

## ZIMBABWEAN RHAPSODY

A popular comic duo of another era had a famous sketch where they enticed a world-famous conductor on to their show to conduct their orchestra while one of the duo played the piano in what was to be Grieg's piano concerto. After messing around for a few moments (not being ready to play at the allotted moment; not being able to see the conductor), the pianist did start playing a tune which was clearly not Grieg's piano concerto, so the conductor (managing to keep a straight face throughout all of this) went over to the pianist and pointed out that he was playing the wrong notes to which the pianist replied, *"They are all the right notes but not necessarily in the right order."*

We might think that there could be nothing better than listening to music when the notes are clearly all in the right order but there is; that is when there is tremendous harmony, when all the notes come together, when all the parts come together and complement each other. One of the great occasions in school life over the years that showcases this has been the Combined Schools Concert which comes to its climatic crescendo with the massed choir of over five hundred pupils singing a collection of songs with great rigour, rhythm and rhapsody, when melody and harmony combine to deep and lasting effect, reflected powerfully at the same time by the harmony of the different schools in their different uniforms with their different backgrounds, all working together.

A modern song that tests the talents of choirs is Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody' with its wonderful collection of harmonies surrounding the melody. The popular song 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight' also provides incredible opportunities for harmonisation, as do 'golden oldies' like the Beach Boys' 'I get around' and Simon and Garfunkel's 'The Sound of Silence'. Here in Africa it seems we do not have to teach harmonisation; it seems to come naturally to people, even from a very young age – and it sounds beautiful. For others, however, it has to be taught.

In some ways we may see a school as an orchestra. The Head is the conductor, seeking to ensure all the different players are playing the same tune at the right time with the intended feeling and interpretation. The conductor will look to draw out all the passion and purpose of the music. The players in turn seek to bring out from their instruments (the pupils) the beautiful potential within. So who then are these players?

The staff are the ones who play the melody, the main tune, the recognisable music. Meanwhile, the harmony is provided by the parent body, by the Board and by the former pupils, all combining in different ways with different notes to produce a wonderful opportunity for the child's education and development. The parent body has the stronger harmony, ensuring that all that happens at home complements the 'music' that is played at school; they perhaps are the altos. The Board provides a deeper, quieter, softer tone, supporting the melody with rich undertones, along the lines of the tenors while former pupils can provide the bass line, quiet reminders of where all the music has come from but no longer taking the lead.

Through the conductor, each has to play their own part in playing the music. The 'music', which takes the form of the Vision, Mission and Values (each of which brings that unique harmony to the piece) of each school, has been composed by the original founding fathers and been given by the Board to the Head to play. In turn, the music's melody is made up of the Vision but the harmony is found in the addition of the twenty-first century learning skills, the local situation and the individual needs of the pupils. All of these bring greater harmony as well.

The music we seek to play is a Zimbabwean Rhapsody (where the word 'rhapsody' is wonderfully defined as being an "effusively enthusiastic and ecstatic expression of emotion"). Each of us must play our part to ensure the harmony comes through, that the harmony builds on the existing melody. Are we playing the right notes in the right order with the right purpose? This is serious, not a comedy. Play the wrong notes, come in at the wrong time, push our own tune and the whole piece will sound disastrous; get it right and it is beautiful! Everyone will sleep tonight when that happens!