2010-2011 PEAK Explores the Answer: Experiments in Arts & Technology

PEAK Performances Programming History

2-10-2011

Walking next to our shoes...

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming

PEAK Performances at Montclair State University

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Dangers of apartheid, or the gospel.

Nostalgia for homeland, women, the poor. But poor we are not. We continue to celebrate and express our state of mind. Poor.

Isicathamiya is a type of a cappella singing. Isicathamiya is a traditional form of music from South African Zulu culture. Isicathamiya choirs are always all male.

And so I continue as I celebrate, dance, and sing. The last residue of a cultural identity.

Part of the preparation for going home was to walk very softly on tiptoe. Gospel singing from the streets of Johannesburg and Durban. I thought that would mean no noise— hence the need to walk on tiptoe.

So we don’t mix and mingle. The only music we would practice and perform before a judge.

I became a competitor, with men putting on dresses, and women putting on pants and the music passion for this art form is reflected in their conscientious attention to style and detail. The judge of the event has no contact with anyone. The organizers of the event go to great lengths to find an impartial observer.

They select the judges randomly every week from the streets of Johannesburg and explain the rules, and then the fun begins. Today, in post-apartheid South Africa, swanking is very much accepted as part of the culture.

Note provided by City Theatre & Dance Group

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Robyn Orlin

Robyn Orlin was born in 1955 in Johannesburg, South Africa. She studied at the London School of Contemporary Dance 1975-1980. With the help of a Fullbright Scholarship, she completed her Master’s degree in Fine Art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1990 to 1993. Since then, she has been working consistently on her own pieces in South Africa.

Swenkas

Every Saturday night, the swenkas turn up in the orange light outside the basement of Johannesburg’s Jeepers Peepers with white dustcoats and hats. Underneath their coats are stylish suits, folded handkerchiefs showing from their top pockets. They are the supporting act for the isicathamiya competition. The swenkas spin on the leather of their soles and flash a broad smile. They raise their legs, pulling back their trousers to reveal their finery—match which their tie, handkerchiefs, and cuff links is. It is important that everything match—the walking style, the presentation, and the quality of their suits.

Swaying is believed to have developed within migrant workers who mostly lived in city hostels, would return home for their Christmas holiday. To show their families that they had reached a certain degree of success in the city, their wives would parade their best clothes to the villagers. From then it became part of hostel culture in Johannesburg. As a preparation for going home, women would practice and perform before a judge. This became a competition, with men putting on dresses, and women putting on pants and the music passion for this art form is reflected in their conscientious attention to style and detail. The judge of the event has no contact with anyone. The organizers of the event go to great lengths to find an impartial observer.

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——Emile Soulier

If you can’t change the world, change your curtains — Emile Soulier (1990); Call it… kissed by the sun… better still the Revenge of Geography… Grover confirmed in 2000… (Untitled) (2001);... In 2010, she presented her latest creation, Carmen and performed in operas including Carmen and Aida. Masina took vocal training at the Pretoria Technikon Opera School. She is a co-founder of JOAT Opera, a self-supporting company that performs European repertoire under various social and official events.

Phuphuma Love Minus is a flamboyant Afro-centric music ensemble specializing in Soweto Gospel Choral music, rooted in Zulu history, culture, tradition, and values, yet responding to the influences of South Africa’s multi-cultural society. Phuphuma Love Minus originates from rural South Africa, Kwa Ngabayela-Umsinga village in KwaZulu Natal. This powerful ensemble was formed in 2002 by the late Khephetshe Ngidi with an aim of teaching the important lessons of cultural identity and restoring the legacy of South African Soweto Gospel Choral music. He believed that the art of music could be used as an instrument of change, sustainable development, socioeconomic empowerment, and personal independence in the community of Umsinga and South Africa at large.

The group started by performing at traditional events such as weddings, harvest celebrations, and many community gatherings in Umsinga village. In 2003 members of Phuphuma Love Minus moved to Johannesburg and became affiliated with the national Iphimbiso isicathamiya music organization led by Simon Ngubane. Under this organization, Phuphuma Love Minus won more than 15 competitions including competitions other isicathamiya music groups.

Within the same period, the group recorded two successful albums, Ibimbolda uRhulika and Thethi Ojikele. In 2010 Phuphuma Love Minus was nominated in the National South African Traditional Music Awards.

In 2008 Phuphuma Love Minus met Robyn Orlin, who created the unique opportunity for the ensemble to take isicathamiya music to another level, working in a theatrical environment. Together they created Walking next to our shoes… intricated by strawberries and cream, we enter contents without knocking… which has been touring Europe for the past few years.
Peak Performances @ Montclair presents:

American Premiere!

City Theatre & Dance Group | Robyn Orlin

Walking next to our shoes... intoxicated by strawberries and cream, we enter continents without knocking...

A Piece by Robyn Orlin

with

Xolisile Bongwana, Yusumuzi Kunene, Ann Masina, Thulani Zwane

and

PHUPHUMA LOVE MINUS

Amos Bengho, Busani Majizi, Miungiseni Majizi, Siyabonga Mgwenzi, Jabulani Mccum, Saziso Myelase, Mbuyenzi Myeza, Mbongeleni Ngidi, Nqapheleni Ngidi

Costumes Birgit Neppi

Lighting Robyn Orlin, Denis Hutchinson

Video by Philippe Lainé

Songs composed by Khethayiphi Ngidi and Nhlanhla Mahlangu, with additional arrangements by Nhlanhla Mahlangu

Sound Manager Gladman Balintulo

Video Operator Thabo Pule

Tour Manager Denis Hutchinson

Assistant Director Nhlanhla Mahlangu

Sound Consultant Boris Vukacovic

Booking Damien Valette

Co-production

Co-produced by City Theatre & Dance Group, Festival des Arts de l’Essonne, Théâtre de Saint Quentin en Yvelines, Theatre de la Province, and the Grand-Théâtre de Luxembourg. Additional funding provided by Conseil Général de Seine-Saint-Denis and the Goethe Institutes, Johannesberg.

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City Theatre & Dance Group thanks Mr. Simon Ngubane and Mr. Adolphus Mbuyisa from the Iphimbo Isicathamiya Association where Phuphuma Love Minus is based.

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In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted inside the theater.

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Department of Theatre and Dance presents:

SWEET CHARITY

February 16–26, 2011

L. Howard Fox Theatre

John J. Cali School of Music presents:

MSU WIND SYMPHONY AND BLOOMFIELD YOUTH BAND

February 22, 2011 • 7:30pm

Alexander Kasser Theater

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- The Honorable Mary Mochary

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