

Buitendag Awarded Prize for Composers' Competition



Rhodes Music postgraduate student Kingsley Buitendag was awarded second prize of R40 000 in the jazz/popular music category of the SAMRO 2010 Overseas Scholarships competition for composers.

In order to qualify, Buitendag had to submit three pieces, one arranged for a quartet in a traditional South African style, one for an 18-piece big band in a traditional swing style, and one for a solo instrument in a Latin style. Once he was selected as a finalist, Buitendag had the opportunity to direct rehearsals with a professional band playing his own material, culminating in the competition finals on 28 August in Johannesburg.

Buitendag's work for jazz quartet, Mr Gaulana, is a tribute to East London jazz guitarist and composer Lulama Gaulana and was performed by Roland Moses on piano, Mthunzi Mvubu on saxophone, Prince Bulo on bass guitar and Rob Watson on drums. His other piece, Sombras, for solo jazz piano, was performed by Moses.

"It was a fantastic learning experience. It is the first time that I have not been involved with the performance of my work as a musician, so it was interesting to sit back and leave the piece in the hands of the extremely gifted musicians," Kingsley commented. "Conducting rehearsals was also an interesting experience, and I learnt a lot. I was blown away by the abilities and professionalism of the band, who turned my pieces from black dots on a page into music that exceeded my expectations."

Regarding the relevance of the experience to his studies, Buitendag says "The compositional aspect of my studies has been greatly enhanced by the opportunity to hear my compositions played by a professional band, and I learnt a huge amount about composition and arranging from this experience. I am grateful to the head of the Music and Musicology Department at Rhodes, Professor Marc Duby, who is supervising my masters' degree, and who encouraged me to enter this competition."

James Bassingthwaite (who studied at UCT, under the tutelage of Prof Mike Campbell) was named the Jazz/Popular Music winner, with Buitendag receiving the runner-up prize; and Keith Moss (who studied at Rhodes University and the University of Cape Town, with Prof Peter Klatzow and Dr Péter Louis van Dyk as teachers) and Angie Mullins (24, who studied at Wits University and was taught by

Dr Michael Blake, Prof Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph and Dr Clare Loveday) were the finalists in the Western Art Music category. Moss triumphed in the Western Art section, with Mullins being awarded the runner-up prize. Merit awards also went to composers Prince Bulu (Jazz/Popular Music) and Christo Jankowitz (Western Art Music).

The adjudicators, under the non-voting chairmanship of Joyce Schulten from SAMRO, were Prof Chatradari Devroop and Prof Marc Duby (both dual-genre panellists), as well as Prof Christopher Collins, Victor Masondo, Dr Carlo Mombelli, Noel Stockton and Denzil Weale (Jazz/Popular Music category); and Prof Tania Leon, Prof Hendrik Hofmeyr, Bongani Ndodana-Breen, Mokale Koapeng and Prof Christine Lucia (Western Art Music category).

SAMRO's general manager: corporate affairs, André le Roux, commented that the record number of entries in the composers category this year – 22 – was extremely encouraging to SAMRO as a composers' society. "If you listen to these compositions, there are little pieces of excellence in each of them, and it is exciting to be highlighting new and different kinds of work. These young people all have enormous talent, and we look forward to a long and prosperous relationship with them."

"We are very proud to see, every year, young people with skill and talent being given the opportunity to explore and polish that skill and talent. We are also pleased that we, in a small way, are contributing towards the development of music in this country and ensuring that culture plays a role in society," added SAMRO CEO, Nicholas Motsatse.

Picture: Kingsley Buitendag.