



The Music Department and
the Office of Special Programs present

Ensemble Connect

A program of Carnegie Hall,
The Juilliard School,
and the Weill Music Institute,
in partnership with the New York City
Department of Education.

*The fall residency is made possible by the generous support
of David and Beverly Sanders Payne '59*

Friday, October 25th, 2024, 7:30PM
Arthur Zankel Music Center
Helen Filene Ladd Concert Hall

Program

Safika: Three Tales on African
Migration (2012)

Bongani Ndodana-Breen
(b. 1975)

Chelsea Wang, Piano
David Bernat, Violin
Rubén Rengel, Violin (Alum)
Brian Hong, Viola (Alum)
Thapelo Masita, Cello

Cry Out (2009)

Andile Khumalo
(b. 1978)

Joseph Jordan, Oboe
Brian Hong, Viola (Alum)
Joanne Kang, Piano (Alum)
Oliver Xu, Percussion

Piano Quintet No. 2 in A Major, Op. 81
(1887)

Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Allegro, ma non tanto
Dumka: Andante con moto
Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace
Finale: Allegro

Chelsea Wang, Piano
David Bernat, Violin
Rubén Rengel, Violin (Alum)
Brian Hong, Viola (Alum)
Thapelo Masita, Cello

Tonight's program will include a special collaboration with students from the Skidmore College Music Department to be announced from the stage.

Program Notes

BONGANI NDODANA-BREEN *Safika: Three Tales on African Migration*

Bongani Ndodana-Breen was born in 1975 in Queenstown (today officially known as Komani), near to the “homeland” of the Ciskei. His *Safika: Three Tales on African Migration* was commissioned by the Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival in 2012, and is a personal reflection on geographical displacement in South Africa. Three dimensions of unhappy migration are reflected in the work. First, the economic pressures of both colonialism and apartheid led to waves of migratory laborers descending on urban mining areas, with formerly rural mineworkers living in cramped male-only hostels. The exploitation of male labor from the countryside had the effect of tearing husbands from wives and fathers from children, destroying centuries of rural family tradition.

The second dimension was the creation of so-called “homelands” or “Bantustans,” which were in reality puppet states of the South African government. Their purpose was to give the international community the illusion of functioning “apartness,” but essentially served as rural reservations with little in the lines of governance or public services. Many city-dwelling Black families found themselves forced into the homelands. Finally, the third aspect of migration highlighted in this work is exile: Political and social activists, persecuted and hounded by the state security apparatus, fled the land of their birth for other countries.

For Ndodana-Breen, the unifying aspect of these three migratory experiences is memory. When communities are split asunder, memory of community remains; when cultures are destroyed, the memory of cultural practice persists; and when dislocation and exile are imposed, the memory of home lingers on. This is reflected in the musical tapestry of *Safika*, where the traditional music that Ndodana-Breen grew up with is intermingled with the techniques, procedures, and formal strictures of Western art music. As with many of the composer’s works, the theme is socio-political in nature. Yet as much as the work reflects South Africa’s painful past, it also considers the present and looks to the future: The title *Safika* is the isiXhosa word for “we arrived.”

ANDILE KHUMALO Cry Out

Andile Khumalo is only three years the junior of Ndodana-Breen but represents a dramatically different form of aesthetic engagement with South Africa's present. He was born in the heart of the KwaZulu Natal province, in the township of Umlazi near Durban. (The South African township is yet another spatial legacy of apartheid-era urban planning and social engineering.) It was through doctoral studies at Columbia University that Khumalo was exposed to formalist trends in art music composition, in particular a style known as spectralism.

Spectralism in music is a modern approach that focuses on the exploration of sound itself, especially the way it is built from its component frequencies. Instead of restricting themselves to traditional harmony, melody, and rhythm, composers in this style examine the natural spectrum of sounds, analyzing how different tones combine and interact to create complex textures. By manipulating these sound spectra and translating them into tangible musical material, spectral composers create music that often has a shimmering, evolving quality.

Cry Out, first performed in 2009 at the Takefu Music Festival in Japan, is a classic example of Khumalo's own brand of spectralism. While Khumalo was influenced in this style by his Columbia University mentor Tristan Murail, he has looked toward the soundscapes of southern African traditional music for his core materials. This is not a case of pure abstract formalism, however. As with Ndodana-Breen, Khumalo's interrogation of South Africa as an aesthetic site of composition draws deeply on socio-political context. There is much to be said about the fact that Khumalo turns his back on the tonality that dominates much contemporary South African composition. Is this a case of a composer refusing the simple classification of his music as "African" in some sense, as if refusing to play by the rules dictated by the narratives of opposition one finds in so much post-colonial music criticism? And how is it that two composers who grew up in the same (admittedly diverse and tumultuous) country at the same time could endorse such strikingly different conceptions of music?

DVOŘÁK Piano Quintet No. 2 in A Major, Op. 81

The evening's performance concludes with one of the core works of the Romantic chamber music repertoire: the Piano Quintet No. 2 in A Major, Op. 81, by Bohemian composer Antonín Dvořák. This work was completed in 1887, roughly 90 years before the births of Ndodana-Breen and Khumalo. It may seem that there is an immeasurable gulf between these composers, but there are some strong similarities in terms of their respective senses of place. This is because Dvořák looked not only to the past—to the works of Beethoven, Schubert, and Robert Schumann—nor only outward, to his contemporary Brahms. He also looked inward and considered his sense of place in the world. And, just as Ndodana-Breen and Khumalo are inextricably linked to the music of South Africa, this examination led Dvořák to Czech folk music.

Take the second movement, for instance. It is labeled *dumka*, a Slavic song genre literally meaning “thought.” This movement draws directly from the *dumka* folk music that Dvořák heard as a child. The movement features a beautiful, lilting folk theme, sharply punctuated by faster interludes. However, Dvořák required a mold into which he could pour this folk-musical material, and that mold had to produce something his audiences would recognize. The movement is therefore cast as a rondo, forcing the contrasting tempers of the *dumka* into a Romantic form. Similarly, Dvořák captures the Bohemian *furiant* folk style in the form of a traditional third-movement scherzo and trio. Therefore, as with Ndodana-Breen and Khumalo, we find that the structures and norms of a dominant Western musical style are brought to bear on music that is local to a composer.

The quintet represents Dvořák at the height of his powers. It stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the great Romantic quintets of Robert Schumann and Brahms, as well as the monumental contributions to the genre written by Schubert. It undoubtedly shows the influence of Beethoven's quartets, including a frequent tendency to organicism (where material is developed from a germ-like core motive). Like Beethoven, Dvořák spent considerable time sketching and reworking material. The quintet actually began life as an attempt to rewrite an abandoned early quintet project in A major, but after reworking failed, Dvořák scrapped the all the material and began over.

Dvořák's use of folk music was nothing new, nor was it something unique to him. Indeed, many late Romantic composers, from the Russian nationalists to Sibelius and Grieg, were exploring the folk music of their native countries. As a matter of fact, several years later Dvořák would go a step further and sample another country's folk music in his famous "New World" Symphony, with what he imagined to be African American spirituals and the folk music of native Americans. A generation later, Bartók would use the materials and techniques of central European folk music to create one of the most influential forms of modernist music in the 20th century. For composers who find themselves as the Other—as strangers to the cultural norms of art music—it is often to the folk music of their own lands that their thoughts are turned. And it is this golden thread that unites Ndodana-Breen, Khumalo, and Dvořák across time and place.

-Barry Ross

The Artists

Ensemble Connect

Artistry. Education. Advocacy. Entrepreneurship.

Ensemble Connect was created in 2007 by Carnegie Hall's Executive and Artistic Director Clive Gillinson and The Juilliard School's President Joseph W. Polisi. Ensemble Connect is a two-year fellowship program for extraordinary young professional classical musicians residing in the US that prepares them for careers combining musical excellence with teaching, community engagement, advocacy, entrepreneurship, and leadership. It offers top-quality performance opportunities, intensive professional development, and partnerships throughout the fellowship with New York City public schools.

Ensemble Connect fellows—chosen for their musicianship, but also for their leadership qualities and commitment to music education—have come from some of the best music schools in the country, including the Colburn Conservatory of Music, Curtis Institute of Music, Eastman School of Music, The Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, New England Conservatory, Peabody Institute, Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, Stony Brook University, University of Southern California, and Yale School of Music.

Ensemble Connect has earned accolades from critics and audiences alike for the quality of its performances, as well as its fresh and open-minded approach, performing a wide range of music—from centuries past to works written days before an event—in a variety of venues. The group performs its own series at Carnegie Hall and has regularly appeared at The Juilliard School's Paul Hall and other venues throughout New York City. As part of a partnership with Skidmore College that began in 2007, Ensemble Connect gives master classes for university students and performs for the Saratoga Springs community both in concert halls and informal settings around town. Committed to providing the fellows with exceptional opportunities to work with contemporary music, composers, and artists, Carnegie Hall has commissioned 35 composers on behalf of Ensemble Connect since 2007. These composers and the fellows have worked closely during the creative process to present a total of 40 world-premiere performances of works, some of which have been featured in Ensemble Connect's Up Close concert series. Along with performance opportunities at premier venues in New York City and beyond, Ensemble Connect fellows partner with instrumental music teachers at New York City public schools to share artistry with—and become central resources for—music classrooms in the five boroughs. Ensemble Connect fellows also take part in community work, performing at many unconventional music venues across New York City, including correctional facilities, homeless shelters, senior community centers, and organizations serving special needs populations. Throughout the two-year fellowship, Ensemble Connect fellows participate in rigorous, ongoing professional development to ensure that they gain the necessary skills to be successful in all areas of the program and to give them the tools to shape purposeful, personally rewarding career paths that give back to their communities. Areas of emphasis include artistic excellence, on- and off-stage engagement strategies, advocacy, professional skills, and preparation for their in-school work.

Moving on to the next stage of their careers, Ensemble Connect's 144 alums are now making an impact on the national and international musical landscape in a wide variety of artistic and educational arenas. Continuing the strong bonds formed through the program, in 2011 alums formed the chamber music collective Decoda, which has been named an affiliate ensemble of Carnegie Hall. Exemplary performers, dedicated teachers, and passionate advocates of music throughout the community, the forward-looking musicians of Ensemble Connect are redefining what it means to be a musician in the 21st century.

Visit ensembleconnect.org to learn more.

Ensemble Connect celebrates its 18th year at Skidmore College!

Since the inception of Skidmore's biannual weeklong residencies with Ensemble Connect in 2007, these talented musicians have engaged with over 51,000 students and audience members through Skidmore class visits, lessons and coaching, local school and community outreach, and premiere performances. The residency is made possible by the generous support of David and Beverly Sanders Payne '59 (October residency) and the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation (February residency).

Upcoming Events

Surround Concert Series:
Tenzin Choegyal
Sunday, November 3, 4:00pm

Flore Laurentienne
Friday, November 8, 7:30pm

Joseph Alpar & Friends:
Ask: Music, Love, and Mysticism
In the Ottoman World
Saturday, November 16, 7:30pm

Sustain Film Series:
John Cage: Journeys in Sound
Sunday, November 17, 2:30pm

Skidmania '74
Friday, November 22, 8:00pm &
Saturday November 23, 8:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
Brass & Woodwind Ensembles
Saturday, November 23, 5:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Chorus
Thursday, December 5, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Orchestra
Friday, December 6, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
Global Music Showcase
Saturday, December 7, 4:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
Concert Band
Sunday, December 8, 1:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
Small Jazz Ensembles + Guitar
Sunday, December 8, 4:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
String Ensembles
Monday, December 9, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
Guitar Ensemble
Tuesday, December 10, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Big Band +
Cuban Music Ensemble
Wednesday, December 11, 7:00pm