

Makerere in theatre drive

Sizzling Entertainment

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Makerere University's department of Performing Arts and Film (DPAF) has pledged to help Ugandan theatre industry get back to its heyday.

The announcement was made last week at the National Theatre in Kampala as a group of 16 selected youths took to the stage in a musical fete dubbed WE2 organised to mark the end of Youth and Theatre Project (YTP).

YTP has been part of the three-year Uganda Youth and Culture (UYC) initiative, an effort by the Royal Danish embassy, Denmark's PasséPartout Theatre Production and Makerere, aimed at encouraging Ugandan youths to harness innovative arts for economic empowerment. The other two components of UYC, film and hip hop, are still ongoing.

"We are lobbying the Danish embassy to extend UYC so that we can continue training and equipping these youngsters," DPAF head Patrick Mangeni told the full house.

Dr Mangeni said his department had set aside a comprehensive work plan to boost budding dramatists and theatre groups across the country. And there was no better way to wind off YTP than performing the thrilling hour-long WE2, a musical drama about respect, forgiveness, tolerance and love.

The play, which was created and written by the youth themselves under the tutelage of the experienced Makerere lecturers, is spiced up with pop music and superb choreography. It chronicles two rival families as they learn to live with each other.

Things get out of hand when two children fall in love, despite resentment from either family. Ironically, it is the same relationship which later unites the families as they realize that feuding only yields bloodshed and death.

"We wanted to extend last year's theme of togetherness which we think is very relevant to the current situation in Uganda," project coordinator and theatre tutor, Lillian Mbabazi said of the play many think is political.

It was a free show, which attracted a number of high-profile personalities including diplomats, government officials and local theatre players. The guest of honour, Danish ambassador to Uganda Dan Frederiksen, said his country was committed to supporting Ugandan arts.

But it is the 16 youths themselves who greatly benefited from the project. Their three-week-long intensive training camp came handy.

"I have been dying to get an opportunity to showcase my talent to such a big audience," said an ecstatic 24-year-old Andrew Kajubi who dropped out of university due to lack of fees.

Leon Onana, 24, an upcoming musician, on the other hand, said the training helped him to up his vocals while his colleague Sharon Bamwine said she now has the confidence to chase her childhood dream of becoming a successful actress.

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