
Creating a Child-Centred Society

11th Drama for Life Conference & Festival Official Call

Transforming Arts | Transforming Lives







Drama for Life is proud to announce the call for proposals, participation and attendance of the **11th Drama for Life Conference and Festival** from the 8th to 17th of August 2019 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Following last year's extensive 10 days of conference and festival that celebrated 10 years of Drama for Life's intersectional interrogation of transformation, this year's conference and festival theme seeks to explore the role arts can play in **creating a child-centred society**.

"Children are wholehearted, compassionate humans with an extraordinary capacity to make meaning of the world they live in. Children are a reminder of who we are; they are the cornerstone of our society's future; they are the litmus test of our humanity. Yet we continue to fail our children, trapped by cycles of trauma, we forget who the real child is." - Warren Nebe.

Early childhood development is the most critical time for positive intervention, a process by which children from birth grow and thrive mentally, physically, morally, emotionally and socially. South Africa has made notable progress in developing children's access to early childhood development and learning, nutrition and healthcare. According to Stats SA as of mid-2017, 19.6 million children (0-17 years of age) are living in South Africa accounting for 35% of the country's total population¹.

Shocking facts about children living in South Africa include:

-  20% of the children live far from their health services;
-  34 out of a 1000 do not make it to their 5th birthday²;
-  nearly 30% of pregnant women in South Africa are HIV positive and 235,000 children under the age of 15 are living with HIV³;
-  26% of adolescents (equally boys and girls) living in South Africa have experienced some form of sexual abuse⁴;
-  92% of preschool children of the age 5 to 6 years old attend a learning program and;
-  24% of youth (15-24 year of age) are not employed, self-employed or attending any educational institution.⁵

Children's authentic needs in South Africa often go unmet too often. The country continues to face high levels of violence, disease, malnutrition and in some cases lack of access to early childhood development programs or educational facilities. Too often children, more especially underprivileged

¹ Katharine Hall & Winnie Sambu. 2018. Children in South Africa. Available from <http://childrencount.uct.ac.za>

² South African early childhood review. 2018. available from <http://childrencount.uct.ac.za>

³ Department of Health (2001 - 2016) National HIV and Syphilis Prevalence Survey 2000; National HIV and Syphilis Prevalence Survey 2011; National Antenatal

⁴ Richter, L.M, et al .2018.A longitudinal perspective on boys as victims of childhood sexual abuse in South Africa: Consequences for adult mental health. Available from <https://www.researchgate.net>

⁵ Statistics South Africa (2003 – 2018) General Household Survey 2002 – 2017. Available from www.statssa.gov.za

children, face marginalisation in our social discourse; they are extremely vulnerable, discriminated against and isolated. In many situations, they are likely to experience poor wellbeing and health, nutrition, lack of healthcare services, lack of access to learning programs or education facilities as well as a safe environment. Patronising and condescending cultures confront children when critical social issues arise. Children are relegated to the last in line when it comes to meeting the needs of the society.

The conference and festival, in response to this critical situation, wishes specifically to explore what role the arts can play in helping create a child-centred society. What role can the arts play in the process of a village raising a child in the 21st century? How can the arts contain and nurture the child's holistic wellbeing and development? In what ways can the arts create thinking, listening and dialogue spaces for children? How can we imagine children as central role players in the fostering of deep democracy?

The conference and festival seeks to map developments in childhood research, and reflect on innovations in the performing arts, applied arts, arts therapies, arts education, and performance as research with particular reference to children and democratic societies. Conference and festival themes will include:

- Children, society and the arts;
- Play, children and hope;
- Theatre, children and the imagination;
- Trauma, children and healing through the arts;
- Building a human rights culture with children in the arts;
- Climate crisis, children and the role of the performing arts;
- Sexual health and wellbeing through theatre for youth;
- Arts therapies, children and wellness;
- Children, the migration crisis and freedom through improvisation;
- Children, education and the freedom to learn;
- Arts therapies for youth in conflict and post-conflict contexts;
- Applied improvisation, gender and youth.

The 11th Drama for Life Conference and Festival will present cutting edge research, performances, installations, dialogues, trainings and workshops that will enhance the knowledge-base and experience of artists, community artists, arts healers and arts therapists, arts and cultural leaders

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 15th June, 2019

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and managers, arts educators, arts academics and arts researchers, and arts activists.

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