

Smithfield is almost exactly half way between Gauteng and Grahamstown, home of the largest and oldest festival in Africa (and the second biggest in the world). The Platteland Preview, based in Smithfield, is a regional arts festival which tries to capitalise on this geographical relationship.

Artists involved in the fringe of the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown often have excellent new material to perform, but without a chance to rehearse as much as they might like. The festival invites artists coming from Gauteng on their way to Grahamstown to stop over in Smithfield: we provide them accommodation and breakfast at no charge; in addition they have a chance for a final technical rehearsal without being charged for the venue hire etc.

The first year, June 2013, went off very well even though we had no money or large-scale sponsors. Many individuals and small businesses in and around Smithfield helped us with cash donations or in kind (loaning us chairs or glasses for example) and it really was a community venture.

We have a strong outreach to our local schools, many of whose learners have never been to the theatre before, and we are working with the principals of all three schools to ensure that their learners get exposure to at least some of the shows we bring to the town.

Following workshops held after the festival with a number of high profile arts officials who offered advice, encouragement and suggestions for funding possibilities, we are now in the process of registering the festival as a not for profit organisation. This will allow us to begin a proper fund raising effort to make sure the Platteland Preview is sustainable.

For a taste of the festival check this You Tube link:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9z5t6QxFOE

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