

JOHAN LAAS

Music captivated Johan from a very early stage in his life, as he started playing the piano at the age of 3. He joined his father's band at the age of 15, and his love for music continued to grow. In 1982 he settled in Johannesburg as a session musician, composer and arranger, performing as keyboard player in pop and rock bands during the week and jazz bands on weekends. His love for all genres of music took him on a journey, producing albums for local and international artists, composing and arranging variety TV shows, numerous extravaganzas, movie scores, radio station identity music, radio commercials and live concerts from 5-piece bands to full orchestras.

International projects that he arranged and produced took him to France, Los Angeles, Atlantic City, Belgium and Italy.

Since the age of 10, as pianist, Johan was immensely influenced by the music of Oscar Peterson, George Shearing, Russell Ferrante (The Yellowjackets) and his biggest mentor Chick Corea. As composer and arranger his biggest influences were Quincy Jones, Dave Grusin, David Foster, John Williams, Jeremy Lubbock and Michel Colombier.

Johan joined the "Idols" team right from the start as Musical Director in 2002. He completed 7 seasons in South Africa as well as two in West Africa and East Africa.

Working closely with producer and director Heather von Ruben, Johan produces music for theatre extravaganza shows for the "Costa" fleet of luxury cruise liners in Italy. In 2014 he completed his 17th and 18th show for the Costa Deliziosa 100 day world tour. In 2012 two of their shows "tipped over" when the Costa Concordia

capsized and sank after striking an underwater obstruction off Isola del Giglio. In 2016 Johan completed 6 more shows for the Tallink and Silja Line, operating in the Baltic Sea between Sweden and Finland.

In 2016 Johan created a show called "Beautiful Barbra", featuring the stunning voice of Cat Simoni. He spent four months on fresh arrangements and orchestral recordings of Barbra's greatest hits. They performed this for two weeks at the Theatre on the Square in July.

Locally Johan has worked with, among others, Soweto String Quartet, The Afro Tenors, Steve Hofmeyr, The Parlotones, Judy Page, Kim Kallie and Vodacom's "Yebo Gogo", Michael de Pinna.

In 2017 Johan relocated to Cape Town, where he joined the Kim Kallie Performance Academy.