

## **Remarks by the Premier of Mpumalanga, Thabang Makwetla, at the Secunda Jazz and Cultural Festival Gala Dinner**

**Secunda, 25 February 2005**

**Programme Director**

**Culture, Sports and Recreation MEC Ms Nomsa Mtsweni**

**Executive Mayor Councillor Mdibanisi Tsheke**

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

I am delighted to be here this evening at the start of what promises to be a wonderful weekend of song, music and dance.

We learn that from now until Sunday, a truly dazzling series of events will offer locals and visitors alike a fabulous variety of artistic experiences. This is the Secunda Jazz and Cultural Festival's third year in existence, and one glance at the programme shows that it's going to be one of the best yet.

I'd like to congratulate and thank the festival's organisers on putting this programme together. A word of appreciation must also go to the army of helpers who have worked on making it a reality.

The Secunda Jazz and Cultural Festival has grown and developed over the years. It is undoubtedly becoming one of the country's most exciting annual cultural events.

This is reflected in the fact that it has attracted strong support from so many art and music lovers, not only from the province, but from beyond as well. It has successfully broadened its appeal from what started as an event largely focussed on a single music genre, to where today it embraces the full range of art-forms.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate the people of this special town, for their continuing support for this festival.

A festival like this is an opportunity to showcase a wide range of artistic productions, and to introduce people to art-forms they may not have experienced before. Artists are increasingly working across a broad spectrum of art-forms and are breaking out of the traditional artistic expression.

Over the next days, you will have an opportunity to see an abundance of creativity from artists who are expanding and conquering the confines of many traditional art-forms.

I'd like also to commend Sejacufe's policy of presenting established artists side by side with emerging ones, encouraging and fostering new talent. This dedication makes Sejacufe a progressive project.

But it is not about featuring the new just for its own sake, regardless of quality. It is also about seeking out the very best in new talent, and giving them support, exposure and experience through presentation.

And, crucially it is also about giving them opportunities for contact and professional development through dialogue with established artists, and through masterclasses.

This year's festival takes place as we celebrate 50 years of the people's document, the Freedom Charter, which boldly asserts that the people shall govern and that "The doors of learning and culture shall be opened to all."

Today the doors of culture and learning, the cultural treasures of the country, the continent and the world, are gradually opening to all. We must continue to encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life.

We will also ensure that we teach the youth to love their people and their culture and to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace.

Our culture and heritage remain important building blocks as we fashion- out a truly democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society for our country. This festival must help foster national identity and social cohesion, and thereby contribute to the revolutionary transformation of our country.

Finally, I would like to say a special word of welcome to our visitors - both those who have come to perform and those who have come to enjoy and revel in the quality entertainment offered by this spectacle. Mpumalanga is blessed with an abundance of beautiful scenery, however, you now know that it is not our only claim to fame.

We are acutely aware that people are increasingly looking for a cultural dimension to enrich their holidays and leisure time. They will rarely find as good an opportunity to explore that dimension, as offered by this experience.

I hope that many of those who enjoy this year's festival will right away diarise it for next year and future years to come. Needless to say that if you really love your friends, you owe them an apology for having left them behind, and that you will give them a treat next year by bringing them along to this exciting new prospect on our national entertainment calendar.

**Enjoy!**