

Fabulous future on display



Rhoda Kadalie

The UCT Vice-Chancellor's concert showcases the potential of South Africa's youth, regardless of colour

There are a few highlights in my calendar every year that I never miss no matter what. One of them is UCT's Vice-Chancellor's annual concert. Dr Max Price hosted a glorious event on Wednesday to celebrate the achievements of the SA College of Music (SACM) students. We heard the best of jazz, opera, classical, and African music. Vocalist Zinzi Nogavu, accompanied by djembe drummer Dylan Jeffrys, set the tone for the theme, "Celebrating 20 years of freedom", with a traditional African lament, sung repeatedly across the airwaves in honour of Madiba's passing last year.

Jazz conductor Mike Campbell of UCT's Big Band never disappoints. The band's performance of Abdullah Ibrahim's *Mannenberg* would have made the composer proud. The exciting variations on the theme, with strident performances by the leading saxophonists, trombonist, trumpeter and guitarist took us back to the mid-seventies when Ibrahim launched this iconic Cape Flats favourite. Vocalists Zoe Modiga, Ndumisa Manana, Amy Campbell and Amy Walton warmed the cockles of many a liberation activist's heart with their versions of *Freedom Is Coming Tomorrow* and *Paradise Road*.

The opera segment after the interval was the most delightful, not least because it was a wonderful display of how much UCT had transformed. Rossini's *Gran Pezzo Concertato* for 14 voices, almost entirely black, was the highlight of the evening and a deft demonstration of the students' mastery of Italian. Noluvuyiso Mpofo and Bongwe Nakana, sang *Delibes Sous le dôme épais* from the opera *Lakmé* with perfect harmony and voice control.

Siyabulela Ntale's rendition of *L'onore* from Verdi's *Falstaff* was exceptional. Showing off

his vocal and acting skills, he presented a masterful characterisation of Shakespeare's comic hero, demonstrating in every way why he deserved to win second prize in the Belvedere International Competition. Three UCT students in the competition (Linda Nteleza, Siyabulela Ntlale and Khanyiso Gwenzane) all advanced to the finals.

This magnificent evening serves as a backdrop for a string of other academic awards UCT has won under the remarkable leadership of Price. In February, UCT and the SA Medical Research Council announced a R370 million partnership to develop new medicines, vaccines, and other biotechnologies to combat HIV/Aids, TB and malaria, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the departments of health and science and technology.

UCT academics, director and founder of UCT Lung Institute in the Department of Medicine, Emeritus Prof Eric Bateman, head of the Division of Pulmonology, Prof Keertan Dheda, and Associate Prof Arnaud Malan at the Department of Mechanical Engineering received the National Science and Technology Forum BHP Billiton Awards in July; and eight UCT academics were among 56 finalists for this prestigious award. Prof Heather Zarr, paediatric pulmonologist, received the 2014 Lung Health Award, in recognition of her healthcare model, which seeks to eliminate all kinds of disparities worldwide.

This list of achievements is by no means complete without a mention of the SACM's own celebrities – Pretty Yende, Judith Sephuma, Sibongile Ngoma, Jimmy Dluolu, and Salaelo Selota – performing on the international stage.

The UCT Vice-Chancellor's concert showcases the potential of South Africa's youth, regardless of colour. They are our future and we must invest in them and entice them to stay here.