

New partnership holds promise for EC arts sector

A new partnership between the National Arts Festival, Grahamstown and Mandela Bay Development Agency brings benefits to artists from PE and surrounds. Artists from Port Elizabeth and its surrounding areas are set to walk under a bigger spotlight at this year's National Arts Festival, the result of an exciting partnership that has been brokered between the festival and the Mandela Bay Development Agency (MBDA), an entity of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality (NMBM).

Central to the partnership is a strategic relationship that will offer increased visibility and capacity-building opportunities for Port Elizabeth artists participating at the festival. The recently revamped Little Theatre at the Athenaeum will also be one of the beneficiaries of the project, which will consider ways in which Fringe productions visiting the festival can also present their work at the small intimate venue in the Athenaeum.

The partnership between the festival and the MBDA will enable fifty musicians from the Port Elizabeth Youth Violin Project dynamic opportunity of participating in a "Festival Encounter". The young violinists will be scheduled for a performance at festival and be given the opportunity of attending other festival concerts. They will also attend a workshop led by leading Standard Bank Young Artist Award winner Samson Diamond (2010) and other musicians. The workshops will offer guidance on playing techniques and life-skills that are essential for young people who intend to pursue a career in the music sector.

Partnership crucial to profile creative economies of PE

In addition, at least one major arts project from Port Elizabeth will be presented on the festival's main programme. Details about this production will be released when the festival officially announces its programme in April.

"With so many on-going inspiring cultural developments in the Mandela Bay, this partnership is crucial to profile the creative economies of Port Elizabeth and its surrounding areas to a captive audience of passionate art lovers who come via Port Elizabeth to the festival from all over South Africa and the world. This is a major step towards positioning Port Elizabeth as mainstream player in the South African arts sector. I'm delighted that the festival and the MBDA can work together with a shared vision," the festival's artistic director Ismail Mahomed said.

"The MBDA is thrilled to be partnering with the National Arts Festival. It marks the culmination of a three-year programme of investment in the arts, through the implementation of Route 67, a public art driven tourism infrastructure project. The agency is committed to supporting the growth of the creative economy of the metro, as a tool for urban renewal and place making. Being part of a world class event such as the National Arts Festival is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the creative talent in Nelson Mandela Bay," planning and development manager of the Mandela Bay Development Agency, Dorelle Sapere said.

The agreement between the Mandela Bay Development Agency and the National Arts Festival was signed at the Athenaeum in Port Elizabeth on Wednesday, 30 January 2013.

The National Arts Festival is sponsored by Standard Bank, The National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund, Eastern Cape Government, Department of Arts and Culture, City Press and M-Net.