

## Inmates to participate in Cape Town jazz festival

PRETORIA: Offenders are busy preparing to participate in next year's Cape Town International Jazz Festival, as part of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) offender jazz music development programme known as "Music Behind Bars".



Music industry professionals have partnered with the department and are hosting workshops in correctional centres in the Western Cape, as part of rehabilitating and ensuring that offenders are equipped with various skills in this industry.

The programme is also aimed at preparing a group of youth offenders to perform at the 15th Cape Town Jazz Festival free show at the green market square.

Offenders are being provided with training and education, as well as employment, opportunities in the music and events industries upon their release.

Last October, approximately 200 offenders, from across South Africa, participated in the first National Offender Jazz Festival at the Grootvlei Correctional Centre in Mangaung in the Free State.

According to the department, there are plans to extend the festival to include choral music, gospel music, popular music, drama and theatre, fashion and crafts as well as traditional music and dance.

Addressing the annual Ingoma Event in uMbumbulu, KwaZulu-Natal, on Wednesday, Correctional Services Minister Sibusiso Ndebele said music is also an effective means to foster correction.

"Music is also an effective means to foster correction, rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders.

"As the Department of Correctional Services, we are reinforcing corrections programmes through various programmes including music, reading for redemption, creative literature, the arts, cultural events, heritage renewal events and sporting events. Of the 20 traditional groups participating at this year's Ingoma event, three groups comprise offenders from correctional centres," he said.

Ndebele said it has been proven that music, and the arts, plays a major, and critical role in offender rehabilitation.

One such example is Larry Joe from the Western Cape, who was sentenced to five years, and six months in prison for house breaking and theft.

He was released from prison in December 2010. He recorded a musical album inside prison, with the aim reaching out to inmates, and the youth, to urge them to avoid gangs and drugs.

The album was produced by Aaron Turest-Swartz (founder of Freshlyground) from QCT music, with the vocals and guitar recorded in his prison cell.

"We have to do our utmost best to keep our people, young and old, from imprisonment. Let's use the expressive power of music, and dance, to create a better South Africa. Music builds bridges, even where there are language barriers. Music builds bridges, even where there are societal barriers. As they say, you cannot argue with a song," the minister said.

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