



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Keynote Address by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, at the 2022 SA Schools Choral Eisteddfod held at the Rhema Ministries

28 June 2022

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Our Partners more especially LoveLife, and SAMRO

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Parents

School Governing Body members

Teachers

Participants

I am greatly honoured to address the 2022 ABC Motsepe South African Schools Choral Eisteddfod (SASCE) after it was muted for two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As you know, this is our flagship event geared at promoting unity in diversity, national reconciliation, social cohesion, and national identity among young South Africans of school-going age.

It is one of the most prestigious events in the annual school calendar.

It is part of our broader strategy for building social cohesion and promoting unity in diversity as envisaged in the 1996 Constitution of democratic South Africa.

Music is a critical activity contributing to children's holistic development.

Since 2001, SASCE has taken us through various musical styles ranging from West compositions to indigenous and contemporary African offerings.

Therefore, music is a vital cog in building a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, united and prosperous society based on justice, equality, and the rule of law and the inalienable human rights of all.

The Choral Eisteddfod opens a unique world of possibilities, unmediated social interaction, bonding and networking for learners, teachers, parents and families.

It helps to break social barriers.

This is the basis of a new society we all aspire to nurture based on values of human dignity, equality and freedom for all.

And it is supposed to be a happy occasion as the voices of the young reverberate across this colossal hall.

But in the Eastern Cape, news broke at the weekend that the music was forever muted for 21 young people.

The youngest victim was 13 years old and died in the early morning in the Enyobeni Tavern disaster in the Eastern Cape.

The Enyobeni Tavern disaster, wherein 21 young people died under mysterious circumstances, is the biggest catastrophe to befall our nation since the 2000 Throb nightclub calamity, where 13 children died in the men-made stampede.

In the recent Enyobeni Tavern disaster, all children who died should have been asleep in the safety of their homes.

Yet, we have learned that they went on a truant mission.

Without a doubt, they didn't go there to die.

The Enyobeni Tavern tragedy is a sad indictment of us as a nation.

It is not just a case of poor parenting and uncontrolled exuberance of teenagers but the general malaise that afflicts our homeland.

The young want to experience the nightlife of the mature, but they meet their death.

Some of us want to be rich; today, without hard work, they take us on the road to ruin, known as state capture.

Some men want instant pleasure and power to control women's bodies resulting in untold pain and suffering for women and children.

Today social ills such as unbridled consumption of alcohol, use of recreational drugs and general truancy characterise our nation.

We are a nation in crisis. We have lost our moral compass.

We must take collective responsibility for the tragedies that cut short the lives of the young before their prime.

It is time for a national reset.

We cannot do things the same way before the 13-year-old met his demise in a tavern in the early morning hours.

Today, we mourn.

We mourn our youth's needless loss of lives.

The innocence of our youth is lost prematurely.

We send our condolences to the deceased's parents, friends and families and the traumatised nation.

We say, Nkosi sikelela thina lusapho lwayo.

Let's rise and offer a Moment of Silence for the dearly departed due to the Enyokeni Tavern disaster and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Moment of Silence!!!

Today, I want to talk about music and nation-building.

Researchers agree that music is the most widely practised and accessible of all the arts.

It is so readily available and associated with entertainment and relaxation that some people hardly pause to ponder its implication in [the social and economic development of a country].

And yet, researchers argue that some countries earn a lot of revenue through cultural nationalism and musical tourism.

Modern technologies have also simplified the export of good quality music so that broader markets are created, and artists earn their countries' foreign currency.

We know of the recent success of Grammy Award winner DJ Black Coffee and the dominance of Ladysmith Black Mambazo in the same award but in different categories for years.

We know that the Ladysmith Black Mambazo remains more popular in foreign lands than at home.

In other words, choristers who are being trained and encouraged to showcase their singing talents here are engaged in a serious business.

We are not keeping you busy while your parents are at work.

This is not a frivolous recreational activity designed to keep you off the streets.

We are building careers here, strengthening one's character and broadening your horizon beyond your village.

We are imparting knowledge about our interconnectedness as part of humanity.

Music transcends geographies, cultural barriers and languages.

It is more significant than this competition.

It has a long-lasting impact on one's outlook on life, discipline and strength of character.

In other words, we are building a nation of strong-willed, courageous men and women worthy of the title of nation builders, one performance at a time.

This is not just a project to build a nation of winners in the choral music category only but in all facets of life.

We are here to build a nation as “music and musicians are integral to the full realisation of any nation’s growth.”

Music scholar Eunice U Ibekwe believes musicians are culture propagators, indicators or pointers to a nation’s identity, revenue generators, social and health promoters, moral censors, and astute educationists.

And in fact, Ibekwe insists they [musicians] constitute strong steering forces to a whole gamut of a nation.

Music and dance competitions allow our learners to practice an essential educational value of abstract thinking as a performance art piece.

But the ABC Motsepe SA Schools Choral Eisteddfod is more than that.

It is a mass movement for the public good.

A new music conductor(s) will come from this group of choristers.

A new professional singer is born during every performance.

A piece of music and artistic director will take off this week.

A music manager will emerge to take the careers of this cohort of choristers to new unprecedented heights.

Thus, the choral music competition celebrates who we are as a nation.

It offers us an opportunity to cement the future we chose as a country to live in harmony with each other, in peace and united in our diversity.

This musical journey, therefore, serves as a creative instrument for strengthening our social contract to which we have committed ourselves as the sixth administration.

Only when we work together in mutual partnerships can we do more to improve the quality of life in our homeland.

Before I conclude, I know that behind the success of any South African Schools Choral Eisteddfod competition is an exhausted teacher, principal, parent, and broader school communities.

We salute you for your contribution to the building of our homeland.

I make a special plea to all learners to use this competition to birth new careers in music: music conducting, management, entrepreneurship or a career in singing.

Your forebears have walked this path, and the road to success has been paved well for you.

It is high time you constructively use your talent nurtured here to empower yourselves, those around you and the nation.

I wish to thank our conductors who have instilled a deep passion for music and musical discipline in our learners.

Keep up the excellent work!

All thanks to the Motsepe Foundation, and the National Coordinating Committee made up of representatives of teacher unions, national and provincial officials.

Our gratitude also goes to other participating organisations and the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture for the sterling work of hosting this event.

We highly appreciate your support and have no doubt that this long-term partnership will make a positive and sustainable difference in the lives of young South Africans.

Together we can birth in our lifetime a high-performing basic education system and a socially cohesive society at peace with itself.

I thank you.