

The background is a vibrant red color. It features several geometric patterns: a grid of small dots, diagonal stripes, and a faint world map. The text is white and bold, standing out against the red background.

NewMusicSA

Stories We Told Ourselves

Online Series

**Digital Indaba '21
Connectedness**



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Curator Statement

This became a visually challenging assignment, highlighting how moving work from the concert hall or art gallery into a virtual space poses additional questions to curators and event organizers. In this instance, shared thematic experiences under lockdown provided a strong focal point for each contributor to interpret, not just musically, but also in how their work was presented in video, directly addressing the problem of how our online concert would cohere visually and conceptually. Is online video the wave of the future for performing artists? It seems by now already an essential medium for composers especially. It's Scriabin's dream in a digital environment! Or perhaps not... this may indeed be a notable regression for music... it will be up to future audiences and musicians to decide.

Nonetheless, in choosing six exceptional South African artists doing relevant work during this time of global pandemic and the associated lockdowns all over the world, our series *Stories We Told Ourselves* attempted to address the topic from six different angles and present this work online. I appreciate how the commissioned artists not only found innovative ways to present their work visually, but also dug deep into fertile inter-disciplinary ground to create the solo pieces for this series. Fusing poetry, photography, and visual art with original scores in the case of the three compositions; showcasing contemporary live performance aesthetics from the worlds of expressive dance, jazz guitar, and pipe organ in the three improvisations: taken together, these six works represent South African composers in different places making strong artistic statements concerning a situation that is impacting everyone in different ways, creating differing realities, arguably fragmenting our society more than ever before (along the lines of the 'digital divide'), and simultaneously opening up new ways to come together.

My hope is that the online audience will press pause a few times, rewind, rewatch, and thoroughly enjoy this series of works, and be encouraged to look out for the artists commissioned here in a time when live events resume.

Daniel Hutchinson

Biography

Daniel Hutchinson (b. 1981) is a South African composer and music educator based in Gauteng. After matriculating with full colours for music at the National School of the Arts in 1999 in Johannesburg, his hometown, Daniel went on to join Gregory Maqoma's Vuyani Dance Theatre as musical director from 2001 to 2003. His first performance at a NewMusicSA Indaba was in 2002, with the Vuyani Ensemble at the National Arts Festival, as a final dress rehearsal before premiering Maqoma's powerful work *Rhythm Colour* that year. In subsequent years, Daniel has kept up a minor compositional profile, with involvement in many NewMusicSA festivals and activities, while focusing on music education. He is sought after as a producer for musical recording projects requiring instrumental ensembles and known locally for his intercultural work and music teaching in the Eastern Cape with the Kouga Ensemble, which he cofounded together with his brother Tim and friend Xolani Faku at the Thornhill Jazz Train Festival in 2004 and which he and Xolani continue to lead.

Daniel's educational and music compositional work has impacted on many sites and spaces, in both established institutions and on the fringes. His primary research interests are indigeneity and culture, and he is active in the decolonization of early childhood education. His major compositional works include full length dance musicals for children *D.U.S.T.* (2010) *Girl with the Magic Paintbrush* (2015), *The Last Battle* (2016), and *The Flower King* (2020). Daniel is married to Blessing with two children, Ushim (b. 2007) and Gilia (b. 2009).



Photograph by Stanley Sher

My House is a Spaceship

An improvisation on guitar and pedals by Reza Khota

Artist Statement

This is a reflection on the ways in which we mark time and perceive our day to day lives. With the arrival of the Coronavirus in 2020, my previous lifestyle characterised by movement and real world collaboration had suddenly and decisively come to a halt. The musicians world of rehearsals, gigs, recording dates and tours was no more; instead, we were locked down in our homes, seeing the world predominantly through the computer screen. With all this time spent indoors, I began paying attention to the planets and stars rising in my east facing kitchen window. Every night Jupiter, Saturn, Mars and sometimes the moon, would rise in the view of my kitchen window. This observation of the arrival of planets became my daily ritual and a source of wonder and contemplation. I started visualising the orbits and rotations of the planets, including our own and realising the perspective of our place in this solar context, imagining that this was the view from a spaceship.



Biography

Reza Khota was born in Johannesburg and was introduced to the guitar by his father in the 80's. He later studied classical guitar and improvisation with Faizel Boorany, who fired his enthusiasm for experimental jazz, the classical avant-garde and progressive guitar music. After enrolling for his B.mus degree at Wits University, he furthered his classical guitar studies under David Hewitt. He has been a recipient of several important awards, including numerous SAMRO bursaries and merit awards. In 1998 Reza was awarded first prize in the National Classical Guitar Competition. The guitarist performs regularly at festivals such as the Joy of Jazz Festival and the Cape Town International Jazz Festival. He was the composer and guitarist for the crossover band Babu, which was regarded by many as one of the most cutting edge Jazz/World music ensembles in South Africa at the time. Reza has also collaborated with people in the world of fine arts, most notably in performance pieces by William Kentridge and Nicholas Hlobo. He currently plays with the cream of young SA Jazz musicians in bands such as: Kesivan and the Lights, who played to a standing ovation at New Yorks prestigious Carnegie Hall in October 2014, as well as the Shane Cooper Quintet who's album, "Oscillations", received widespread praise from local and international press. In addition to being a sideman in these bands Reza has his own quartet featuring Jonno Sweetman, Shane Cooper and Buddy Wells who released their debut album, Transmutation, in early 2014.



Image supplied by the artist

Wavering

An improvisation on organ by Zorada Temmingh

Artist Statement

The improvisation reflects changing stories I told myself to process the impact of the pandemic. The work is built on two main musical elements, namely the pentatonic scale (the basis for traditional Chinese as well as African music for thousands of years) and the well-known hymn, Be still my Soul (Sibelius). The work opens with a drone on E-flat against which melodic fragments of the pentatonic scale precede a sweet melody depicting a calm pastoral scene in China. This is interrupted by a dissonant descending figure signifying the first news of the virus reaching the West. The mood changes to uncertainty. Soon a new scale is heard in the bass: a hybrid between pentatonic and minor. This repetitive scale is frustratingly incomplete: it continually stops on the leading note to denote the uncertainty and ominous feelings of being threatened by some unseen killer during the hard lock-down. Against the low ostinato two melodies are heard: a high pitched flute tune depicting determinedly positive self-talk and contrived cheerfulness, and a middle-register oboe melody - the first appearance of Be still my Soul in which consolation is sought in trying circumstances. After this the texture thins out, as if breath is being held in hope that all is over. But then the first stirrings of the second wave appear, and an abrupt crescendo stumbles into Kyrie eleison (Lord, be merciful) after which another verse of Be still my soul is heard in forte dissonant chords, dissolving into piano fragments of the chorale. Single phrases of the chorale are heard a last time in an earnest plea '... thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake; all now mysterious shall be bright at last.' The work ends in the quiet relief after the second wave.



Biography

Zorada Temmingh is considered one of South Africa's foremost organ improvisers. In addition to being the first South African to release a CD with organ improvisations (she has released six to date), she was also the first to do soundtrack improvisations for silent movies. For her groundbreaking contribution to classical music she received a special Kanna award at the KKNK in 2006. In 2019 she was awarded the FAK Andrew Murray prize for her contribution to Christian music. She has been the organist of the Moederkerk in Stellenbosch since 1986. International performances include concert tours to the USA, the UK, Switzerland, Belgium and Namibia.



Image supplied by the artist

Body Waves

A dance and sound improvisation by Nicholas Aphane

Artist Statement

Normally a musician works with dancers or choreographers to create sounds in relation to the body and not the other way around. Out of my body comes forth what is called silent sound: My tongue is so deceptive, I choose to speak through my body: like any other music instrument; open your eyes, ears: see and listen to the sound of my heartbeat, my breath and my soul. Then the pandemic hit us, we had to find new ways of working other than what our normal was, which then drove us to a point of isolation. Humans were no longer allowed to interact with other humans, we were also deprived of so many other things. Others went into a state of depression, people died, the entire Universe changed. I had the only instrument that I could use and communicate better with, my Body. My interest and research is about the sound produced by the body, unconscious and conscious, sounds within amplification. Nature and body sounds to correlate into one big instrument.



Biography

Nicholas Aphane, a performer, theatre practitioner and dance maker. He started dance classes at the Dance Factory at the age of 12 and so his multifaceted journey in the creative sector started. Straight after school he joined PJ Sabbagha's FATC. During his second year he successfully auditioned for PARTS. He then worked with choreographer/dance teacher David Zambrano in 2009. A collaborative duet with Steve Michil followed. In these works his use of rhythm becomes his personal choreographic stamp, his unique movement and language. His versatility and eagerness to explore all creative frontiers has him working for FATC company and individuals.



Photograph by Christo Doherty

Here Again

A composition by Kyla-Rose Smith

Artist Statement

Here Again - the original impetus for this piece was the seed of an idea I have had ever since moving to New York City in 2015 - I, like many natives of the global south, am still so taken with the magic of snow, particularly when snow blankets a city and completely transforms the urban landscape. But then, for me, there has been another layer to that magic, and that is when the snow melts. As the city slowly thaws out after a big snow storm - snow, turns to running water, dripping down streets, through gutters, down building scaffolding, against the window pane - its a symphony of drips, of reverberations - and for the last few years I attempt to record it whenever I can. As I began to make this piece it became something else - perhaps an expression of a slow thawing that has happened over the last few months - the gradual emergence of this city from the sleep and inertia that the pandemic has induced. And at the same time the emergence of spring....the awakening expressed in ourselves and in the world around us. It's a slow and cautious emergence,...like the gentle thawing of the snow.



Biography

Kyla-Rose Smith is an acclaimed performer, violinist, and multimedia artist, best known for her work as violinist and backing singer with Freshlyground, South Africa's premier Afropop band. She has toured extensively inside and beyond South Africa and garnered many awards including seven South African Music Awards (SAMA) awards, an MTV Europe Award, and four METRO awards. Kyla was also a recipient of the Glamour Woman of the Year Award. Spending the better part of two decades as a touring musician, Kyla developed a keen interest in the art of performance and how musicians interact with their audience through the medium of sound and music, while bridging cultural divides. Since leaving Freshlyground, she has established herself as an emerging multimedia artist and her current projects engage with aural and visual dimensions of contemporary society. She is co-artistic director and artist facilitator of Hear Be Dragons, a sound mapping project and artistic exchange program that explores sound and the city and the way these influence our quality of life, perceptions of history and memory, and notions of identity. Kyla has curated and produced a variety of contemporary artistic pieces from South Africa and beyond. She is currently the OneBeat US Programs Director + Curator, as well as an associate producer for THE OFFICE performing arts + film, working as Associate Producer on The Mile-Long Opera, a city-wide public engagement project that brought together 1,000 singers for a performance of a new choral work by Pulitzer prize winning composer David Lang, the opening of The Kennedy Center's, The Reach, and William Kentridge's The Head & The Load.



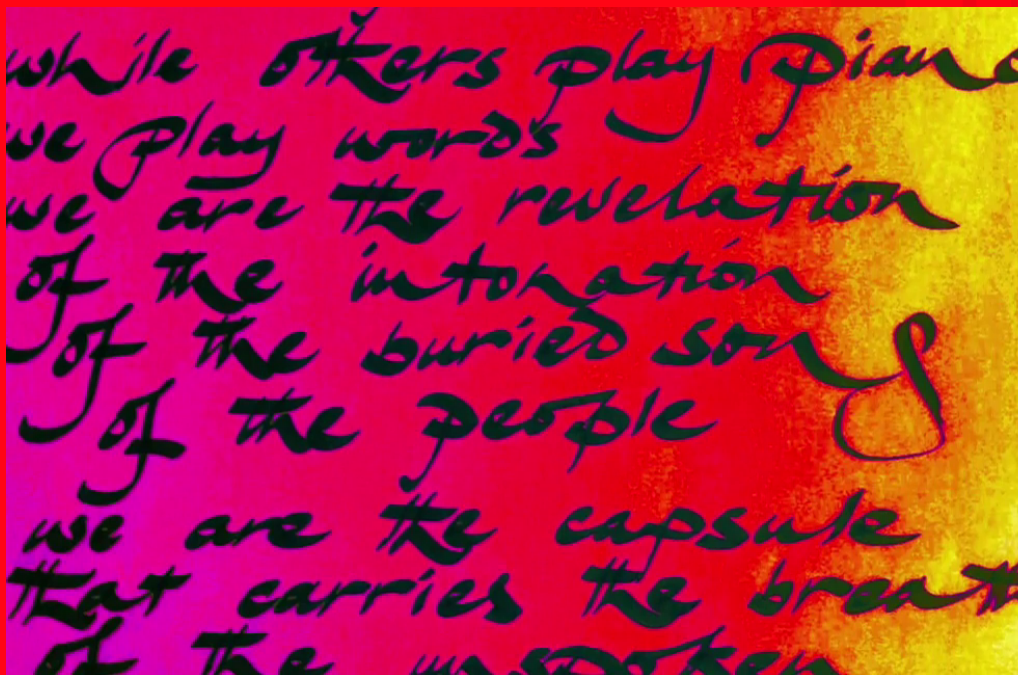
Image supplied by the artist

Iphupho Lasendle – Dream Of The Wilderness

A composition by Eugene Skeef

Artist Statement

This creation is a testament to my recourse to creativity as the fundamental human initiative for finding a solution to the vicissitudes of life. Throughout my life I have always relied on my innate creative skills to navigate life's impediments. For me, personally, the culture of lockdown imposed by the Covid- 19 pandemic is, at its core, no different to any challenge that I have been presented with in my life of being in perpetual attainment of alignment and wellbeing; except that the scale of its virulence makes that striving for a deeper balance within myself as well as between myself and the world at large ever more acute. At the beginning of lockdown in 2020, I vowed to write a poem every day inspired by the aspiration of unveiling the light of hope hidden from view for most of us. I was determined for my daily poems to be a beacon of hope for us all. The success of this humble initiative revealed itself to me in the massive positive responses I received (...) including private messages of thanks from people whose lives had been transformed by my words. I was deeply moved by the profound effect that my poems were having on people in parts of the world far away from my temporary enclosure in Clapham, London. Of particular note was the Welsh violinist/singer/composer Sianed Jones painting some of my poems on a public wall on her street in Splott, Cardiff, so that community could be inspired to find hope from the distressing effects of the pandemic. Central

A photograph of a wall covered in graffiti. The graffiti is written in black and white ink in a cursive, handwritten style. The text is a poem by Eugene Skeef. The visible text reads: 'while others play piano we play words we are the revelation of the intonation of the buried song of the people we are the capsule that carries the breath of the unspoken'. The background of the wall is a mix of yellow and orange tones, with some red and blue graffiti visible in the background.

while others play piano
we play words
we are the revelation
of the intonation
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we are the capsule
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to the ethos of my lockdown creative process is that I allow myself to be absorbed into the world of my dreams; because in dreams anything is possible. I don't have to physically travel to magical destinations because the ones in my dreams are more magical than any in existence.

This way my joy and sense of fulfilment are perpetually ensured. From childhood, I have always used whatever is in my environment, whatever is available to me, to create art. What is available to me during lockdown is my physical being, everything that I carry within me, plus whatever is in my home. These become the tools of my creativity.

Biography

Eugene Skeef is a South African filmmaker, percussionist, composer, poet, educationalist & workshop leader and has lived in London since 1980. He also works in conflict resolution, acts as a consultant on cultural development, teaches creative leadership and is a broadcaster. As a young activist he worked closely with the civil rights leader Steve Biko and co-led a nation-wide literacy campaign teaching in schools, colleges and communities across apartheid South Africa. As well as being at the forefront of the contemporary music scene collaborating with innovative artists, he has also been instrumental in developing the education programmes of some of the major classical orchestras in the United Kingdom. Eugene is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA) and has served on the board of directors of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. In September 2004 he was appointed musician in residence of the Purcell School of Music. In March 2005 Eugene performed with his Abantu Ensemble at Buckingham Palace and was presented to the Queen as part of the historic Music Day to celebrate the diversity of culture in Britain.



Photograph by Peter Jones

Eugene is the Artistic Director of Quartet of Peace, an international project initiated by Brian Lisus, the South African luthier who has made a quartet of string instruments in honour of South Africa's 4 Nobel peace laureates. In 2010 Eugene's collaborative project *The Battle Of The Wordsmiths* (with writer Tunde Olatunji and producers Blue Hippo Media) was shortlisted for the PRS New Music Award. Eugene has begun a programme of taking his skills back to South Africa, where his work is regarded as beneficial to the process of embracing the ever-unfolding vision of a democratically cohesive nation.

Virulent Strain

A composition by Garth Erasmus

Artist Statement

Decolonisation is firmly foregrounded across the multiple mediums in which I work. Film as a medium is new to me. The isolation and solitude of lockdown allowed me the time and space to explore basic film-making skills using the iMovie App for cell phone. Virulent Strain is made up of four short films set to music that constitute the four chapters of the work. In the first two chapters it is the audio that inspires the image while in the last two chapters the image inspires the music. Chapter one contains an example of a local WhatsApp voice message that went viral in the first few weeks of lockdown when people were flouting social distance rules. This voice is an identity marker for the indigenous people of South Africa, the Khoisan. The anonymous voice speaks in Afrikaans in the strong accent and vernacular of the people of Namaqwaland. It is a vernacular characterized by an abundance of colourful (and ironic) humour and swear words of which the word "Kontsekjind" is a classic example that can roughly be translated as "son of a bitch" or "motherfucker". In this extract the speaker is strongly venting his anger at those breaking lockdown regulations where he stays but also at the police who ride by and do nothing. Virtually every second



or third word that he utters is a swear word! The second chapter contains the cell phone audio that my friend Jethro sent me of his verbal altercation with police during a lockdown protest in his community and the sounds of his being shot later with rubber bullets during the same protest. Jethro is my colleague in the band Khoi Khonnexion. Chapter three focuses on the shaman in indigenous culture as the communal healer or medicine man in the context of the time of Covid-19 plague. Chapter four is a meditation on place and the hurts inflicted by colonization.

Biography

Garth Erasmus is a visual artist & musician whose work focuses on SA's indigenous people, the KhoiSan, which is his heritage. He taught at the Zonnebloem Art Centre, District Six in Cape Town, from 1982-1997. He is one of the founders of Greatmore Street Artists Studio, and the Thupelo Artists Workshop. One of his large-scale mural artworks is included in an installation depicting first peoples of the Western Cape at Artscape Theatre, Cape Town. His audio installation, *Autshomato*, is at the Robben Island Museum (Nelson Mandela Gateway, Cape Town). Garth is part of the activist music & poetry group, Khoi Khonnexion, who toured European music theatre festivals in 2018-19 with the production *House of Falling Bones* on the Namibian genocide of the Nama people by the German colonialists. He is also part of the free-jazz groupings *As Is* and *Riempie Vasmaak*. Garth co-published a conversation with Valeria Geselev in 2019, 'The knots of time and place' & engaged artistically with a text by Cornelius Cardew in *Herri Issue 3*. Garth's sonic collaboration with flutist Esther Marié Pauw enacts forms of decolonial aesthesis, and interventionist curating amidst publics, institutions, art, and music-making. During the Covid-19 Lockdown Garth initiated the *Africa Open* improvising collective to play weekly Zoom sessions. Garth is also a member of the *Khoisan Gypsy Band* whose theatre production *Die Poet - Wie's Hy?* on the work of Adam Small won Best Production at the Stellenbosch Wordfees Festival 2020.

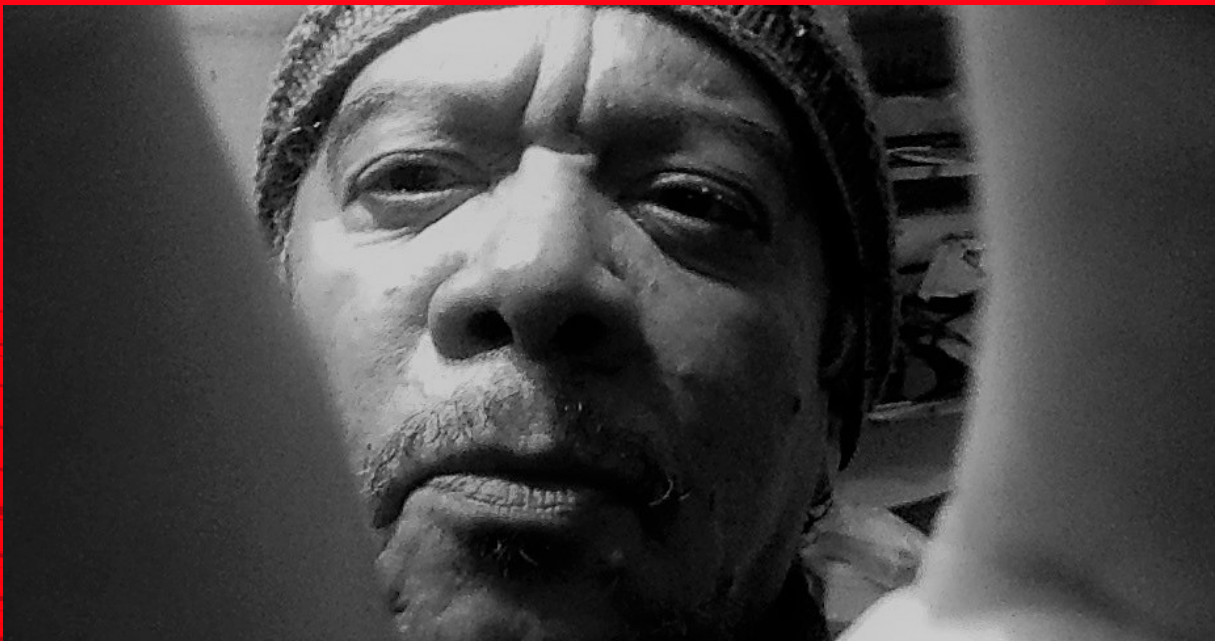


Image supplied by the artist

Stories We Told Ourselves

**An online music series created by
NewMusicSA for the Digital Indaba '21**

**Premiered at: National Arts Festival
Makhanda 2021**

Curator: Daniel Hutchinson

**Artists: Reza Khota, Zorada Temmingh,
Nicholas Aphane, Kyla-Rose Smith, Eugene
Skeef, & Garth Erasmus**

**Producers: Camron Andrews & Ignacio
Priego**

**Supported by: the National Arts Council, the
Arts & Culture Trust - Nedbank, & SAMRO**

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information@newmusicsa.org.za

www.newmusicsa.org.za

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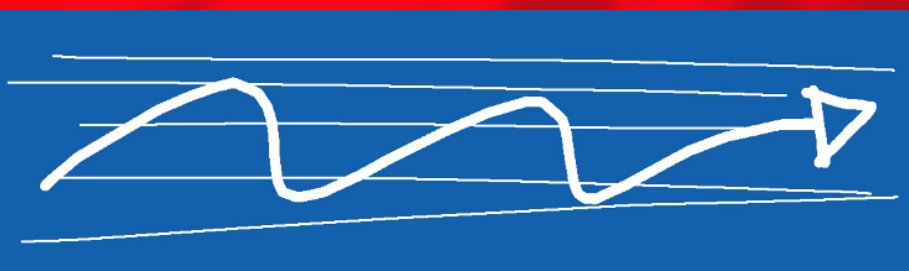
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