

2019 Creative Works Award

CD: *Ubuntu – The Common String*

Associate Professor Dizu Plaatjies

Associate Professor Dizu Plaatjies is a lecturer in the African Music section of the South African College of Music. He has an international reputation as performer, teacher and intrepid researcher of his African heritage. He regularly performs and gives masterclasses worldwide in Europe, the Middle East, the Americas and Australia and has an extensive track record as a creative artist, which includes the publication of over 40 albums, both solo and collaborative.

The multiple award-winning album *Ubuntu – The Common String* is a CD publication in which Dizu Plaatjies, as arranger-songwriter and solo performer on a wide range of traditional African instruments, discretely blends his artistry with that of younger friends, who contribute to the album with a unique blend of vocals, guitar, percussion and horns. The result is 11 tracks of performances embracing a mixture of styles and inspirations from traditional, pop, rock, reggae and jazz, yet carrying the unmistakable stamp of Dizu Plaatjies' Mpondo roots.

Described in the media as a seminal work, it has been variously praised for its embracing yet cohesive sweep of musical genres, and the reflective social conscience of its songs. Within a month of its publication in November 2015 it reached and remained in the top ten of the Transglobal World Music Charts (for three months) and was subsequently included in its list of the best of 2015.

Ubuntu – The Common String marked a new departure in Dizu Plaatjies' output, who, in the preceding decade had focused his efforts on the preservation of the vanishing music of the older generation of Xhosa musical bow players and vocalists. Recognising the need for generational dialogue, *Ubuntu – The Common String* is a conscious attempt to close the gap between the traditional and the contemporary by creating a music album that could jump across the divergencies of current musical genres. This attempt to place the music of his roots in the context of pan-African, popular and world music inspirations is what makes the album distinctive. That Dizu Plaatjies was successful in this pragmatic goal is borne out by the fact that a peer-reviewed South African body, the SA Music Awards, voted the CD as Best African Adult Album, at the same time as the prestigious British Songlines Magazine selected *Ubuntu* as a Top of the World Album. That these two bodies with very different industry criteria were concurrently attracted to the same album speaks volumes.

Ubuntu – The Common String, both forward-looking and retrospective is a work that shows that Southern Africa's older musical traditions are relevant on the global world stage and by example forges a way for a new generation of African musicians.