

FEDA KZN brings young theatre makers and technical skills together

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Posted on September 1, 2026



Kearsney College, the FEDA Winner

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There is a wonderful sense of purpose when Janet Baylis talks about young people and theatre in South Africa. In 2004, she founded the Festival of Excellence in Dramatic Arts (FEDA) to give high school students a platform to tell their stories, develop their skills and experience the magic of live theatre.

Now in its 23rd year, FEDA has grown beyond Johannesburg, with the festival making its debut in KwaZulu-Natal this year and set to expand to Cape Town next year. As part of the inaugural KZN festival, DWR Distribution's Michael Taylor-Broderick was invited to present a technical workshop. At the same time, DWR also donated a grandMA3 onPC DMX-key as the prize for the winning school, Kearsney College.

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The inaugural KZN festival brought together young actors, playwrights and backstage teams for the interschools FEDA One Act Play Festival. Productions, which run between 15 and 30 minutes, are adjudicated by professionals from the theatre, television and education sectors, alongside FEDA alumni.

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grandMA3 onPC DMX-key

“Every year I’m amazed by the bravery and resilience of young people in telling their stories,” says Janet, who adjudicated 64 productions in Johannesburg and 11 in KZN this year. “They remind us of who we once were and why their voices are more important than ours. These are the future theatre makers of tomorrow. It’s an honour and a privilege to witness their work.”

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Congratulations Kearsney College, the FEDA Winner

Technical theatre is an important part of that future, which is why DWR Distribution was delighted to be involved in the KZN launch. Michael Taylor-Broderick's technical workshop added another dimension, showing students that what happens behind the scenes is just as important as what happens on stage. Lighting, control and technical production are all part of bringing a story to life, and giving young people an opportunity to explore these skills can open doors to an entirely new side of theatre.

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The poster features a group of young performers on a stage, holding up large plastic bottles as if they are props or weapons. A spotlight shines down on them from above. The background is a dark stage with red curtains.

FEDA
Festival of Excellence
in Dramatic Arts

THE MILKWOOD THEATRE
AT DANVILLE GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL
23 - 26 JULY 2026
18H00

FEDA KZN
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“Besides being the most brilliant playwright, Michael is generous and humble and kind and funny and witty and amazing,” smiled Janet. “He just held me whilst I birthed this festival here and encouraged me to be brave. The prize DWR has given us is way beyond anything we are given in Johannesburg. It’s incredibly generous and will enhance the winning school’s future theatre productions.”

The prize is a grandMA3 onPC DMX-key, a powerful yet compact lighting control solution. Used with the free grandMA3 onPC software, it unlocks 4,096 parameters via USB-C, giving students access to professional lighting control without the need for a dedicated console or complicated infrastructure.

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Curro Hillcrest High

Janet was asked why it was important to her that other players get involved in her project. She answered, "Because we forget we were once young. Because we don't listen carefully enough to young people's stories. Because they need to be SEEN and HEARD. Because they deserve better from us! But most of all because at FEDA a group of young playwrights, a few actors and backstage crew walk on stage and care for their souls every night! It's the world premiere of their work! FEDA alumni have moved on to NYU. To Yale. To Harvard. FEDA teaches skills about managing people, meeting deadlines, tolerance. Collaboration and creativity, to mention a few."

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St Mary's DSG Kloof