



MEDIA RELEASE

National Arts Council launches script development initiative for theatre at National Arts Festival in Grahamstown

So you think you can write? – A theatre script development initiative for first time writers created by the National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC) will be launched at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown on Wednesday 8 July, 2009.

Packaged as a Script Reading Festival, the initiative is designed to nurture emerging scriptwriters in an innovative three-phase script development master-class in writing for theatre.

A combined approach including mentorship, script writing workshops, interactive script readings to audiences and competitive evaluation by a panel has been devised to ensure that the scripts are developed to the highest quality standards before going into production.

NAC Chairperson, Adv. Brenda Madumise said: “In a bid to extend the reach and impact of the NAC funding allocations, the NAC has launched this programme as a skills development initiative which bridges the quality gap between new talent, a good idea and a successful production.

“As South Africa’s largest arts funding agency, experience has shown that the key to sustained development in the arts is a multi-faceted approach to funding which addresses issues of capacity building and resources. As such, this new programme is a deliberate intervention which will ensure optimum value is achieved for the emerging theatre writer and audiences. We are investing in South Africa’s emerging talent by ensuring provision for foundation skills as a pre-requisite to financing the ultimate production”, she continued.

Nine scriptwriters from across South Africa have been selected for the inaugural NAC Script Reading Festival.

Eight of the writers are new voices in theatre writing. One of the writers is an established writer, Professor Nicholas Lewes from the Freestate University. His script was included to work as a quality benchmark for the aspirant scriptwriters.

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The NAC Script Reading Festival is an innovative concept in which excerpts of the final scripts, honed in over two months of script development workshops, will come to life at the Barrat Theatre in Grahamstown.

Over the past week, 20 drama students from Rhodes University have rehearsed the final scripts with tutelage from directors; Selaelo Maredi, Tina Johnson and Hieke Gehring who are serving as distinguished panel of judges for interactive programme.

During the three day Script Reading Festival, the drama students will read the scripts to an audience of festivalgoers, media and invited theatre professionals. The audience will be invited to provide constructive feedback and input during a question and answer session with the script writer.

On day three, the panel of judges will also provide 'Director's Notes' with recommendations for which scripts should be selected for further funding and development into stage productions.

A series of insightful and thought-provoking papers will be presented by respected theatre practitioners during the Script Writing Festival programme. The presenters and the topics to be presented include:

- Vusi Kunene: Acting for theatre
- Fatima Dike: Writing as an isolated work
- Malcolm Purkey: Writing workshop: "Workshop 71"
- Lara Foot-Newton: New voices, New Writing

"Theatre plays an important role in the history of South Africa's arts scene. The stage is a potent platform for expression and in our country's developing democracy, it is important that new talent is nurtured in the craft of storytelling. Through their works, they will capture the nation's voice on stages across the African continent and indeed the world," said Peter Tshabalala: NAC Arts Development Officer for Theatre.

The selected scripts that make the quality grade will be announced shortly after the end of the NAC Script Reading Festival: *So you think you can write?* The scriptwriters will be allocated further funding to be able to develop the scripts into productions which will be showcased at the National Arts Festival in 2010.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The NAC also launched a Craft Exhibition initiative at the National Arts Festival this year. The exhibition will form part of an ongoing market access initiative where crafters are provided infrastructural and business development support as part of their funding grant allocations.

Boilerplate:

The National Arts Council of South Africa operates under the terms of the NAC Act (1997). The NAC vision is to promote, through the arts, the free and creative expression of South Africa's cultures. NAC website: www.nac.org.za

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