

Hollywood music maestro comes to work in native SA

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FOR Trevor Jones , conquering Hollywood was easy.

The composer, who was born in South Africa, says: "Surviving apartheid South Africa and working in rainy England was character-building.

"Hollywood was a piece of cake."

Now he is composing the score for the local drama series JoziH.

Jones has composed the music for acclaimed movies such as Mississippi Burning, In the Name of the Father, The Last of the Mohicans, Excalibur and Cliffhanger.

Other notable films include Notting Hill, G.I. Jane, Kiss of Death and the Japanese film Aegis.

In 1992 he was nominated for a Golden Globe for best original score for The Last of the Mohicans and in 1998 he was nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Original Song for the comedy drama The Mighty, for the song of the same name performed by Sting.

He has also been a jury member for the British Academy of Film and Television Awards.

The A-lister is in town to compose a score for the big-budget SABC 3 medical drama Jozi H and spared a few moments for Metro.

He left South Africa at 17 to study at the Royal Academy of Music in Britain, doing casual work to support himself while studying.

Silver-haired Jones is a consummate storyteller and his tales make for stimulating conversation.

He says he went out of his way to keep a low profile while working in Hollywood. "I've seen fame and what it can do. There's a price you pay... and the security of my family was paramount for me.

"Anyway, my job doesn't necessitate my being up front and on the cover of magazines."

But in Hollywood he became one of the most sought-after composers because, as he puts it, "the music bypasses the intellect and goes to the heart".

Jones acknowledges that he's been lucky to be surrounded by mentors like Professor JP Duminy, who organised him the British scholarship, throughout his working life.

He was a reviewer of classical music on BBC radio and TV for four years before studying further at York University.

He now holds a PhD and he also had an honorary doctorate, from the University of Western Cape, conferred last year.

Coming to the job at hand, Jones says Jozi H is one of the most amazing shows he's worked on.

"I always jump at the opportunity to work at home. South Africa is the best place to work when it comes to film," he says.

"It has all the conditions and climates, from Mediterranean to the semi-desert of the Karoo. It's an ideal place with all the landscapes. I'm very happy to be asked to come down here and work: it's a great opportunity."

Jones says he will include South African musicians in the score of Jozi H, which he's compiling with Afrikaans Idols judge Deon Maas.

The show is a collaboration between Morula Pictures, which makes Generations, and Inner City Films of Canada. It will be shown in the North American country as well as locally.

Having tasted success, realising his childhood dream of conducting the London Symphony Orchestra at 33, Jones wants to give back to his homeland.

He has set up a scholarship in conjunction with the National Film and Video Foundation for a deserving student to study film and acting in England and perhaps step into his shoes when he retires.

Quoting from another musical great, his hero Sir Edward Elgar, Jones says: "We are the music makers. We are the dreamers of dreams."