



Dear Parents and Friends of St Martin's

6 February 2018

"Please Father, can you get a trumpet for me." As we mourn the passing of the legendary Hugh Masekela, an Old Boy of St Martin's School, we are reminded of the origins of this great musician's journey. He began his musical career as a little boy practising scales and arpeggios on the piano in the music room of our lovely campus. But then he somehow got the idea into his head that he wanted to play the trumpet. Not being able to afford such a costly instrument did not deter this young man in any way; he spoke to his chaplain, Father Trevor Huddleston, about his desire to play the trumpet and asked him whether he was able to help. In true Huddleston fashion – *Go big or go home* – he wrote to none other than the American trumpeter, composer and singer Louis Armstrong who has undoubtedly been one of the most influential figures in the history of jazz. His simple request: *Have you got an old trumpet lying around for a keen young pupil of mine*, was one of those brief, yet profoundly defining moments in Masekela's life. There was of course no e-mail in those days let alone takealot.com, but a few weeks later, much to the surprise and delight of Trevor Huddleston, a parcel arrived for Hugh Masekela – and the rest is history. Masekela is known as the father of South African jazz and has enthralled audiences across the world. It is not only his musical talent that was nurtured here at St Martin's, but also the tenacity and staying power which he displayed throughout his illustrious career. *Anything can be done, when you believe*, became the motto for his life and he would have first heard these words in the chapel, here, from Trevor Huddleston. We are proud of him and send our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends. Rest in peace Bra Hugh!

It has been just over two weeks since school has started and I have witnessed first-hand what everyone told me before I came: *St Martin's is a real family school – a school with a difference*. My father passed away in our first week here. On the day of the funeral, much to my surprise, a St Martin's bus arrived at the church. The head boy, head girl, a number of staff members – also from the Prep School – and the chaplain had come to show their support and sympathy. For the first time I have understood what the *Ministry of Presence* means. And in terms of our move – thank you to everyone who has made our transition from the sun-kissed beaches of Durban to the Big Smog so smooth – we are hugely excited to be in Johannesburg and at St Martin's.

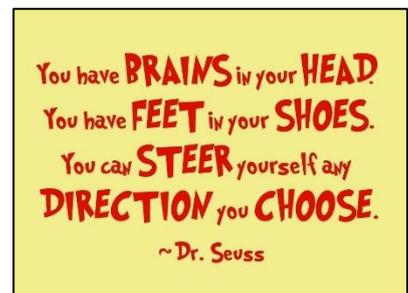
We recently hosted two welcome sessions with parents and since not all of you were able to attend, I thought it necessary to briefly outline what I said at these events:

We know that St Martin's has produced great leaders and has a rich history as a South African school. I love what Michael Stern, the first headmaster of St Martin's, once said: "We have proved that the Anglican Church is still prepared to do some dangerously decent things". He went on to say that St Martin's doesn't only produce good South African citizens but, indeed, good human beings. This is the challenge which our founders and the church will keep reminding us of. Are we still producing good human beings at this school? Academic endeavour and sporting prowess are important – of

course they are – but at a school like St Martin’s it cannot only be about that. There must be more. If all we do is ensure our pupils a great Matric, so that they can go to UCT and study Business Science with the sole purpose of owning a house in J-Bay, having a boat on the Vaal and a sleek sports car in the driveway, then I fear we have not been true to our founders’ vision. There is, of course, nothing wrong with any of these assets, but if there is nothing more that we send our pupils away with when they matriculate, we haven’t necessarily produced the good human beings that Michael Stern was talking about. I believe we owe this country more! Sure, not everyone is going to be an Oliver Tambo, a Fikile Bam or a Hugh Masekela, but every one of our pupils can make a difference in his or her environment. Do we, as a school, engender that indelible urge in our pupils to think beyond themselves and to want to be a part of real nation building? Jesus once made an interesting comment: “If you want to be great in God’s kingdom, you need to be the servant of all.” True greatness comes through service – something we can all do and something that will be high on the agenda at St Martin’s while I am here.

To the issue of change; many of you will have been wondering what changes I plan to bring to St Martin’s as the new headmaster. I need you to know that, in my opinion, it would be hugely disrespectful to an organisation of this stature to come in and just make wholesale changes. I am also of the opinion that: ‘If it aint broke, don’t fix it’, but I will be asking a lot of questions. Why are we doing what we are doing? Is this the best or most effective way of doing it? I believe in working collaboratively and any major changes will include the relevant stakeholders. As a school, we need to resolutely hold onto what is good and what works, but just as resolutely, we need to be prepared to change what needs changing, so that we can continue to offer a top-class education here at St Martin’s. The risk of becoming irrelevant in a fast changing educational environment should not be underestimated.

This quote by Dr Seuss was the subject of an excellent assembly at the High School by Mrs de Abreu last week. The benefits of being at a wonderful school like St Martin’s are many, but our pupils still need to choose to go after greatness. The choice to work hard, for example, comes with a cost, as does the choice to be honest at all times. I would like to encourage you as parents to help your child with the many choices they may face – being a child in our modern world is not always easy!



At the Prep School I have put out a challenge to the Grade 7 class: **“If the answer is 15, what is the question?”** Of course $13 + 2$ is correct but there must be far more interesting questions with

an answer of 15. Something like:
$$\frac{\sqrt{5!+(3^2-2^3)}}{[2,8]+7\frac{1}{6}-2,6+\sqrt{\frac{1}{4}}} \times \frac{1,4}{1+\frac{2}{1+\frac{2}{1+2}}} + \sqrt[3]{2744}$$

The chocolate for the best prize will be significant and if any parent wants to try their hand at coming up with something remarkable, I have another chocolate waiting for you!

Best wishes

Thomas Hagspihl
(Headmaster)