



Address By

Senator Hazel Manning
Minister of Education

on the occasion of

SanFest 2007
Formal Launch and Awards Ceremony
37th Annual Festival of the Arts & Culture

Sunday September 30, 2007
Creative Arts Centre
Circular Road
San Fernando

It is indeed a pleasure to be here in San Fernando on the occasion of the Formal Launch of **SanFest 2007** and to share in your 37th annual festival of the Arts and Culture Awards Ceremony.

This Festival has blossomed in the last few years and, as “the keepers of the flame of the Arts” here in South Trinidad, I take this opportunity to congratulate the San Fernando Arts Council on the pivotal role you continue to play culturally, socially and economically and in our society.

Indeed, we can all look back in pride to those talented award-winning artists who made their debuts here at SanFest. Some of you would well remember Liam Teague, Atiba Williams, Machel Montano, Michael Zephryne, Joan Foster and Sherma Andrews, to name just a few of the artistes who’s careers were launched following performances at this Festival.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Torrance Mohammed, Chairperson of the San Fernando Arts Council and his team of facilitators who, despite the many challenges, continue relentlessly to produce this annual San Fernando Festival.

I thank you for your excellent work in carrying the torch and increasing participation and awareness of “the Arts – the flame of the Nation.” I congratulate as well all of the young people who participated in this year’s Mr. and Miss SanFest Teen Talent Competition.

Lets all stand and give a rousing cheer to the organizers of SanFest 2007 and particularly to those who participated in the Mr. and Miss SanFest Teen Talent Competition. Congratulations to the scores of primary and secondary school students who have over the years participated in this Festival.

As many of you may be aware, the Arts are dear to my heart and that I take a keen and active interest that ranges from attending musical, drama and dance performances to playing in our own Ministry of Education steel orchestra. This interest was nurtured right here in San Fernando where I attended school and taught for awhile.

The aims and objectives of the Junior Arts Festival:-so integral to SanFest-are in harmony with the mission of the Ministry of Education: to create and implement programmes that assist our students to develop spiritually, morally, physically, intellectually and emotionally.

I take this opportunity to applaud all those who partner with the Ministry of Education and continue to provide rich learning experiences for our students. I urge you to continue to carry the torch, as indeed I call upon all education stakeholders to collaborate with our schools to ensure that students have a variety of experiences for imagining, exploring and creating in the visual and performing arts.

The Arts are unique, expressive, creative and communicative forms that engage our young people so that they may better understand themselves and the world.

It is well known that the Arts in Trinidad and Tobago as in the rest of the world are continually evolving. Festivals such as SanFest provide an opportunity for your young people to exhibit an ability to think, symbolize, observe and express themselves through dance, music, theatre and the visual arts.

At the Ministry of Education we remain committed to the provision of aesthetic education for the nation's children at the Pre-School, Primary and Secondary levels. At the secondary school level, the Visual and Performing Arts is now a core or compulsory subject on the curriculum. It includes Art and Craft, Music, Dance and Drama. These subjects provide balance in the school curriculum and an opportunity for our students to improve their self-confidence and image.

The evidence suggests that the Arts encourage the development of new skills, nurture cultural understanding, invention, new directions and new technology. Indeed, many education theorists have identified the power of the Arts as impacting positively on the well being, self-confidence and self-esteem of those who have not been successful in the traditional academic areas.

The Ministry of Education will continue to provide materials, resources and infrastructure to support the Visual and Performing Arts in all our schools. We will continue to ensure that there is adequate curriculum support and monitoring at all levels of the education system, beginning at Early Childhood level.

As part our commitment to the Arts we will continue to provide resources in the following areas:

- Facilities for Drama and Dance, a Pan Theatre and Studio spaces for sound engineering and video production
- Equipment in the form of musical instruments
- Teachers, instructors and administrators necessary to develop and maintain programmes at all levels of the school system. We are collaborating with the University of Trinidad and Tobago to ensure the development of teachers in this area.
- Technical and financial assistance for a variety of competitions and festivals, such as the Junior Parang Festival, Junior Soca Monarch and Calypso Monarch, Junior Chutney Monarch, Chutney Soca Monarch, the Secondary Schools Drama Festival, the Trinidad and Tobago Music Festival and several others.
- I take this opportunity to invite the San Fernando Arts Council to submit your Business Plan and budget for our consideration so that we may continue to provide support for your efforts.

I am very proud of our achievements over the years in the area of the Arts. They are too many to share at this time but permit me to focus on one area that features our national instrument – the steel band.

Through our Pan-in-the-Classroom Unit we have placed a sixteen-piece steelband ensemble in sixty-five schools in Trinidad and Tobago to support the Music Curriculum. It is our goal to outfit one hundred Primary Schools during the course of this academic

year. We have also provided instruments for those students and schools engaged in East Indian musical traditions.

Since its formation in 2003, this Pan-in-the-Classroom Unit has chalked up many achievements, including:

- Development of Standardized Specifications for Steelpan Instruments in the Sixteen-Piece Ensemble
- Training of over 200 Teachers and other personnel
- Hosting of Vacation Camps that catered to over 500 students and
- Facilitating arrangements since 2005 for both the National Junior Panorama and the National Junior Steelband Music Festival.

Additionally, we facilitated arrangements for recent overseas tours by the St. Margaret's Boys' A.C. Steel Orchestra and the St. Augustine Senior Comprehensive Steel Orchestra. St. Margaret's Boys Steel Orchestra recently performed to appreciative audiences in Mexico and, as you may have seen in the news media, the St. Augustine Senior Comprehensive School Orchestra – winners of this year's National Junior Panorama – returned last weekend from a very successful tour to South Africa where they performed at the 20-20 World Cricket Competitions.

Let me once again congratulate all of today's awardees for your commitment and dedication to the arts and arts education. The Ministry of Education salutes you as you personify our motto of "Excellence in Education."

To our students, as you pace each other on the road to excellence, I encourage you to personify this year's theme. Let the flame of the Arts continue to burn brightly in our nation. Use your talent and Art to create harmony in our society. Avoid violence, disruptive behaviours and negativity and, in the words of the popular song ...let us all "*Carry our Candle. Go, light our world.*"

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you and extend best wishes to all who participate and attend performances at SanFest 2007.

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