

Honoured Guests, Fellow Award Winners, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am deeply honoured by this award. Thank you to the selectors, the sponsors and organizers of this event. I also want to take the opportunity to say how humbled I am to be in the company of my fellow Awardees, whose work I have respected and admired over the years.

It is a momentous time in our history where heritage is a place of both celebration and battle, when lost and marginalized aspects of our heritage have to be reclaimed as well as when aspects of our common heritage have to be let go of so that the new can be ushered in. A time when balances are struck fearlessly and with courage, between what is community and what is individual, what is pride and what is divisive, what is diversity and what is compromised. It is ultimately an exciting, inspirational time to be South African and I am honoured to get an Award of this nature at this time.

I want to thank my family, Mervin, Rosh, Kenny, Sharon and Penny, my extended family who have been integral parts of the vision, Ntombi Gasa and Neliswa Rushualang of Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, my supportive partner Storm van Rensburg, my late father Mr MN Pather who taught me intellectual rigour, devotion, discipline and political responsibility but ultimately my mother who gave me the heart of heritage and social responsibility. My mother is not a university graduate and the kind of emotional intelligence that she gave me is testament to the kind of heritage that this country overflows with. An intelligence not just in museums and libraries, but an active intelligence of the body, an intelligence on the street, an intelligence and creativity that surprises and overwhelms, the extraordinary in the supposedly ordinary from Warwick Avenue to Kwa Machai.

It is pure inspiration just to be South African. Thank you.