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EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

Candidate: **Mr. J.E. Oosthuizen**
Student number: **20515197**
Degree: **PhD in Music**

Music Department
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Title: *Die gebruik van jazz-stylelemente in die orrelkomposisies van Surendran Reddy (1962–2010)*

The candidate has produced an original and highly relevant dissertation in the contemporary field of musicology, performance practice, and South African music studies. It speaks directly to ongoing academic conversations about hybridity, identity, and the permeability of stylistic boundaries in music. The choice of topic—the

integration of jazz idioms into the organ works of Surendran Reddy—constitutes a particularly innovative and necessary contribution to organ scholarship, where the intersection of jazz and classical traditions has long been acknowledged in passing but seldom subjected to systematic analysis. By foregrounding Reddy's oeuvre, the study not only reclaims the significance of a composer whose contribution has been underexplored in scholarly literature but also highlights the pipe organ as an instrument capable of reflecting complex cultural dialogues that extend well beyond the confines of liturgical or European art-music traditions.

The dissertation demonstrates intellectual courage by engaging with the contested terrain of stylistic hybridity. Rather than avoiding the theoretical and methodological difficulties posed by music that resists neat categorisation, the candidate confronts these challenges directly, developing a bespoke analytical framework capable of capturing the nuances of such mixed-idiom compositions. This methodological innovation signals an awareness that conventional analytical tools, designed for tonal Western art music, cannot adequately address the layered rhythmic, harmonic, and textural elements that characterise Reddy's works. It is precisely in this willingness to design new tools, rather than merely apply existing ones, that the study establishes its authority and scholarly originality.

What is most striking is the dissertation's breadth and scope. It moves fluidly between international jazz practices, their specific stylistic conventions, South African idioms such as *kwêla*, *marabi*, *mbaqanga*, and *ghoema*, and the distinctive demands of organ performance practice. It situates Reddy's compositions simultaneously within global jazz traditions and a distinctly South African sound world, offering a layered understanding of cultural and musical exchange. The analytical discussion is never pursued in isolation, but consistently tied back to performance practice, ensuring that the research has practical and theoretical implications. Moreover, the dissertation's breadth is not merely a matter of coverage; it reflects the candidate's ability to weave diverse bodies of knowledge into a coherent and persuasive scholarly narrative that models how interdisciplinarity can enrich the study of music and its performance.

Beyond the boundaries of musicology, in my opinion, the significance of this work extends into cultural studies, postcolonial discourse, and debates on identity in post-

apartheid South Africa. By examining Reddy's blending of Western classical idioms with both international jazz and South African township styles, the dissertation demonstrates how music can act as a site of negotiation for cultural memory, hybridity, and reconciliation. It situates the organ—a symbol often associated with European tradition—within a broader, globalised context where instruments and genres construct new forms of cultural identity. In this way, the study resonates with musicians, scholars, and readers concerned with the politics of culture, the legacies of colonialism, and the role of the arts in social transformation. The study provides an invaluable addition to South African organ scholarship by foregrounding the compositions of Surendran Reddy, a composer of exceptional creativity who, until now, has remained on the margins of academic discourse. Whereas much organ research in South Africa has focused on European repertoire and performance traditions, this dissertation shifts the centre of attention to a local figure whose work embodies both artistic innovation and cultural relevance. The candidate recovers Reddy's legacy and situates it within broader scholarly debates about hybridity, stylistic fusion, and cultural representation in music.

By concentrating on two seminal works—*Toccata for Madiba* (1997) and *Mayibuye Suite* (2001)—the dissertation demonstrates how Reddy's distinctive *clazz* style represents a unique synthesis of Western classical idioms, jazz vocabularies, and South African township styles. The analytical treatment of these works convincingly establishes their musicological importance, showing how harmonic language, rhythmic devices, and textural layering operate across multiple stylistic registers. At the same time, the study brings to the fore the aesthetic value of Reddy's music, highlighting the originality of his compositional voice and its political resonance in the years following South Africa's democratic transition. For example, the symbolic dedication of *Toccata for Madiba* to Nelson Mandela is explored as a commemorative gesture and a musical enactment of reconciliation and cultural dialogue. Similarly, the *Mayibuye Suite* is shown to embody nostalgia, longing, and an affirmation of African identity, thus contributing to broader conversations about belonging and postcolonial expression. In positioning these works as musicologically, aesthetically, and politically significant, the dissertation underscores their multidimensional relevance. They are compositions for performance and cultural artefacts that engage with questions of hybridity, inclusivity, and identity formation. The candidate demonstrates how these

compositions bridge divides—between classical and jazz idioms, between European and African traditions, between sacred and secular contexts—and, in doing so, exemplify the broader sociopolitical processes of post-apartheid South Africa.

Internationally, the study extends its impact by situating the South African organ tradition within global conversations about the blurring of art and popular music. By documenting and critically analysing the incorporation of jazz idioms into organ composition, the dissertation disrupts entrenched assumptions of the organ as a fixed, liturgical, and exclusively European instrument. Instead, it presents the organ as a versatile medium capable of engaging with contemporary idioms and responding to diverse cultural environments. This repositioning of the instrument is not merely a local innovation but contributes to an expanding global discourse in which boundaries between genres are increasingly porous.

The dissertation's contribution also carries critical pedagogical implications. Reddy's works, as analysed here, could serve as exemplary case studies in organ teaching and performance curricula, particularly in courses dealing with interpretation, stylistic analysis, or historically informed performance. By engaging students with compositions that defy singular stylistic categorisation, teachers can encourage them to develop flexible interpretative strategies and to think critically about how cultural contexts shape musical meaning. Incorporating Reddy's *clazz* style into training programmes would also prepare the next generation of organists to navigate a repertoire that is increasingly global, hybrid, and responsive to social realities. Thus, the study enriches scholarship and offers practical avenues for rethinking organ pedagogy in South Africa and beyond.

In this respect, the dissertation makes a timely and significant contribution to the emerging field of organ-and-jazz fusion studies. Providing a detailed case study rooted in South African repertoire ensures that scholarship in this area is not confined to European or American contexts but is broadened to reflect more global perspectives. The study will thus resonate within South Africa and internationally, offering new insights for organists, musicologists, and cultural theorists interested in the intersections of genre, identity, pedagogy, and performance.

The research methodology choices are carefully explained and rigorously applied. The candidate recognised the inadequacy of traditional analytical frameworks (e.g., Schenkerian and Riemannian analysis) for addressing music that integrates jazz idioms. Instead, he constructed a bespoke analytical model based on Aleksey Nikolsky's eleven aspects of musical expression. This is a significant scholarly innovation: the framework respects the integrity of jazz as a recognised music genre. It provides a model that future researchers can adapt to other hybrid repertoires. The qualitative methodology—comprising literature study, score analysis, comparative stylistic catalogues, and the creation of detailed appendices—is implemented with precision. Including South African sub-genres alongside international idioms in the analytical framework gives the study a distinct regional anchoring, ensuring that it does not merely replicate international approaches but develops a truly South African narrative.

The thesis is logically structured and flows smoothly from the broader context (the convergence of classical music and jazz) to the focused analyses of the two selected works. Each chapter builds systematically on the previous, with clear signposting of aims and findings. Awe-inspiring is the level of detail in cataloguing stylistic elements—harmonic, rhythmic, textural, and registration—which reveals scholarly thoroughness and practical awareness for performers on eclectic pipe organs nationally and abroad. The argumentation is generally strong and coherent. At times, however, the sheer wealth of detail threatens to overwhelm the reader. For example, while the extended catalogues in the appendices are invaluable for reference, their density might distract from the broader narrative flow. Nevertheless, the candidate consistently returns to the central research questions and ties the discussion back to Reddy's two organ works, which prevents the dissertation from losing focus. The use of the Afrikaans language is clear, academic, and largely free of redundancy. The candidate successfully balances scholarly rigour with accessibility, and his writing style demonstrates maturity befitting work at a doctoral level.

Two aspects of originality deserve particular commendation:

1. Analytical framework

By adapting Nikolsky's system and expanding it into a comprehensive jazz-stylistic catalogue (both international and South African), the candidate has provided a tool that future researchers can use well beyond this study.

2. Emphasis on performance practice

The candidate does not treat the scores as static artefacts but views the performer as a co-creative partner in realising Reddy's music. This aligns with contemporary performance-as-research discourses and enriches the study's relevance for practising musicians.

While the dissertation is of very high standard, I offer two constructive suggestions that might have strengthened the research even further:

1. Contextualisation of Audience Reception

Although the study engages deeply with analysis and performance, it could have benefited from a stronger ethnographic or reception-oriented perspective. How have South African or international audiences received Reddy's organ works? From the perspective of performing organists and scholars, this gap is particularly felt. For organists considering programming this repertoire, firsthand accounts of audience reactions—be they surprise, delight, confusion, or a sense of cultural connection—are invaluable data. Understanding reception is not merely anecdotal; it is crucial for assessing a work's viability in the concert hall and its impact beyond academia.

Scholarly discourse would also be enriched by moving beyond textual analysis to include the lived experience of the music. Interviews with organists who have performed these pieces, documenting their interpretative choices and the audience's verbal and non-verbal feedback, or testimonies from listeners, would have added a valuable dimension to understanding their cultural impact. Such evidence would powerfully demonstrate whether the hybridity and cultural dialogue so expertly

analysed on the page truly resonate in practice, completing the cycle from score to performance to public meaning.

2. Comparative Dimension

The candidate might also have positioned Reddy's work alongside other composers experimenting with jazz and organ idioms (e.g., Johannes Matthias Michel and Michel Claus Bantzer). While other composers are mentioned in the literature review, a sustained comparative analysis would have highlighted what is uniquely South African in Reddy's *clazz* style.

Editorial suggestions

1. The abstract is slightly lengthy. It should ideally be condensed to 250–300 words and framed more as a concise summary rather than an introduction.
2. Some chapters (particularly those cataloguing stylistic elements) are incredibly detailed; an executive summary of key findings at the beginning or end of each chapter would improve readability.
3. A glossary in English of South African jazz terms might have assisted international readers unfamiliar with concepts such as *mbaqanga*, *kwêla*, and *ghoema*.
4. Page iv: *Suider-Afrikaanse Kerk- en Konsertorrelsteervereniging*

Overall evaluation

This dissertation displays impressive scholarship, originality, and commitment to advancing knowledge in organ studies, jazz research, and South African musicology. It not only honours the memory and creativity of Surendran Reddy but also reframes the pipe organ as a dynamic, global instrument capable of expressing hybrid identities. The candidate demonstrates all the qualities expected at the doctoral level: independence of thought, research methodological innovation, comprehensive command of literature, and significant contribution to knowledge. Despite minor areas for improvement, the dissertation is a work of high academic calibre and worthy of the award of a PhD.

I award the dissertation a well-deserved **PASS**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T.J. van Wyk".

Prof T.J. van Wyk

September 2025
