

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 13 May 2023

The African Concert Series at Wigmore Hall

The 21st Century has seen the widest dissemination of creative art in world history. Within the preceding 100 years, the granting of national freedoms and the consequential opening-up of countries - many being previously part of European empires - has enabled artists of all ethnicities to create, secure in knowing that there are no constraints upon their work in today's world, such creations able to be seen and heard far from the nations where they were created.

In some ways, especially in music, it was pay-back time: for example, the influence of jazz, founded upon African roots, had long infiltrated music in the United States and Europe, and continues to do so today. Yet the earlier new-found freedoms of Nation states led, inexorably, to the adoption of established - that is to say, European - forms and instruments by those ethnic African musicians drawn to create music in their own style and manner. Art - all art, we would suggest - is universal: an attempt to reach transcendence over petty individual or national restrictions and to speak to all in terms - so far as music is concerned - which cannot be expressed in any other manner.

In that way, of course, music remains a universal language, and such events as the programmes in today's African Concert Series demonstrate clearly the truth of that statement. The language used by some ethnic African composers may possess dialectic variants naturally, not all of which may be grasped at a first hearing, but what is expressed, and how that expression is achieved, lies at the heart of all true artistic creation, no matter whence it came.

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11.30am

African Pianism

Rebeca Omordia piano

Ayo Bankole (1935-1976)	Piano Sonata No. 2 in C 'The Passion' (1959) <i>I. And they sought to kill Him • II. And He was Crucified • III. Mary's Song</i>
Christian Onyeji (b.1967)	Ufie (Igbo Dance) (2002) <i>I. Moderately fast • II. Slow • III. Fast</i>
Nabil Benabdeljalil (b.1972)	Nocturne No. 4 (2015) Nocturne No. 6 'La montagne d'Imsfrane' (2020)
David Earl (b.1951)	Princess Rainbow from <i>Scenes from a South African Childhood</i> (2012)
Fred Onovwerosuoke (b.1960)	From 24 Studies in African Rhythms <i>Study No. 3 'Udje'</i> <i>Study No. 8 'Ayevwiomo Dance 1'</i> <i>Study No. 11 'Ayevwiomo Dance 3'</i> <i>Study No. 18 'Pende'</i> <i>Study No. 23 'Sanza'</i> <i>Study No. 24 'Raging River Dance 2'</i>

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Programme I - African Pianism: Piano Music by African Composers

Rebeca Omordia's opening recital begins with the remarkable Piano Sonata No. 2 'The Passion' by **Ayo Bankole** (1935-1976), clearly inspired by Christ's last days on Earth. Bankole, significant in modern African art music, remains a tragic figure following his murder in 1976 (alongside that of his wife) at the age of 41. His musical parents encouraged the boy's gifts and despite his early death, Ayo Bankole left a notable body of music, including two piano sonatas, of which 'The Passion' is particularly impressive. His admirable study, *An Introduction to the Appreciation of the Problems of Synthesis in Modern Nigerian Music*, arguably the most insightful publication on the subject, gave rise to his Second Piano Sonata, which relates both elements to the central act of Christian faith. It may be argued that not since Messiaen has a composer shown such avowed Christian inspiration in his piano music as Bankole, whilst remaining true to the precepts of his upbringing.

Completed in 1959, the Second Sonata is in three movements, its composition conceptually altered from personal grief to a lament for Christ's passion and crucifixion, the thematic material being either taken from Yoruba traditional melodies or made of melodies composed in a Yoruba idiom. The first movement is in sonata form, beginning (as Bankole wrote) with 'a musical painting of the sight they sought for to kill Him.' The varied emotions aroused are found in a mixture of polytonality, whole-tonality, and pentatonic phraseology. The Sonata opens with two contrasting themes. The first, a rhythmic, pentatonic motif, precedes a setting of the phrase 'Jesu, Jesu, mo ki o o' ('Jesus, Jesus, I greet Thee'). The development section pursues the original motif, beginning and ending with the song 'Jesu Kristi, igi oro' ('Jesus Christ, O painful cross'). The second movement (*And He was Crucified*), in ternary form, begins with a slow, tearful, chordal progression in the minor key before a broad pentatonic melody suggests the esoteric and mystical joy of the Crucifixion. This is interrupted in the hammering and

nailing by the executioners, the sympathisers, and the abandonment of Christ's body as He said: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit', the music returning to slow, sad chords before the concluding major chord implies the triumph of Christ's death. The rondo finale, titled *Mary's Song*, incorporates the hymn tune 'St Mary'; the entire movement is a succession of songs of hope, sorrow, sympathy and religious victory, as Bankole wrote, 'from the brimming-over heart of the Mother of Jesus.'

The greatly significant Nigerian composer **Christian Onyeji** was born in 1967 and is now one of the leading figures in African contemporary music. He is Professor of Music at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and his own numerous compositions are founded upon an evolved technique based on the application of ethnomusicological procedures in the composition of modern African art music, to produce a logical continuum of African traditional music. His compositions for solo piano include three individual pieces entitled *Ufie (Igbo Dance)*, each based upon a remarkably successful evolution of what the composer terms a 'drummistic piano style', its rhythmic subtleties producing an intriguing mixture, controlled and varied throughout – the essence of all dance. The title comes from that reserved for titled men in the Anambra part of Igbo land of Eastern Nigeria who have achieved respectable status in the society. It is also referred to as title music (*egwu echichi*). The wooden slit *Ufie* drum is used by the Anambra people, and the tonal materials for the piano work were drawn from a double pentatonic scale derived from tuned drums of Ukom ensembles.

The 51-year-old Moroccan musician **Nabil Benabdeljalil** is the youngest composer in Rebeca Omordia's programme. He is the most significant concert music composer Morocco has produced, and among his relatively extensive solo piano works is a series of Nocturnes which encapsulate his development and varied stylisations admirably.

He writes of Nocturnes IV and VI: 'My first Nocturne was written in 1992, the second in 2012, and it was at that point that I planned a series of Nocturnes (still in progress). Throughout these pieces I have attempted to rediscover the poetic essence of musical expression, ignoring "historical necessities" with implied prohibitions and orientations.... My music may therefore occasionally reflect the essence of earlier periods, free from the constraints of a specific age or era.

'The fourth Nocturne (2015) is characterised by an uninterrupted melodic line from beginning to end, with expressive implications of sweetness, tenderness and nostalgia. The melody – which is developed mainly in the Kurd fashion – was initially used in a setting of a poem by an Arab author from Muslim Andalusia before I used it definitively in this solo piano piece.

'The composition of my sixth Nocturne was completed in 2020 on my return from a trip to the Imsfrane mountains (also known as "Imsfrane Cathedral") in the Middle Atlas region of Morocco, after the end of the most difficult phase of the COVID lockdown. In this piece I have tried to express the freedom found within nature, but it is also a spiritual quest, since God is to be found in the most magnificent and legitimate of his temples: Nature!'

David Earl was born in Stellenbosch, Western Cape province, in 1951, and made his professional debut as a pianist at the age of 16. A year later, he performed Mendelssohn's First Concerto with the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra before moving to London for further studies at Trinity College of Music under Jacob Kaletsky and Richard Arnell. He has composed a number of major works, including five operas, eight ballets and three piano concertos, as well as seven other concertos and five operas. Among his solo piano music is the suite *Scenes from a South African Childhood* (2012), on the second of which, *Princess Rainbow*, David Earl comments: 'Running through the Jonkershoek Valley was the Eerste (literally "first") River. This lay just beyond, and parallel to, the gravel road leading up to Old Nectar. Here, in the boulder-strewn, light-dappled water, my Father would spend many a weekend hour trout fishing. I would often accompany him with a "pretend" rod and line. Fly fishing was something of a passion for my Father, and he possessed a number of books, fact and fictive, on the subject. For several years he conjured up an on-going bedtime story about a trout called Princess Rainbow.'

Senior amongst Nigerian composers today, **Fred Onovwerosuoke** was born in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana in 1960 to parents from the Igbo tribe. He grew up in Ghana and Nigeria, before gaining a scholarship to study music at Principia College, Illinois. Now a US citizen and a successful composer, his compositions exhibit African, Cuban and Caribbean characteristics. Onovwerosuoke is best known internationally from his chant 'Bolingò', featured in the 2006 Robert de Niro film *The Good Shepherd*.

Onovwerosuoke's *24 Studies in African Rhythms* share influences through strands from across Africa. He says, regarding 'Ayevwíomò' ('Birth'): "events" of that "first night" often inspire communal dancing and more celebration! Mastering these various pieces enables the pianist to appreciate a wide variety of African music.' Christopher Morley found Onovwerosuoke's studies '...rhythmically exhilarating, surprisingly western influenced, [with] Chopinesque melodies and textures. *Raging River Dance 2* could have been composed by Bartók.'

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3.00pm

African Art Song - Journeys From Home

Omo Bello soprano
Rebeca Omordia piano
Richard Olatunde Baker percussion

- Joseph Bologne** (1745-1799) From *L'amant anonyme* (1780)
Enfin une foule importune ... Amour, devient moi propice
Du tendre amour
- Engelhardt Unaeb** (b.1984) Onja Johorongu (2019)
Beyond the Mountain from *Prince | Haihāb* (2020)
- Akin Euba** (1935-2020) From *6 Yoruban Songs*
Òré méta
Mo já wé gbé gbé
Omo jòwó
- Ayo Bankole** (1935-1976) Ojo ma ro
Iya (1975)
Adura fun alafia (1969)
- Chijioke Ngobili** (b.1988) Selense (2016)
- Laz Ekwueme** (b.1936) Nwa n'akwa akwa (1972)

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The second programme in today's three-concert African Concert Series is devoted to songs by African-born composers, the subtitle 'Journeys From Home' referring to the fact that each of these composers studied in countries far from their native homeland. Naturally, of course, this fact meant that such composers could hardly remain aloof from the (largely European) influence of their places of study – often capital cities in countries with their own musical heritage, frequently founded upon different musical characteristics than were to be found in the composer's indigenous cultures.

The resultant songs are all too little known outside of Africa, yet share qualities wherein seemingly disparate elements are conjoined, melded with genuine artistry into a wider sense of human expression – that directness of utterance which unites composers of all ethnicities and genuine musical impetus.

In this programme, as is customary in almost all performances of songs of the African art music genre, there will be solo moments of percussion between the songs. Line-by-line translations of the songs are not feasible, as there is not an exact translation. Most of the

songs have a proverb at the base of the lyrics or words of wisdom that cannot be translated exactly. Therefore, the artists will introduce the music themselves, although we are able to provide background information to the composers and their work.

The Chevalier de Saint-Georges, **Joseph Bologne** (1745-1799), was the most significant classical musician of African heritage (he was born in Guadeloupe) in the 18th Century, his manifold gifts ranging wider than just music or art. His father was a wealthy Frenchman, and in addition to being an accomplished composer – among his impressive output can be found a wide range of music for voices: he left seven operas and many songs – he was a violinist and harpsichordist, Music Director to Marie Antoinette and a champion boxer and swordsman. He spoke and wrote several languages and was a Colonel in the French Army; his music was admired by Leclair and Gossec.

Among Bologne's works are around 100 songs, the original manuscripts of which have survived, and of his theatre works one of the most significant is his music for a production in 1780 in Paris of *L'amant anonyme*, a romantic comedy. It is Bologne's sole surviving complete opera; Act II contains two songs sung by Leontine, a widow pursued by an anonymous suitor who is finally revealed. The first, 'Enfin une foule importune ... Amour, devient moi propice' with an initial recitative, is virtually a short *scena*; the second, 'Du tendre amour', has the unmistakable phraseology of a love song – two minor masterpieces from the European cultural capital, ten years before the fall of the monarchy.

Music by the contemporary Namibian-born composer **Engelhardt Unaeb** follows, with two songs. These arose from different stimuli – as he explains, 'In my quest to start an art song anthology of my native Namibia, I decided to set proverbs of the different Namibian ethnic groups to music. Onja Johorongongo (2019) is one of them. This proverb is in binary form: whereas the first part describes the unforeseen mysteries of life, the second section is about the joys of life. Here, I am using a popular rhythm/musical phrase common in contemporary music with scat words/gimmicks as in Oviritje and Malgaisa styles. Beyond the Mountain (2020) is an aria from my unstaged mini-opera *Prince JHaihāb*. This appears at the end of Act 1 whilst JHaihāb is in hiding with his followers in the mountains...his daughter Khoendi, staring at the moon, wonders what life beyond the mountains is like.'

Olatunji Akin Euba (1935-2020) was in many ways the most distinguished Nigerian composer, musicologist and pianist of his generation. He composed much music, and wrote extensively on African and especially Nigerian folk music, particularly as a source for art music. His *6 Yoruban Songs*, concert arrangements of folk songs, follow the example of Vaughan Williams and others of almost a

century earlier, and are the most well-known of Euba's compositions. They are often performed at folk music festivals as well as in the recital room, either singly or as a group. From this set we are to hear 'Mo já wé gbé gbé' ('I cut a certain leaf'), 'Omo jòwó' ('I'm begging you, child') and 'Òré méta' ('Three friends') – the theme of the second song is the most tragic, being a lullaby to a dying child. These three songs are arguably the finest examples from this seminal group.

As we pointed out in the programme note for the opening concert in this Series, the shocking murder at the age of 41 of **Ayo Bankole** removed one of the most significant African composers of his generation. His creative legacy covers a significant breadth of musical genres, often distinguished by his natural fluency and a fascinating natural fusion of African phraseology within a framework clearly paying tribute to Western models. In this way, Bankole's work displays a natural mode of expression, entirely unselfconscious, often exhibiting through a flowing melodic line such characteristics which both fulfil and surprise the attentive listener's expectations. In that regard, his three songs in our programme variously exemplify those characteristics: the first song, 'Ojo ma ro', is a fascinating study in which an off-beat pulse underpins a flowing triple-pulse melodic line as the singer joyfully anticipates a return to home; 'Iya' is an ode to mothers and motherhood and the third song, 'Adura fun Alafia', is a moving prayer for peace, underpinned by a gently-flowing piano line; it was composed during the Nigerian-Biafran Civil War of 1967-70.

The Nigerian **Chijioke Ngobili**, a noted scholar of music, history and cultural studies – particularly of his native country – is also a much-admired composer. His output embraces aspects of Nigerian musical theatre and popular music as well as ethnic musical influences, which come together in 'Selense' ('Step in, let's merry and dance'). It is a brilliantly evocative and popular song, an admixture of step variants founded upon a basic 6/8 pulse.

Born in 1936, the composer and actor **Laz Ekwueme** is now the doyen of art music composers in Nigeria, having long been one of the pioneer lecturers of music in that country. Ekwueme is a prolific scholar who studied both in Africa, in the United States and at the Royal College of Music in London under Gordon Jacob. He returned to Nigeria almost 60 years ago, since when he has become established as a leading figure in African art music. His music has never abandoned its native African roots, and the song from 1972, *Nwa n'akwa akwa*, is an excellent example of the quality of his marriage of native linear expression with European stylisation. It is a lullaby, as the mother seeks to calm her crying child.

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Joseph Bologne (1745-1799)

From *L'amant anonyme* (1780)

Desfontaines-Lavallée, after Stéphanie Félicité, comtesse de Genlis

**Enfin une foule
importune ... Amour,
devient moi propice**

Enfin une foule importune
me laisse en paix.
Quel état est le mien...
Il ne me manque donc plus
rien à ma cruelle infortune.
Je n'ose pénétrer jusqu'au
fond de mon cœur.
Je crains d'approfondir un
secret si funeste.
Hélas! Sans mon affreux
malheur,
Plus de repos pour moi,
Nul espoir ne me reste.

Ah! Du moins si l'amitié
accordait à mes maux
Une tendre pitié
La peine partagée en devient
plus légère,
Mais mon âme à Valcour
refuse de s'ouvrir.

Valcour, dont l'amitié
me fût toujours si
chère,
Son cœur froid, son humeur
austère,
Aux tourments de l'amour ne
peuvent compatir.

Amour, devient moi propice,
Ou suspend du moins ta
rigueur.
Par le plus cruel supplice
Cesse de déchirer mon
cœur.

**At last the madding
crowd ... Love, smile
more upon me**

At last the madding crowd
leaves me in peace.
What a state I'm in...
So my cruel misfortune is
complete.
I don't dare look deep into
my heart.
I'm afraid to get further into
such a grim mystery.
Alas! To my dreadful
misfortune,
no more rest for me,
there is no hope for me.

Ah! At least friendship used
to grant to my woes
a tender mercy;
in sharing suffering it
becomes lighter,
but my soul refuses to
open to Valcour.

Valcour, whose friendship
has always been so
dear to me -
his cold heart, his austere
spirit
cannot empathise with
the torments of love.

Love, smile more upon me,
or at least belay your
harshness.
With the cruelest torment
stop tearing my heart
apart.

Du tendre amour

Du tendre amour, tel est
donc la puissance.
En vain on s'arme de
rigueur
Aux traits qu'il nous
lance.
Rien n'a pû dérober mon
cœur.
Je croyais que sur mon âme
Il perdrait tout son pouvoir,
Mais hélas! vain espoir.
Plus que jamais il
m'enflamme.

Funeste moment!
Ciel, est-il possible?
Malgré mon serment, je
deviens sensible,
Eh quoi! Mon cœur d'un
tendre sentiment
Epreuve encore le
tourment.

Of tender love

Such then is the power of
tender love.
In vain one arms oneself
with discipline
against the bolts he fires
at us.
Nothing was able to steal
my heart.
I believed that over my soul
he would lose all his power,
but alas! A vain hope.
He inflames me more
than ever.

Fateful moment!
Heavens, can it be?
Despite my oath, I feel
myself weakening -
what is this? My heart
with tender feeling
endures once again the
torment.

Engelhardt Unaeb (b.1984)

Onja Johorongu (2019)

Ouje otjivingurura
Onja johorongu

**Kudu = big antelope*

**Like the Horns of the
Kudu**

The world (life) turns and
twists around,
like the horns of the
*Kudu

Beyond the Mountain from *Prince JHaihāb*
(2020)

What is beyond this mountain?
Are there children like me?
What is beyond this mountain?
A wonder I hope to see!
I know the moon and stars,
Just like my lovely puppies.
I know the love in my heart,
Like I love my mother and father.
I love my mother and father!

Akin Euba (1935-2020)

From 6 Yoruban Songs

Òré méta

Three Friends

Meta meta l'ore o e Okan ni nwa sun l'eni e	Friends are in threes: one says I should sleep on the mat;
Okan ni nwa sun n'ile e	one says I should sleep on the ground;
Okan ni nwa sun l'aiya e	one says I should sleep on his bosom.
Mo s'aju were mo b'alaiya lo	I look around and I follow the one that says I should sleep on his bosom.
Mo ti lo m'Ogun, Mo ti lo m'osa	I know River Ogun, I know the sea.
Mo ti lo m'opo bale odo	I know the bank of the river.
Ope wewe se 'ku pa pako	Small palms bring about the death of a tree.
Ise nkele se 'ku p'okunrin	A certain job brings about the death of a man.
Ote 'Badan m'ogun wa ja'lu	Hatred in Ibadan brings about war in the town.
Ondere she 'ko yeye	Friends can often be of no use,
Yeye o l'ore o e	no use indeed.

Mo já wé gbé gbé

I cut a certain leaf

Mo ja 'we gbe gbe ki nwon ma gbagbe mi	I cut a certain leaf so that they wouldn't forget me.
Mo ja 'we oni tete ki nwon ma te mi mo 'le	I cut green vegetables so that nobody would step on me.
Oyo nlo, ko she wa 're	Oyo town moves, but does us no good,
Oju ipon rokoroko ko gbagbe ile	no matter how a farmer farms, he will never forget home.
O ma nlo ogerere	He is going with a group of people.

Omo jòwó

I'm begging you, child

Omo ki o ye jowo o	I'm begging you, my child.
Omo jowo , mo kunle mo be o o	I'm on my knees my child, I'm begging you.
Omo jowo , mo f'ekuru be o o	I'm using <i>*moi moi</i> to beg you, I'm begging you.
Omo j'owo, mo f'akara be o o	I'm using <i>*akara</i> to beg you, I'm begging you.

Omo jowo, ki o ye jowo o I'm begging my child,
Omo jowo I'm begging.

**moi moi – traditional bean pudding. *akara – traditional
bean cakes*

Ayo Bankole (1935-1976)

Ojo ma ro

Let it rain!

Ojo ma ro! Itura lo je	Let it rain! For you bring peace
Ewe ko'o yo bo ba ro	Plants will not grow if you do not pour
Ewe ko'o yo	Plants will not grow
Agbado'o yo bo ba ro	Corn will not grow if you do not pour
Agbado'o yo	Corn will not grow
E mi o ni jeun boba ro	I will not eat if you do not pour
E mi o ni jeun	I will not eat
E mi ole lera lara bo ro	I will not put on weight if you do not pour
E mi ole yo kun	I will not grow a pot belly

Iya (1975)

Mother

Iya	Mother
Iya l'olufe julo ni kekere	Mother is the most beloved in childhood
Nigbati mo sun, oun l'oso mi	When I sleep, she watches over me
Nigbati mo ji, oun l'ogbe mi	When I wake up, she carries me
Nigbat'e bi'n pa mi, oun lobo mi	When I am hungry, she feeds me
Ko s'eni t'o feran mi	No one loves me
T'o mo ai ni mi	Who knows my needs
T'o si le pese funmi bi Iya mi	Who can still provide my needs like my mother
K'Oluwa k'o gbe o o	May God take care of her

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have
ended.*

Adura fun alafia (1969)

Prayer for Peace

Olorun mi	My Lord
Olorun mi mo tun wa sagbe si o	My Lord, I have come again to you to make supplications
Olorun mi mo wa sagbe si o	My Lord, I have come to make supplications
Mo wa gbadura,	I have come to pray
Mo wa gbadura si o o	I have come to pray to you
Mo wa juba, mo kunle, mo wole jun o Baba	I have come to worship, I fall on my knees, I lay down before you Father
Mo wa ranti gbogbo awon to wa loju ogun	I have come to remember those who are in the war front
Mo gbadura,	I pray
Mo gbadura fun nwon Baba	I pray for them Father
Toju gbogbo nwon pata pata	Take care of all of them
Toju gbogbo nwon porogodo	Take care of all of them entirely
Toju nwon o	Take care of them
Toju gbogbo nwon porogodo	Take care of all of them entirely
A se hin wa a seyin bo	As you have done from time immemorial
Wa fitura fun gbogbo wa	Come and give us all relief
Wa fi ayo fun gbogbo wa:	Come and give us all joy
Wa fi oye fun gbogbo wa	Come and give us all understanding
Mo be o o, wa fitura fun wa	I plead, come and give us relief
Mo tun wa sagbe si o o	I have come again to you to make supplications
Olorun mi mo tun wa sagbe si o	My Lord, I have come again to you to make supplications
Mo wa ranti gbogbo awon to wa loju ogun	I have come to remember those who are in the war front
Mo gbadura,	I pray
Mo gbadura fun nwon o	Oh I pray for them

Chijioke Ngobili (b.1988)

Selense (2016)

Step in, let's merry and dance

Ogini bu iwe gi, nwa nne?	What makes you angry, beloved?
Obu gini bu ya nae chegbu gi?	What is it that strains your thoughts?
Ke di' fi' rugi ji agbalusi?	Why is your face so frowned?
Ke di' fo'nu gi ji atukwusi?	Why is your mouth so beaked?
Ngwa kunie puta n'ogbo K'ayi yoli b'egwu	Come step in, let's merry and dance.
Agbogho bia, kunie bata n'egwu	Young lady, step onto the dance floor
Ikolo bia, kunie bata n'egwu	Young man, step onto the dance floor
Onye nne, kunie bata n'egwu	Mother, step onto the dance floor
Onye nna, kunie bata n'egwu	Father, step onto the dance floor
Odighie be bu n'uwa to lu'te	There's no place where life spread a mat for anyone
Ife dikwa b'oke dikwa b'Ogini	What's in the house of Rat is also in the house of <i>Ogini</i>
Ya bu n'anyi ga n'enwanuli	So we ought to remain happy
Ura to b'uto, ekwobe ya	When the sleep gets sweet, we snore along
Onye bupute nni, anyi lichapu ya	When anyone of us feasts, we eat to our satisfaction
Obulu mmanya, anyi nuchapu ya	If he serves wine, we drink to our satisfaction
Maka n'uwa buo fumbia	For this life is lived just once
Onye nwu kwaa, nke ya gaa na ee	If anyone dies, his being terminates entirely
I na nu ya?	Do you hear me?
I na nu ya?	Do you hear me?
Nwannem, kunie ba ta n'ogbo K'anyi yoli be'gwu	My beloved, come step in Let's merry and dance
Mebe ya selen, selen,	Do it (<i>gesturing</i>) selen, sele,
Selen, selen, sele,	Selen, selen, sele,
Selen, selen, sele,	Selen, selen, sele,
Selense, selen, sele,	Selense, selen, sele,
Selense!	Selense!

Laz Ekwueme (b.1936)

Nwa n'akwa akwa (1972) Oh, crying child

Nwa n'akw'kwa	Oh, crying child
Biko yaliba	Please, stop
Nwa n'akw'kwa	Oh, crying child
Biko yaliba na nnei n'abia o	Please, stop for your mother is coming
Nwa n'akw'kwa	Oh, crying child
Biko yaliba na nnai n'abia o	Please, stop for your father is coming
Onye n'akw'akwa?	Who is crying?
Biko kwusizia	Please, cease your crying
Onye n'akw'akwa	Who is crying?
Biko kwusizia na nnei n'abia o	Please, cease your crying for your mother is coming
Nwa n'akw'kwa	Oh, crying child
Biko mechie onu, na nnei n'abia o	Please, keep quiet for your mother is coming
Onye n'akw'akwa ?	Oh, crying child
Biko ka odiba	Please, its alright!
Nwa n'akw'kwa	Oh, crying child
N'obu Nwa Chukwu!	This is the Child of God!
Jesu n'akw'kwa	Jesus is crying
Biko yaliba na Mary n'abia o	Please stop crying for Mary is coming
Jesu n'akw'kwa	Jesus is crying
Biko yaliba na Joseph no nso o	Please stop crying for Joseph is nearby
Nwa n'akw'kwa	Oh, crying child
N'obu kwa Nwa Chukwu!	This is the Son of God!

7.30pm

Chamber music by African composers

Ubuntu Ensemble

Theo Magongoma baritone
Claudia Dehnke violin
André Swanepoel violin
Louise Lansdown viola

Elliott Bailey cello
Leon Bosch double bass
Tessa Uys piano

Moussa Dembele percussion

Grant McLachlan (b.1956)

Yihle Moya (2020)

Senzeni Na (2022)

Stimela (2022)

Mokale Koapeng (b.1963)

Komeng for string quartet with percussion accompaniment (2003)

Moussa Dembele (b.1982)

Original works for balafon solo

Dunia • Tama • Bara • Touga

Fodé Lassana Diabaté (b.1971)

Sunjata's Time (2015) *arranged by Jacob Garchik*

I. Sumaworo • II. Sogolon • III. Nana Triban •

IV. Bala Faseké • V. Bara kala ta

Interval

Grant McLachlan (b.1956)

The silence of the day (A song cycle for baritone, double bass and piano) (2022-3) *world première*

Olifantsbos • Sea • Langebaan • Happiness •

Stone Clouds • Winter is past

David Earl (b.1951)

Elegy in memoriam Winnie Mandela (2018)

Peter Klatzow (1945-2021)

Piano Quintet (2016)

I. Lento • II. Andante con moto • III. Adagio

CLASSIC *fm*

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This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25

Grant McLachlan 3 pieces for solo double bass, composed for Leon Bosch

Yihle Moya

This piece is adapted from the Hymn 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika', by Enoch Sontonga. It begins as a single line at the beginning, after which other harmonies gradually grow as a free-sounding fantasia upon the initial melodic line.

Senzeni Na

The title translates as 'What have we done?' - a famous Xhosa anti-Apartheid folksong sung at demonstrations, funerals and in churches. It begins in moderate chordal fashion, the supporting lines gradually being revealed one by one as the work unfolds.

Stimela

Also known as 'Shosholoz', 'Stimela' is a traditional miners' song, originally sung by Ndebele men travelling by steam train from their homes in Zimbabwe to work in South Africa's diamond and gold mines. It expresses the hardship of working in mines.

Mokale Koapeng *Komeng* ('Don't Stop') for string quartet with percussion accompaniment

This short work, lasting around five minutes, is a re-imagining of a song by Xhosa musician Nofinishi Dywili, whose traditional Uhadi Bow songs inspired The Bow Project, launched at the New Music Indaba in 2002. The piece colourfully explores the Uhadi techniques and makes use of overtones, conveying the essence of expressive motivic song-dance until the final section, with longer note-values, keeps the underlying pulse moving as the music gradually fades from our perception.

Moussa Dembele Original works for balafon solo

Moussa Dembele is a multi-instrumentalist of African instruments, born and raised in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso in West Africa. He comes from a family of musicians and craftsmen and has been creating high quality, hand crafted instruments for over 20 years, including the balafon (a West African xylophone) – on which, tonight, he will introduce and play four of his original

works and arrangements for the instrument - *Dunia, Tama, Bara* and *Touga*. *Bara* is a song originating from south Mali, the dance of the 'noble' people, performed once a year during a great feast held at the village attended by the king. *Touga* is another song from Mali.

Fodé Lassana Diabaté *Sunjata's Time* (transcribed for string quartet by Jacob Garchik)

This work was originally written for the balafon, on which instrument Diabaté is one of the world's leading virtuosi, and is a suite in five movements, transcribed for string quartet by Jacob Garchik. *Sunjata's Time* is inspired by Sunjata (sometimes Sundiata) Keita, the prince who founded the Mali Empire in 1235. As emperor he established many of the cultural norms that remain today - including the close relationship between patron and musician.

Each of the first four movements depicts a character in Sunjata's life, each featuring one of the quartet's instruments. The fifth movement unites the characters. *Sumaworo*. Sumaworo Kante was Sunjata's opponent, a fearsome character who wore skulls as a necklace. The balafon originally belonged to him and its sound was believed to have esoteric powers. This movement prominently features the viola.

The second violin leads in *Sogolon*. Sogolon Koné was Sunjata's mother, from the central Mali valley where the music is pentatonic, sounding like the roots of the blues. In the city of Mande, she married the king - on his passing, Sunjata sought exile with his mother.

Nana Triban. The cello is prominent in this movement portraying Sunjata's sister. During Sunjata's exile, the people begged Sunjata to help overthrow Sumaworo. Eventually, with his sister's help, Sunjata restored peace and built West Africa's most powerful empire.

Bala Faseké. This movement highlights the first violin: Bala Faseké Kouyaté was Sunjata's court musician whose instrument was the balafon. He was also an adviser, educator and loyal friend to Sunjata.

Bara kala ta: 'he took up the archer's bow.' As a child, Sunjata was unable to walk. But, aged seven, he miraculously stood - immortalised in song, a variant becoming the Mali national anthem. The finale utilises the tune in praise of Sunjata, uniting the instruments and signifying the role music played in his life.

Grant McLachlan *The silence of the day*: a song cycle for baritone, double bass and piano (world première)

The composer has provided the following note:

This cycle is born out of a long collaboration with the innovative and versatile double bassist Leon Bosch, and a new acquaintance with the expressive and warm voice of Theo Magongoma. I was excited by the possibilities of the interplay between the different sonorities of baritone voice and double bass - the bass, for example, can play an octave above or an octave below the voice, and the combination can blend well with the low register of the piano.

Three South African poets are represented. Stephen Watson, who died tragically young at the age of 56 in 2011, was a well-known Cape Town poet and academic. Mxolisi

Nyezwa was born in the Eastern Cape in 1967, and has published three books of poetry in English and one in isiXhosa. His poems have been described as encompassing 'the spiritual, the political and bleakness of the everyday with the fluency of language and a compelling "deftness of image".' Archie Swanson was born in 1956. He has published four volumes of poetry, and his poems have appeared in many publications since 1973. His poetry has been described as 'expansively open to the world, yet resolutely introspective'.

The poems have a common theme running through them: They express the beauty and love for the natural surroundings of the Western and Eastern Cape of South Africa, which is set against the poignancy and pain of the reality of life in South Africa.

The title of the cycle is taken from the last line of Stephen Watson's *Langebaan*. The words of Stephen Watson himself, taken from a talk, *Bitter pastoral: The meaning of the Cedarberg*, published in 2007, reflect the difficulty I found as a composer when setting the music; landscapes I love deeply, and emotions that are as mine are. Here he describes the Cedarburg mountains (as referenced in *Stone Clouds*): '...no one ever satisfactorily explains anything they love....and the difficulty of doing so increases in direct proportion to the extent of that love....here is a mountainscape both dry yet shining, desolate yet so rich.'

David Earl *Elegy in memoriam Winnie Mandela*

Following Winnie Mandela's death in April 2018, a Memorial Service was held at the South African High Commission in London which included various musical items. David Earl's single movement *Elegy* was written specifically for the event at the request of Leon Bosch, using the musicians who were going to be present: two violins, viola, cello, double bass and piano. The composer explains that the work consists of a lyrical cantilena forming either end of a simple arch, with a more feverish central section leading to a climax at the work's apex. The *Elegy* was later included in a four-movement Piano Sextet, whose finale is a set of variations on the African hymn 'Wakrazulwa', sung on the day of the Memorial Service.

Peter Klatzow Piano Quintet

The greatly-significant South African composer Peter Klatzow died in December 2021, aged 76. He wrote about the work:

'My legendary piano teacher, Kathleen Long, once told me that the Piano Quintet was a balance of two forces. That polarity is shown by the opening of the first movement, in dynamics and material. This is full of shadows, ghosts from Schumann to Shostakovich. A huge variety of textures [include] a duet with viola and double bass. The last movement is based on the song 'I am one acquainted with the night' which I composed a few years ago in a song-cycle entitled *Landscapes of the Heart*. However, it is not a set of variations like Schubert; instead the song acts as a generative source for many motivic ideas.'

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Grant McLachlan (b.1956)

**The silence of the day (A song cycle for
baritone, double bass and piano) (2022-3)**

Olifantsbos

Archie Swanson

lime leucadendron magic backlit in morning light
jewelled mounds of shells on pristine sand
brown bontebok with blaze of white
fantastic shapes carved into stone
sacred ibis on a seaweed strand

kelp gulls rise in arcing flight
on balm of ozone laden air
along the line of land and foam
as all the while the breaking waves
accentuate the overwhelming silence here

Sea

Mxolisi Nyezwa

the sea is so heavy inside us
and i won't sleep tonight.
i have buckets of memory in a jar
that i keep for days and nights like these.

Langebaan

Stephen Watson

Under the Norfolk pine, where the air was dryer still,
Beneath those alkaline, brack hills, their chalky soil
candescent,
Far from the wheat-land heat, the goats that crop the dust,
From the mountains burning, rough as ground black
pepper,
There was once that day - don't let us disown it, ever -
A day of water clearing, warm across the tawny sand-bars,
Of that lagoon still cooling, blue-shadowed in the seaward
channels
When sun was glancing off the tide, its tilted facets
shimmering,
The foam was scrolled along the sets, the crests of waves,
And glittering with salt, far out to sea, in a green of rinsed
wine-bottle glass,
The sails were many, white as blued linen, full of wind:
The silence of that day was not separate from its light.

Happiness

Mxolisi Nyezwa

i know i have forgotten you
like the sea that forgets the blue sky, like the sun
that forgets to heat the land,
a pain so deep settles in all familiar places,
and i am deeply disturbed, and i am sad.

i wrestle with the quills of madness
dead melodies of joy, where will i find you?
i know i have missed you with a number so deep,
and what the eye doesn't see, my heart feels.

a seashell sings to me the music of earth,
the last soil sells me a heritage,
the madness of the land heals my name.

Stone Clouds

Stephen Watson

Cloud shadows on the stone-clad peaks
You float across the slopes, those peaks,
Till they themselves would seem to float
Above their flanks of stone like chalk,

The clouds of light, chalk-coloured scree
That float way off, to leave me here
Forgetting my own age, my time,
Remembering what it was to know,

To be again that child, years back,
Who once knew beauty as pure lack,
That beauty was this loneliness
Of knowing all one is, is not

Grown homesick as a child grown sick.

Winter is past

Archie Swanson

winter is past
rain is gone
flowers appear on earth again
lily among thorns
tender grape on vine
apple and fig put forth in time

north wind abate
shake off the dreadful scourge
come summer breeze and blow
the fragrance-laden air
down the corrugated roads
by which we all have come