



## The history of the East Rand Youth Orchestra

The East Rand Youth Orchestra was founded in 1978 to serve the community on the East Rand. This orchestra aims to introduce the public to orchestral music, and to let children enjoy themselves in a team environment, while giving pleasure to others.

The orchestra has served the community over the years by playing in churches, at fetes, shopping centres and the like, outdoor activities, school concerts and choir festivals. It has also played at graduation and corporate events. Educational concerts have been given at schools, where a demonstration of instruments is given, and the structure of an orchestra is explained. Many children who started off playing in this orchestra

have gone on to become professional musicians. A few play in leading orchestras in Europe, some are invited to play solo with leading orchestras, and others have gone on to teach. The members are aged between 10 and 24 years old, and come from Bedfordview, Edenvale, Boksburg, Benoni, Kempton Park, Daveyton, Springs and Heidelberg. At present it has over 50 members. Although based on the East Rand, the orchestra has toured extensively. Concerts have been given in Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Ceres, Durban, the Eastern Transvaal, Jeffrey's Bay, Knysna, Maputo, Mossel Bay, Vryheid, and of course East Rand, West Rand, Pretoria and Vereeniging. In 1998 the orchestra went

to Madagascar. As the first symphony orchestra to visit Madagascar for 35 years, it literally had audiences of thousands. As a result of its visit, many music schools have been started. In 2005 the orchestra visited Namibia where it played with some wonderful choirs and also entertained some of the previously disadvantaged communities. A highlight was the winning of the Ekurhuleni Mayoral Award in 2008 for the best musical production. Children from previously disadvantaged communities have been helped by providing them with lessons. Some of these young people are now starting to earn their own living by teaching. One young man who learned his skills with us has attended conducting seminars in

England and Finland and has been invited to lecture in China and Argentina. The orchestra's repertoire is wide and music from opera to movies themes, from Bach to the Beatles as well as popular and religious works are played. The Education Department used to fund the orchestra, but since 1996 when they withdrew the funding, the orchestra has had to rely on income from concerts, fundraising and subscriptions. Donations and sponsors are always welcome. Mr. Pienaar Fourie has been the conductor from the inception 34 years ago. The organiser is Mrs. Janet Dixon. The orchestra can be contacted on (011) 609 3354