
THE UNIVERSITY CREATIVE WORKS AWARD

The University Creative Works Award recognises the production of outstanding and/or influential creative works (art works, performances, productions, compositions, architectural design) that make a scholarly contribution.

Francois du Toit

'The Five Beethoven Concertii with the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra'

Francois du Toit is an Associate Professor at the South African College of Music, UCT and a nationally and internationally acclaimed concert pianist. He is the recipient of numerous awards and prizes and is in demand as a pedagogue, performer and juror throughout South Africa.

Being approached by the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra to perform all five Beethoven concertos on two successive nights was a daunting challenge, but also the realisation of a lifelong dream. The five concertos represent the journey that Beethoven undertook as a composer and revolutionary in music, mirroring the times in history. Throughout history, music has proven to be a universal language and to have the ability to draw people from all cultures together. In the words of the eminent conductor, Dr. Bernhard Gueller: "There is something greater than life, that it means something to be a human...and great art, especially great music, gives us a glimpse of it."

In many ways music is apolitical. To give examples of this, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra of Daniel Barenboim comprises musicians from various Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. The aim of this orchestra is to promote understanding and tolerance between different cultures performing the works of great composers including Beethoven. Also, at the darkest times of the blitz in London during the 2nd World War, Dame Myra Hess performed Beethoven Sonatas in the basement of the National Gallery to audiences from all walks of life. Classical music at the College of Music has bridged the diversity of all the students' backgrounds and it continues to enrich everyone's lives with its universal message. For many it is a rediscovered tradition. In life the negative exists for the positive to shine through and rarely is it more true than in music.

The performances of the Beethoven concerti were a collaboration between a Russian conductor, a truly South African orchestra, a local television studio and Francois du Toit. Even though these concerti have been in existence for over 200 years, to every artist they are initially a compilation of black dots on a page that need to be dissected, researched and interpreted. In the words of Beethoven: "Don't only practise your art, but force your way into its secrets, for it and knowledge can raise men to the divine."