

Virtuosos choose the Cape Bar

By Jean Meiring, Johannesburg Bar



Photo: Stéphanie Lawrenson

Natalie Lawrenson and Vaughn Fransch brandish their instruments in the Company Gardens in Cape Town.

The scholars Balkin and Levinson wrote that ‘[l]aw, like music or drama, is best understood as performance – the acting out of texts rather than the texts themselves.’ They added: ‘American Legal Realists distinguished “law on the books” from “law in action.”’

Two junior members of the Cape Bar who surely understand this point very well are Natalie Lawrenson and Vaughn Fransch. Having turned from music to the law, they’re experienced performers who will in years to come add drama to proceedings in the Cape courts.

Natalie, who completed pupillage and took up chambers in December 2010, holds a BMus degree from Wits and a MMus from UKZN, which she completed while performing for the Natal Philharmonic Orchestra.

‘There’s a wonderful children’s story about Gustav Mole that commences as follows: “Lucky the mole born into a musical family ...” I share that sentiment. Born into my family, music was always going to be part of my life. Not only did I have the privilege of sharing many hours of chamber music, symphony concerts, ballet and opera performances with my family, music friends and colleagues, but I also had the opportunity as a young musician – my instrument, the french horn – to tour abroad as a soloist with the SABC Junior Orchestra, to attend the Aspen Music Festival in the United States and to study in Berlin.’

When Natalie’s musical career was interrupted by an offer of marriage, which led to a move to Cape Town, she acted on the inspiration of her high school Latin teacher and enrolled for the LLB at UCT. Thereafter, she completed an LLM.

Natalie notes wryly: ‘The faculty secretary Mrs Baxter had her doubts about enrolling a music student for law. Yet, I soon discovered many similarities between music and law: discipline; hard work; attention to detail.’

At university, Natalie was inspired by Belinda van Heerden, Kate O’Regan, Dennis Davis and Hugh Corder, who had an ability to make administrative law fun and interesting.

‘Nico Steytler from UWC was the external supervisor to my LLM thesis and taught me how to craft a dissertation. Johan Roos encouraged me to participate in moots, which sparked my interest in advocacy. Taking part in Legal Aid, under the guidance of Lee-Ann de la Hunt, gave me an insight into the practical side of law.

‘During my law studies, I continued to freelance in music. Eventually, after completing my LLB in 1990, I joined the CAPAB Opera Orchestra fulltime.

‘Motherhood brought three new musicians into our family and the law was placed on the backburner for twenty odd years, until I met Graham van der Spuy, who became my mentor at the Bar. His predominantly medico-legal practice was an instant attraction to me; he encouraged me to do pupillage.

'As a junior, my practice is flexible enough to have allowed me to participate in music on a freelance basis, be it by playing for orchestras, enjoying chamber music with my children or filming an advertisement for Mweb!

'My main interest is medico-legal law. Yet, as a junior starting out, my practice is a general one. I've thoroughly enjoyed tackling every new area of law that has crossed my path.

'As is the case with learning to play a musical instrument, I believe practice makes perfect.

"Of course, not having been in the law for twenty years, I wasn't sure how I'd get briefs, no matter how passionate I was about honing my skills. Happily, work did arrive soon enough – often from the most unexpected of sources.

'A wise silk did once advise me of the four As for success at the Bar: ability; availability; affability and attorneys. To this I would add the 'ready' advice always at hand from my senior colleagues.'

Vaughn, who took up chambers at the end of 2012, grew up in Bulawayo in the former Rhodesia. As a young tyke at the Christian Brothers' College, he took up the study of the piano at the nearby girls' convent.

'The nuns taught me for free. They were as bad as the Brothers when it came to corporal punishment. I received regular cracks with a ruler if my finger technique was not up to scratch.'

Vaughn proceeded to study the trumpet under the virtuoso conductor Derek Hudson and became the youngest member of the Bulawayo Philharmonic Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra.

'I was so tiny I had to sit on my trumpet case so as to see over the music stand.'

After school, he enrolled at the Godfrey Huggins Medical School at the University of Zimbabwe, where he graduated with an honours degree in pharmacy, specialising in clinical pharmacy in 1986.

After completing an internship with largest pharmaceutical company in Zimbabwe, he rose to management in two years, before becoming the managing director and managing pharmacist of a chain of pharmaceutical outlets.

Then, having traveled the world both performing as a musician and working as a pharmacist, Vaughn returned to Zimbabwe to take up the position of managing director of Fransch Pharmaceuticals (Pty) Ltd, which acquired shares in several

dispensing pharmacies in Harare and Victoria Falls, including a trauma unit.

As if this wasn't enough, he obtained private pilot's licence, a diploma in homeopathic medicine – and a brown belt in karate.

At the age of thirty-five, Vaughn retired, choosing to invest in property in Cape Town.

Yet, retirement it hardly was. Vaughn took up a place on the BMus programme at UCT. Having attained his degree in classical and jazz music *summa cum laude*, he proceeded to complete the MMus *cum laude* and took a licentiate from the Royal College of Music in London and a licentiate from Trinity College in London (with distinction).

Vaughn took up a post teaching and examining jazz at UCT, while his performing career took him to the North Sea Jazz Festival, to the International Association of Jazz Educators Symposium in California and to concerts in New York, Russia, Egypt, England, to name but a few.

In South Africa, Vaughn came to be reckoned a leading session trumpeter, sharing a stage with Sting, Brian May of Queen, the Eurythmics, Deodata, Jonathan Butler and Abdullah Ibrahim. When Vaughn became a father – 'I have the most beautiful children, son Jarryd and daughter Aerin' – he realised that his professional musical career had to end.

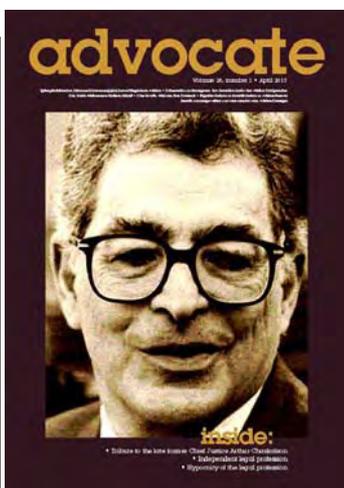
'The endless evening performances and traveling became untenable. I then came up with what I considered the only rational solution: an LLB. I no longer saw myself as a pharmacist. I knew that in the legal profession, I would find a comfortable niche in medico-forensics.'

After graduating with an LLB, he was accepted to do pupillage at the Cape Bar and successfully completed that in 2012.

'I'm very happy at the Bar. I've never met such a friendly and warm profession. While a pharmacist, the reception of colleagues was always professional but distant and less collegial.

'I can honestly say I am proud to be affiliated to this profession. I owe much to colleagues like Francois Joubert SC, Peter Hodes SC, Richard Goodman SC and Ismail Jamie SC, and my mentor Ashley Kantor, who have been immensely supportive.'

If you hear the sweet strains of a french horn and trumpet coming somewhere from the direction of the motion court in Cape Town, even without being an expert in the American Realist school of jurisprudence, you'll now know why. **A**



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