

Tribute by Kutlwano Kepadisa (Kepa) delivered at the Farewell Concert for Dr Andrew-John Bethke in Grahamstown Cathedral on 27 March 2017

Good Evening and welcome to a wonderful celebratory evening for an extraordinary person. Tonight we have come together far and wide to bid farewell and say our goodbyes to a person who will certainly become a legendary figure in our city's Musical History.

I have only worked with Dr Andrew-John Bethke or more casually known as AJ, for two years and a few months, so what I could say about him is quite futile and little compared to the actual influence and impact he surely had to many of you sitting in front of me.

AJ's work and influence in Grahamstown has been than just music. It is through this man that we have seen breakthroughs in Transformation here in the Cathedral. The incorporation of traditional music in historically colonial spaces such as the ones we find ourselves in today and engagements in matters regarding inclusiveness and acceptance of people from all walks of life with their own unique cultures and experiences are just a few example of AJ, in this relatively short time, has been able to achieve.

In many of AJ's compositions and writings and his way of life – the common underlying message has been centred on this idea: To anchor everything you do with love and respect. This personally, is the greatest lesson I've ever learnt. A lesson which I hope and aim to live by for the rest of my life.

I am reminded of the time I first met AJ – on a windy summer evening, 19 February 2015, in a little rehearsal room named after Beethoven at the Music Department. It was my time to Audition for the Rhodes University Chamber Choir. As I enter the Beethoven room, a panel of auditioners almost immediately burst out the words: "Oh Look, AJ!" Now at this I'm probably the most confused person in the world because – 1: Why in the world would a panel of auditorers be so jovial and happy as I enter the room, surely I can't be that charismatic or good looking and – 2: I'm pretty sure my name was not AJ. So as you can imagine, I'm now double thinking about not only my decision to hopefully be part of this Choir but now I'm even questioning how wise my decision to come to Grahamstown was.

Nevertheless I put on my usual smile and continue my audition. As I'm about to leave following all the tests to asses my choral capabilities, I get another comment from of the panellists saying "Thanks for Wearing AJ", this time, more confidently I ask: "AJ?" They respond to making me aware of my Shirt that had the letters AJ on it and that the person who was sitting at the piano was the conductor and his name was in actual fact AJ.

This was a little coincidence at the time, but in retrospect it became a metaphor for me, and I trust many others here as well, which will last with us till the end of our days: That we will always somehow and someway be wearing AJ in our hearts as we move forward with our lives. That somehow he has managed to touch and fill in a place in our hearts which no one else can replace or overshadow. A truly remarkable man leaving us.

As a musician AJ, you have taught us how and what it is to appreciate diversity. As Pat Terry said yesterday, you have managed to do what many people only speak and babble about: real and sincere transformation. Your drive to always keep the integrity and culture and the context of any music we perform, made us grow to learn that even though there are many differences in music and languages – somewhere somehow there seems to be a epicentre found find in all kinds of music where the art begins to transcend these barriers and speak authentically and with integrity to the heart. I appreciate your drive to encourage us to push and extend this phenomenon beyond the scope of music and towards the scope of life itself.

As a teacher, you have taught us how to love and above all treat each other with dignity and respect despite our differences and ideologies. You have demonstrated that a proper teacher is not one who just aims to instil a syllabi in a student's mind but one who seeks go beyond the call of duty and aid them in growing and developing towards becoming decisive individuals and citizens of our nation. You have

attended many of our emotional, physical and structural needs and made sure we remained a priority in your livelihood.

As a man of god, you have been a remarkable role model and an inspiration to most of us. You have influenced us to aim towards living a life anchored by love. You have shown us that even the greats can have flaws and the world is nothing but a palace of imperfections. However, what makes people like yourself the greatest among the greats is your willingness to humble and allowing yourself to be vulnerable in the presence of the lord so he could intervene and move you towards a most possible place of perfection. It is my hope one day we can grow to become as spiritually driven as you are.

AJ you have been a tremendous gift and blessing to us in Cathedral and many others apha eRhini. As we mourn your departure and celebrate the time, the music, the wisdom and lessons we shared with you, we also pray that God be with you and continue to steer toward pathways of light, growth and success. We pray for God's shield over you and for his presence with you always, wherever you may go. We pray that you continue to inspire and empower the many people who will have the privilege of encountering you from hence forth.

Today's concert is a fitting tribute to the work, the love and passion you had on developing music and people in this city of ours. You will forever find a home in our hearts.

Tsamaya sentle morwa was modimo. Di tsela di tsagao dibudule. A modimo a go tsamaise ka dinaledi.

You are forever loved.

Thank you AJ and Farewell.