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Fame beckons for Gugulethu Choir in new movie

A feature documentary filmed in Gugulethu highlights the beautiful voices of a young choir - as well as Home Affairs bureaucracy, as teens from Fezeka High School struggle to get the required identification for their debut at a prestigious international festival in the UK.

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11 September 2009

A feature film called "Fezeka's Voice" will have its World Premiere at the Tri Continental Film Festival, which runs from 11 September to 12 October 2009 at selected Ster Kinekor and Cinema Nouveau cinemas nationally.

"Fezeka's Voice" tells the true story of choirmaster Phumi Tsewu and his dedication to his township, his school and his choir.

For 12 years he has been teaching the children at Fezeka High School in Gugulethu, Cape Town.

Chronicling their challenge and their first adventure overseas to perform on an international stage, the film follows Phumi's commitment and spirit as he guides the students, teaching them everything from manners to Mozart, giving them focus, pride and joy.



“They are a baby Soweto Gospel Choir waiting to happen”

WHERE TO SEE THE MOVIE

Johannesburg:
 Maponya Mall, Soweto - Sat 12 Sept 2pm
 Rosebank Mall - Tues 15 Sept 6pm

Cape Town:
 V&A Waterfront
 Sat 19 Sept 2pm
 Sat 19 Sept 5pm
 Sat 26 Sept 2pm
 Sat 26 Sept 2.30pm

Tshwane/Pretoria:
 Brooklyn Mall - Thu 1 Oct 6pm

Durban:
 Musgrave Mall - Sat 10 Oct 2pm



HOW THEY GOT INVITED TO THE UK

"Despite there being 77 of them, when I first heard the choir sing in their tiny classroom in Gugulethu, I booked them on the spot to come to the UK," says Jo Metcalf, former Director of The Salisbury International Arts Festival. "They are a baby Soweto Gospel Choir waiting to happen."

SCHOLARSHIPS

As a result of Fezeka High School's performance at the Salisbury International Arts Festival in the United Kingdom last year, over £30,000 (around R380,000) was raised by the local community for a scholarship fund for the Fezeka High students.

This amount will put 7 of the students through four years of university.

To build on this further, the filmmakers have dedicated 50% of the profits from the film to The Fezeka Scholarship Fund, which will enable pupils the opportunity to pursue further education. A further 20% will be put towards outreach and community engagement initiatives in South Africa.

Produced by Ciel Productions and All Living Things, a London-based organisation whose mission is to raise awareness and provoke social change, through the production and distribution of campaigning media projects, Fezeka's Voice will premier alongside 5 other world premiers, 19 African first showings and 22 South African films.

INSPIRATIONAL

"Directing Fezeka's Voice was a powerful and moving experience," Director of Fezeka's Voice Polly Lubbock said.

"What started off as a simple story about a school trip became so much more. It's been incredibly exciting to see it evolve into a feature documentary about one man's life mission to empower the young people living in his township."

Alongside its premiere at this year's Tri Continental Film Festival, "Fezeka's Voice", which features Archbishop Desmond Tutu, will form part of the 50th Anniversary cultural celebrations of Gugulethu in October 2009.

■ More about All Living Things

All Living Things is a grass-roots organisation that cultivates global citizenship through inspiring individuals to positively engage in their communities and ultimately embrace the universal rights of All Living Things. The organisation is driven to inspire a people's movement to bring about a Universal Declaration of Planetary Rights, which has already been presented to the UN by lawyer and environmentalist Polly Higgins.

To do this, All Living Things creates powerful issue-based media works, such as socially responsible documentaries, podcasts and online content and uses this multi-media to create and foster a movement of ideas and debate to push for action and social responsibility. The organisation works with the more traditional routes of cinema, TV and DVD, as well as alternative distribution platforms, such as screenings in community centres and schools, online campaigns and working with relevant NGOs.

■ More about the Tri Continental Film Festival

The Tri Continental Film Festival, now in its seventh year, is an annual human rights festival, which takes place at commercial cinemas in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Tshwane and Durban. Selected films are predominantly factual (documentary), although drama features are included, along with a component of short films. All films are concerned with and/or created by filmmakers from, the three continents of Africa, Asia or Latin America. The festival is a founding member of the Human Rights Film Network, an international partnership of human rights film festivals that includes One World (Prague), Amnesty and Human Rights Watch.

Films selected represent award-winning, stimulating and rewarding content. The programming aims to connect global issues to local issues and by doing so to allow viewers to make sense of their world. In other words, it is a festival that redefines the notion of entertainment by providing challenging films that are originated internationally and locally.

■ On the Web:

For further information on Fezeka's Voice and the online community established around the film, visit www.fezeka.com or All Living Things, www.all-living-things.org.

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