



PRESS RELEASE

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“The Princess of Africa” Takes Centre Stage In 21 Icons

The irrepressible Yvonne Chaka Chaka takes centre stage in **21 Icons South Africa** and shows exactly why she is known as the “princess of Africa” on Sunday, **October 20** at 6.57pm on SABC3. The singer of hits such as “Burning Up”, “I’m in Love with a DJ”, “I Cry for Freedom” and “Umqombothi”, Chaka Chaka is a role model, mentor and agent for change who is known and loved throughout Africa.

With seemingly boundless energy, Chaka Chaka has accomplished more in her almost 30-year career than most people do in a lifetime. Importantly, she has used her fame to campaign for various causes, including literacy, women’s and children’s rights, and transparency in the distribution and monitoring of donor aid. “My voice has given me a platform to air my views, to help people, to do advocacy and to try to change people’s lives. I believe in helping out there,” she tells filmmaker and photographer Adrian Steirn, creator of the 21 Icons project.

A goodwill ambassador for both Unicef and the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, Chaka Chaka is passionate about doing her bit to help eradicate this disease that claims more than 600 000 lives each year, most of them in Africa. “I want to be the voice of the voiceless,” she says. “I want to be the voice of the people who, with \$5, can buy a net and sleep under it but cannot afford to do it. I can go and lobby for them; I can talk to government leaders.”

Always one to take action and get involved, Chaka Chaka in 2006 established a charity, the Princess of Africa Foundation, to complement her work in this field. Among many other projects, it has trained more than 100 women to be community healthcare workers in Limpopo villages where malaria prevalence is high.

The disease personally touched her when one of her musicians, Phumzile Ntuli, died from cerebral malaria, which she had contracted during a tour with Chaka Chaka in Gabon.

“Her death opened my eyes,” says Chaka Chaka, “and I wanted me to do lots not only for her, but for those children and women in Africa — children under five, pregnant women — who die from this disease that is preventable and curable. Imagine a world without malaria!”

This wife and mother of four also spends much of her time motivating children through talks at schools and other public-speaking events. “I always say to them: be what you want to be and never let anybody tell you what you want to be,” she says.

Steirn’s inspiration for his portrait of Chaka Chaka, which will be published in the Sunday Times on October 20, is her own refusal to allow a poverty-stricken background to deter her from becoming what she wanted to be. “When I spoke to her she told me that when she was growing up she was too poor to afford a microphone, so she would sing holding a broomstick,” he says. “Now she sings for kings and queens — it’s a real rags-to-riches story.”

The resulting image shows Chaka Chaka doing exactly that on stage while in the background a tiara rests atop a piano — a reference to her status as “princess of Africa”. The portrait, signed by Chaka Chaka, will be auctioned at the end of the series and the proceeds donated to her Foundation.

Public participation is invited on **Twitter: @21icons;** **www.21icons.com** and **www.facebook.com/21icons**.

21 ICONS South Africa is proudly sponsored by Mercedes-Benz South Africa, Nikon and Deloitte and supported by The Department of Arts & Culture as a nation-building initiative.



PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS

Singer and goodwill ambassador Yvonne Chaka Chaka tells Adrian Steirn, filmmaker, photographer and creator of **21 Icons South Africa**, about her long and difficult journey as a musician and why she has chosen to become a voice for the voiceless through her charitable work.

PHOTOGRAPH DETAILS

Photographer Adrian Steirn's portrait shows singer Yvonne Chaka Chaka on stage, holding a broomstick into which she sings — a reference to the iconic singer doing so as a little girl because there was no money for a microphone. In the background, a tiara reflects her status as the "princess of Africa".

ENDS

On behalf of **21 ICONS South Africa**

Jo-Leen Jan

Publicity

joleen@honeybell.co.za

SA Mobile: +27 83 287 0165

+27 74 525 9014

Heidi Pretorius

Project Management

heidi@honeybell.co.za

SA Mobile: +27 82 940 3464