



Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor

PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

14TH UNISA INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION

OPENING CEREMONY WELCOME

ZK MATTHEWS HALL, WINNIE MADIKIZELA MANDELA BUILDING

20 JANUARY 2020

The piano is amongst the most recognizable, most played and largest of musical instruments. It is also one of the easiest instruments on which a non-musician can play a simple melody, yet one of the most difficult to master if you are a dedicated musician. It is the instrument of choice for the majority of composers thereby making it one of the most sought after and beloved instruments in the world of music.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to extend my warmest welcome to all of you to the 14th Unisa International Piano Competition. A special word

of welcome goes out to our competitors and jury members who have travelled great distances to be with us this evening. We are very proud of the fact that our visitors come from all continents of the world and represent over 20 countries. We are indeed fortunate to have all of you participating in our piano competition.

The very first music competition hosted by Unisa in 1982 was a piano competition. It comes then as no surprise that piano competitions are very close to our hearts and firmly embedded in the Unisa calendar of events. Since 1982 our competition has grown significantly in size, stature and prestige. Today, the Unisa International Piano Competition ranks amongst one of the top piano competitions in the world and the only international music competition on the African Continent for the past 38 years.

This year's competition will build on the success of the last international piano competition in 2016 which included both jazz and classical categories. The winners of the jazz and classical categories of that competition have gone on to enjoy prolific international careers. We expect to do the same with this edition of the competition. Truth be told, we know of no other competition in the world that has parallel jazz and classical categories within the same competition. Unisa is proud to lead the way forward in this initiative.

Leadership comes with great responsibility, and in putting together the guidelines, rules and regulations for this competition, the Artistic Director, Prof Karendra Devroop, went to great lengths to research and study the best jazz and classical piano competitions in the world. The goal was simple: be respectful of both art-forms yet set the bar high enough so that other competitions could look to us as a model upon which to build. We are proud of the fact that the guidelines for both the jazz and classical components of this competition meet the statutes and strict guidelines of the World Federation of International Music Competitions, the quality assurance body of music competitions world-wide.

The success of any competition is highly dependent upon the caliber of the jury. We are fortunate to have ten of the world's most prestigious performers and teachers on our jury. They represent 9 countries, 6 continents and the most diverse jury we have ever encountered at a Unisa competition. Each of these individuals is a highly respected international artist, with many having served on the juries of other prestigious international competitions. I am most confident that given the unique nature of this competition, we could not have found a more capable jury.

A unique and important component of the Unisa Music Competition is the "shadow jury". The *shadow jury* is part of Unisa's efforts to

impact the education and training of young South African musicians. The shadow jury for this competition is comprised of young jazz and classical pianists from various universities in South Africa. Their goal is to shadow the professional jury in an attempt to develop their skills as future potential jury members and examiners. They will also have the privilege of taking lessons, masterclasses and workshops with our international jury members.

In putting this competition together, Unisa is very proud to have partnered with some of South Africa's best industry partners and educational institutions. These include but are not limited to most universities across the country, MNET/DSTV, SAFM, SAMRO, Pretoria University, The Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra and the abundance of talented professionals that exist at Unisa including in Institutional Advancement, Sound and Video, University Estates and our graphics departments. Unisa has a very close relationship with Oberlin Conservatory in the USA and I am most pleased to see that Mr John Cavanaugh, the Director of Piano Technology at Oberlin Conservatory has once again made the trip to South Africa to prepare our pianos to the highest possible international standards.

Ladies and gentleman, the competition steering committee under the leadership of Prof Devroop have worked tirelessly over the past 18 months trying to put everything into place for what we hope would be

a landmark competition. It is my distinct pleasure to welcome all of you to South Africa and to the opening of the 14th Unisa International Piano Competition. My best wishes go out to all of you for a successful competition.

Thank you!