

**The speech of the Free State MEC for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, Mr Dan Kgothule, on the occasion of the Provincial Choral Music Competitions, Maokeng/Kroonstad**

30 October 2011

Programme Director  
Honoured Guests  
Adjudicators  
Choristers  
Ladies and Gentlemen  
Comrades

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the first ever Provincial Choral Music Competition. I am truly delighted to be part of this historic event which I believe will further enhance the promotion of choral music and help to elevate the standard of choral music in the Free State.

Choral music has its roots in African culture and a people we must be proud to celebrate and cherish this unique South African music genre. As a department, we view the hosting of this completion as an important milestone because it forms part of our overall objective of developing, preserving and promoting all forms of art in the Free State. We are aware that choral music as an art form has truly stood the test of time and is integral part of our history and heritage. It is within this context that, together with the Lengau Choral Music Association, we initiated the Provincial Choral Music Competition.

Choral music has played a critical role in relay our history and culture. As a form of artistic expression, choral music has been used by different composers to preserve and pass on our history as well as to communicate issues that affected us as a people. Today we continue that tradition in honour of those composers and choristers of yester year.

Through this initiative the Provincial Government is elevating choral music to a more coordinated and professional musical genre.

We value choral music because of its dignity and the role it can play in nation building, social cohesion and the renewal of our heritage. This art form can play an important role in our efforts to promote moral regeneration and can be a vehicle through which we drive our anti-crime and anti-crime campaigns in the province. It is important to encourage young people to cherish and take part in choral music.

Through this completion we hope that in the coming years more young people will be draw to join choristers or to form their own choirs. In an effort to promote this art form we also have to identify and support aspiring young composers to continue the legacy of musical luminaries such as Enoch Sontonga, J. P. Mohapelo, Hector Mjana, Dr. Mzilikazi Khumalo and others.

This inaugural Provincial Choral Music Competition paves the way for what we envisage to be an annual event. Our vision is for the completion to start at district level so that we can reach a wider base of choirs and to ensure that competition is fair and inclusive. The department has invested considerably towards this competition.

We must, in future, have as a precursor to the provincial event, competitions held in every corner of the Free State so that the sound of choral music can resonate into the very being of our existence.

My experience of choral music is that it is a genre that is not only heard but it is also meant to be felt. Choral music is a language of the heart and spirit, a language of

movement and of life. This art form personifies our struggles, aspirations and achievements. In the words of French philosopher, Victor Hugo, "Music expresses that which cannot be said, and on which it is impossible to be silent". This is another way of saying that as people we must make music and we must dance and rejoice as a means of expressing our inherent emotions.

I wish to assure you that my department takes the development and promotion of its core mandate very seriously. The hosting of the Provincial Choral Music Competition is an embodiment and celebration of our quest to quality service delivery and improved cultural and artistic progression.

The Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation will continue to advance its core mission and vision towards the upliftment and development of the lives of our people. Through our various programmes, interventions as well as sound policy frameworks, we can be able to ensure that our designated areas of concern are successful and implemented in a conducive manner.

I wish to thank all those individuals who have worked tirelessly to ensure that this completion is a success. Let me also take the opportunity to commend the efforts and commitment of all the choirs that will be taking part in this competition. I sincerely hope that your participation at this event will inspire other choristers to emulate your achievement by being part of this occasion.

All the best to the choirs and may those with the most "angelic" voices win the competition.

I thank you.

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