

# What does my future look like? Ask a branding agency

By  Mathew Weiss

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As I sat there enjoying Olga Kern's virtuoso rendition of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1, I felt immensely proud to have contributed, in a small way, to the relaunch of the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra (JPO). Brand Union, the company I lead, had developed the new brand identity.



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The evening was a great success, the music was world-class and the auditorium was packed. The executive mayor of Johannesburg, Mr Herman Mashaba responded by committing millions of rands to the sustainability of the JPO for at least the next three years. He stressed that it was important for Johannesburg to have a vibrant cultural scene.

Bongani Tembe, CEO and artistic director gave a wonderful speech, as did Justice Diking Moseneke, both emphasising the work the JPO will do in reaching out to communities to uplift, inspire and educate through the power of music. Beyond bringing world-class talent to the city, a clear goal of the JPO is to attract a new, younger and more diverse audience to this type of music.

This vision and how the JPO would be different from other orchestras, is clear, but it wasn't always so. It was the work that the JPO did with Brand Union that helped to crystallise what its vision should be.

## Exploring, defining and choosing the new brand identity

This point was brought home to me when chatting to Malcolm Segal, one of the JPO board members. While he knew what the JPO wanted to achieve, including this broader social mandate, he couldn't quite 'see' how they should communicate this story to the public. By going through the creative process of exploring, defining and then choosing a brand identity for the JPO, he was able to see what the future of the JPO would look like in the market.

More than the elegant design of the logo itself, it was the picture we painted of what the JPO should stand for that Malcolm found most valuable.

In the concert programme, Bongani started his message to concert-goers by referencing this brand vision. “The new identity of the JPO has been inspired by the iconic Nelson Mandela Bridge, coupled with a movement motif. With one note, the audience can be transported across time, place and setting. Music has the ability to transport us, to tap into our emotions and to move us. In a city that has a natural beat and energy, music is very much part of our everyday lives. The JPO exists to bring our stories, culture and city to life through excellence in musical performance and community engagement.”

## Music brings us together

Our team chose the bridge as the heart of the new logo, because it is an iconic Johannesburg landmark, but also because a bridge is a metaphor for connections. In a city too often known for its divisions, music is something that brings us together. This is an inspiring and unique story for an orchestra to tell.

And that is what great design and branding can do for you. Help you see and articulate the future.

Corporate vision statements have become less popular tool these days. Everyone is about purpose it seems. Corporate visions have been relegated to a dry statement wheeled out for the first few pages of an annual report. Perhaps it's time to revisit and re-evaluate their value and role within a business or brand strategy.

So, if you can't quite see what the future of your organisation looks like, you could ask your branding and design consultancy to help you.

## ABOUT MATHEW WEISS

Mathew is the Managing Director for Superunion Africa. He has accumulated broad experience in both design and advertising in the US, Central America and EMEA where he built brands across a range of industries including FMCG, Financial Services, Hospitality and Tourism.

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