

Business leaders ignite Linder Auditorium at unique BASA event

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Johannesburg's Linder Auditorium came alive last week when some of the country's business leaders stepped up to the rostrum and conducted the Johannesburg Festival Orchestra during a unique Business and Arts South Africa event.



Conduct an Orchestra formed part of the recent Johannesburg International Mozart Festival, but the six business leaders who took up the baton chose from a vast repertoire that more than proved the Johannesburg Festival Orchestra's versatility.

Under the experienced, nurturing eye of renowned conductor and BASA Board member Maestro Richard Cock, CN & Co's head Carel Nolte – resplendent in a red jacket - was up first, taking the orchestra through a resoundingly upbeat version of Queen's "We Will Rock You".

Next up was former RMB Chief Economist and Professor of Economics at the University of Stellenbosch, Rudolf Gouws. His choice of Mozart's "Turkish Rondo" was in keeping with the festival's theme, the piece's distinctive, dramatic notes providing an instructive counterpoint to the next piece, Astor Piazzolla's "Oblivion".

The choice of Gail Walters, Group Corporate Affairs at Hollard Insurance, and the long-held notes of this haunting tango provided Cock with the chance to explain the challenges of conducting "a more fluid piece".

Following a tea break, Paul Vonk, head of MayFord Seeds, tackled (with humour and a well-placed 'Learner' sign!), Vivaldi's "Summer" from "The Four Seasons" before Mastrantonio co-founder Gianni Mariano paid homage to his Italian heritage with an emotional version of "Va Pensiero" by Giuseppe Verdi. The final performance was an inspired and uplifting classical take on TKZee's kwaito classic, "Shibobo" by Kaya FM's Managing Director, Greg Maloka.

Throughout the morning, Cock interspersed the musical action with illuminating stories that proved the link between the constant care and steady hand needed to conduct an orchestra and being a business leader. What became quite clear as a learning opportunity was the importance of team work and ensemble work. Also, as CEO Michelle Constant noted, the

importance of passion. “In order to get the orchestra to work with a novice like myself, I felt that I needed to prove my passion for what they did. Trust in the team was also noted.

Referring to Itzhak Perlman, Cock spoke of the renowned violinist and conductor’s statement that conducting is “about finding satisfaction in other people’s accomplishment”.

“This is one of the parallels with business,” said Cock. “As a business leader you get satisfaction from other people’s accomplishments. Whereas technical experts are doers, the best managers are enablers and influences. They get things through others. As Perlman also said, “When I play the violin I worry about myself. When I conduct, I worry about other people.”

Although nervous at standing in front of an orchestra for the first time, the participants declared the event a resounding success.

“Aside from some panic stricken moments of terror, the sheer passion and resultant enjoyment in the room was exhilarating,” concluded Vonk.

Monies raised from the event will be given to various youth music organisations.

Business and Arts South Africa will host another ‘Conduct / Lead!’ event later this year. Should you, or a member of your company wish to participate, please contact lakin@basa.co.za 011 447 2295

About BASA (NPC):

Business and Arts South Africa (NPC) is an internationally recognised South African development agency with a suite of integrated programmes implemented nationally and internationally. BASA encourages mutually beneficial partnerships between business and the arts, securing the future development of the arts sector in South Africa and contributing to corporate success through Shared Value. Business and Arts South Africa (NPC) was founded in 1997 as a joint initiative of the Department of Arts and Culture and the business sector as a public/private partnership. For more information on Business and Arts South Africa contact us on 011 447 2295 or visit our website: www.basa.co.za

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