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UCT to honour leading musicians, an engineering giant & cardiovascular scientist

The University of Cape Town will award honorary degrees in 2013 to a range of experts chosen for their rich contributions to their respective areas of expertise and society as a whole. This year's honorands are:

- Derek Yellon: leading cardiovascular scientist;
- Caiphus Semenya and Letta Mbulu: South Africans with international reputations as musicians;
- Klaus-Jürgen Bathe: giant in the field of computational engineering mechanics; and
- Daniel Kunene: renowned literary figure and scholar in the fields of translation and critical appraisal of African orature

These recipients will be honoured at either the June or December graduation ceremonies. Professor Bathe will receive his honorary degree in September.

Professor Derek Yellon, who holds a PhD and DSc, is a leading cardiovascular scientist whose work on myocardial protection has provided fundamental insights into the way the heart responds to the acute deprivation of blood supply in myocardial infarction. For the past 25 years he has pioneered this field and has led studies which span the range of scientific endeavour from the laboratory to clinical settings. His work is now in the process of translation into patient care. If large clinical studies presently underway succeed, interventions based on his discoveries will become routine in coronary artery bypass surgery and in primary percutaneous intervention in patients presenting with a heart attack. Such impact on routine patient care is achieved only very rarely by a cardiovascular scientist within their professional lifetime and underscores the magnitude of his achievement.

UCT's nomination for an honorary degree is in recognition of Professor Yellon's distinguished basic and clinical research into the pathophysiology of ischaemic heart disease and the mechanisms underlying the phenomena of myocardial ischaemic-reperfusion injury

and cardio-protection, as well as his significant contribution, through the establishment of the Hatter Cardiovascular Institute at UCT, to molecular and cardiovascular medicine.

The Hatter Cardiovascular Institute has enabled a wide range of research and educational activities to be carried out at UCT. Professor Yellon has been instrumental in establishing the annual “Cardiology at the Limits” meeting which is a joint venture between the Hatter Cardiovascular Institutes of University College London and UCT. These internationally recognised meetings have been endorsed by The Lancet and have played a major role in reaching out to sub-Saharan Africa. Internationally respected as an educator and academic mentor, Professor Yellon has enabled true collaboration between academic institutions in the northern and southern hemispheres. He has published more than 450 full papers and edited 22 books.

Caiphus Semanya and Letta Mbulu are two South African musical icons. Apart from their international reputations as talented musicians, Semanya and Mbulu have each, through their respective musical achievements, also served as unofficial “cultural ambassadors” for South Africa. The married couple are role models in South Africa, epitomising values on which to build stable communities including tolerance, dignity, respect, accomplishment and the importance of family.

In 1981 Mbulu narrated *You Have Struck a Rock*, a documentary on African women's campaigns of non-violent disobedience. In the 1980s Semanya toured with the anti-apartheid musical *Buwa*. The couple returned to South Africa in 1990. In 2009 they were awarded the Order of iKhamanga in recognition of their excellent contribution to music and the struggle against apartheid.

Their nominations for honorary degrees recognise their achievements as well as the respect and reverence they have engendered in communities that love their music and identify with their struggles.

Semanya is an accomplished musical director and composer, whose body of work includes conceptualising and conducting a Quincy Jones production at the Montreux Jazz Festival that featured several South African artists, including Mbulu and Hugh Masekela.

His compositions have been performed by music legends such as Cannonball Adderley, Harry Belafonte, The Crusaders, Lou Rawls and Nina Simone. He composed the African music for *Roots* and *The Color Purple*, which earned him an Emmy Award and Grammy nomination, respectively.

Mbulu has recorded more than 20 albums on renowned labels with highly regarded producers. When she left South Africa for the US in December 1964, she was already well

established as a teenage star, having been featured in many big concerts, including the famous African Jazz and Variety show as well as the musical King Kong.

As a protege of Miriam Makeba, Mbulu went on to perform alongside other musical greats and is regarded by some as having the greatest voice of all the 'songbirds' of the era. Klaus-Jürgen Bathe, a UCT alumnus, is regarded as a giant in the field of computational mechanics and ranks among a handful of pioneers of a powerful procedure called the Finite Element Method: a numerical method for simulating on the computer the response of complex structural and fluid systems in engineering and the sciences, from bridges and cars to biomedical and nano structures.

He has made fundamental contributions in theories and procedures that are used worldwide in computer programmes. On a more practical level, he has developed one of the most advanced and widely used finite-element programmes called ADINA. His book Finite Element Procedures is a classic in the field.

Professor Bathe's work has helped create safer engineering structures, devices and machines which continue to benefit millions of people worldwide. He retains strong links with UCT and established the Klaus-Jürgen Bathe scholarship for engineering students in 1997.

This nomination recognises his extraordinary achievements over many years. Professor Daniel Kunene is a renowned literary figure and scholar in the fields of translation and critical appraisal of African orature. Through his translations he has contributed to exposing African culture to the rest of the world.

Professor Kunene has been one of the foremost figures in the translation of South African texts from African languages into English, completing an acclaimed new translation of Thomas Mofolo's Sesotho novel Chaka in 1981 and in 2010 the widely praised translation of CLS Nyembezi's 1950 isiZulu novel My Child! My Child! for which he won the Karel Čapek Medal.

He has used his own prose and poetry in opposition to apartheid in South Africa, demonstrating with great subtlety the multifaceted relationships between individual and community in African society, especially those societies affected by colonialism and apartheid.

His pioneering work on heroic praise poetry explores how heroism is defined and expressed in praise poems, and charts the manner in which praise names are conferred. Professor Kunene has also contributed to African literature in his work on the stylistic features of

various oral forms in use in Sesotho and the function of the ideophone in narrative or poetry.

He started his teaching career at UCT, his alma mater, in 1954, and has since taught African literature at the University of California in Los Angeles, the University of London, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Johannes Guttenberg University in Germany. Professor Kunene's nomination recognises his contribution towards preserving the African tradition and promoting it to a wider audience.

ENDS

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