

## HONORARY GRADUATE

### Gideon Daniel Roos

Gideon Daniel Roos was born on 28 October 1909 in Worcester, Cape Province, the eldest child of a young schoolmaster, Paul Roos, who three years earlier had become well known as captain of the first Springbok Rugby team during its debut abroad in Britain and France.

The family moved to Stellenbosch when Roos *père* became Head of the Hoër Jongenskool - which today bears his name as the Paul Roos Gymnasium - where Gideon matriculated shortly after his sixteenth birthday in 1925. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Latin and Greek *cum laude* at the University of Stellenbosch in 1929, and his Bachelor of Laws degree in 1933, in which year he was admitted to the Bar in Cape Town. His extramural interests as a student, apart from sporting activities, had centred on the elocution and dramatic societies, and when the burgeoning African Broadcasting Company put out a call for a fluently bilingual announcer, the lure of public speaking proved stronger than that of legal practice and he joined its staff.

In 1934, however, on winning a Rhodes Scholarship he returned to wider juridical interests at University College, Oxford, where he read for the Bachelor of Literature in international law, which he obtained in 1936 - also becoming a Rugby Blue. He then decided to pursue his topic further at the University of Leyden in Holland, and the following year passed the examination portion of the requirements for a doctor's degree in law, acquiring the qualification of Doctorandus Juris.

Fortuitously, a cable from the newly established South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) called him home, and almost immediately he was charged with launching its Afrikaans Service. After promotion to Programme Manager for the Cape, he became Head of the Afrikaans Service in 1941, Secretary to the Corporation in the next year and its Director-General in 1948. He held that high office for more than a decade, during difficult years for our country, and was able, through his close relations with such eminent international colleagues as Lord Reith of the BBC, to steer the SABC through many a reef until he felt obliged, in 1961, to resign on a point of principle.

This 'in many ways regrettable' event, as Michael Freegard (formerly Chief Executive of the Performing Rights Society of Great Britain) has called it, 'turned out' - as he further observed - 'to have the most fortunate consequences for South African musical life, and for the cause of composers' and authors' rights in particular. Gideon's high standing, legal qualifications and administrative experience, coupled with his personal qualities of integrity and industry, made him the ideal person to establish a society to administer musical performance rights in the Republic.'

Gideon Roos's own abiding love for language and literature had expanded into the sphere of music and its adjuncts not only through daily contact with them at the helm of a broadcasting entity but also - and even closer to his heart - through his marriage to one of South Africa's most prominent singers, the soprano Esther Mentz (1911-1986). It was through his foresight and efforts that in 1953 the SABC formed what has today become the National Symphony Orchestra, while as founder and head of SAMRO (the Southern African Music Rights Organisation) and DALRO (the Dramatic, Artistic and Literary Rights Organisation) he has, over the past three decades, prudently and with great perspicience built these two non-profitmaking, non-racial societies of composers and authors into national institutions. Apart from being crucial to the interests of all our creative artists, they provide an essential service not only through the protection and administration of intellectual property in southern Africa but also by making it easily and equitably available for public use, in contributing to the spiritual upliftment of all our diverse musical, literary and theatrical audiences.

Both SAMRO and DALRO are affiliated to the Confédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Auteurs et Compositeurs (CISAC), and since 1966 Gideon Roos has served almost uninterruptedly on the Administrative Council of this worldwide body, which counts amongst its membership some 150 similar societies in over 100 countries. At home, too, he has given unstintingly of his time, wisdom and abilities, acting as Vice-Chairman of the Board of the Johannesburg Civic Theatre from 1964 to 1992, as a member of the Board of Directors of PACT from 1972 to 1992, and as Honorary President of the Johannesburg Musical Society - on whose Executive Council he had already served for several decades - since 1979.

But it is not only through personal service that Gideon Roos has contributed so greatly to the arts in South Africa. In terms of CISAC's Rules, SAMRO is able to operate a wide-ranging Fund for Encouragement of the National Arts, and from the very first meeting of its Board of Directors in 1962 he has actively promoted the use of this facility to enhance our cultural life. Over the years the scheme has grown into one of the most important of its kind in our country, providing sponsorship for a multitude of musical and artistic projects. These include the commissioning of new works, the funding of concerts and performances, and the publication of scores of books. It also provides the largest group of educational awards for the study of music on the subcontinent, embracing both the 'serious' and 'contemporary popular' genres in twenty annual undergraduate bursaries and two overseas scholarships. The needs of South Africa's less developed students are also one of its concerns, and are being catered for, *inter alia*, through funding of the Music Education Workshops 'bridging' programme (MEWS) at the University of the Witwatersrand, to whose School of Music a number of other substantial benefits have also accrued through the good offices of Gideon Roos and his fellow directors at SAMRO.

Despite his busy involvement in copyright and the arts, Gideon Roos has continued to maintain his interest in international law, having been closely associated for more than half a century with the South African Institute of International Affairs, of which he is a Deputy National Chairman, as well as being a Life Trustee of the South Africa Foundation.

Among the significant awards bestowed on Gideon Roos for his distinguished services to our cultural life are the Medal of Honour of the South African Academy of Arts and Sciences (1991) for his contribution to broadcasting and the performing arts, the Prestige Prize of the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies for his work in advancing the cause of music in the country (1978) and for his promotion and stimulation of the creative arts, and the first Doctorate of Musicology to be conferred *honoris causa* by the University of South Africa (1989).

The University of the Witwatersrand has pride and pleasure in paying tribute to a man of distinction who has contributed greatly to the cultural and intellectual life of our country, by conferring on him the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.