

## *Joshua Meyiwa Radebe (1936–2015)*

**J**OSHUA Meyiwa Radebe was born on 12 February 1936 at Ethembeni Mission in the Umzimkhulu area. He completed his primary education at Ethembeni and Ixopo and then went on to Pholela Secondary School at Bulwer where he did his secondary education. He qualified as a teacher at Eshowe Training College and began his teaching career in Pietermaritzburg in 1964 at the Maria Memorial Primary School. Later on he moved to Maria Memorial Secondary School. This is where his love of music and conducting blossomed. He started conducting the Maria Memorial Secondary School choir in 1966 and never looked back. As his teaching career took him from one school to another he never stopped conducting choirs. He conducted the Sobantu High and Amakholwa High School choirs amongst others. Later he conducted the Indumiso College of Education choir and this is where he retired in 1998.

In 1970 he met Nigel Fish, the renowned cellist and musician, who was impressed by his conducting skills. Nigel immediately encouraged him to take music lessons, which he did and went as high up as Grade 8. His long association and friendship with the Fish family helped him grow musically. Whilst still teaching at Sobantu High, a certain Dr Msomi from Edendale who was also impressed by Radebe's conducting skills and musical knowledge encouraged him to form an adult choir that would perform at community functions. In 1973 the Pietermaritzburg Choral Society was formed.

It was in 1978 that the choir started entering music competitions – and never came back without a trophy! The



*Joshua Radebe*

Pietermaritzburg Choral Society under the leadership of Dr Radebe won over 12 Provincial (NATU and ATASA) competitions and they were crowned National Champions five times in the popular Old Mutual Competition. Over and above this, the choir performed in major works of the choral repertoire such as Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* (1983), Mozart's *Coronation Mass* (1986), Handel's *Messiah* (1984), Handel's *Solomon* (1987), Haydn's *Creation* (1994) and Mozart's *Missa Brevis* (2003). Besides performing professionally, the choir also sang at various official and community functions, for example the University of Natal's graduation ceremonies, for many years.

Just as Dr Radebe was supported and motivated by other people, so he supported others. He assisted more than 10 young men and women who had a musical talent and who ended up singing professionally and earning their living through music. He also created platforms and opportunities where his trainees (soloists) displayed their talents

and earned bursaries to study music at various institutions, e.g. UKZN and DUT. One of his trainees who also got a bursary to study music at UKZN went on to get other bursaries that saw him obtain an Honours degree from the University of Western Cape. He is presently pursuing his MA degree at a university in the US.

Besides training soloists, Dr Radebe also trained and produced a number of conductors, some of whom went on to establish their own choirs, e.g. the Ulundi Choral Society, the Eyesizwe Adult Choir and Sounds of Joy.

From the year 2000 to 2009, after Dr Radebe's retirement, he worked with a non-governmental organisation called I-Africa Entsha, the chairperson of the board of which was the then MEC for

Health in KZN, Dr Z.L. Mkhize. His key responsibility was to ensure the development and promotion of music in Pietermaritzburg and its surrounding areas.

In his career as a conductor, Dr Radebe received numerous certificates and awards, e.g. Khabi Mngoma Award (2003), Creative Arts Award (2010), Indondo Award (2010), Lifetime Achievement Award (2014). In 1998 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the then University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) for his tremendous contribution and dedication to choral music and community upliftment.

His wife predeceased him. He is survived by his five children – Andile, Vuyi, Dumisa, Ndumiso and Mpume.

ANDILE RADEBE

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## *John Martin Sellers (1924–2014)*

**A** FORMER editor of *Natalia*, John Sellers died in November 2014,\* aged 90. He was born and educated in Pietermaritzburg, attending university there and graduating with an MA in history. After joining the Natal Education Department, he taught at various schools before being transferred from Northern Natal to a post at his old school, Maritzburg College. There he taught History and English, and was senior resident master in the boarding establishment, relinquishing the latter position when he married. After a brief period as a lecturer at the Natal Training College, he was appointed as lecturer in economic history at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg.



*John Sellers*