



**WELCOME REMARKS**

by

**Senator, the Honourable Dr. Emily Dick-Forde**

**Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment**

**At the**  
**Grand Opening of the**

**National Academy for the Performing Arts**

It is my role to welcome you to this magnificent facility.

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As I thought about this event and visited the facility over the period, in its different stages of development, as a construction site, as a finishing project, and finally as a masterpiece, and, as I reflect on the controversy that tries to detract from the developer's deliveries, I could not help but liken the entire experience to that of a woman announcing her pregnancy in a climate of antagonism. Then, going through the birthing process, with all of its reforming and shifting, finally, submitting to the pressure, the pain, the ring of fire and then the joy of a successful delivery.

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Birthing involves a process of confusion, distortion, pressure, requiring courage and resilience, then strength, and a sense of purpose, that gives life and light to a **delight**, that is priceless. The Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 that there is a time for everything under heaven. That chapter reminds us that we must enjoy the work of our hands. Moreover we are told that everyone should eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. Now is the time therefore to celebrate the delight of delivery.

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We celebrate a remarkable team effort on the part of the developer, the project manager, prime contractor and the sub-contractors, to complete construction on a condensed time schedule. I congratulate the Executive Chairman of the UDeCOTT, Mr. Calder Hart and the Board of Directors, the Chief Operating Officer, Ms. Neelanda Rampaul and staff of the corporation for persisting and completing. In labour some give up, or things go so wrong that the baby is not delivered. As a government we kept watch and supported like good midwives and doulas. We now celebrate completion and excellence.

I wish to thank the construction company Shanghai Construction group for their consistent first class workmanship and their maturity in persisting and completing with excellence in the face of many challenges. We watched in fascination as the workers placed the covering over this treasure, by hand. We looked on as the shape emerged and the complete integrated design gave light to the carefully crafted Chaconia flower, with every petal in place, as it was in the original design. Ladies and gentlemen when you look at this magnificent structure it is clear that there were no after thoughts, the academy was carefully planned and masterfully executed. Thank you Mr. Michael Zhang, Mr. Shi, the project manager, and staff of the SCG for giving to Trinidad and Tobago a marvelous venue.

I prophesy that this facility will take the arts in our nation to higher and higher levels as articulated and planned for in our national strategic plan for development, Vision 2020. In the Vision 2020 plan, significant emphasis is placed on the continued development of our human resource. This emphasis is consistent with, and has always been, one of the central pillars for development by this government.

By the completion of this carefully planned academy, we as a nation have satisfied goals under two of the five pillars that ensure Vision 2020 is achieved. This world class facility provides the creative space for the realization of goals under the pillar **Developing Innovative People:**

**Goal 1**

***The People of Trinidad and Tobago will be well known for excellence in innovation***

**And Goal 4**

***The richness of our diverse culture will serve as a powerful engine to inspire innovation and creativity.***

These are the specific goals to be pursued, and for which this facility was constructed. This beautiful space, that itself is a creative masterpiece, has a purpose in fulfilling the goals for further developing the creativity and innovation of our citizens.

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Several Government Ministries and Agencies are involved in pressing this facility into operation, and opening its doors to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. These include the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, The Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, the University of Trinidad and Tobago and their affiliated organizations and stakeholders.

The second pillar to which this north campus provides goal achievement is Sound Infrastructure and Environment. One objective and two strategies under this pillar are satisfied in this legacy structure. Objective: Improve the visual appeal and functionality of all public facilities and buildings; Strategies: Strengthen the institutional capacity for infrastructure development and; strengthen the planning and development framework.

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As a start to fulfilling their mandates, two shows are to be staged at this facility before the CHOGM, one by the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs and the other by the UTT. Both events are opened to the general public with UTT's show giving focus to children.

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In addition to these shows, and after the CHOGM, the UDeCOTT will stage several shows at this venue to allow persons from all over Trinidad and Tobago to come and experience the facility, as well as sample the cultural excellence of local and international performers. And of course these will be free of charge also. So stay tuned for details on these shows.

At the completion of a project of this magnitude it is imperative to take a moment to critically evaluate the lessons learned during the course of the project. This project offers opportunities for transferring learnings that should result in significant improvements in our development process.

This project employed the same design-build Requests for Proposals process that the UDeCOTT had previously and successfully employed in the construction of the Waterfront Complex. This process, combined with the fixed-price nature of the contract, has shifted significantly, the project risks away from the state and tax-payers and transfers a much greater burden of accountability on our construction partners. Our partners at Shanghai Construction Group in this case proved themselves more than capable of bearing that burden and worthy of the trust placed in them.

The timely opening gives us as a nation the opportunity to present to the world our aspirations and achievements during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

This Academy is both home to the arts (in its function) and a monument to the arts (in its form). And yet of the many functions that this Academy has, and the many forms it can take, its most important function is that it quite simply is a school...

- a centre for learning and growth

- a centre for excellence,

- a centre for experimentation and discovery

- A centre to push the creativity of our artistes to new boundaries

The National Academy for the Performing Arts Centre has the functions of theatre, administrative management and hotel in its design. It is functional as a space to showcase, as well as develop national culture and art and satisfy demands for the development of the tourist industry. It is a multipurpose and multi-sectoral facility.

This Academy, in its purpose and structure, stands as a tribute, and a commitment, to continued excellence as we pursue developed country status through the synergy of human resource and physical capacity development. In the same way that academic

excellence has its treasured spaces, this architectural wonder similarly lifts the profile of cultural artistes to the prominence given to academic attainment in our nation.

We applaud the local contractors and all those who have contributed to the excellence that surrounds us here today, and to the wonder of human capacity to which the completion of this facility testifies. We thank God for the pressure and the pain, which are always a part of delivery, yet critical to build character and emotional resilience in those who laboured. The UDeCOTT, its leadership through Mr. Hart and the Board of Directors and its staff are stronger today as a result of this accomplishment. On behalf of the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment, I say welcome to all of our citizens to this new facility. I wish to thank you all for listening and may God continue to bless our nation.

**November 9, 2009**