**CITATION: JAMES STEPHEN MZILIKAZI KHUMALO**

Professor James Stephen Mzilikazi Khumalo was born on 20 June 1932 to Andreas and Johanna Khumalo in the Vryheid district of Natal on the Salvation Army farm. His parents (who were ministers in the Salvation Army and members of its Band) were devoted Christians and nurtured, from a young age, his spirituality and love for western vocal music as well as traditional African music.

He was schooled in Durban and Soweto and in 1950, matriculated from the Salvation Army High School, Nancefield. He then trained as a teacher. It was while working as a teacher that he further developed his love for choral composition and performance. In 1956 he graduated with a BA degree majoring in English and Zulu, and in 1972 with a B.A. (Hons) from the University of South Africa. In 1987 he attained his Ph.D. from the University of the Witwatersrand. He joined the Department of African Languages at Wits as a tutor in 1969, serving a long stint as Professor of African Languages and Head of the Department. In these positions he made major contributions to the development and academic standing of the study of African languages. He retired from the University in 1998. He also devoted time to music studies including theory, composition under various leading figures of the music education and performance like Charles Norburn of Pretoria, Professor Khabi Mngoma of the University of Zululand and Zandi Casan of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Professor Khumalo is a colossal figure in South Africa’s academic, cultural and public landscape, effortlessly moving across the spheres of scholarship, cultural production and social life. He is currently Emeritus Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand after a long academic career where he was acknowledged as an authority in African Languages Literature. Furthermore, he is particularly revered for his achievements in South African music where he has been an outstanding award winning composer, conductor and the mentor of generations of singers and musicians in the field of choral music.

1958 marked the completion of his first composition, *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* which was followed by the composition of more than 50 epic choral works including the internationally acclaimed African opera, *uShaka kaSenzangakhona*: *An Epic in music and poetry on Shaka, son of Senzangakhona.*

Professor Khumalo’s deep love, commitment and service to the world of choral music have also extended to being a conductor and adjudicator of major choral compositions in Soweto and in the Salvation Army. Inspired by the late former *Sowetan* Editor Aggrey Klaaste’s nation building project he together with Richard Cock created the Nation Building Massed Choir Festival as a celebration of the singing abilities of the African people. The choral choirs he has been involved with have toured and performed internationally to acclaim.

The distinctive features of Professor Khumalo’s compositions are a deep and seamless weaving of a remarkable range of historical, cultural, literary and musical sources and interests. In addition to his abiding celebration of his faith and the influence of European classical composers - especially Joseph Haydn and Friedrich Handel – his vision and work is singularly unique in how it also evinces a continuous meditation on South Africa’s history and culture, excavating and celebrating great African leaders and writers as well as indigenous performance traditions. He has set numerous poems to music, ranging from foundational writers such as B.W. Vilakazi to contemporary poets such as Professor Themba C. Msimang.

The national respect that Professor Khumalo commands is attested to in the numerous national positions and honours that he holds (including a “Lifetime Achievement Award” bestowed at the 2007, M-Net Literary Awards), the countless competitions and awards that he and his choirs have won, the many times he has been commissioned to compose music for major occasions, being asked to join the Anthem Committee that developed the new national anthem of South Africa, and having a piano concerto composed in his honour, *Mzilikazi Emhlabeni*, composed by Bongani Ndodana-Green. He has received honorary doctorates from the University of South Africa, University of Zululand, Fort Hare and Stellenbosch University.

It is therefore fitting that the University of the Witwatersrand bestows on Professor Mzilikazi Khumalo an Honorary Doctorate degree.