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13 April 2021

To the South African Government, the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture Re: The National Arts Council of South Africa

The International Association of Performing Arts for Youth (IPAY) connects a vibrant and diverse international collective of arts professionals dedicated to outstanding performing arts experiences for young people. Our community members are producers, agents, presenters, artists, and cultural institutions across the globe. We envision a world in which artistic excellence and innovation in performing arts for young audiences are nurtured, supported, and expanded.

We have been monitoring the current situation in South Africa as artists and creative practitioners have been engaged in public protest for over 40 days without any response from you. These individuals are simply asking for transparency and accountability from the South African government, the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture, and the National Arts Council of South Africa with regards to relief funding for the arts. Today we heard reports that employees of the NAC have been warned not to come to their offices because you plan to forcibly remove peaceful protestors. This is deeply disturbing.

IPAY stands in solidarity with South African artists and creative practitioners in their rightful expectation that you publicly disclose your accounts of this relief funding. As stewards of public funds, it is imperative that we honor the contracts we establish with our partners. It is unacceptable that work has already begun on multiple projects, yet the creators of these projects have not been paid for their work, which they began in good faith that you would disburse payment as promised.

As organizations such as ours work to seek out artists from geographic regions (like South Africa) which have been underrepresented in our festivals and programming, we cannot in good faith engage with cultural and governmental agencies that withhold promised compensation from artists and information from their communities.

We hope that you will respond to these requests for accountability with grace and candor. It seems that your intention was to provide much-needed COVID relief support to artists and creative practitioners, as well as to enrich your community through artistic and cultural experiences as we grapple with a global pandemic. We hope that the situation can be resolved to the mutual satisfaction of all parties.

Sincerely,

Wendy Bable, President

Written on behalf of and supported by the full IPAY Board of Directors