



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**Ministry of Trade and Industry**

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# *The Trinidad and Tobago Gospel Music Awards*

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REMARKS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON  
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

APRIL 30<sup>TH</sup>, 2023

**Salutations:**

- The Honourable Randall Mitchell – Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts
- Dr. the Honourable, Nyan Gadsby-Dolly – Minister of Education
- The Honourable Donna Cox – Minister of Social Development & Family Services
- Ms. Ayleen Alleyne-Ovid – Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Mr. Ian Haywood – Managing Director, Celian Group
- Ms. Melissa Jimenez – General Manager, Trinidad and Tobago Music Company Limited (MusicTT)
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening

It is indeed a pleasure for me to join the Gospel music community tonight to recognize the contributions of our local artistes who continue to break barriers and promote our music regionally and globally.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry is very pleased to sponsor this event for yet another year and I am truly encouraged by the number of persons present here tonight and those who have participated in the various events during this 3-day Festival. The resounding interest and participation in the Festival, which culminates in tonight's award ceremony, is a testament to the growing popularity of Gospel music locally and the positive impact events like these have on the entire Gospel community from fans to artistes and producers.

Christian music, a subset of the Gospel music genre, represents a significant market internationally. According to an article dated 2018 in the Forbes Magazine in the United States (US), album sales of Christian music exceeds Latin, Classical, Jazz and the popular Electronic Dance Music (EDM) markets and is the fastest growing radio market in the US is Christian music. Many major mainstream brands such as Pepsi and McDonald's, have also aligned with Gospel/Christian artists and their music to promote their brands as part of their overall marketing strategy.

The Gospel music landscape in Trinidad and Tobago is relatively well-developed comprising of five (5) radio stations, many producers and recording studios and at any given time there are 12–20 local artists who tour extensively. However, there are opportunities for further growth and expansion. Accordingly, with the continuous evolution of the Christian music industry partly due to the rise of digital music and greater use of social media, the opportunity for local artistes to tap into international markets is far greater than before.

With social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, fans of religious music are now a post away. More and more artistes are utilizing these popular platforms to upload reels and short clips, creating a niche space for the spiritual community online. According to Euronews, a reputable newspapers in Europe, since May 2022, there has been a 25% increase in creations on TikTok with Gospel music.

I must acknowledge local artistes such as Jaron Nurse and “Positive” who are putting Trinidad and Tobago on the map as a recognized producer of Gospel music and world-class artistes. Viewership statistics for these artistes via YouTube are quite impressive and stand well over 18 million plus views which is indicative of their popularity internationally.

However, it would be remiss of me not to take this opportunity to remind artistes and producers alike of our International Standard Recording Codes for Trinidad and Tobago (TT-ISRC). This unique identifier, distributed by COTT, is a fixed point of reference which identifies a piece of work as originating from Trinidad and Tobago. It also enables tracking and recordkeeping of your material across borders, over different services, and through various digital activities. This is one tangible way in which members of the music fraternity ought to be embolden to expand the footprint of Trinidad and Tobago’s Gospel music in the global arena.

Internationally there are new and interesting trends in the Music industry. With the increase in demand for Gospel music and the growing popularity of Christian songs globally, already there is a related increase in Sync Licensing opportunities for which our local Gospel artistes can benefit from by creating content for local and international Christian movies, film series and short films. The best way to benefit from this is to connect your music to these platforms and create licensable music. Music creates more exposure and marketability when it is linked to other mediums.

Another emerging trend is the fusion between Gospel music and other leading genres. Producers and musicians are creating music without being constrained to one style. Today, playlists are created for everyone and for any purpose including studying, exercising, cooking, driving and so on. People listen to music based on their mood as opposed to genre preferences. The lines between genres will continue to blur even further as new music is released and different sounds emerge much to our enjoyment.

This trend is also reflected in the Award Ceremony as this year some new categories have been introduced including: Praise and Worship Song of the Year; Reggae Song of the Year; Soca Song of the Year and Contemporary Song of the Year. I am delighted to see that the genre has been uniquely blended with other popular types of music with positive lyrics. Gospel music was also a key feature at the recently held Tobago Jazz Festival which opened with a Gospel Music Night featuring the likes of Positive and Blessed Messenger from Tobago.

This genre of music is so multifaceted it can’t be defined by a broad brush but the common tenet is the message itself always has primacy. In a time when many are seeking answers and just general direction, you the artistes and producers, who have chosen Gospel music as your career of choice, have an immense undertaking to spread messages of faith, hope, love, togetherness, perseverance and strength to overcome life’s obstacles. It is a heavy cross to bear and so far, just by tonight’s ceremony alone, I am pleased to say you are all progressing well and it is my hope that you continue along this path of uplifting and inspiring our nation and your fans wherever they may reside for generations to come.

The Government will continue to do its part through musicTT to develop the music industry as well as the capacity of all our creatives. There are a range of initiatives underway inclusive of the Spotlight Artiste Portfolio Development Programme which seeks to harness the potential of our musicians and equip them

with the knowledge and skillsets to exceed in local and foreign markets; a host of capacity building and educational webinars; subsidized performances through the Live Music District; and, the RVRB Music Conference which provides an opportunity for music professionals to network and navigate the challenges of a changed global music economy. Ladies and gentlemen, the tools and programmes are available and I urge you to avail yourselves of them.

In closing, I wish to thank Mr Haywood and the team at Celian Group for their unwavering support and commitment to the growth and development of the Gospel music industry. Your efforts are applauded for continuously realizing and improving this production on a yearly basis. I also extend heartfelt congratulations to all nominees, finalists and award recipients on your achievement. Your talent and dedication to creating and promoting Gospel music is a source of inspiration and strength to many. I ask that God to bless and guide you and all your endeavors. I look forward to your continued success locally and challenge each of you to expand into the regional and international markets.

I thank you.