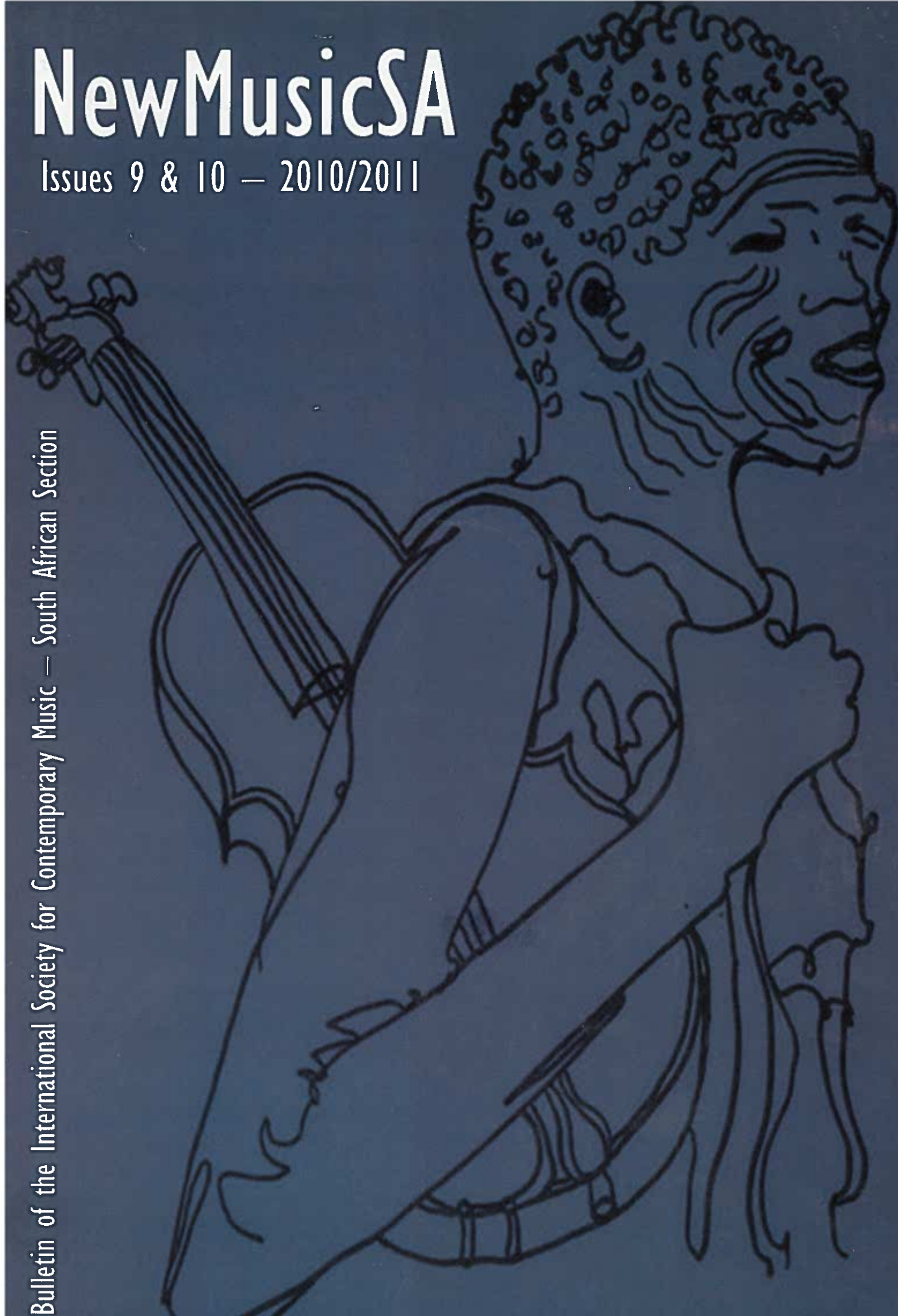


# NewMusicSA

Issues 9 & 10 — 2010/2011

Bulletin of the International Society for Contemporary Music — South African Section



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## Editorial

Welcome to the new-look *NewMusicSA* bulletin! This change takes place along with others: our new website which will be launched soon and the introduction of a new logo for the organisation (not yet featured here). These changes should enhance the professional image of the organization and reinforce our commitment to innovation and support for South African composers.

What is the place of contemporary (art) music in the present-day South African landscape? I'm sure all composers working in this field have asked themselves this question many times. Mareli Stolp's interview with new music pianist Jill Richards attempts to further explore this important question. This focus on new piano music is continued in our featured composition: Andile Khumalo's *Schau-fe(r)n-ster*. I decided to create a space for the inclusion of a yet unpublished composition in *NewMusicSA* (a tradition hopefully to be continued in future editions) in the hope that it will give exposure of this work to new music performers as well as stimulate debate with other composers.

In celebration of Michael Blake's sixtieth birthday in 2011, a feature by Martin Scherzinger on this composer is included. In this article the writer traces Blake's stylistic development through discussion of specific works. Grant Olwage's overview of the career and works of John Knox Bokwe ('father of black South African choral music') serves an educational purpose, introducing this composer to readers not familiar with the history of black choral music in South Africa.

Reports on the 2010 and 2011 Indabas and World New Music Days are included, as well as selected news items from these years. Jean-Pierre de la Porte leaves us with a final thought on what he calls 'the South African composer's dilemma', which is 'to imagine that they can graft themselves onto a canon of their choosing'. This complex issue is best not summarised here.

For logistic reasons I was unable to get the assistance I needed to include a new South African works list in this issue. From the next issue onwards I will instead include a *NewMusicSA*

members' new works list, as a special privilege reserved for paid-up members only.

I should like to thank all contributors to this issue, Cameron Harris for his editorial assistance, and especially artist Loubser van Rhyn who provided the art works on the front page and on page 29.

Chris van Rhyn  
*Editor*

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## INTERVIEW

### Performing contemporary music in present-day South Africa: An interview with Jill Richards

Mareli Stolp

In 2010, I began a PhD study in music at Stellenbosch University. This degree was described as an integrated degree, where performance and research were envisaged as interdependent entities, equally significant to the research outcome. My topic focused on contemporary music and the performance practice of art music in present-day South Africa. Jill Richards, a well-known performer especially of contemporary music, was appointed in 2011 as a special advisor to this study, and between July 2011 and March 2012 she was instrumental especially in terms of the practical and performative aspects of the study process. In September 2011, Richards gave a public master class where I performed, followed by a colloquium (also open to the public) which was conducted in the form of an interview. The following transcription of this interview (which has been edited and shortened) illuminates much of Richards's philosophy of music and performance, and the place of contemporary music in the present-day South African cultural landscape.

Mareli Stolp (MS): You're quite a unique figure in terms of pianism and piano playing in South Africa, because you specialize almost exclusively in music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. There are very few like you! How did your interest in contemporary music develop?

Jill Richards (JR): The interest started when I was at university in South Africa. When I was at UCT there were always these composers prowling the halls, looking for 'victims', and I got into it in a way because I found it quite easy. Having perfect pitch really helped, but it's not essential at all. And I love challenges. But I think the biggest thing was working with the composers. Even if they're pretty crappy you still get the sense of how music is actually made – in the most profound sense, dealing with this language which is not a verbal language – and you can take this knowledge back to any other music. I just kept thinking, wow, this is so interesting!

MS: As we all know, when you put yourself 'out there' as a performer of new music, you get exposed to music of varying standards. How do you make value judgements in terms of new music or, put another way, what are some of the factors that contribute to a positive experience of a piece of music for you? How is your opinion formed about the 'successfulness' of a piece?

JR: Oh, you mean when do I look at a score and go, 'Ugh!?' Well, that's a tough question. I think it comes a lot from experience. One of my criteria for a good piece of music is that it must have the right number of notes! I've played music where I thought, you know, there are so many notes that you think, this is just 'padding', this is kind of 'noodling along' and you think this is just laziness on the part of the composer. The other criterium is structure. You can play a piece where you think actually the composer doesn't know what he or she is doing from beginning to end, and you can't find the architecture of the piece because there isn't any. It's like they've put all these bricks, and there's no foundation. I think this is insulting to a performer. I know that sounds awful... With some pieces, though, even if in the beginning you think there might not be much there, there is sometimes just this indefinable part where you think, this person has something really fresh and interesting. This is the torch that shows you that this is going to be good.

MS: Let's say you find a work that you feel has potential but, for example, there are issues with structure. Would you approach the composer about your misgivings? And how would you go about it? How much is it a collaborative situation when you play a composer's music, and you have the possibility of personal access to this composer?

JR: That's tricky. Basically, when composers produce their piece it's like they are saying these are my children. And anyone who is a parent knows, if someone tells you your kid is ugly, you don't take kindly to it! What I've tried to do sometimes with composers when I just know something's not working I can say general things. If they're smart they'll pick up the subtext. If not, they'll say nothing is wrong and the piece stays as it is. And then I think, 'goodbye, so long'. Life is too short to play bad music.

MS: You performed a lot of South African music in the past, but lately you seem to have been focusing more on international composers. Is there a specific reason for this shift in interest?

JR: I've always felt very committed to South African music. But I got to a point where I thought...well, I was playing overseas more and more, and there was a little window where everyone was curious to know all about 'the rainbow nation' and the music that came from there. But within about two years I thought I just can't play this music overseas anymore, it's just simply not 'up there'. If you come from another country and you say you've got special music, then it really has to be special.

MS: You mean it can't just be special in a specific context.

JR: Yes. It's like Morton Feldman said: 'Just coming from a place doesn't make you special.' And I think that's true.

MS: Being one of very few performers in South Africa that specializes in new music must make you feel a bit isolated sometimes. I know I often feel as if I lack a sort of 'measuring stick' for my own level of performance – it's hard to determine your own standard when you don't seem to have many peers! Do you experience isolation as a performer? And how do you deal with it?

JR: You're right; we are isolated in South Africa when we play new music. This is obviously not the case abroad, not at all. I guess I'm just extremely hard on myself. I'll listen to Pierre-Laurent Aimard playing, and I'll think wow, I have so far to go! I try to have a very ethical approach to playing the music. Being true to the score is absolutely essential, in Beethoven's *Waldstein* sonata as in any music, contemporary or otherwise. This ethical relationship to the score is especially true of new music because the demands on performers are so huge, and notation is so specific a lot of the time. This ethical approach helps you keep your standards higher. Volans writing something in 2004 and Beethoven writing in 1804: it's the same line. Composers are composers.

MS: And the text is the text.

JR: Absolutely.

MS: You've not been connected to a music institution for a long time, and you're one of the few professional musicians in the country who operates outside of institutional boundaries. How did the decision not to be institutionally affiliated come about?

JR: I just got fed-up with teaching really bad students who didn't pitch up for lessons! Sometimes I think it must be quite nice to be in an institution because you have access to resources. But I've got enough friends and colleagues, who are in institutions, and I hear about all the 'admin' and the backbiting and politics and I think, what a relief I don't have to deal with that! Mostly I enjoy not being beholden to anyone. I regard myself as beholden to music, to the ethics of music.

MS: As we all know, universities are focused on research and research output, and the position of the performer, although absolutely essential to the functioning of the music institution, is often not clearly defined in the university context. Performers feel they deserve recognition for their creative output, yet it's difficult to reconcile this idea with the workings of the university as an educational and research institution. Do you have an opinion of the position of the performer in the institution?

JR: I have looked at institutions and thought, why aren't these people getting out there and playing concerts?! It becomes like a safe option for some people. I think if you are a performer at an institution, teaching and playing, you've got to push yourself almost into a position of discomfort because that's where performers live. You're only as good as your last concert. I think performers should be inspiring their students. The thing is, we're all on the same path. We're always going to be learning. Also, it would be great if you could get performers in the institutions that inspire their students to engage with new music. This doesn't happen nearly enough.

MS: Let's get back to composers and new music. Are there any composers currently active who you specifically admire?

JR: There are many composers that I'm interested in at the moment. I keep ordering these scores! It's catastrophic! Lachenmann is one, although he's older; Rolf Wallin from Norway; Beat Furrer; Georges Aperghis, he's fabulous because, you

know, I'm getting more and more into piano and electronics; oh, and Alvin Lucier!

MS: How did you become involved in electronic music?

JR: It was doing Stockhausen's *Mantra*! Also, I've been working with amazingly interesting people in Johannesburg, like João Orrechia (who works in sound), and Lukas Ligeti is another one. There's a Spanish sound artist called Francisco Lopez, and he was in Johannesburg for a few days. We took a trip to Alexandra Township, and he was recording stuff. Then he did a concert with James Webb, and Francisco was essentially doing these mixes on the spot from all his pre-recorded stuff. Someone like him is hugely inspiring.

MS: It seems as if you're becoming more and more involved with improvisation, sound experimentations and so on? Moving away from working with scores, in a sense?

JR: Absolutely. I also have a project where I work with an artist. He draws, and films while drawing – he plugs his tablet into a USB port, and the computer is on the music stand – that's my score. It's amazing!

MS: How do you train for something like this? How do you practise and prepare?

JR: You don't. You just jump in at the deep end! Marcus (Neustetter), that's the artist, just asked me if I wanted to do it, and I said 'cool, why not', and I had no idea. I told him I was totally inexperienced at this. And then I discovered that actually I know a lot about piano playing – sometimes we forget how much knowledge we actually have under our belts in terms of the physicality of playing the instrument! That's really all you need. I tried to consciously 'turn off' my left brain, and using my right brain and thinking in music language, not verbal language. That helps me enormously, because I just go into a space where it's all listening and it's physical, not thinking.

MS: Improvisation is so different to the way we usually perform: interpreting a score, giving a creative rendition of it becomes substituted by real-time activity, which of course is not structured in any traditional way. How do you, as a performer, control the 'quality' of your improvised

performance? Do you ever feel this kind of performance runs the risk of becoming gratuitous?

JR: Well, sure. But I think when one performs with the utmost integrity, when you're completely prepared – so that you're not 'busking' in the slightest way – the audience will perceive that. Kevin Volans once said something amazing to me. He said: 'audiences aren't stupid'. Maybe that's not so obvious, but it's true! And knowledge of music or other things has nothing to do with it. If you know that and you respect your audience they will pick that up.

MS: Can you expand on your idea of integrity in performance?

JR: I think things work best when you're playing with integrity. The other thing is, you have to let go of your ego. If you want to play for the wrong reasons – to be famous or impress people or whatever – you're on shaky ground. The other thing that's incredibly important is sharing. It's not that you're saying to your audience, 'look, guys, I can play this Liszt *Transcendental Etude*, I'm so amazing', it's about saying 'listen to this amazing music, my god it's so great!'

MS: You just completed a big project where you collaborated with William Kentridge, as well as several other artists. This kind of interdisciplinary work is uncommon in music, especially in South African institutions, and our music departments rarely interact with drama or visual arts departments. I would argue this is a negative characteristic of our discipline. How did you experience the interdisciplinarity in this project? And do you feel it is important for musicians to engage with this kind of collaboration?

JR: In terms of young music students and collaboration at university level...well, let's just face it: music students are nerds! They just want to sit and practise! I know, I've been there! That's what we do – we sit and practise, and that's what we're supposed to do. I think it's very important though, from the top down, for more encouragement to be given to students from different departments to interact and work with each other, and learn each other's art forms. If we want to be good musicians, I think we need absolutely to be aware of visual arts, movement, all that. I found it incredibly fruitful to have access to and work with people from other disciplines, who

have completely different ideas about art and making art, and creativity.

MS: Did you encounter specific difficulties in this project with Kentridge?

JR: There were some purely practical problems. For *Dancing with Dada*, for example, there were dancers, instrumental performers, singers, film, these amazing mechanical moving sculptures...when you have a show that size you need a producer, someone to manage all these different aspects. It was amazing to work with all these very different types of artists, though. That's when collaboration really rips your head off. You're all sparking off each other, it's so inspiring.

MS: I guess it's about realizing that, actually, we creative artists have so much more in common than we think, there's so much more that binds us together than sets us apart.

JR: Yes! I think the big commonality is that we're all dealing with the feeling world. I know it sounds cheesy. But we all eviscerate ourselves regularly, because that's the only way you can be a decent artist in any discipline.

## FEATURED COMPOSITION

### *Schau-fe(r)n-ster* by Andile Khumalo



Andile Khumalo was born in Durban in 1978. His former composition teachers include Jürgen Bräuninger, Ulrich Süße, Fabio Nieder and Marco Stroppa. He studied with the latter in Stuttgart, Germany, where he earned his Master's degree in Composition. He is currently based in New York, where he is a Faculty Fellow in Composition at Columbia University under the direction of Tristan

Murail and Fabien Lévy. Khumalo has attended master classes in Darmstadt (Germany), Fondation Royaumont (France) and in Stuttgart, lead by composers such as Salvatore Sciarrino, Stefano Gervasoni, Brian Ferneybough and Isabel Mundry. His music has been performed at the New Music Indaba (South Africa), the Royaumont 'Voix Nouvelles' (France), the Takefu International Music Festival (Japan), and at other occasions in Hong Kong, Switzerland, Sweden and the United States. Performers of his works include the Sontonga String Quartet (South Africa), Ensemble Mosaik (Germany), the International Contemporary Ensemble (USA), members of Ensemble Vortex (Switzerland), and the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra.

*Schau-fe(r)n-ster* was performed in April 2012 by pianist Chris Goddard at the Italian Academy in New York (Khumalo, 2012: online). It is part of a four-movement piece that the composer is still working on, and has now evolved into a piece for four hands, rather than piano solo. The quote, by the German poet Christian Morgenstern (1871-1914), that accompanies the piece is as follows:

'Alle wahrhaft Große Dichtungen sind Variationen zum Schicksalsliede, seien es Maestosi, Allegri oder Scherzi.'

The following translation was provided by the composer:

'All truly great literature (or poetry) is a variation on the Song of Fate, may it be as maestosos, allegros, or scherzos.'

Rather than providing a complete programme note here, readers are left to construct their own interpretations.

#### Reference

Khumalo, Andile. 2012. 'About me' and 'Upcoming projects' [online]. Accessed on 17 August 2012 at [www.andile-khumalo.de](http://www.andile-khumalo.de)

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Please note: A given pitch collection is repeated in the rhythm of the flags (without noteheads) that follow, until a new pitch collection is indicated.

# Schau-fe(r)n-ster

for Tristan Murail

Andile Khumalo  
(\*1978)

2  $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 72$  *sim.*

Piano *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Pno. *p* *mf* *p* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Pno. *p* *pff* *f*

chromatic cluster

3

u.c.

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2

10 **2**

*pp* *mf* *p*

Pno.

Ped. 1/2

15

13 **2**

*pp* *mf*

Pno.

*mp*

*sim.*

16

**1** **2**

*mf* *pp* *f* *f* *mp*

Pno.

*pp*

Ped. 1/2

19

Pno. *p* *pp* *ppp* *p* *mp*

(Pcd.)

22

Pno. *mf* *f* *sim.*

(Pcd.) u.c.

25

Pno. *p* *mf* *pp*

(Pcd.) 1/2

4

28

1♩ 2♩

*p* *pp* *mp*

always the clusters short and dry.

*f* *p*

(Ped.) u.c.

31

3♩ 2♩

*P* *sim.* *più mf*

*sim.* *P*

(u.c.)

34

3♩ 3♩ 1♩

*più mf* *p* *più p* *pp* *P*

(u.c.)

37 **2** **3** **3** <sup>5</sup>

Pno.

*più mf* *più mf* *mp* *più mf* *P* *pp*

*u.c.* *p*

40 **2** **7** **2**

Pno.

*mp* *mf* *f*

*u.c.* *f*

it is ok not to have all the notes of the chromatic cluster.

43 **2**

Pno.

*p* *p*

*u.c.* *P 8va...!*



6  $\text{7} \downarrow$   $\text{2} \downarrow$

46

Pno.

*mf* *mp*

(u.c.) *mp*

49

Pno.

*mf* *mf*

(u.c.) *mf*

52

the clusters should be slightly louder than the rest.

3  $\text{7} \downarrow$   $\text{7} \downarrow$   $\text{7} \downarrow$

Pno.

*mf* *P* *loco* *P*

(u.c.)

6 <sup>16</sup> 7♯ <sup>2♯</sup>

Pno.

(u.c.) mp

19

Pno.

(u.c.)

52

the clusters should be slightly louder than the rest.

3♯

Pno.

(u.c.)

8

63

the clusters should be slightly louder than the rest.

3

Pno

*mf* *pp* *mf* *P* *mp* *mfp* *PPP*

Ped.

66

2

3

3

Pno

*pp* *mp* *mf* *f* *ff*

*pp* *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

82.1

69

2

This should come out of the resonans of the cluster.

5

Pno

*p* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *mp*

Ped. *sost. ped.*

82.1

## SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY

### Approaching the silence of patterns: The music of Michael Blake

#### Martin Scherzinger

Michael Blake was born in Cape Town in 1951. He was awarded the BMus degree by the University of the Witwatersrand, the MMus degree by Goldsmiths College (London), and the doctorate in music composition from Rhodes University. In 1977 Blake settled in England, where he lived for twenty years. A tireless advocate for new music, Blake performed in, collaborated with, and administered various ensembles, including the well-known *London New Music*, which he founded in 1986. In 1997 Blake returned to South Africa, where he successfully negotiated South Africa's re-entry into the *International Society for Contemporary Music* (ISCM). He has taught courses in composition, contemporary music and analysis at Goldsmiths College, Rhodes University and the University of South Africa. He resides in Stellenbosch with his wife Christine Lucia, an eminent musicologist. They are currently both Extraordinary Professors at Stellenbosch University.

It was during his 'English period' that Blake's compositional ambitions shifted from the then dominant aesthetics of modernism toward a 'new simplicity', a German-based movement associated with the Anglo-American 'experimental school' (Henry Cowell, John Cage, Morton Feldman, La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Gavin Bryars, Howard Skempton, Gavin Briers, and later Kevin Volans and Walter Zimmermann, amongst others). In its rejection of the excesses of modernist complexity, these composers emphasized simplicity of basic musical means and materials. In Blake's words: 'A lot of experimental music explores only one idea, or one parameter, and much of it is non-goal directed, cyclic, minimal, postminimal, postmodern, chance, indeterminate, and so on' (Muller, 2002: 122). It is in the context of this aesthetic shift in Europe that African music came to serve as a natural conduit to Blake's compositional

output, in which it claims continued residency today.

While Blake's music draws on and makes reference to a broad stylistic palette, ranging from Claude Debussy, Igor Stravinsky, Louis Andriessen and Kevin Volans, his unique interest in African musical patterning is evident throughout his compositional career. Early works, like *Taireva* (whose title, roughly translated as 'I warned you', refers to a famous Shona *mbira dza vadzimu* tune), *Kwela* (a work for chamber orchestra that re-casts the South African jazz-inflected pennywhistle music of the 1950s in ever-slippery rhythmic arrangements) and *Let Us Run out of the Rain* (which is grounded in patterns found in Nsenga *kalimba* music), explicitly evoke African modes of music-making. In these works Blake offers refracted paraphrases of various genres of African music in a way that menaces the opposition between quotation and abstract invention. *Let Us Run out of the Rain*, for example, a piece for two players at one piano or harpsichord or for four players on *márimba* and vibraphone, hovers between, on the one hand, direct references to *kalimba* music, and on the other, the formal assemblage of the music's internally derived processes as such. The music thus shuttles between a referential, directed modality and a visceral, self-enclosed one. On the one hand, by transferring the overtone-rich sounds of the *kalimba* to the time-worn blandness of the modern industrial piano, the music paradoxically conjures the faded colours and open spaces of the southern African landscape. On the other hand, Blake's use of this strikingly un-exotic timbre in the context of quotation directs a paradoxical attention to the purely formal play of the original music. As if simultaneously to embody *kalimba* music and to supply a commentary on it, *Let Us Run out of the Rain* distills typical gestures found on the *kalimba* only to abstract them and then examine them from different points of hearing. Blake filters and recombines typical *kalimba* fingering patterns into novel fragments, casting them in new temporal frames, which in turn articulate unpredictable formal episodes of call-and-response. Along the way, Blake's composition suggests a *possible* African music; it offers (new) 'traditional' patterns organized by formal relationships not indigenous to such patterns. *Let Us Run out of the Rain* is therefore both less and



more than the *kalimba* music it paraphrases; it portrays a *kalimba* rhetoric that does not yet exist.

In the 1990s Blake's compositional output shifted from a musical style derived from creative transcriptions of various indigenous genres to an abstract style, as disarmingly casual as it was uncompromisingly austere. In these works references to traditional African music are no longer literal or overt. His *French Suite* for piano solo, for example, traces elusively skeletal fragments of the formal patterns of the western African *kora* and the southern African *mbira* in the unfamiliar (and defamiliarizing) context of irregularly shifting rhythmic groupings. And yet the work also conjures the musical characteristics of Erik Satie in its sparse simplicity and plainness. As in Satie, we here find tilted rocking rhythms elaborated in a static harmonic field. The casual simplicity of the piece belies an unpredictable rhythmic complexity; an ever changing tapestry of understated rhythmic shifts that demand close listening to

be fully grasped.

The *French*

*Suite's* opening section is premised on a simple descending melody in the framework of an eviscerated E Major mode. While the left hand accompaniment alternates precariously between an open E octave and two dyads (G/D and G/C respectively), the right hand slowly journeys downward, in a hesitant back-and-forth over five bars spanning the octave. This phrase is echoed in a disconcerting approximation. However, instead of sounding like a *repetition*, and thereby clarifying the music's fundamental rhythmic character, the echo is not quite imitative enough (like an image of a faulty memory). And instead of sounding like a *variation*, and thereby clarifying the character of the music's journey, the changes are not quite distinctive enough (like a memory of a faulty image). It is as if the music shuttles uncertainly between being and becoming – neither repeating nor going anywhere, it merely starts over. When the movement *does* open into a dance-like interlocking variation of the opening (bar 11, see figure 1), its groove is abruptly cut short, interrupted by a return to the opening phrase, again



Fig. 1 'First Dance' from the *French Suite* bars 11-12\*

only via approximation. But the promise of variation is further obstructed by a return to the opening that is severely abbreviated, recalling only the *first* bar of the opening five-bar phrase (which is then subject to the neither/nor logic of phantom repetition/variation). This is a *kaleidophonic* music built of possibilities, not of realizations. It issues phantom parallelisms that lie at the nexus between repetition and change, shifting haphazardly from section to section with cool indifference. But just as the music threatens to become enamoured of its own lack of orientation, the composer suddenly introduces dramatic changes (an inexplicable pounding on the hitherto neglected pitch class A in bars 84 ff., for example) as if, after all, to insist on the hard touch of the composer's hand behind the floating kaleidophone.

In Blake's 'South African' period works, we find a signature rhythmic asymmetry, which puts an angular lilt into the pacing of the music's flow.

Likewise, melodic movement is given in irregular

temporalities, and contrapuntal lines are never fully aligned with

one another. Time signatures are

constantly shifting to produce bars of different lengths, which nonetheless often carry the *same* basic harmonic/melodic materials. Motives, themes, and rhythmic gestures are thereby set adrift in a mobile field that hangs as if freely in the wind. The hard-edged abstraction of the music's microscopic changes and sudden changes is offset by the organic flow from one perspective to another. The music conjures the gradually shifting arrangements of Morton Feldman's asymmetrical minimalism, and yet the resulting musical tableaux are just as often abruptly punctured and punctuated by new tableaux (textures, rhythms, melodies). In Blake's late musical style, one might say, a breezy mobility thus mingles with filmic montage. When it comes to the listener, the music comes not as a dialectical journey of full dramatic closure, but as passing moments of faltering rhythmic repetition punctuated by shifting instants and intensities.

The organ piece *San Polyphony*, for example, operates on the basis of *kenosis*. It is a kind of

dialectic-in-reverse. Here we find the gradual emptying out of a saturated melodic field of demisemiquavers, which, on encountering a fistful of dissonant tones (F# and C# in the context of a white note pentatonic collection), tilt finally into silence. From the pedals we are given the remote outlines of bass lines found in *mbira* music, which never quite behave like functioning harmonies in that repertoire. Still, sometimes this accompaniment comes to life as if it was the centre of musical interest, and at other times it recedes, its own momentum increasingly eroded by patterned silence. It is as if musical figures capriciously yield to textured ground as much as musical ground congeals into distinct figures. The music may be precisely notated but it transpires on the shifting threshold between counterpoint and texture: ambiguous, open and indeterminate.

As it is with *San Polyphony*, *Leaf Carrying Song*, for guitar and oboe (or oboe d'amore), is a study in anti-development, which gradually leads toward emptiness. The piece opens with a pentatonic continuum in descending guitar motives (from F# to B) that

occasionally, and faintly, touch upon a high A. The oboe's melody, given in long sustained notes that are gradually shortened (from eight crotchets to dotted crotchets,

and then to abbreviated dotted quavers), as if to foreshadow the music's large-scale reduction, spans a complementary ambit from A to E. The tension between the B/F fragment in the guitar and the A/E-centred oboe line is isolated in various intervening bars that cut into the texture of the continuum in unexpected places (bars 7, 13-15, 17, 25). These interrupting sections oscillate between these two 'tonics' (B and A) in a manner that recalls the single-string bow music of southern Africa (*uhadi*, *ughubu*, *chipendani*, etc.). Likewise, the asymmetric rhythmic dispositions of these breaks recall the intricate cross-rhythmic patterns of western African drum ensembles. As the music



Fig. 2 *Leaf Carrying Song* bars 53-58\*

progresses, the complexity of these interludes increases (in bar 25, for example, variously articulated patterns grounded in a dotted quaver pulse in the guitar run agilely against the oboe's motivic movement in quavers), but this development is itself held in check by yet further interruptions, such as the pulsing walking bass section in bars 53 ff.), which recalls Zulu music for the guitar (see figure 2). By the end of the piece, the many unmotivated episodes have ruptured the seams of the various continua, leaving shards of motivic figures suspended in silence. Although it clearly elaborates a *tonal* pitch space, and even conjures a brief modulation to F# (in bars 101 ff.), *Leaf Carrying Song* in fact *cancel*s the functional principle associated with traditional tonality. The modulation 'happens' – it is not achieved – as if this were a matter of colour instead of function. The music is thus less 'in' a key than it is 'on' it.

From the Alexander Calder-like organicism of his *Toy* series, which explored the ambiguous limits of counterpoint formation, to the Wolfgang Rihm-like expressionism of *Ways to Put in the Salt*,

which explores modes of articulation and punctuation, Michael Blake's music is impossible to summarize beyond a few general

points. This is music without narrative line or dramatic trajectory (as in traditional Western music); nor is it music of time-transcendence cycles and circling (as in traditional African music). Where the music ought to generate data for large-scale structures it retards its own tendencies and prefers to meander. Where it ought to have rhetorical content there is a virtual blank. Its movements are casual; its form rudimentary: AB form, or ABC, or complex cross-hatching in which no sections assume structural ascendancy. It is music that exists on a cultural and stylistic borderline. The pitch language is neither tonal nor atonal. The rhythmic language is neither metric nor contra-metric. In Blake's musical universe tonality

becomes tone and time becomes timing. The work holds no promise save that of delicately patterned stasis. It is a music in which silence can ultimately prevail.

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\*Samples from Michael Blake's French Suite and Leaf Carrying Song reproduced by kind permission of Bardic Edition.

## EDUCATIONAL

### John Knox Bokwe: Father of black South African choral composition

Grant Olwage



John Knox Bokwe (b Alice, Cape Colony, 1855; d Alice, 1922) is known as the father of black South African choral composition; *Umdengentonga*, 'the little man who is mentally big' (Shepherd, 1968: 89). Bokwe's importance to the world of black choralism was generative in several respects. His own biography became a template for the amateur black choral composer: a self-taught composer (though unusually Bokwe had lessons in

piano and harmonium); who composes almost exclusively for voice; is typically also a choral conductor; and for whom choral practice is a part-time activity (Bokwe's other work included various jobs at the Lovedale Mission Institution, in the eastern Cape Colony, where he spent much of his life). In 1905 he was ordained as a minister of what we now know as the Presbyterian Church and established his own mission in Ugie in the north-east Eastern Cape; the portrait dates from this time. Briefly, though importantly, he was co-editor of the first black-managed newspaper in South Africa, *Imvo Zabantsundu (Native Opinion)*, during the two closing years of the nineteenth century. In many ways, then, Bokwe's life was to be the generic life of the black South African choral composer for much of the twentieth century.

The first notated piece of music by a black South African is also Bokwe's: *Msindisi Wa Boni (Saviour of Sinners)* was published in the Lovedale paper *The Christian Express* in June 1875. Thus was black choralism's performance of (the Christian) religion inaugurated; churches, together with schools, remain the prime sites for the practices of choralism in South Africa. Equally important for the history of the performance and composition of black choral music, *Msindisi Wa Boni* was printed in tonic sol-fa; the Victorian notation and method of sight-singing that had been 'invented' by John Curwen in the early 1840s, introduced to the Cape in 1855, and flourished in the colony's black mission schools (see Birkett, n.d. [1871]).

*Msindisi Wa Boni* is an exemplary Victorian hymn-tune in phrasal structure, melodic contour and harmonic practice: largely tonic and dominant enlivened by a smattering of dominant sevenths and secondary dominants and sevenths. Much of Bokwe's output is of similar hymn-tunes and his mastery of that compositional discourse was such that his music was printed in British hymnals. Other forms of 'mainstream' British church music that influenced Bokwe's style were the Anglican chant and 'service of song'; an example of the latter is Bokwe's compilation work *Indoda Yamadoda (Man of Men)* based on the Nehemiah story.

As important an influence was gospel hymnody (not to be confused with contemporary (black)

South African or American gospel music), then also called 'sacred song', and associated with the revivalist churches of the late nineteenth century; Ira D. Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos* was the most popular international example. One of Bokwe's best known works, 'Plea from Africa', fits this mould. Composed for a trip to Scotland in July 1892, it is a typical mission hymn: pricking the white conscience through a diagnosis of Africa's benightedness as it prescribes the cure of the Gospel. Bokwe was a well-known figure in Cape politics, and, as members of the black elite were wont to do, frequently discoursed on various topics on the 'native question'. If his politics enacted a proto-black nationalism, however, it was one underpinned with an unswerving belief in the evangelical thrust of the civilising mission (see Olwage, 2003: chap. 5). 'Plea from Africa' is also exemplary revivalist music, typical features including the verse-chorus form, humming, and a vocally accompanied solo (see Example 1, on page 21). Almost all Bokwe's music is resolutely metropolitan in style and to detect Africanisms therein is to misread the music; sometimes this has been done to suit a scholar's own politics (see Olwage, 2006).

Much of Bokwe's music was collected in *Amaculo ase Lovedale (Lovedale Music)*, a compilation that underwent several editions and expansions from its first appearance in 1885 to the final, commemorative edition of 1922 which appeared in the year of the composer's death. A later principal of Lovedale, R.H.W. Shepherd, wrote that after Bokwe's death his 'esteem as a national figure has steadily grown' (1955: 73). Indeed a small body of his compositions has entered the choral canon. As such Bokwe stands at the head of the tradition of black choralism.

### Work List

An incomplete and often inaccurate list of Bokwe's musical works appears in the entry for the composer in the *South African Music Encyclopedia* (Malan 1979: 202; also Huskisson 1969: 8-9). The present list includes only Bokwe's original music, except for the transcription-arrangement of Ntsikana Gaba's 'Ulo Tixo 'Mkulu'. Excluded, then, is music that Bokwe arranged, as well as music other than Bokwe's; both the compilations *Amaculo ase Lovedale* and *Indoda Yamadoda*

include works by other composers, metropolitan and colonial. Dates of composition are seldom known, and those given below are generally for the first known publication of or reference to a work. All Bokwe's manuscripts, deposited in the Cory Library for Historical Research, Rhodes University, are in staff notation and undated.<sup>1</sup> The majority are probably transcriptions from existing sol-fa-notated works for a planned staff edition of the second edition of *Amaculo*.

### Vocal Music

Hymn-tunes, sacred songs, part-songs and occasional pieces.

- 'Msindisi Wa Boni' ('Saviour of Sinners'), June 1875
- 'Welcome Home', July 1875
- 'Iculo Lomtshato' ('[Kaffir/Xosa] Wedding Song'), c. Sep. 1875
- 'Ulo Tixo 'Mkulu' ('Thou Great God', or 'Great Hymn'), Nov. 1876; orig. 'composed' Ntsikana Gaba (c. 1820), transcribed and arranged Bokwe.
- 'The/My Heavenly Guide', 1876
- '[Nature's] Giving', c. 1879
- 'Intlaba-Mkosi Yakwa Tixo' ('The War Cry of God'), Dec. 1883
- Included in the first edition of *Amaculo*, c. June 1885:
  - 'O! Yehova, Vuka' ('O! Jehovah, Arise')
  - 'Sindulule Sinoxolo' ('Dismiss us in Peace')
  - 'Ku Tixo U-Yise' ('To God the Father' [Doxology])
  - 'Mayenzek' Intando Yako' ('Thy Will Be Done')
  - 'Imini Zokupila Asizazi' ('Days of Life Uncertain')
  - 'Unganxami, Ungapumli' ('Haste Not, Tarry Not').
- '[South African/Queen Victoria's] Jubilee Ode', c. June 1887
- 'The Peace of God', 19 Jan. 1890
- 'Plea for Africa', 21 July 1892
- 'Her Last Words', 17 Oct. 1893
- Newly included in the second edition of *Amaculo*, c. 1894:
  - Sacred Kaffir Songs
  - 'Bawo Ndixolele' ('Father, Forgive')
  - 'Buya Mpefumlo Wam' ('Return, My Soul')



'Guquka' ('Repent')  
 'Imini ye-Nkosi' ('The Lord's Day')  
 'Umanyano' ('Unity')  
 'Uzuko ku-Tixo' ('To God Be Praise'  
 [Doxology])  
 'Wafa, Wafa Umkululi' ('The Saviour  
 Died')  
 'Yesu Hlala Nam' ('Jesus, Abide With  
 Me')  
 'Yizani Makolwa' ('Come, Ye Believers')  
 'Zulu Kaya Lam' ('Heaven, My Home')

Sacred English Songs

'I Think of Thee, My God'

Miscellaneous Songs

'Five O'Clock in the Morning/Chorus for  
 Lovedale Boys'

'[Lovedale] Holiday/Vacation Song'

'Vuka, Vuka, Debora!' ('Awake, Awake,  
 Deborah!'), c. 1905

*Indoda Yamadoda. Ibali lika Nehemiya kuma-  
 Afrika. Libaliswa nge Zifundo ne Ngoma*, 1905.

Newly included in the third edition of *Amaculo*, c.  
 1910:

Xosa Devotional and Miscellaneous Songs

'Kugqityiwe' ('Tis Finished')

'Ndilundwendwe, Ndingumhambi' ('I am  
 a Stranger and a Pilgrim')

'Vuka Zion, Kanya' ('Rise Zion, Shine')

'Sive, Nkosi Yetu' ('Hear Us, Lord')

'Isibeno so Dade' ('The Sister's Appeal')

'Ingoma Yebuto Lomshato' ('Marriage  
 Social Hymn')

Music set to English Words

'Ntsikana's Vision'

'God Bless the Prince of Wales', date unknown

**Note**

1. The MSS were deposited by Percival R. Kirby,  
 courtesy of Bokwe's daughter Frieda Bokwe  
 Matthews. For a more complete account, see the  
 Appendix to Olwage (2003).

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**REPORTS**

**The eMusic Indaba 2010 in  
 Durban**

Jürgen Bräuninger, Fiona Tozer &  
 Cameron Harris

Although the scope and duration of the originally  
 planned *Unyazi* event were scaled down owing to  
 difficulty in acquiring funding in the year of the  
 FIFA World Cup, the aims and objectives of the  
 eMusic Indaba ('e' for 'electronic') remained the  
 same: to present both local and international  
 performers to South African audiences, as well as  
 to provide opportunities for up and coming South  
 African composers to showcase their work in this  
 musical genre.

Three concerts were presented at the Howard  
 College Theatre on the University of KwaZulu-  
 (continues on page 22)

Example 1. John Knox Bokwe's 'Plea from Africa'. Created from the autograph manuscript (c. 1984).  
Cory Library for Historical Research, Rhodes University.

Acompl.  
by  
Organ  
or  
Sustained Vocal  
Humming

Give a thought to A - fri - ca Neath the burning sun There are

5

hosts of wea - ry hearts Waiting to be won. Ma - ny lives have pass'd a - way; but on

11

swamps and sod There are voi - ces cry - ing now For the liv - ing God.

16

Tell the love of Je - sus, By her hills & wa - ters  
Tell the love of Je sus By her hills and wa - ters;

21

God bless A - fri - ca, And her sons & daugh - ters.

Natal's Howard College Campus in Durban.

Nicolas Collins, Professor in the Department of Sound at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and editor-in-chief of the *Leonardo Music Journal*, presented a concert of a broad range of his compositions created between 1973 and 2008. This gave the sizable audience a good overview of his aesthetic approach and artistic changes of direction over the years, tying in very nicely with his lecture demonstration given in the morning of the same day. In a piece entitled *Pea Soup II*, Professor Collins collaborated with another of our international visitors, the Swiss new music pianist Petra Ronner: five microphones were placed strategically around the concert hall, creating slight feedbacks which were influenced by the pianist's actions on or away from the piano. In *Mortal Coil*, the technique of sensing

electromagnetic fields with contact microphones attached to a glove was utilized and *The Talking Cure* told a story accompanied by an interactive computer music system. The fourth piece, *Salvage (Guiyu Blues)* employed six of Professor Collins's workshop participants, who were probing a piece of discarded electronic circuitry. The concert was concluded by a work for a light sensitive synthesizer – responding to a candle – played in almost complete darkness.

The concert given by Petra Ronner was characterized by close performer-composer collaborations. The majority of the pieces on the programme, which mostly consisted of contemporary South African and Swiss compositions for piano and electronics, were written especially for Petra Ronner on the occasion of her tour of South Africa. The eMusic Indaba was a central part of this tour and helped in large part to make it possible. Jürgen Bräuninger's *torture/taxis*, which made

emphatic links between the performer and her role on stage, South Africa's past and the realities of a troubled global present, was a highlight of the concert. *Developing Nation* by Angie Mullins (commissioned by the festival and SENA) and *[O]-Rd:2* by Dimitri Voudouris were both strong examples of how the younger generation of South African composers are engaging with trends in electronic music and sound art. *Selbstgesprache*, a work by the Swiss composer Max E. Keller, played with the balance between woman and machine. The live electronics forced the performer to respond and also affect the nature of that response in such a

way that the electronics become almost an equal partner with the performing individual. Also of note was *Earthed* by Pierre-Henri Wicomb in which the composer returned to the earliest and most basic principles of electronic music, and indeed

electricity itself, in a work that explored the interplay between live pianist and the essential oscillation of an electric current.

The evening concert on Heritage Day saw the first performance of Luc Houtkamp's *Ikhaya on Wooden Shoes or The Adventures of Josef Brezelbacker*, a seventy-minute composition created especially for the Dutch POW ensemble's eMusic Indaba appearance. Collaborating with our own Sazi Dlamini playing bows, flutes, percussion – and yes – Dutch clogs, this 'mini-opera' questioned identity, heritage and nationalism. Musically, the evening went seamlessly from *avant garde* to pop and folk, demonstrating the wide range possible with today's state-of-the-art electronics combined with more traditional acoustic instruments. The contributions by master recorder player Erik Bosgraaf and the wizardry of DJ DNA's turntablism were outstanding.

The workshops provided a wide variety of educational opportunities for South African



musicians from all backgrounds. Nic Collins gave very hands-on circuit bending and hardware hacking workshops for composers interested in electronics, but who did not necessarily have much background in the area. Collins led the composers through a number of projects that created novel new instruments that subverted the intended use of the appliances that were modified (such as analogue radios and children's toys). Not only did the results themselves excite ideas in the composers' minds for incorporation in new works, but the process also taught them some of the most fundamental principles of electronically produced sound in a very practical way. This workshop's concept provided the festival subtitle of 'home made, hand-made'.



Petra Ronner's piano and electronics workshop was well attended and provided students with a valuable interactive experience. After studying various scores, participants had the opportunity to experiment with duets between the piano and the pre-programmed digital audio processor that featured in Max Keller's composition from Petra Ronner's concert programme.

The POW Ensemble workshopped composer Daniel Hutchinson's NMSA/SENA commission *Pass the Salt* for tenor recorder, flutes, musical bows and electronics. These two-and-a-half hours gave the workshop participants a very detailed, in-depth look at musical realization in various forms, including improvisation, electronic live processing, sampling, as well as the interaction between electronic and acoustic instruments such as voice and saxophone.

DJ DNA presented a very personal introduction to turntabling and how DJs can be integrated into instrumental groups. He told the story of his work with a number of such groups and demonstrated his extremely idiosyncratic techniques. Many of these techniques have been developed in direct response

to the situation of working as part of an instrumental ensemble, rather than as a dance DJ.

Instrumental workshops included those on the saxophone, flute, recorder and voice. These workshops were attended by performers as well as composers interested in creating works for these instruments.

In the final workshop there were discussions on some of the issues facing South African composers, and the benefits of introducing them to international ideas and performers. It enabled local composers to voice concerns relating to

difficulties in accessing information on the world stage from within our country, and allowed the visitors to answer questions relating to their fields of expertise.

As always, the workshops involved composers with a wide range of experience and from different backgrounds. One of the benefits of the electronic music genre is its flexibility in bridging the gap between art music and popular genres. It therefore has opened up our activities to a broader spectrum of composers and performers.

## **The ISCM World New Music Days 2010 in Sydney, Australia**

### **Clare Loveday**

Each year, the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) stages a new music festival that presents performances of new music. Composers from all over the world submit works to an international jury, who select appropriate works for performance at the festival. There are two streams through which composers can enter: member countries of the ISCM submit a small number of selected works that have been through a local jury and, from these, one work is usually chosen for performance; alternatively, composers



can submit a work independently for consideration.

I submitted my work, *Duodectet* for twelve saxophones as an independent entry because, being on the South African jury, I was not eligible to enter through the former category. Much to my delight, *Duodectet* was selected for performance at the 2010 World New Music Days Festival, which was held in Sydney, Australia. This was the first time the festival had taken place in the southern hemisphere - a landmark moment in the ISCM's Eurocentric history. As one of the performed composers, I was given a few days accommodation by the hosts. This, combined with the prospect of a premiere of a work I thought would never be performed - how often do twelve highly skilled saxophonists get together? - made a trip to the festival irresistible.

The visiting participants were in a hotel in downtown Sydney, a slightly grubby and seedy part of the city, certainly a far cry from the shiny gleam of the harbour and the famous Sydney Opera House. While many of the participants complained about the hotel (perhaps when South Africa hosts a festival such as this we should house the participants in Hillbrow, just to provide a little perspective?), I enjoyed exploring the down-market immigrant enclaves that offered, among other things, affordable and very delicious Malaysian food - an important discovery in expensive Sydney.

Festivals like the World New Music Days can be overwhelming. To prevent concert overload and because, to be honest, I simply couldn't afford to attend everything, I selected my concerts quite carefully. This is a good strategy at these festivals, as three concerts a day are wonderful at first, but quickly become exhausting. Even so, the concerts did begin to blur and many of the pieces, particularly by the European composers, began to sound a bit tired, restrained, over-formalised. But there were some notable highlights and I was delighted to discover in many of the Australian

musicians a wonderful energy and edginess. The Australian performers were passionate, committed and invigorating to listen to. Two performances that stood out for me were by the chamber group *Topology* and the sax quartet *Continuum*. They both played a number of works by Australian composers, such as Robert Davidson, Damien Ricketson and Andrián Petrou, that delighted me.

The festival was focused around the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, located near Sydney's famous Botanical Gardens. For a saxophile such as myself, this is a very happy place to hang out. Michael Duke, head of the woodwind section, is a virtuoso saxophonist and passionate about promoting classical saxophone. The students clearly work hard. Their performance of *Duodectet* was almost note perfect, in spite of a rather dodgy second bass saxophone that they had found in a

basement in Sydney and dusted off for the performance. I was thrilled by the concert and deeply grateful to Michael Duke for taking on the challenge of this work.

It seemed to me

that, like South Africa and many countries outside Europe and the US, Australians suffer from an underlying sense of exclusion, of not being as good as their American or European counterparts. But there is no doubt that the Australian new music scene is active and filled with hard-working people committed to the promotion of new music. New works are commissioned regularly and Australian composers are often featured on concert programmes. I, for one, experienced genuine warmth and friendliness from the Australians, feeling immediately included and welcome in their music world. Good on ya, mate.



Clare Loveday with the saxophone orchestra that performed her *Duodectet*

## The New Music Indaba 2011 in Johannesburg

Cameron Harris

The 2011 New Music Indaba was an intense three days of new music performance and workshops at the POPArt Centre, Main Street Life, in central Johannesburg. The festival featured internationally renowned Swiss musicians Roland Dahinden (trombone and alphorn player, and composer) and Hildegard Kleeb (pianist and composer), an experienced duo who have performed the music of Christian Wolf, Morton Feldman, Anthony Braxton and Duke Ellington amongst others. They have also premièred and recorded a huge amount of new music. Their repertoire is eclectic and crosses the composition-improvisation and art-jazz divides. The duo was featured in concert where they collaborated with South African musicians Samora Ntsebeza and Carlo Mombelli. Austrian-American performer-composer Lukas Ligeti also took part in this collaboration.

In addition to this, Roland and Hildegard also led workshops that focused on improvised composition using the techniques of Anthony Braxton. The workshop participants were wide-ranging and included commercial musicians, university students and musicians from Alexandra and Yeoville, coordinated by artist Siphon Gawla. These workshops were incredibly successful and culminated on the last day of the festival in a public presentation of the music that was created during them.



Roland Dahinden



Hildegard Kleeb

Canadian artists Véronique Mathieu (violinist) and Sophie Patey (pianist) also performed at the festival in a programme that included the first ever world première of a Canadian work in South Africa (*Pushpangolin Mutthiraigal* by Gabriel Dharmoo) and music by South African composer Robert Fokkens, in addition to new music from around the world. As part of her contribution to the festival, Véronique led a workshop on violin music written by the workshop participants.

The South African percussion duo, DuoFourIVTwo, performed an all-South African programme on the rooftop of Main Street Life. The Chamber Choir of South Africa, directed by Classic FM's Michael Dingaan, performed the last concert of the festival, which ended with the audience, musicians and the choir all singing together some traditional songs from the choir's repertoire.

Because the 2011 Indaba took place in a central urban setting, funds were available to help a wide variety of musicians to attend, and the workshop leaders had cross-over stylistic abilities that helped to bridge artistic divides, our workshops saw the highest number of participants in 2011 of any year since I have been involved in NewMusicSA's Indabas (since 2006). The concert audience levels were also very pleasing. Ideally, the scale of the festival needs to be larger, and the length of time therefore available for interactions between the participants longer. This will allow for the full benefit of the situations we set up to be possible. At the present time, however, both manpower (volunteer levels) and a need for core funding still affect the amount that NewMusicSA can achieve in this regard.

The transfer of skills between workshop leaders and participants were not only one-way: the international workshop leaders were inspired by the musicianship and drive of many of the workshop participants. In a brief email to me, Hildegard Kleeb wrote: 'Thank you so much for that very big gift of making possible a most beautiful week. We are so enriched and deeply moved, we will never forget the collaboration with South African musicians.'

## The ISCM World New Music Days 2011 in Zagreb, Croatia

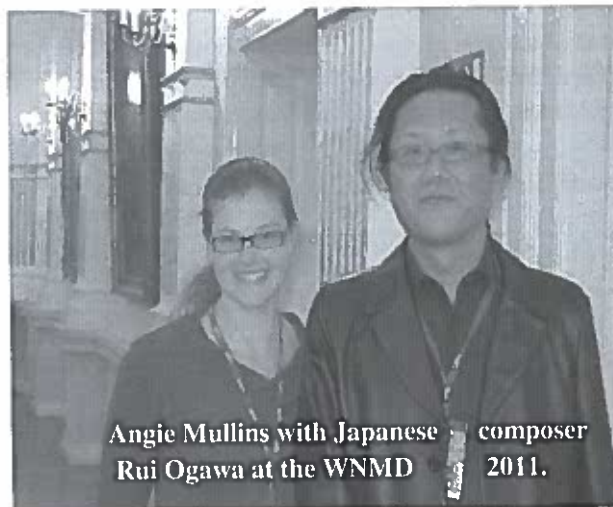
### Angie Mullins

Writing a report on the 2011 ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music) World New Music Days Festival is a daunting task due to the enormous scale of this event. I tried to make the most of every opportunity to hear new music, but despite my best efforts, I did miss a few concerts. For this reason, what I present here is not an all-encompassing report but rather a written account of my experience as a first-time attendee and only representative from the African continent at the 2011 ISCM World New Music Days.

The festival, which was coupled with Zagreb's 26<sup>th</sup> Music Biennale took place over eleven days and featured forty varied concerts. I have done my fair share of concert organizing – but never to this extent – and was astonished by how smoothly and professionally everything ran. Mirna Ores and her team (the local organizing committee) were as friendly and helpful in Zagreb as they had been in the months leading up to the event, during which they assisted with everything from scheduling to helping organize a Croatian visa for me (no small task when travelling on a South African passport!).

Composers and delegates were accommodated in the beautiful Westin Hotel in Zagreb and the concert venues were a pleasant walk or short tram ride away. Each morning began with an expansive buffet breakfast and lively debate amongst composers and delegates. This quickly became one of my favourite times of the day, and not just because of the remarkable assortment of pastries. Ideas were exchanged, experiences shared and guidance offered. I did not come across a single attendee who was not open and available for discussion and I felt a growing sense of camaraderie with each meal we shared.

Time not spent in concerts, meetings and breakfast could be used to explore the city. I found Zagreb truly magnificent, steeped in a fascinating history and full of interesting people who were passionate about new music. I befriended two young girls during my stay in Zagreb. The sisters, four and six years old, attended nearly every concert with their parents and listened with extraordinary intent and concentration. All concerts were well attended and audiences seemed open minded and accepting of all genres and aesthetics ideals.



Angie Mullins with Japanese composer Rui Ogawa at the WNMD 2011.

Despite all of the excitement of the city, the highlight of the festival, as you would imagine, was the music. I had never been exposed to the volume of music I was able to hear in these eleven days! During my first three days at the festival I attended ten concerts featuring pieces by Stravinsky, Stockhausen, Boulez,

Lutoslawski, Adams, Kagel, Ligeti, Berio and Messiaen. I had not had the opportunity to hear this much live new music throughout both my undergraduate and postgraduate studies and these first ten concerts were just the warm-up before the World New Music Days officially launched.

The WNMD pieces were presented in fifteen concerts interspersed with other Music Biennale concerts. As I mentioned before, I was not able to attend every concert and therefore unable to hear

every piece but, of those I did hear, there were some that stood out for me:

Sergey Khismatov (Russia) created a bold and interesting soundscape in his *Cymbal Quartet*, which was presented by biNg bang percussion ensemble – a Croatian group of performers who were as much fun to watch as they were to listen to. Marcel Wierekx's (Canada/Netherlands) *Sense Machine* incorporated electric guitar, live electronics and video images. This vivid performance was mesmerizing and stayed with me long after the performance. Several orchestral works were presented by The Choir and Orchestra of the University of Zagreb Music Academy, The Symphony Orchestra of the Witold Lutoslawski Philharmonic (Poland), the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra, the Plovdiv Philharmonic Orchestra (Bulgaria) and the Croatian Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra. The stand-out orchestral work for me was Milica Djordjević's (Serbia) evocative *The Journey of a Weather-Beaten Skeleton*. Katia Beaugerais (Australia), winner of the 2010 ISCM/IAMIC (International Association of Music Information Centres) Young Composer Award, presented a new work entitled *Manifesto pour la Paix*, which dealt with the Iraqi War. I found this performance exhilarating and I look forward to hearing more of Katia's music.

There were numerous other pieces that caught my attention and each new piece, whether I found it enjoyable or not, offered interesting ideas and prompted many hours of discussion. It would be negligent not to give due recognition to the Croatian musicians who performed the new works. I have already mentioned the orchestras who tackled a series of new compositions. They were joined by the aforementioned biNg bang percussion ensemble, the Croatian Television and Radio Tamburitza Orchestra, the Zagreb Saxophone Quartet, the XL Tuba Quartet, the Croatian Armed Forces Symphonic Wind Orchestra, the Song String Quartet, Camerata Garestin Ensemble, the Croatian Radio and Television Big Band, the Zvezdice Girl's Choir, the Zagreb Soloists and the Zeirfluss Ensemble – each ensemble working alongside the composers to polish the new works.

The Music Biennale concerts also boasted some exceptional performers. Sonja Loncar and Andrija

Pavlovic (Serbia), who made up The LP Piano Duo, gave two wonderful performances, first of Stockhausen's *Mantra* and the following evening a more varied, but still highly enjoyable programme. They were joined by a number of Croatian pianists: D&B Duo (Dubravka Vukalović and Bruno Vlahek), who performed Messiaen's *Visions of the Amen*, Damir Greguric, who gave a wonderful concert of Boulez's *Third Sonata*, and Katarina Krpan and Vlasta Gyur, who performed Ligeti's *Piano Etudes*.

All performances were of a very high standard and it was a pleasure to listen to musicians who obviously put a great deal of time and effort into preparing the repertoire and who take such pride in their craft.

Each morning the ISCM general assembly took place. Here the representatives of each country or organization belonging to the ISCM debated important issues pertaining to the organization's future, and heard presentations on future events and other projects the ISCM will be involved in the coming years.

Attending the World New Music Days Festival was a fantastic opportunity and a very enjoyable experience, but I was rather sad to see the lack of representation from Africa. NewMusicSA is the only organization from the continent that is an ISCM member and very little consideration is given to developing nations. It is an unfortunate state of affairs for all parties involved: African composers not only have so much to learn through this type of festival, but also so much to offer. There are burgeoning new music scenes throughout Africa that have a great deal to contribute to the international new music scene. I do hope that, in the future, we find some way to make Africa a more visible (and audible) presence in the ISCM, and the ISCM a stronger presence in Africa. I believe that a mutually beneficial collaboration could bring a new energy and perspective to the ISCM and the World New Music Days Festival.



## SELECTED 2010-2011 NEWS

### Helgaard Steyn Prize 2010

Composer Hans Huyssen was the recipient of the prestigious Helgaard Steyn prize in 2010. He received this prize for his orchestral work *Proteus Variations*, which was commissioned by the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle for the South African National Youth Orchestra. *Proteus Variations* was premièred by this orchestra at the Beethoven-Bonn Festival in Germany in 2006.

Source: *Volksblad*, 2010-10-31

### South African National Youth Orchestra/NewMusicSA Call for Scores 2011

John Simon's *Late Gothic Overture* was the composition selected for performance from this call for scores.

Source: [www.sanyo.org.za](http://www.sanyo.org.za)

### In Memoriam Hubert du Plessis

Renowned South African composer Hubert du Plessis (born 1922) passed away on 12 March 2011. Among others, he studied composition with W.H. Bell and Friedrich Hartmann in South Africa, and with Alan Bush and Howard Ferguson at the Royal Academy of Music in London. He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Stellenbosch in 1989, where he held a post from 1958 to 1982. According to *Grove Music Online*, he 'at first rejected the use of South African elements in his music, but from 1958 he used Afrikaans and Cape Malay folksongs on account of their symbolic significance', that he felt 'himself to be essentially a vocal composer', and that '[v]ocally-rooted melody is a salient feature of his essentially neo-Romantic music...'

Sources: The *South African Music Research Blog* and the article 'Du Plessis, Hubert (Lawrence)' by Jan Bouws and James May in *Grove Music Online*.

### Sivum'Ingoma Choral Music Workshop for Composers

The Gauteng Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation hosted a choral music workshop for composers in April 2010 in Johannesburg as part of its preparations for the Sivum'Ingoma ('we sing the songs') choral singing competition held annually in Ekurhuleni. One of its aims was to provide a

platform to discuss a way forward for choral composition that would cross the boundaries of established performing traditions in both the black and white choral traditions in South Africa, and at the same time allow composers to be innovative. Composers also got a chance to present the compositions they submitted as prescribed works for this choral competition to other composers and conductors present. The GDSACR (in partnership with SAMRO) published a song book containing these pieces.

Sources: [www.sacr.gpg.gov.za](http://www.sacr.gpg.gov.za) and *ClassicSA*

### Crossings 2011

The Newtown Dance Corner in Johannesburg, with the support of the French Institute of South Africa and other partners, presented the *Crossings* workshop in July and August 2011. *Crossings* is an international workshop for young professional composers, dancers, choreographers and lighting designers that takes place under the supervision of a team of established artists. The purpose was to provide an opportunity for the young artists to collaborate and present a twelve-minute artistic creation on the stage of the Dance Factory at the end of a two-week residency.

Source: NewMusicSA E-News

### Bahia-Africa Exchange Project Inauguration

The Bahia-Africa Exchange Project, which aims to forge links between composers in Africa and composers in the Bahia region of Brazil, was inaugurated on 22 March 2011 with the launch of the [bafrik.com](http://bafrik.com) website, and a concert of works by composers from Bahia, South Africa, Uganda and Nigeria. Compositions were performed in Bahia by the ensemble Gimba and the concert was webcast worldwide. The South African composers whose works were performed are Pierre-Henri Wicomb and Angie Mullins.

Source: NewMusicSA E-News

*Please note that 2010 news items that were included in the previous issue of the NewMusicSA Bulletin were not repeated here.*



## FINAL THOUGHT

### On the South African composer's dilemma

#### Jean-Pierre de la Porte

Composition is not a natural endowment; people get the notion of becoming composers because some previous composer has overwhelmed them with a particular work. They equip themselves technically for years until they have what they think they need to win a little elbow room in the morbid claustrophobia another composer has embroiled them in. For a long time they do not separate their new identity as candidate composer from the features of a previous composer seeping through their efforts like damp.

A composer thus attempts to write their own works only by rewriting the works of their most burdensome precursor. In this frankly dysfunctional relation, many neophytes dream of a clean sweep or finding an authenticity in themselves able to make them seem a source of music that bypasses the precursor. But if they did succeed in this they would find they had become ex-composers.

Composers arise in a trap and have no other fate than to become the trap for their successors. For every composer, including Hofmeyr\* who has a prolific and distinctive voice, there is nobody before themselves. Without this necessary and necessarily false assumption, how could they get up in the morning and compose?

The South African composer's dilemma is not found between Hofmeyr's complex mnemonics and Blake's skilled forgetfulness since both are stopgaps for the sake of morale. The real dilemma of South African composers is to imagine that they can graft themselves onto a canon of their choosing. South African painting or literature do have canons, highly and appropriately contested, but undeniably encountered by every would-be artist or writer. The same cannot be said for South African music. What common sense doesn't realize is that a canon without content exerts more of an oppressive hold on everybody's provenance than even one filled with unassailable giants. The

South African preoccupation with the archive is just a diversion and stopgap for the failure to indigenize the canon. Future critics will have no difficulty seeing present-day composers as acting out the absent canon via their own works. Until someone is bold enough to point to the inescapable South African music, and with that discover or invent strong precursors, our music will do little more than mime the absence of its past.

*\*This piece emerged from a discussion between Jean-Pierre de la Porte, Hendrik Hofmeyr and Michael Blake. It originally appeared on [www.kaganof.com/kagablog](http://www.kaganof.com/kagablog) and is printed here with the author's permission.*



**Elbow room?**

