



*The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor*

**PROFESSOR MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**CLOSING CEREMONY: 5<sup>th</sup> UNISA NATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION**

**18 JULY 2015**

**ZK MATHEWS HALL, UNISA**

- Hon. Justice Bernard Ngoepe, President, Unisa International Competitions and Chancellor, Unisa
- Members of Unisa Council present
- Members of Unisa Executive and Extended Management present
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Members of the Jury and Competitors present
- Members of the Board of Control of the Unisa Music Foundation, present
- Members of the Unisa board of Trustees present

- Sponsors of the Special Prizes Awards present
- Representatives from the Provincial Government present
- Members of the Music Competition organising Committee present
- Other members of Unisa community present
- Members of the media fraternity present
- Invited Dignitaries
- Ladies and Gentlemen

There are many interesting facts about the piano, three of which include: the first piano being built in 1698 by the Italian Spinet maker Bartholomeo Christofori; the modern piano having 12 000 parts of which 10 000 are moving when performed; and finally, that there is no person named Steinway that made pianos. Rather his name was originally Engelhard Steinweg which he subsequently changed to Henry E Steinway. Today, the piano is known and loved as an instrument that awakens our senses and inspires passion and pathos - and a range of other emotions and sentiments in between.

Ladies and gentlemen, invited guests, colleagues and participants, good evening and welcome to the 5<sup>th</sup> Unisa National Piano Competition. It is my distinct pleasure to address you this evening. In 1982 Paul McCartney wrote a song for a person he admired greatly, and that is of course, Stevie Wonder. The song was called Ebony and Ivory and the message was about racial harmony using the piano as a

metaphor. The main message of the lyrics was that the black and white keys of the piano (Ebony and Ivory) live together side by side in perfect harmony, so why can't we. It was one of the first instances in which the piano played a role other than that of a solo or accompaniment instrument.

Over the past two weeks, the piano has played a very different role at Unisa and in our country. It is well known that the Unisa piano competition ranks amongst the world's best piano competitions and that we are looked upon as being leaders in the field of piano competitions. In keeping with our Unisa identity of breaking down stereotypes, breaking new ground and leading transformation, our national piano competition has become the first competition to include both jazz and classical categories side-by-side. In 2016 we will become the first international piano competition in the world to include both jazz and classical categories in the same competition - a testament to our determination and drive to become pioneers in the field of music both nationally and internationally.

The inclusion of jazz has tremendous ramifications for music across our country. It is well known that jazz was at the musical forefront of the struggle against Apartheid with many jazz artists expressing through music that which they could not express verbally. Accordingly Jazz occupies a unique place in our society, and it brings me tremendous joy to see its incorporation in our competitions,

concerts and community music efforts. It is most certainly a truly South African art-form deserving of national recognition.

When Prof Devroop informed me that the competition will include both jazz and classical categories, my first thoughts were that this development will make our competitions accessible to the many young pianists of colour. To my surprise I was overwhelmed to see so many young pianists of colour entering not just the jazz category but also the classical category. You may ask well why is this important? It is extremely important because it shows that all styles of music are becoming accessible to all South Africans irrespective of their racial, economic or gender differences, and this bodes well for equality and accessibility to the arts across our diverse country. Unisa is proud to take the lead in this initiative.

Over the past two weeks we have witnessed some of the best young South African jazz and classical pianists grace the stage of this hall. Without a doubt, the quality and level of performance has been the highest it has ever been in our competitions. This is a testament to the quality teaching that is taking place across the country. Thirty three years ago we would probably have doubted whether our national pianists were at the level of the international pianists that visited our country. Today I can state unequivocally the levels of performance from these candidates is on par, if not better, than their international counterparts. I cannot wait to hear the finalists from

tonight compete against the international jazz and classical pianists that will participate in our international piano competition in 6 months.

To our winners, congratulations on your superb achievement! You have just joined a prestigious list of past winners whose careers took flight after winning one of our competitions. To all participants who had the courage to enter in this competition, thank you for making the effort to participate and share your talents. We are very proud of you as young South African artists and wish you well as you embark on a journey to take your places on the world stages as South African performers. To our esteemed classical and jazz jury members, my sincerest thanks go to you for sharing your expertise and mentoring our young performers.

We are grateful to everyone that was involved in this competition - from our conductor Maestro Eric Rycroft, the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra and rhythm section with Victor Masondo and Rob Watson, to our highly skilled Unisa staff from Sound and Video, facilities, the Unisa Music Foundation, Music Directorate and Corporate Communications and Marketing. We are indeed fortunate at Unisa to have such talented individuals who can make events such as this a resounding success.

I encourage you to mark your calendars as our international piano competition is scheduled to take place from 25 January until 6

February 2016. I sincerely hope that all of you will be able to attend.

Thank you.