

Covid restrictions scrapped as National Arts Festival opens

The mood was upbeat in Makhanda on Thursday as the 48th National Arts Festival opened its first live event in three years with the news that the requirements on the wearing of masks and restricting events to 50% capacity Covid regulations were removed by the government.



Image by Mark Wessels: Performers at the Official Opening of the 2022 National Arts Festival

Audiences celebrated as previously sold-out shows for Amanda Black and Ringo Madlingozi were re-opened to accommodate 50% more seats, and audience members even joined artists on stage at the SAfm Sundowner concerts to sing and celebrate the moment.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, National Assembly speaker Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula shared in the celebration but noted the devastating effects of Covid-19 on the arts industry and pledged to support its renewal along with the talented artists in the constituency.



Celebrating Fringe at the National Arts Festival

22 Jun 2022



The Eastern Cape is known for an abundance of arts and culture talent and not just at the National Arts Festival. Calling the Eastern Cape ‘the creative home of South Africa’, MEC Siphokazi Mani-Lusithi, who was attending on behalf of the Eastern Cape Premier, said, “The amount of creative talent this province has produced remains unmatched. I will be the first to admit though that most of this talent leaves the province for greener pastures elsewhere. Our task as the government of the Eastern Cape, working together with various stakeholders, is to nurture and support this creative potential and position the Eastern Cape as truly the creative home of the country.”

Mani-Lusithi said she was looking forward to watching the Festival gain momentum as it headed towards its 50th anniversary in 2024 and thanked the Festival partners in government and the private sector including Standard Bank and Distell for their support of the arts.



Image by Mark Wessels: Performers at the Official Opening of the 2022 National Arts Festival

Makhanda's executive mayor, Yandiswa Vara, welcomed visitors to the city and noted the important role the arts played in promoting social cohesion and bringing people together for both the city and the country. Vara reiterated her intention to ensure that the National Arts Festival remains in Makhanda and her determination to address Makhanda's historical problems.

The outgoing chairperson of the National Arts Festival Board, Ayanda Mjekula, confirmed that no discussion about moving the NAF from Makhanda had ever been added to the agenda in all of his decades of service on the board. In his farewell message, Mjekula noted that the city has a unique infrastructure for hosting the Festival and that it would, without a doubt, remain the home of the Festival.



Celebrate music at the National Jazz Festival Makhanda

1 Jun 2022



As the Festival dropped its requirements for compulsory wearing of masks, CEO Monica Newton said that the biggest win for the arts and events industries was a much-needed return to normal.

"Operating at 50% capacity was completely unsustainable for most festivals, theatres and sports events unless they passed

the lost revenue onto the customer in the form of higher ticket prices - which would ultimately decrease access to only a small demographic. This good news is an auspicious start to the 2022 National Arts Festival and, we hope, the beginning of a much-needed rejuvenation of the arts,” Newton said.

The National Arts Festival is on until 3 July 2022. The programme and ticket bookings are available [here](#).

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