



THE

ARTS

SAN

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | ISSUE #2

National
Arts Council **NAC**
an Agency of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture

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**"ART HAS THE POWER TO TRANSFORM,
TO ILLUMINATE, TO EDUCATE,
INSPIRE AND MOTIVATE."**

- Unknown -





CEO'S FORE- WORD

Mr Lebogang Mogoera
Interim Chief Executive Officer

“ I am delighted to welcome you to the latest edition of our Artisan Quarterly Newsletter. This edition presents a rich tapestry of stories reflecting the National Arts Council’s ongoing journey to empower South African creatives, celebrate our heritage, and deepen connections both locally and internationally.”

This issue comes at a moment of pride for the NAC. We have successfully completed our audit by the Auditor-General, and I am pleased to share that the organisation has received an unqualified audit outcome. This achievement underscores our steadfast commitment to good governance and accountability, and it is a testament to our continuous efforts to maintain a clean, transparent, and well-managed organisation.

I am also pleased to reflect on a season of growth and collaboration marked by significant events over the past few months. In this edition, readers will gain insight into these milestones and see how the NAC continues to create opportunities for the arts sector.

Events such as the forthcoming **Journey of Discovery Concert**, in collaboration with the **Hong Kong Arts Development Council and the Market Theatre Foundation**, will once again position South Africa as a hub for global artistic exchange. By bringing together artists from two continents to co-create, share ideas, and present work that transcends borders, this initiative exemplifies the power of cultural diplomacy in generating meaningful artistic outcomes.

Our recent Memorandums of Understanding with Ghana and China further reinforce the NAC’s role in regional and international collaboration. The agreement with Ghana’s Black Star Experience strengthens Africa-to-Africa exchange and celebrates our shared heritage, while the partnership with China’s Federation of Literary and Art Circles opens doors to joint festivals, exhibitions, residencies, and new markets for South African creatives. These partnerships broaden horizons and create sustainable pathways for growth.

We also celebrate the 2025 National Arts and Culture Awards, where several NAC beneficiaries were honoured for their outstanding achievements. Their success reflects the talent, resilience, and innovation within our sector and underscores the importance of ongoing support for creative excellence.

Together, these milestones demonstrate how strategic partnerships are expanding opportunities for South African artists while building a stronger, more sustainable arts ecosystem. I invite you to explore this issue and draw inspiration from the stories of collaboration, creativity, and shared purpose that define our work.

As you read this edition, I encourage you to notice the common thread running through every article: **partnership, innovation, and shared purpose**. These values continue to guide the NAC as we support our artists and nurture a thriving, sustainable arts sector.

Enjoy the read, and may these stories inspire you to collaborate, create, and reimagine what is possible for our arts community.



EDIT- TOR'S NOTE

Welcome to second edition of Artisan quarterly newsletter for the second quarter of Financial year 2025-2026, which will highlight a season of growth, collaboration and celebration within the arts sector.

At the heart of this issue lies a unifying theme: **the power of partnerships - across borders, across disciplines and across communities**. In recent months, the National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC) has been at the forefront of forging alliances that uplift artists and strengthen cultural diplomacy regionally and internationally.

This edition opens with a look at the landmark Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) signed this quarter with the Black Star Experience Secretariat in Ghana and the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (CFLAC). These agreements build bridges with counterparts on the African continent and beyond, creating spaces for South African artists to engage in cultural exchange, access new platforms and showcase our country's creative spirit on the global stage. Partnerships such as these remind us that art knows no borders but thrives on collaboration, innovation and the sharing of stories.

We also feature the recent National Arts and Culture Awards (NACA) 2025, which celebrated South Africa's creative excellence. Several NAC beneficiaries, including Vhakololo Press, Moeketsi Koena and The Sanda Money Series, were honoured at this prestigious event. Their success reflects both individual talent and the collaborative networks of support that make artistic achievement possible.

On the funding front, this issue highlights the launch of PESP 6 and the outcomes of our International Bursary Call. These initiatives extend opportunities for creatives to learn, innovate and grow, representing a collective investment in the future of our sector.

Throughout this edition you will notice a thread that ties all these stories together: the recognition that we achieve more when we work together. Whether it is regional collaboration with Ghana, international exchange with China, celebrating excellence at home or enabling individuals to study abroad, the NAC remains dedicated to building a sustainable, inclusive arts ecosystem through strategic partnerships.

Finally, our #ArtToGo guide and staff feature remind us that the arts are not only about policy and funding but also about lived experiences, spaces and people who make culture vibrant and accessible every day.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and that these stories inspire you to collaborate, create and reimagine what is possible for our sector.

AUDIT REPORT

NAC Achieves an Unqualified Audit for 2024/25

The National Arts Council (NAC) is proud to announce that it has received an unqualified audit for the 2024/25 financial year. This milestone reflects the organisation's unwavering commitment to good governance, transparency, and accountability, and marks a significant achievement in our ongoing mission to support and empower South African creatives.

An unqualified audit opinion represents the highest standard of financial reporting, confirming that the NAC's financial statements present a true and fair view of its financial position. This outcome is the result of months of meticulous preparation, collaboration, and attention to detail across all levels of the organisation.

This achievement underscores the dedication of our staff, management, and stakeholders in maintaining high standards of excellence. It also strengthens confidence in the NAC's work, demonstrating that we manage resources responsibly while creating meaningful opportunities for South African artists.

As we celebrate this success, the NAC remains committed to upholding financial integrity and transparent governance, ensuring that every step we take contributes to the growth, sustainability, and vibrancy of the arts sector.



Strategic Disruption Workshop

Shaping the Future of South Africa's Arts and Culture

The National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC), led by Council Chairperson **Mr. Eugene Botha**, hosted a Strategic Disruption Workshop on 21–22 August 2025, a bold initiative designed to explore innovative and sustainable solutions for the growth of South Africa's arts and culture sector.

Over two days, participants engaged in collaborative discussions and transformative thinking, exploring how the arts can adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing society. The workshop focused on fostering resilience, unlocking new opportunities, and creating impact-driven strategies for artists, organisations, and communities.

Building on insights from the first day, Day 2 emphasised sustainable innovation and actionable solutions, providing a platform for fresh ideas that can drive meaningful change across the arts ecosystem.

The two-day engagement concluded successfully, leaving the NAC and its stakeholders with a roadmap of forward-thinking strategies to strengthen South Africa's vibrant arts and culture sector. Through initiatives like this, the NAC continues to champion creativity, collaboration, and innovation, ensuring a thriving future for the nation's artistic community.

An abstract graphic design featuring a light blue background with three red lightning bolts in the upper right. A central, dark, textured, cone-like shape is partially covered by a halftone pattern. The lower half of the image is dominated by large, overlapping circles in light blue and mustard yellow, set against a black background. The text 'FUND-NG NEWS' is overlaid in a large, white, serif font, with the 'NG' in 'FUND-NG' being smaller and positioned between the 'ND' and 'NEWS'.

FUND- NG NEWS



PESP6 FUNDING CALL IS NOW OPEN. APPLY NOW!

Opening Date: 16 September 2025

Closing Date: 16 October 2025 @ 23:59

Outcomes: 08 December 2025

PESP 6 FUNDING CALL

EMPOWERING SOUTH AFRICA'S CREATIVE TALENT

The National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC) proudly announces the successful closure of the **Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP 6)** funding cycle. The call, which opened on **September 16th** and officially closed on **October 9th, 2025**, received submissions aimed at bolstering employment and **job retention across the arts, culture, and heritage sectors**.

PESP 6 is a vital component of the NAC's commitment to **creating job opportunities, nurturing artistic talent, and supporting the cultural ecosystem**. This specific funding targeted **both individuals and organisations whose projects deliver meaningful impact across diverse arts disciplines**.

This initiative represents a critical opportunity for creative practitioners to access government support designed to sustain cultural vibrancy and promote inclusive economic development through the arts.

Key Dates:

Call Opening: 16 September 2025

Call Closure: 9 October 2025

Outcomes Date: 1 December 2025



THE 2025 NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL

INTERNATIONAL BURSARY FUNDING CALL IS OPEN APPLY NOW!

CLOSING DATE:

Friday, 11 July 2025 @ 23h59

OUTCOMES:

Tuesday, 26 August 2025

INTERNATIONAL BURSARY FUNDING

Applications for 2025 Academic Year

The National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC) is delighted to announce the successful outcomes of its 2025 International Bursary funding call.

The bursary, which sought to support **South African talent pursuing advanced studies abroad**, opened on **June 2nd** and closed on **July 11th, 2025**. The call attracted high-calibre applicants from **all arts disciplines, including craft, dance, literature, multidiscipline, music, theatre, and visual arts**.

Strengthening South Africa's Cultural Future

The competitive selection process **resulted in 15 successful applicants** who have been **awarded bursaries totaling R2,712,000.00**.

This financial support is a **strategic investment in South Africa's cultural future**. By enabling creative practitioners to pursue international postgraduate and undergraduate studies, the bursary actively works to:

- **Strengthen Creative Capacities:** Recipients acquire advanced skills and global best practices.
- **Foster Cross-Cultural Exchange:** They build international networks and bring fresh perspectives home.
- **Enrich the National Landscape:** The knowledge and experience gained will ultimately enrich South Africa's creative economy.

The NAC extends its heartfelt congratulations to all successful recipients. Your achievements are a beacon of excellence, and the NAC is proud to support each of your journeys as you take South African talent to the global stage.

We look forward to seeing the innovative contributions you will bring back to enrich our creative landscape.

EVENTS



THE JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

ALL ROADS LEAD TO SOUTH AFRICA!

The Journey of Discovery returns for its second edition!

South Africa is once again set to become the heartbeat of global artistic exchange as the second edition of the Journey of Discovery takes centre stage. Scheduled to take place over two days, from **24–25 October**, the event promises to be a powerful celebration of creativity, collaboration, and cultural diplomacy.

Following the booming success of its inaugural edition that took place in Hong Kong last year (2024), the Journey of Discovery continues to live up to its name, offering audiences and artists alike an opportunity to embark on a creative exploration that transcends borders.

The programme begins on the 24th of October with closed sessions that bring together leading artists, cultural practitioners, and stakeholders from South Africa and Hong Kong. These sessions focus on deepening collaboration, exchanging ideas, and rehearsing dynamic co-creations that merge diverse artistic traditions and contemporary practices.

The spotlight then turns to the public on the 25th of October, where audiences will be treated to an unforgettable showcase of electrifying performances. These will feature one-of-a-kind co-creations between South African and Hong Kong artists, demonstrating how cultural exchange not only enriches artistic expression but also resonates with shared human experiences.

The Journey of Discovery is more than just a showcase, it is a statement of intent. By uniting artists across continents, the initiative affirms South Africa's growing role as a hub for cultural innovation and global exchange. The programme underscores the belief that creativity knows no boundaries and that the blending of traditions, languages, and a musical artform that sparks new ways of seeing and experiencing the world.

The concert is set to inspire and highlight the convergence of global cultures and ideas exchange. With its deep-rooted heritage and diverse communities, the NAC, in partnership with the Market Theatre and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) is uniquely positioned to host this event.

Members of the public are warmly invited to be part of this extraordinary experience on **Saturday, 25 October from 15:00-17:00 at the John Kani Theatre in the Market Theatre, Johannesburg**. Whether you are a supporter of international collaboration, or someone simply curious about the power of creativity, Journey of Discovery promises a concert that will inspire, entertain, and leave lasting impressions.

This event is not just about performances, it is about creating memories, sparking dialogue, and reaffirming the arts as a universal language. It is about a journey worth taking.

"Turning Up the Sound. One Stage. All the Energy!"

Bringing together an extraordinary line-up of creative talent, the Journey of Discovery returns with artists from **South Africa: Mbuzeni Mkhize, Thandeka Mfinyongo, Ayanda Jiya, Sky Dladla and Dr Natalie Rungan**, and from **Hong Kong: Ngaiman, Ma Wai Him, Jing Wong** who embody the spirit of collaboration and innovation.

From celebrated musicians and dynamic performers to cultural practitioners pushing the boundaries of their artforms, these artists represent the heartbeat of the programme. Their participation not only showcases individual excellence but also reflects the transformative power of collective creativity.



Mbuzeni Mkhize



Thandeka Mfinyongo



Ayanda Jiya



Sky Dladla



Dr Natalie Rungan



Ngaiman



Ma Wai Him



Jing Wong



HAPPY HERITAGE DAY /20 25

HERITAGE MONTH

Every year on 24 September, South Africans come together to celebrate Heritage Day, a commemoration that honours the country's rich cultural wealth. This year, the National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC) marked Heritage Month with a vibrant programme that combined a virtual roundtable discussion and a nationwide social media campaign.

Heritage Month remained a reminder of the importance of living heritage- the oral traditions, rituals, knowledge, and creative practices that continue to shape identity and social cohesion in South Africa. The NAC's programme highlighted how the arts can play a central role in preserving heritage while inspiring unity and fostering economic development.



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

Preserving Heritage

Through this Heritage Month programme, the NAC demonstrated the power of the arts to connect the past with the present, while fostering pride in South Africa's cultural identity. The combination of a thought-provoking roundtable and a far-reaching social media campaign created a platform for dialogue, celebration, and reflection, ensuring that the preservation of heritage remains central to building a shared and inclusive future.

HERITAGE DISCUSSION

Heritage and the Arts



On 23 September 2025, the NAC hosted a virtual roundtable discussion themed *“Heritage Conservation in the Arts: Exploring the Intersection of Culture and Creativity.”*

The discussion examined the role of the arts in conserving heritage, explored both the opportunities and challenges in using the arts as a tool for preservation, and reflected on the impact of heritage on artistic practice.

The event brought together leading voices in the arts and culture sector, including Mbali Dhlamini, Sphelele Mbhele, Jamil F. Khan, and Tania Majavie, and was facilitated by Melissa Nayimula. Participants shared valuable insights on heritage conservation while the live audience contributed through a lively question-and-answer session.

The discussion became a collective space for reflection, knowledge-sharing, and dialogue on the importance of protecting South Africa’s diverse cultural traditions.

Social Media Campaign: Showcasing Living Heritage

Running from 2 to 30 September 2025, the NAC’s social media campaign amplified the celebration of Heritage Month by sharing engaging content across its platforms. The campaign showcased ancient art forms, including San rock art and traditional musical instruments, while highlighting their connection to South Africa’s living heritage.

Infographic posts presented five keyways the arts preserve heritage, while interactive content, such as polls encouraged audiences to reflect on their own cultural practices. One campaign highlight was the poll question: *“What art form best reflects your heritage, and how do you keep it alive?”* which invited the public to engage using the NAC’s seven arts disciplines as options.

CULTURE AWARDS

Congratulating winners at the 2025 National Arts and Culture Awards

The 2025 National Arts and Culture Awards (NACA), hosted by the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC), celebrated South Africa's artistic excellence with a prestigious ceremony held on 23 August 2025 at Sun City, Rustenburg, North-West. The event recognised pioneers and innovators who continue to shape the nation's arts and culture landscape.

The National Arts Council (NAC) is proud to have supported several beneficiaries whose work was honoured at this year's ceremony. Their success reflects the resilience, creativity, and innovation that define the sector qualities the NAC is committed to nurturing.

HIGHLIGHTED WINNERS:

Literary Category:

Outstanding Children's Book Award

Winner: Yamkela Tywakadi
(Sanda Makes Some Money)

Congratulations to the Sanda Money Series, which has expanded from one book to five titles thanks to NAC's Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP) funding. This inspiring series is shaping young minds and showcasing the richness of South Africa's storytelling tradition.



Literary Category:

Outstanding Publisher Award

Winner: Vhakololo Press

The NAC proudly celebrates Vhakololo Press for being awarded the Outstanding Publisher Award. As one of our Arts Organisation Support Funding (AOSF) beneficiaries, Vhakololo Press continues to demonstrate excellence in advancing South African literature and publishing. We are honoured to have contributed to their journey.



**Performance Arts Category:
Outstanding Dance Production
Winner: Moeketsi Koena (Ingoma)**

The NAC congratulates Moeketsi Koena for winning the Outstanding Dance Production Award. As an AOSF beneficiary, Moeketsi has consistently elevated South African dance through innovation and artistry. His achievement underscores the importance of supporting local talent to sustain growth in the performing arts sector.

The NAC extends its heartfelt congratulations to all winners and participants of the 2025 NACA. Their achievements highlight the transformative power of the arts in shaping identity, fostering dialogue, and building a vibrant cultural legacy for South Africa.





WOMEN'S DAY

Women's Day Commemoration: Building Resilient Economies for All

On **9 August 2025**, South Africa marked **Women's Day** with a national commemoration event held at **Nkowankowa Stadium in Tzaneen, Limpopo**, where **President Cyril Ramaphosa** delivered a powerful keynote address celebrating the resilience, achievements, and enduring contributions of women to the nation's history and development.

Women's Day honours the more than **20,000 women who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956** to protest against unjust pass laws. Their courage continues to inspire the ongoing pursuit of equality, justice, and inclusion. Reflecting on this legacy, President Ramaphosa reminded the nation that *"the march of 1956 was not only about rejecting discriminatory laws, but about demanding a South Africa that respects the dignity and potential of every woman. That struggle is not yet over."*

In his address, the President highlighted both the progress achieved and the persistent challenges facing South African women, including gender-based violence, economic exclusion, and barriers to leadership. He called for:

- **Stronger action** against gender-based violence and femicide through coordinated national and community efforts.
- **Greater economic empowerment**, including targeted support for women-owned enterprises and access to funding and skills development.
- **Commitment to gender parity** across leadership and decision-making roles in both the public and private sectors.

President Ramaphosa emphasised, *"We cannot claim to be free while women live in fear, while women are excluded from opportunities, and while women continue to bear the brunt of poverty and inequality."*

The commemoration was enriched by **cultural performances, exhibitions, and community dialogues** celebrating women's creativity and leadership. The **National Arts Council (NAC)** proudly participated with a **vibrant exhibition** showcasing its programmes and opportunities available to artists and cultural practitioners. Local women entrepreneurs and creatives were also given a platform to exhibit their work, reinforcing the event's focus on empowerment and visibility.

The Women's Day celebration in Tzaneen reaffirmed South Africa's collective commitment to **building an inclusive, equitable society** where women's rights are protected and their potential fully realised. As the nation looks ahead, the message resonated clearly: **women are not only the backbone of families and communities but are also leaders, innovators, and nation-builders.**

This year's commemoration served as both a **tribute to the past** and a **call to action for the future**, urging every South African to play their part in achieving true gender equality.



A person in a dynamic, low-to-the-ground pose is visible in the background, partially obscured by the large text. Above them, several balloons are floating. The entire scene is set against a dark, textured background.

MOU SIGN- INGS

NAC Signs two Landmark Memorandums of Understanding with Ghana and China to Strengthen Cultural Diplomacy

The **National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC)** has strengthened its global cultural diplomacy efforts through the signing of two landmark **Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)** with **Ghana's Black Star Experience (BSE) Secretariat** and the **China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (CFLAC)**.

Signed on **28 August and 5 September 2025** respectively, these agreements mark a significant milestone in the NAC's mission to **advance international cultural relations, foster cross-border collaboration, and create meaningful opportunities** for South African artists within the global creative economy.

Both partnerships reflect the NAC's continued commitment to positioning South Africa as an influential player in global arts and culture, while nurturing sustainable exchange and mutual growth across continents.



Strengthening Africa-to-Africa Exchange with Ghana

The National Arts Council (NAC), under the leadership of Acting CEO **Ms. Julie Diphofa**, hosted delegates from Ghana on **28 August 2025** for the official signing of a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with the **Black Star Experience Secretariat** — Ghana's premier platform celebrating African excellence through arts, heritage, and culture. This partnership represents a powerful step towards **deepening Africa-to-Africa collaboration** and advancing the continent's shared creative vision.

Through this agreement, the NAC and the Black Star Experience will:

- Facilitate **artist exchanges, joint projects, and knowledge sharing** between South Africa and Ghana.
- Promote **African identity, heritage, and storytelling** across borders.
- Expand **regional and continental opportunities** for creatives to showcase their work.
- Strengthen a **Pan-African cultural economy** rooted in collaboration and mutual growth.



In her remarks, NAC Deputy Chairperson **H.R.H. Princess Celenhle Dlamini** highlighted that the agreement underscores the Council's ongoing commitment to bridging gaps for artists despite financial and systemic challenges. *"This partnership marks a significant milestone where two African giants join hands to develop arts and culture for the benefit of both nations,"* she affirmed.



Expanding Cultural Diplomacy with China

In a significant step towards strengthening international cultural exchange, the National Arts Council (NAC) formalised a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with the **China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (CFLAC)** on **5 September 2025**. CFLAC is one of China's most prominent national organisations representing the country's diverse arts and cultural communities.

The signing ceremony marked an important milestone in the ongoing deepening of **South Africa–China cultural relations**, reaffirming both nations' commitment to collaboration and mutual artistic growth.



The agreement outlines key areas of partnership, including:

- Promoting **cross-cultural collaboration and dialogue** between artists and cultural practitioners.
- Facilitating **joint festivals, exhibitions, and artistic residencies** to encourage creative exchange.
- Creating **pathways for South African creatives** to access Chinese markets and audiences.
- Building **sustainable partnerships** that honour cultural heritage while embracing creativity and innovation.

This MoU builds upon the **foundation of African–Asian cultural diplomacy** established in July 2011 and highlights the NAC's continued strategic role in positioning **South Africa's creative sector on the global stage**.



ADVANCING THE NAC'S STRATEGIC VISION

The recent Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) signed with **Ghana** and **China** mark a significant step in advancing the National Arts Council's (NAC) **Five-Year Strategic Plan (2025–2030)**, which prioritises:

- **Expanding international partnerships** to strengthen global cultural exchange.
- **Creating economic opportunities** for artists through sustainable platforms.
- **Enhancing South Africa's visibility and influence** within the global creative economy.
- **Promoting and preserving cultural heritage** as a cornerstone of national identity.

Through these strategic alliances, the NAC reaffirms its position as a **catalyst for artistic excellence** and a **bridge-builder** connecting South African creatives with international networks.

More than formal agreements, these MoUs represent a **shared vision for the future** — a collective commitment to nurturing sustainable cultural ecosystems that empower artists, foster collaboration, and unite communities through the arts.

As the NAC continues to expand its international footprint, South African artists will gain **greater access to new markets, cross-border collaborations, and opportunities for global recognition.**

In the words of **Mr. Lebogang Mogoera**, Interim Chief Executive Officer of the NAC:

"Through culture, we create lasting bonds that transcend borders. These partnerships with Ghana and China are investments in the future of South Africa's creative sector and a testament to the power of the arts in shaping diplomacy and development."



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STORIES



MPUMALANGA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA: Building a Legacy of Music

Established and registered in **2018**, the **Mpumalanga Chamber Orchestra (MCO)** has grown into a cornerstone of cultural development in the **Province of the Rising Sun**. Initially supported by the **Department of Culture, Sports and Recreation** under former MEC **Sibongile Manana**, the orchestra was created to bridge the gap for disadvantaged groups in orchestral music while providing pathways for professional growth and participation in the creative economy.

Driving Skills and Job Creation

With three years of dedicated arts funding secured from 2022, the MCO has focused on **skills development, mentorship, and job creation** for emerging and professional musicians. Partnerships with **schools, community ensembles**, and the **Mzansi National Symphony Orchestra** have strengthened training initiatives and fostered a platform for continuous knowledge-sharing and artistic exchange.

Recognised Performances and Strategic Partnerships

Since its inception, the orchestra has performed at high-profile events including **government commemorations, state funerals, and World AIDS Day** observances between 2020 and 2022. It has also featured at the **Mpumalanga Cultural Xperience International** alongside **Mzansi Ballet**, and performed at the **TS Galaxy Football Club Annual Awards**.

Recognition from both provincial and national government has reinforced the orchestra's importance, particularly its role in distributing **Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP)** funds to local creatives.

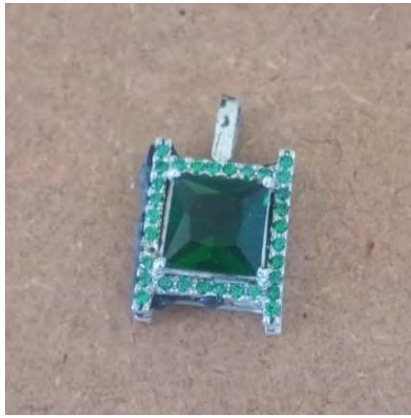
Saving Costs and Generating Provincial Pride

Before the establishment of the MCO, Mpumalanga often relied on orchestras from Gauteng, incurring costs amounting to hundreds of thousands of rand for short performances. The creation of the province's own orchestra has **saved millions in outsourcing costs**, while simultaneously **stimulating the local economy** and instilling a sense of pride and ownership among communities.

Inspiring Through Music

The vision of the Mpumalanga Chamber Orchestra is to **inspire through music**, engage audiences across generations, and build a sustainable platform for local talent. By combining **artistic excellence with social impact**, the MCO continues to demonstrate the transformative role of music in strengthening communities, nurturing talent, and preserving South Africa's rich cultural heritage.

Today, the Mpumalanga Chamber Orchestra stands as a beacon of empowerment, creativity, and sustainability, advancing a professional orchestral tradition rooted in inclusivity and community development.



SKILLS INNOVATION: The Change We Need

In celebration of 30 years of democracy, **Bridgeetie Jewels** launched the *Skills Innovation (The Change We Need)* project, a transformative initiative that united local and visiting artists, community members, and individuals who lived through apartheid. The project created a vibrant space to reflect on South Africa's democratic journey through **art, craft, and traditional cuisine**, reaffirming the arts as a powerful medium for storytelling, healing, and cultural preservation.

Empowering Through Creativity and Skills Transfer

The initiative focused on **skills development, entrepreneurship, and social inclusion**, using jewellery-making, craftwork, photography, fine art, fashion design, and manufacturing as vehicles for empowerment. Participants particularly **unemployed youth, women, and people living with disabilities**, received practical and creative training designed to foster both artistic excellence and sustainable livelihoods.

By integrating creativity with entrepreneurship, the project addressed **structural poverty and unemployment**, while promoting a **responsibly sourced jewellery value chain** that economically empowers women and youth. Discussions around **xenophobia, racism, and corruption** further positioned the project as a space for reflection and transformation, framed by the guiding principles of *Step Up, Pursue Justice, Listen Up, and Redress*.

Production and Artistic Achievement

Hosted at the **Imfundiso Skills Development Workshop** at the **Cullinan Diamond Mine (Region 5, Tshwane)**, the project produced over **700 handcrafted jewellery pieces**, including bangles,

earrings, rings, bracelets, anklets, pendants, and necklaces. Each design drew inspiration from **South Africa's wildlife heritage**, featuring motifs of the leopard, rhino, elephant, buffalo, and lion accompanied by stories that celebrated their symbolism. The use of silver and brass added both value and visual distinction to the creations.

Beyond jewellery, participants also produced **100 fashion garments** and **500 craft products**, adding to an existing portfolio of **1,000 market-ready pieces**. The garments, focusing on high-quality casual wear for men, women, and children, were developed with the aim of **competing in both local and international markets**.

Celebrating Creativity and Market Access

Photography was integral to the project's documentation process, capturing the artisans, their creations, and the exhibitions that showcased their work. Through exhibitions and stalls in **Cullinan and the broader Tshwane region**, participants were able to **connect with customers, build trade networks**, and celebrate South African diversity through **music, beadwork, clay art, and storytelling**.

Inspiring Change Through Engagement

The *Skills Innovation (The Change We Need)* project stands as a compelling demonstration of how **the arts can drive economic empowerment, social justice, and cultural sustainability**. By merging creative enterprise with community development, **Bridgeetie Jewels** has reaffirmed its role in **positioning South African craft and jewellery design** as a globally competitive industry - one that draws strength from **cultural diversity, innovation, and the resilience of communities**.



HAIRITAGE: A Photographic Dialogue on Identity, Culture and Social Cohesion

Hairitage, a powerful and emotionally resonant photographic exhibition, has transformed a deeply personal cultural symbol into a canvas for meaningful national dialogue. Conceived by artist **Lithemba Maha**, the project moved beyond a conventional display, delving into the lived realities of South African youth by using hair as both a literal and metaphorical point of departure.

The exhibition, hosted online and at The Albany Museum in Makhanda, captivated audiences by utilizing **advanced macro photography techniques** to magnify single strands of hair into striking, abstract artworks. This innovative approach transformed hair into a vehicle for exploring broader narratives surrounding identity, race, beauty standards, heritage, and memory in contemporary South Africa, ultimately inspiring conversations about authenticity and belonging.

Deepening Impact Through Engagement

To maximize its impact and foster interdisciplinary reflection, the *Hairitage* project incorporated a range of interactive engagements:

Panel Discussions: These forums brought together art practitioners, curators, lecturers, and cultural leaders to reflect on themes of identity and representation within the visual arts.

Creative Workshops: Led by industry professionals, these sessions targeted emerging artists aged 13–30, effectively bridging the gap between theoretical fine art education and essential real-world practice.

Gallery Walkabouts and Talks: Led by the artist, these events provided audiences with direct insight into the creator's vision, prompting personal reflection on their own cultural journeys.

Key Outcomes and Institutional Influence

The success of *Hairitage* demonstrates its lasting cultural and institutional impact, aligning strongly with the NAC's mandate for social cohesion and nation building:

Academic Integration: The project has been formally integrated into the **Rhodes University Fine Art academic curriculum**, establishing it as a long-term educational resource for future students.

Media Recognition: *Hairitage* achieved significant national visibility, receiving extensive mainstream and social media coverage, including a dedicated segment on **SABC Television**.

Thought Leadership: Artist Lithemba Maha was invited to deliver **two guest lectures at Rhodes University**, thereby extending the project's themes into influential academic discourse.

Social Cohesion: The exhibition successfully created **safe, inclusive spaces** for participants to engage in meaningful conversations about culture and identity.

Hairitage is now recognized as more than an exhibition; it is a movement of cultural affirmation and reflection. Its ability to stimulate conversation, challenge norms, and influence institutional knowledge systems makes it a powerful model for socially engaged art practice.

The success of the project reflects the **positive impact of targeted arts funding**, enabling artists to amplify underrepresented voices, shape national conversations, and influence institutional knowledge systems.

A close-up photograph of a hand using a carving tool to create a geometric pattern on a light-colored ceramic jar. The jar is covered in a repeating diamond-shaped motif. In the background, another jar with a different pattern is visible, and some wooden shavings are scattered on the surface.

CRAFT BENEFICIAL RITES



EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH CERAMICS: Upliftment, and Community Impact

Rooted in indigenous heritage and passed down through generations, craftwork serves as both a powerful expression of identity and a vital livelihood for many South Africans.

This is especially true in rural and township communities, where artistic skills drive economic inclusion.

Funded by the NAC, a transformative project recently set out to merge artistic excellence with socioeconomic empowerment. Its primary goal was to produce high-quality ceramic works while simultaneously empowering a collective of emerging women artists from marginalised backgrounds through structured skills development, income generation, and community investment.

A Structured Approach to Empowerment

The initiative began with the identification and securing of a dedicated ceramic studio, a professional space designed to foster collaboration, creativity, and high-quality production. The project successfully brought together four talented women artists, selected based on their potential and passion.

Working collaboratively, these artists produced a diverse range of ceramic pieces, each infused with a unique style and cultural expression. This dual-purpose platform not only provided intensive, practical skills training but also immediately delivered sustainable income generation.

The resulting works are recognized not only for their artistic excellence but also as powerful symbols of resilience, collaboration, and growth.

Holistic Impact: Economic, Cultural, and Social

The success of this project is best measured by its profound, multi-layered impact:

1. Economic Impact & Local Procurement:

At the heart of the initiative was a commitment to economic empowerment. The participating artists received **fair compensation** for their work, offering immediate financial relief and establishing a clear pathway toward long-term economic inclusion. Furthermore, the project boosted local economic activity by consciously sourcing materials and services from nearby businesses, ensuring NAC funding was reinvested directly into the surrounding community.

2. Cultural and Educational Impact:

The collaborative studio environment was a space for rich cultural exchange. Artists deepened their skills and broadened their creative perspectives by sharing techniques and artistic traditions. Beyond hands-on production, the women were equipped with practical **entrepreneurial knowledge**, covering production processes, design thinking, and market readiness - essential skills for future artistic ventures.

3. Social and Community Impact:

Working together fostered a strong sense of community, critical for artists from marginalised backgrounds who often face social exclusion. The collaborative setting promoted mutual support, peer learning, and personal connection. By showcasing the value of local talent, the project celebrated community-based arts development and promoted an inclusive narrative for underrepresented voices.

A Model for Sustainable Development

This NAC-funded project stands as a compelling example of how targeted funding can simultaneously drive **economic empowerment, artistic excellence, and community upliftment**. By seamlessly blending creativity with purpose, the initiative not only advanced the careers of emerging women artists but also **contributed meaningfully to local development, cultural expression, and social cohesion, affirming the transformative power of the arts in building inclusive, resilient communities.**





**"WELL CRAFTED THINGS INSPIRE,
WHETHER IT'S POTTERY OR ART
OR MUSIC."**

Rodney Yee

A large crowd of people is seen from behind, looking towards a stage area. In the background, several bright, golden-yellow fireworks are exploding against a dark night sky. The scene is illuminated with a strong blue light, creating a vibrant and festive atmosphere.

GIG GUIDE

THE GO-TO GIG GUIDE FOR ARTS FANS

Everybody enjoys a live performance! If you're looking for something new to see, here's where you should be!



19 October: **FATHERHOOD**

LadySmith Black Mambazo Live in Concert

Barney Simon Theatre,
Market Theatre, Johannesburg.



19 October: **CENTRE STAGE**

DANCING INTO OUR FUTURE)

Artscape Theatre Centre, Cape Town.



24 October 2025: **MZANSI BALLET'S PRIVATE PRESLEY**

Montecasino Main Theatre,
Johannesburg.



25 October 2025: **CREATIVE ARTS PROJECTS CONCERT**

Polokwane, Limpopo
(64 Biccadd St, Polokwane Central).



25 October 2025: **JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY**

John Kani Theatre at The Market Theatre, Johannesburg



STAFF FEA- TURE

The NAC organisation has over 45 internal staff members, departmentally structured in various departments. Each individual within the organisation plays a vital role in fulfilling the NAC's vision and mandate. So, who are these individuals working towards sustaining an accessible and responsive funding agency in the arts sector? Let's find out!

NKULULEKO NDLOVU

Bridging Music, Heritage, and Arts Administration



Meet **Nkululeko Ndlovu**, an invaluable member of the National Arts Council (NAC) team, currently serving in the Art Development Unit's Music internship program. Nkululeko's journey is a powerful blend of professional music career, deep Zulu heritage, and dedication to arts administration.

Heritage and the Power of Culture

Born and raised in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, with roots tracing back to the village of Ephatheni near Richmond, Nkululeko carries his isiZulu heritage with immense pride. For him, **heritage is an active, lived experience** - embodied by the music, dancing, ceremonies, and traditions such as Indlamu (traditional dancing), Umemulo (coming-of-age ceremony), and

traditional weddings with ilobolo (bridal negotiation). These practices are the foundation of his identity, providing a strong sense of belonging.

From Stage to Sector Leadership

Nkululeko is a highly accomplished musician, holding a **Bachelor of Arts and a BA Honours in Ethnomusicology** from the **University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College**. Prior to joining the NAC in November 2024, he built a career as a sought-after session drummer and percussionist, performing at events and festivals across South Africa.

He believes profoundly that music is a powerful force for unity and social cohesion, capable of bridging divides, expressing emotions beyond words, and driving cultural reflection and social change.

Impact in Arts Administration

Since joining the NAC, Nkululeko has transitioned his passion for the arts into effective arts administration. His responsibilities within the Art Development Unit are critical, focusing on:

- Processing grants and facilitating payments.
- Reviewing reports from funded projects.
- Ensuring compliance and recommending submissions for committee review.

Nkululeko values the transparency in the NAC's funding process and finds immense satisfaction in reading reports that demonstrate the real-world impact of funded projects, viewing this as his personal contribution to the growth of the South African arts sector.

Vision for the Future

Nkululeko keenly recognizes the sector's challenges, particularly the lack of financial resources and regulation that often hinder sustainable artistic careers. To combat this, he strongly **encourages artists to pursue formal training and structured learning to master their craft.**

Reflecting on his role, he shares an inspiring vision: *"Being part of a team like the National Arts Council that fosters innovation and shapes policy, I aim to retire from the sector having helped leave it in a stronger position than it is today. My vision is that the next generation of creatives will not have to endure the same challenges we faced."*



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