

Benefit Concert for Ward Theatre

A benefit concert to raise funds for the rehabilitation of the Ward Theatre is slated for the Institute of Jamaica, East Street, downtown Kingston, on Sunday, November 18, beginning at 11:15 a.m.

The concert, which forms part of a broader fund raising effort for the historic land, situated at North Parade, downtown Kingston, is being organised by the Ward Theatre Foundation. Patrons can look forward to being thrilled by the crème-de-la-crème of local contemporary performers. They include: Dr. Curtis Watson, Pauline Watson, the Brandenburg singers, Movements Dance Company, Peter Ashbourne, Rosina Moder, and Dr. Carol Ball. Ward Theatre Foundation Director, Cedric McDonald, told JIS News that the organization is seeking to raise over US\$6 million from the concert to rehabilitate the Theatre, which, he lamented, is in a state of disrepair. He expressed the hope that the facility can be restored to its former "majesty and grandeur", while adding that a business and development plan, to this effect, has already been drafted. Mr. McDonald, who is also Chairman of the Planning Committee, pointed out that the concert coincides with the anniversary of the birth of late philanthropist, Ruby Martin, who led the Ward Theatre restoration campaign. He said, to this end, Mrs. Martin, who passed away in April this year, was instrumental in staging a number of fundraising Sunday morning concerts. "We worked with her on about three or four concerts at the Institute between 2010 and 2011, which had been successful. So we thought it appropriate, as a Board, to do this particular one in her memory," he added. Noting the Ward Theatre's "tremendous potential" which can be tapped as part of efforts to boost heritage tourism in Jamaica, Mr. McDonald underscored the need for greater focus on developing this area. "Everywhere in the world, a theatre district is very vibrant. And we want to make the Ward Theatre no less a vibrant institution so that, when we have it restored, we can have the plant being used, perhaps, seven days a week," he said, while noting that the facility is a focal point in downtown Kingston redevelopment initiative. The Theatre was presented as a gift to the citizens of Kingston in 1912 by the then Custos of Kingston, Colonel Charles J. Ward. It was declared a national monument in January 2000. In endorsing the initiative, Patron of the Foundation, Governor-General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen, has encouraged persons to lend full support to all of the efforts being undertaken to ensure that restoration of the Ward Theatre is carried out in the shortest possible time. "This once grand symbol of Jamaican culture must regain its pride of place. A hundred years ago, then Custos Ward willed the beautiful structure to our capital city. A restored state of the art Ward Theatre is a legacy we owe to succeeding generations," Sir Patrick said. Tickets for the concert may be obtained at the Ward Theatre and from the Directors of the Foundation.