

## **NGC Sanfest Command Performance Day 1**

**November 7, 2017**

Good morning.

I am so happy to represent The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (NGC) as we *celebrate the talent of our youth* at this much anticipated, first Command Performance of the NGC Sanfest 2017.

The San Fernando Junior Arts Festival is a space where thoughts, ideas and stories find expression in the most creative artistic media; it is a stage for imagination and talent to combine and explode. The standard of performance and creative output at this festival gets better every year, and that is one reason why NGC continues to renew this investment. We are also keenly aware of the potential of this festival to impact and shape our future in a number of important ways, most notably in the sphere of culture.

Children today inhabit a world that is remarkably different from the world of our childhood. The pace at which technology is changing the face of our planet is breath taking, and it is therefore not a stretch to imagine that in the space of a generation, entertainment, art, even language, will have undergone huge transformations. These changes will of course trigger cultural shifts as well, and indeed, we can already see how the culture of youth today differs from that of our parents' time.

We often bemoan this departure from traditional ways as a 'loss of culture', but what we need to realise is that our ancestors are not the **only** authors of our culture. Trinbagonian culture began at the birth of our nation, yes, but it continues to grow and evolve and be shaped by successive generations. We cannot stop that evolution - we must accept that change is inevitable - but we **can** try to ensure that the elements of our ancestors' culture that are

unique to Trinidad and Tobago, that are indigenous to our shores, are carried through in every iteration of Trinbagonian culture to come. That is where events like the NGC Sanfest come in.

Sanfest creates a space for the culture of Trinidad and Tobago in the 1960s, 70s, 80s to dialogue with contemporary culture. It introduces our youth to the characters, stories, music and dance of our parents and grandparents, and challenges our youth to make them their own. It helps them understand the past, and get excited about bringing it to life again in new incarnations. This of course allows *us* to experience our traditional cultural creations in new ways, nuanced by the interpretation of youthful imaginations.

Of equal importance is the fact that NGC Sanfest has today become a calendar fixture in the academic year. This is significant because in order for schools to consistently field participants in the various categories, our traditional art forms must be **taught** to students. This means that the festival not only urges our children to reflect on and embrace our heritage, but it compels our educators to do the same. It should be clear then, that as long as there is **active interest** and **participation** in this festival, our cultural patrimony will not be lost.

Therein lies a critical proviso – we need to encourage our children in the Arts, and pique their interest in traditional culture. We cannot fault our young people for not valuing the past if we ourselves do not celebrate it. For instance, were it not for Sanfest, young people today might not know who Torrance Mohammed is, or what Calypso Rose has accomplished, because many of us adults are equally oblivious to their contributions. We as parents and guardians must recognise that we are complicit in the ‘loss of culture’ that we lament, because we are perhaps not as proactive about honouring our traditional art forms and artistes as we should be. We must therefore play our part in the cultural education of our children, and support their involvement in festivals like these.

That said, ladies and gentlemen, I am optimistic that today's Command Performance will prove to us that despite our concerns about the future, our cultural inheritance is in good hands. We have, after all, entrusted it to extremely talented boys and girls.

On behalf of NGC, I wish all the best to our young performers for a successful show this morning, and I hope you enjoy every minute of it.

Thank you.