

The National Arts Festival kicks off in Makhanda

The 2019 National Arts Festival is officially underway in Makhanda. The festival will showcase South Africa's biggest and brightest artists until 7 July 2019.

The crowd watched as the South African flag was raised and the South African and African Union national anthems were sung by a combined choir of Makhanda. This was followed by celebratory dance performances from Khoi-San group, The Forgotten Kingdom of Kamquqa; local Makhanda Pantsula dancers, Dlala Majimboz; and Eastern Cape vocalist Nomabotwe.



The Forgotten Kingdom of Kamquqa - © Mark Wessels

The opening was attended by the director-general for the Department of Arts and Culture Vusumusi Mkhize; Eastern Cape MEC for sport, recreation, arts and culture Fezeka Bayeni; Makhanda Mayor Mzukisi Mpahlwa; National Arts Festival CEO Tony Lankester; and a group of stakeholders and media.



National Arts Fest's main programme released

24 Apr 2019



Mutually beneficial ecosystem

MEC Fezeka Bayeni welcomed the start of the festival remarking that it brings R94m to the city of Makhanda. "Festival organisers often talk about how they prepare the stage and lay the table from which others come to feast. With the influx of visitors, there is an increased need for small businesses to play a role – not just in terms of providing accommodation and meals to visitors, but a whole host of other services. All of this plays a role in improving the experience of our visitors and, at the same time, helps build local business and economically empowers our people. It's a mutually beneficial ecosystem in which we all play a role." Bayeni committed that her department has budgeted R15m for film development in the Eastern Cape.



Makhanda Mayor Mzukisi Mpahlwa and Eastern Cape MEC for Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture, Fezeka Bayeni - © Mark Wessels

Mayor Mzukisi Mpahlwa said that he fully understands the significance of what has become a truly international festival: “We have come together to create the best possible conditions to facilitate this festival without interruptions and we have pulled out all the stops to make sure this happens.”

The festival’s CEO, Tony Lankester, said that, as with each year, the tone and texture of the festival take its cue from the artists. “The stages are platforms for our artists to come and tell their stories and more than any other festival in the country, the National Arts Festival provides multiple opportunities for the surrounding community to engage with it. What’s special about this is that it happens naturally and not through any sort of development programme. Everyone in this town is touched by the festival. There are free shows every day and we distribute around 4,000 tickets to the community. This year, we are also bringing the cinema to Makhanda with the Noluthando Bioscope playing blockbuster films for adults and children.”



© Mark Wessels

Snap for water

In light of the challenges that host city Makhanda has been experiencing with a water shortage, long-time festival partner Standard Bank has created an opportunity for festival-goers to donate to the Amanzi Yimpilo Project (Water is Life) project that is assisting local primary schools with sustainable water tanks. Desiree Pooe, head of sponsorship at Standard Bank, says: “This year, the National Arts Festival gives us an opportunity to demonstrate how a cultural event can be part of a sustainable solution to a social and developmental challenge. Standard Bank will show our African Heart and we request the public to do the same in our drive to provide sustainable solutions to the water shortages in Makhanda. It is even more crucial this year to support the festival and ensure it is successful.”

To donate to the #snapforwater campaign, members of the public can snap the barcode pos.snapscan.io/qr/SnapForWater.

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