

Opening of Joburg Festival

23 August 2011

Welcome address by the MMC of Johannesburg, Councillor Chris Vondo, on the opening of Joburg's Festival of one-man

Programme Director
Fellow Councilors present here
Managers and Officials of Council
Representative from The Joburg Theatre
Distinguished Guests
Members of the media
Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director it gives me immense pleasure to be officially opening this festival here today. Also it is exciting to be in the midst of the most talented performers in our country today, while at the same time when recognizes familiar faces who have left an indelible mark on our entertainment circles, be it in television, film or stage.

But let me also hasten to add that I'm also indebted with the pleasure of not officially opening the festival but also to be honouring one of our greatest actors, Arthur Molepo.

It fills me with joy that the organizers of this festival have also chosen to honour this imposing figure on our theatre stages, television and film. Even under the most difficult period in the history of our country, Molepo and his peers held their own and continued to be the voice of reason through stage, provided edu-tainment as well as selfishly sharing their experiences with budding actors. Probably Molepo, like me is pleased that this festival has not been relegated to the periphery of the city, but at a facility that is accessible.

And also we should also commend the organisers of the festival. These are young theatre practitioners who are trying to make a mark in this field. Programme Director for us as a City to honour these great artists who came before us, enjoin us to the Freedom Charter which declares that "the government will continue to develop a national programme aimed at building social cohesion through the support and promotion of arts, cultural heritage activities at national, provincial and local levels".

Therefore, the Joburg Metro Council under our Executive Mayor Clr Parks Tau, in line with Community Development imperative, The Joburg Theatre has sapce.com, a programme whose aim is to empower up-and-coming artists from disadvantaged communities. This program affords these artists free space in a world class facility wherein they can showcase their talent.

But in addition, as part of the City's ambitious project, Growth & Development Strategy (GDS) whose theme is Liveable Cities it is our mission that people are not excluded from facilities based on accessibility and affordability.

Also our mission is to ensure that public amenities are accessible in terms of location and operating hours are utilized accordingly. We don't want these facilities to be viewed as being exclusionary and therefore serving the elite. Therefore, I would urge you all to join us on an

ongoing ambitious programme to get Joburg citizens to participate in public discussions whose aim is to make our city a liveable place.

Let me add that we have been overwhelmed by the response which has seen participants from NGOs, academic institutions, finance corporations, residents, religious groups, youth, business, security agencies, environmentalists, town planners and a host of other stakeholders to determine the future of the city of Johannesburg.

These interactions have really broadened our horizons and were a reminder that multiple solutions are required-one size does not fit all

And as a city whose vision is to provide real quality of life for all its citizens, first on our agenda is to turn Joburg into a city that provides really quality of life, for all citizens.

And it is our goal to also promote multi-purpose community facilities that can be used throughout the year by many. We would also look at the possibilities of extending hours of operation of community facilities to 24-hours.

But having said that we need to emphasize good, safe, inclusive public space to promote social cohesion. And theatre is one such place and over the years it has proven so.

Let me also reiterate our commitment that we will continue to support initiatives like these as they seek to nurture up and coming artists, but let me stress that this will be done within the limited available resources.

With that I declare this festival open, let's all enjoy and support the arts.

I thank you.