ako Chijioke, his cousin and groomsman Nkem Chijioke and his brother and second best man, Eric Chijioke. 6. Khanyi with her cousin and maid-of-honour, Lihle Mtshali and her nieces and bridesmaids, Nomfundo and Nolwazi Dhlomo. 7. The page boys: Khanyi's son, Khaya Mkhize and her nephew, Bafana Dhlomo. 8. Flower girl Minenhle Sibisi carries a basket of petals. 9. The Order of Ceremony booklet.



rated Malay and Indian influences, as well as some North African flavours. The five-tier cake included flavours like dark Belgian chocolate ganache, carrots, macadamia nuts and white chocolate tiramisu.

Khanyi and Chinezi announced their arrival as a married couple to the thumping Brenda Fassie anthem *Vulindlela*, with Chinezi showing some serious Zulu dancing skills – to the delight of the applauding onlookers.

Khanyi laughs that although she and Chinezi had agreed on the choice of the song beforehand, she was very surprised by her groom’s dancing expertise.

“We both enjoy dancing to it, and the song proved wonderful! To *ukusina* [perform a Zulu dance], however, was all Chinezi’s idea. I’m not sure where he learnt it. Clearly, he’s a Zulu-Igbo-American man,” she says.

The couple had also previously invited each guest to submit their favourite songs for the reception, which ensured a packed dance-floor until the wee hours.

Khanyi says she’s thrilled with the way the evening came together, and adds that fitting the lengthy planning of a big wedding into the running of a demanding media company wasn’t as difficult as she’d feared.

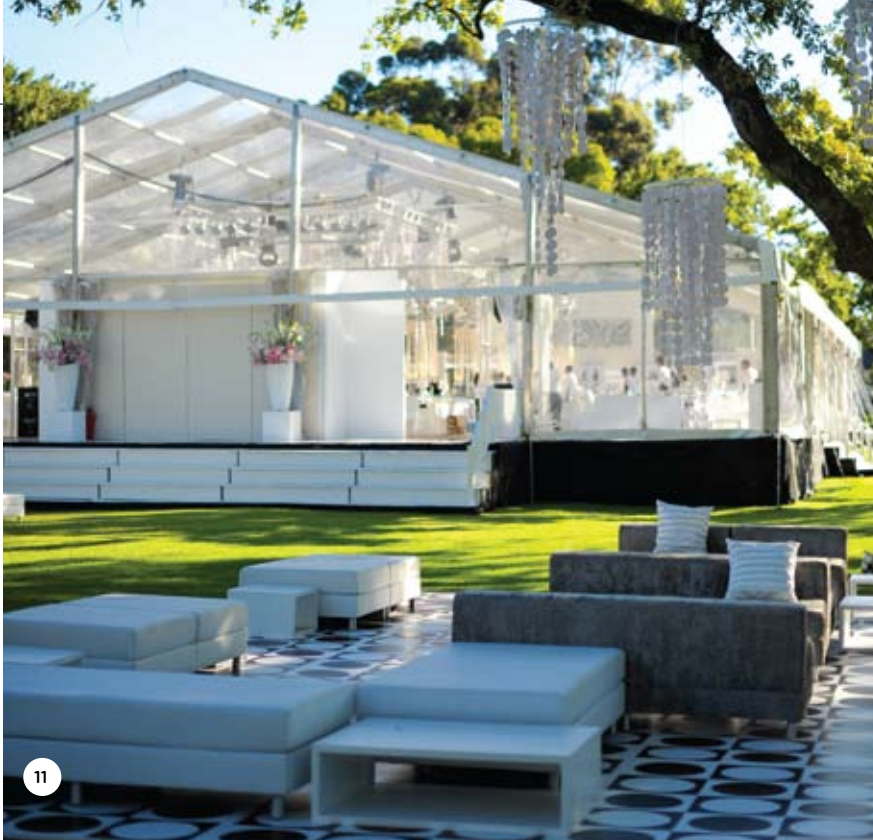
“It doesn’t feel tough when it’s a labour of love, and both the wedding and Ndalo Media are that. We wanted the wedding to be beautiful, but also relaxed and comfortable, and for each of our guests to know how special they are to us. We also wanted to be able to enjoy the day ourselves – and we certainly did.”

The musical gifts on the night included a sublime version of the ballad *The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face* by the couple’s talented doctor friend and singer, Nthabiseng Legoete.

For Khanyi, equally memorable highlights were the taking of the marriage vows, the candle-lighting ceremony for her late >



1. Chinezi waits for Khanyi as she walks down the aisle with her eldest brother, Lwazi Dhlomo. 2. Khanyi and Lwazi. 3. Brandon October, who performed *The Prayer, You Raise Me Up* and *What a Wonderful World* at the ceremony. 4. The couple’s mothers, Mary-Ellen Chijioke and Venetia Dhlomo, during the candle-lighting ceremony. 5. Mpho Diale and Thandi Modise-Diale. 6. Prof Otty and Tshitshi Nxumalo. 7. Bame Pule and Merafe Moloto look on as Khanyi walks down the aisle. 8. Logan and Delphine Govender. 9. Musa and Tumi Ramakgopa. 10. African Leadership Academy CEO and founder Fred Swaniker with co-founder Chris Bradford. 11 & 12. The outdoor lounge where guests enjoyed pre-reception cocktails, canapés and entertainment by the Simply Smooth Jazz band. 13. Female guests were given cream parasols as mementos, while male guests enjoyed Cuban cigars as gifts later in the day.



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14. Khanyi's sons, Khaya and Hugo, with their cousins (from left): Thabani, Ntokozo, Bafana and Sandile Dhlomo. 15. Khanyi and Chinezi at the altar with Pastor Nkosi Khanyile. 16. The bridal couple with Khanyi's sister-in-law Nonhlanhla Dhlomo, her eldest brother Lwazi, her younger son Khaya, her mother Venetia Dhlomo, her elder son Hugo and her second-eldest brother Mfundo. 17. The couple with groomsman and Chinezi's cousin Nkem Chijioke, Chinezi's father Prof Mark Chijioke, his mother Mary-Ellen, his brothers Eric and Ako, his sister-in-law Sumeeya Chishty-Mujahid, his niece Ella-Celeste Chijioke, his sister Olanna Chijioke, and his aunt and uncle, Jo Anne Murphy and Douglas Grafflin.



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1. Nkhensani and Zam Nkosi. 2. Sizwe Dhlomo and his mother, Ntokozi Dhlomo. 3. Neo Mokhobo and Thuli Zulu. 4, 10 & 11. The reception marquee decorated with paisley giant chandeliers, white and cream furniture and table linen, touches of blue in the glassware and cream and pink flowers. 5. Lindiwe Suttle and Mandla Sibeko. 6. Mpho Diale, Sizwe Nxasana, Nono Dhlomo and Dr Judy Dlamini. 7. Nicola and Mampho Brescia with Nthathi Moshesh and Relebohile Sefako. 8. Wandile and Dr Mashadi Motlana with Penny Ndlela. 9. Sandile and Zodwa Zungu with Thembeke and Antoine Johnson. 12. Kholisa and Ciko Thomas. 13. Sonia and Leslie Sedibe with Thami

brother and father, and her groom's speech, in which he thanked her mother for raising "such a wonderful, beautiful woman".

"There isn't just me to take care of Khanyi; I have to thank Hugo and Khaya [Khanyi's sons], who've been very accepting of me."

Turning to face his bride, Chinezi continued: "The first time we met at a fundraiser [for the African Leadership Academy] in Boston in 2005, I was struck by your beauty, your smile and your style. But it was more than that: it was your sense of grace... I was captivated by it then, and I'm still enchanted by it now."

The other speeches of the night were just as poignant, with both Khanyi's uncle, Mandla Dhlomo and Chinezi's father, Professor Mark Chijioke, expanding on the crucial importance of family and heritage.

Chijioke said: "One of my continuing hopes is that the tradition of global network energisation, which we started in my family in the early Seventies [with his own marriage to his American-born wife], will spring a link between Nigeria and the USA, Nigeria and Europe, Nigeria and Asia, and now Nigeria and South Africa. We need to pull up the continent in every possible way and, in all humility, do it as a duty thrust upon us in the circumstances."

Chinezi's brothers, Ako and Eric, offered a heartfelt and humorous tribute to the couple. Eric, in true best man tradition, had guests in stitches as he recounted anecdotes from their youth, teasingly adding that he couldn't understand how Chinezi had managed to "wiggle his way" into the impressive Dhlomo family.

"Khanyi, maybe he appealed to your sense of goodwill and charity, which I know you have in abundance," he grinned.

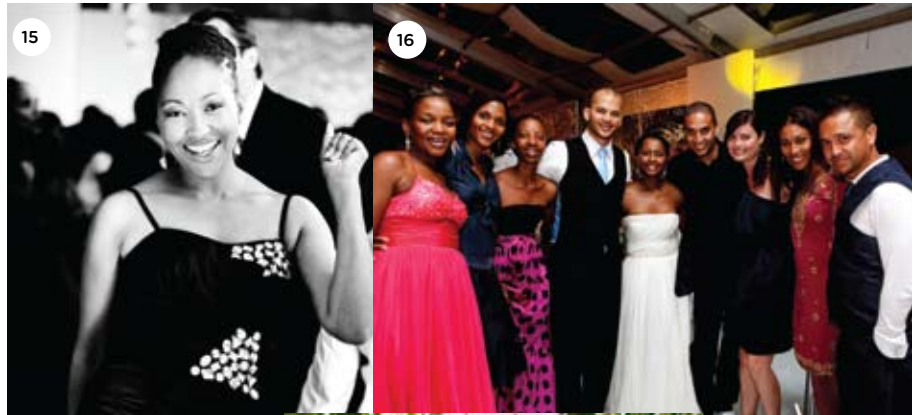
"The force of Khanyi's persona hits you within five minutes of meeting her. She's a model of grace and poise: sophisticated, yet grounded; stunningly beautiful, yet wholesome. She's a model role-model in all senses of the word.

"And then there's Chinezi – a Nigerian-American hunk!" he added mischievously.

Eric said his brother's "fearless honesty" and "lack of self-consciousness of character" distinguished his personality.

Having enjoyed the first of a few "mini-honeymoons" the couple has planned in SA and abroad, they agree that their real-life fairytale romance was destined to end in matrimony.

"We believe in marriage. We're very happy >



Ngubeni. 14. Lindile and Mfanafuthi Sithebe. 15. Augustine Chuene. 16. The bridal couple with Faith Seoue, Queen Serobe, DESTINY's Papama Mtwisha, Thoban Jappie, DESTINY's Candice-Lee Kannemeyer and Sheena Adams, and Travers Solomon. 17. Joy and Deon Dhlomo. 18. Regina Osih and Nothando Ndebele. 19. Busi and Peter Mombaur. 20. MC for the reception, Khanyi's cousin Sicelo Sikakane. 21. Khanyi and Chinezi's five-tier wedding cake. 22. The couple enjoy their first dance.

together and excited about the life we're building. Apart from loving each other, what's working for us is that we have the same values. We really want to bring joy into each other's lives and support one another in fulfilling our purpose on earth," says Khanyi.

Chinezi adds: "Our time together has been wonderful, and continues to grow more so. Seeing the world together has always been exciting for us, but what we really cherish most are the routine joys we share – sunny Sunday afternoons together, spending time with Hugo and Khaya, or having a relaxed evening braai with friends."

And since it was an educational institution that brought the couple together, they say they're immensely grateful for being able to share their love of learning with each other.

"Education's deeply important to both of us. We've both grown up in families with a commitment to education, and have been blessed by the opportunities it brings. Creating opportunities for others, in turn, through education is something we aspire to."

Love this strong – and this fulfilling – couldn't have happened to two more deserving, or nicer, people! As Eric observed: "This is a match made in heaven – it's destiny." **D**

LITTLE WHITE BOOK

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1. Dudu and Xola Gubu. 2. Ipeleng Mkhari 3. Thembisa and Simphiwe Dinga. 4. Noluthando Langeni and Sayo Skweyiya. 5. Drs Lesiba and Vuyoletu Mokgotlane. 6. Dolly, S'busiso and Phumzile Luthuli. 7. Acha Leke and Swaady Martin-Leke. 8. Skhumbuzo and Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo with Nono and Sipehelele Dhlomo. 9. Lungi Morrison and Rebs Mogoba. 10. Sbonga Dhlomo, Sinethemba Dhlomo, Bubby Mbele and Slindele Dhlomo. 11. Khanyi and Chinezi at the wedding reception. 12. Sindi and Lwazi Koyana. 13. Mpume Mthembu and Nombuso Hadebe.

