

glimpses of a half-forgotten future

Lamentations and consolations in South African string quartets

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Through now's incessant numbness

*Flickers a glint,
 A startling glimmer,
 A dark flaring...*

So writes Robert Fokkens in the programme note to his *glimpses*, the title piece of this album. It fittingly touches upon shared aspects of the quartets: These are works of profound depth, great originality and in a diverse range of styles. In mood, they range from ethereal, spectral and haunting to dark and brooding, from a still, hushed sighing to tumultuous outbursts of ecstasy and rage.

Two works in this programme were written in London at the beginning of the Second World War, and at the time were considered major additions to the string quartet literature. One of them is by one of the fascinating figures in South African music, Priault Rainier. Born in 1903, she moved to London to study violin at the RAM, and later composition with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. In 1943 she became professor of composition at the Royal Academy in London. The recording of her Quartet for Strings, made by the Amadeus Quartet in 1951, played a significant role in the increasing interest in her music: She would go on to write solo concerti for Yehudi Menuhin and Jacqueline du Pre.

All of the composers featured here are important voices in their own right and have made significant contributions to South African music.

Programme notes

Quartet for Strings (1939)

1. Allegro molto serio
2. Vivace leggiero grazioso
3. Andante tranquillo
4. Presto spiritoso

Priault Rainier (1903 – 1986)

Priault Rainier was a South African-English composer of English-Huguenot origin, born in Howick, Natal, in 1903 and died in France in 1986. After an early childhood in Zululand, she entered the SA College of Music in Cape Town in 1913, as a violin student, and in 1920 her playing won her a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in London. She settled permanently in London, earning her living as a violinist and teacher until 1935, when an anonymous grant enabled her to concentrate on composition. In 1937 she studied with the renowned pedagogue Nadia Boulanger for 3 months, and was professor of composition at the Royal Academy from 1943 to 1961.

Rainier developed a fastidious musical language drawing little from other 20th-century styles. Rather, the most important influences were the language and music of the Zulus, and the natural sounds of their country. She came to the attention of a wider public after the success of her String Quartet, written in 1939, a work whose originality is particularly clear in the scherzo and in the finale. Crystalline textures and short ostinato rhythms assist in the building of fast movements independent of Bartok and Stravinsky and of more conventional styles.

Five Elegies for String Quartet (1940-41)

Arnold van Wyk (1916 – 1983)

1. Molto Lento, assai espressivo con tristezza
2. Allegro feroce
3. Adagio, senza tempo e parlante
4. Allegretto, poco scherzando ed amabile
5. Allegro, appassionato e sempre in tempo giusto

Arnold van Wyk was one of the first South African-born composers to study abroad, and also of the first to write anything of significance for string quartet. He was offered a bursary to study in London in 1935, and stayed for eight years. In 1949 he was appointed lecturer at the University of Cape Town, and in 1961 he moved to the Conservatoire of the University of Stellenbosch.

Van Wyk wrote the Five Elegies in 1940-41 while studying at the RAM. Though ostensibly a student work, it shows no sign of immaturity or technical uncertainty - all the more surprising bearing in mind that the medium is particularly difficult to handle; moreover he had never tackled it before, and had only very slight experience of playing a string instrument.

The title alone might suggest a set of separate pieces cast in a uniformly grey mood; however the five movements form an indivisible whole that covers an unexpectedly wide emotional range. It is worth remembering that they were written in wartime London at the height of the night-time air raids; so it is hardly surprising that they reflect very varied feelings. Yet this diversity is always unified by the underlying elegiac mood.

Certain stylistic features common to Van Wyk's compositions of this period are exemplified in the Five Elegies. These include the Lydian sharpened fourth degree, the flattened seventh degree, interlocking major/ minor thirds, sudden tonal shifts, slowly evolving melodic ideas (aptly termed "long-limbed") which are often stated in octaves (q.v. the opening) pedal points and, by extension, ostinato figures.

(James May/ Howard Ferguson)

***iinyembezi* (2000, rev. 2001)
1953)**

Péter Louis van Dijk (b.

iinyembezi ("tears" in the Xhosa language) was inspired by the Dowland song, *Flow my Tears*. Van Dijk has used only the first four descending notes of this song as the basis for several free variations throughout the quartet. The three principal elements in this single-movement work are the opening "sighing" motif (in various rhythmic and dynamic guises throughout the piece), the four-note falling motif (eg. the opening cello statement) - used in a variety of opposing or complimentary ascending-descending, extended-contracted and chromatic-diatonic forms, and the interval of the perfect fifth (harmonics, open strings, syncopated accompaniment figure). The only overtly "African" section is a slightly jaunty variant of the theme accompanied by pizzicato mbira-like figures and limited percussive effects on cello and viola.

The Dowland theme, which is stated melodically only at the conclusion of the work, has been used by several composers - including John Dowland himself in his *Pavan Lachrymae* (1604), by his Dutch contemporary, the blind composer Jacob van Eyck and by Benjamin Britten in his *Lachrymae* for viola and piano.

iinyembezi is dedicated to the composer's son, Xandi van Dijk (viola) and the other members of the UCT String Quartet, Anouk Espi (violin), Camilla Driver (violin) and Eddie McLean (cello) who premiered the work at the Grachten Festival in Amsterdam in August 2000 and was recorded by the Sontonga Quartet in September 2002.

(PLVD, JULY 2003)

Péter Louis van Dijk is an internationally performed composer. His works include *Horizons* (for The King's Singers), *Bells* (Chicago Children's Choir), a string quartet "*iinyembezi*" and the opera "*Mandela Trilogy*", which has been performed to critical acclaim at the Welsh National Opera in 2012 and received performances in Munich in 2014 and Paris in 2015. Recent works include *the song the san women sang* (for two pianos) for the Mainzer Klavierduo, a Magnificat for the NMMU Choir and Sontonga Quartet and *Windy City Songs* for soloists, double choir and orchestra, commissioned by the Chicago Children's Choir for their 50th Anniversary Concert in June 2007.

He has more than a dozen CD's to his credit and is published by Oxford University Press, Hal Leonard, Accolade Musikverlag, Prestige and under the Marco Polo label.

Other compositions include two ballets, several choral-orchestral works including *The Musicians of Bremen*, *The Selfish Giant*, *Follow that Flute!*, *Youth Requiem*, *San Gloria*, *About Nothing* (for orchestra), a *Te Deum* and numerous orchestral arrangements of African songs such as *Bawo Thixo Somandla*, *Akhala Amaqhude Amabile*, *Ntsikana's Hymn* and others.

Dr van Dijk has lectured at the University of Cape Town (composition and orchestration), the University of the Western Cape (recorder and education) and was Senior Lecturer in Composition and Musicology at Rhodes University. He currently assists his wife, Junita Lamprecht-Van Dijk teaching choral conducting at post graduate level at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth.

As a conductor he has conducted most major South African orchestras and in 1996 conducted his *San Gloria* in Chicago with the Chicago Children's Choir and the CYSO.

Komeng

Commissioned by New Music Indaba with financial assistance from Distell Foundation for the performing arts.

Mokale Koapeng (b.1965)

Koapeng uses subtle yet haunting string sounds and effects to evoke the world of the uhadi bow. The most literal of these is a delicate use of *col legno* (literally “with the wood” of the bow). Another feature is an all-pervasive use of triplets versus dotted rhythms in the accompaniment, which creates a slightly uneasy sense of untogetherness. It is based on Nofinishi’s *Umyeyezolo*, (‘ululation’) – a song for boys’ initiation.

Having graduated from the University of the Witwatersrand, **Mokale Koapeng** is one of South Africa’s most exciting and versatile young composers. He has performed with some of the best known musicians in the country, including Sibongile Khumalo, Bheki Khoza, Motsumi Makhene, Wendy Mseleku, Gloria Bosman, Khaya Mahlangu and many more. His concert tours have led him to the USA, Canada, the UK, France, Finland, and other countries in Africa. He has directed musical productions like *Rainbow of Hope* (a dance revue by Nomsa Manaka, Wits Theatre, 1991), *Swing High, Sweet Gospel* (Arts Alive, 1993/4) and *Sellout* (Grahamstown, 1995). Together with Motsumi Makhene, Sibongile Khumalo and Hugh Masekela, Mokale co-composed the music of *Milestones*, a musical by Mandla Langa. The musical premiered at the Grahamstown Festival and had a run at the State Theatre, winning the 1999 FNB SAMA’s Best Soundtrack Award.

Mokale Koapeng composed and conducted the world premiere of *Cantus in Memoria ’76*, a work which commemorates the 30th anniversary of the events of 16 June 1976. He was the resident composer for the Consonances Festival of Chamber Music, St. Nazaire, France, in 2005, and was the inaugural composer-in-residence of the ‘Ihlombe! South African Choral Festival’ in 2010. Mokale Koapeng founded the Soweto Youth Jazz Orchestra, co-developed a concept called “Intyilo Kantu: Melodies of the Wise” and is the Music Director of SDASA Chorale, a gospel group that released the internationally acclaimed CD *SIMUNYE* with the famous British vocal group I Fagiolini. In addition to his appointment as a committee member of the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown Mokale Koapeng teaches in the music department of the University of the Witwatersrand and has given workshops on South African vocal, choral and jazz styles at the Sibelius Academy and the University of Jyväskylä in Finland.

glimpses of a half-forgotten future (2012)

Robert Fokkens (b. 1975)

- I. Rhythmic
- II. Brilliant
- III. Tender but still

*Through now's incessant numbness
Flickers a glint,
A startling glimmer,
A dark flaring...*

Glimpses of a half-forgotten future is an elegiac work reflecting on those moments where death unexpectedly enters our lives, both bringing grief for those lost and opening a dark window through which we see our own inevitable end.

As with all my music over the last 15 years, the technical means employed – and, at times, the aesthetic world explored – owes much to traditional Xhosa bow music from South Africa, but a range of other influences are audible, including Cage, Feldman, Bach and the French spectralists.

This string quartet started life as a single movement work for clarinet quartet, which was commissioned and premiered by Clariphonics in the 2009 Park Lane Group Young Artists' Series at the South Bank, London. I have wanted to rework this movement for string quartet ever since – writing for the Carducci Quartet offered the perfect opportunity, this piece becoming the first movement of the present work. The second and third movements pick up where the first left off.

The work is dedicated to the Carducci Quartet, and was first performed by them on 13 November in the Concert Hall at Cardiff University School of Music.

Robert Fokkens is a South African composer based in the UK. His work explores a range of influences from traditional South African music to 20th- and 21st-century experimental music, via jazz, electronic dance music and the classical canon, creating a music characterised by twisted cycles, rhythmic energy, and microtonal inflections. The Times has described his work as being “*fascinating*”, “*imaginatively orchestrated*” and having its “*own engaging quirkiness*”.

In 2020, Robert's work will be premiered by the Riot Ensemble, David Adams (violin) and Alice Neary (cello) at the Penarth Chamber Music Festival, and soprano/piano duo Anna Snow and Kate Ledger for the York Late Music Festival. French quartet Quatuor Capriccio and pianist Jakob Fichert also give repeat performances of works commissioned by them. Following a workshop and showing in December 2018, funded by an Arts Council Wales/Lottery-funded Research and Development Grant, Robert is also currently developing a monodrama with Kathleen Ferrier Prize 2010 winner, baritone Njabulo Madlala, and librettist Mkhululi Mabija for premiere in 2020.

In past seasons, Robert's work has been performed in major venues in the UK (including the Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room and Royal Festival Hall), South Africa, Australia, the USA, Japan, and across Europe. He has received commissions from organisations including the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust, Arts Council Ireland, Cape Town Opera, the SAMRO Foundation, the Vale of Glamorgan Festival, and the Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival. Performers of his orchestral music include conductors Pierre-André Valade, Gérard Korsten, Kenneth Woods and Tim Murray, and orchestras such as the South African National Youth Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, and English Symphony Orchestra. Other musicians and ensembles who have performed his music include violinists Ernst Kovacic, Darragh Morgan, Harriet Mackenzie, Lucy Gould, and Philippa Mo; cellists Oliver Coates, Richard Lester and Robin Michael; singers Ian Partridge, Claire Booth, Sarah Dacey and Patricia Rozario; flautists Liesl Stoltz and Carla Rees; and ensembles such as the Carducci, Signum, Armida and Capriccio Quartets, Fidelio and Fibonacci trios, rarescale, New Juilliard Ensemble, EXAUDI, juice vocal trio, Tête à Tête Opera, and Chroma.

His music is published by Composers Edition and Tetractys Publishing, and his debut CD of chamber music – *Tracing Lines* – is available on the Métier label. The violin concerto *An Eventful Morning Near East London* was released on Nimbus in 2017, garnering a range of excellent reviews, BBC Music Magazine describing it as “*exquisitely crafted...an arresting work*”. His music has also been released on Orchid, Herald, Prima Facie, TUTL and Foundry labels, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3, Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio, Swedish Radio P2, Portuguese Radio Antena 2, and various South African radio stations.

Robert is Senior Lecturer in composition at Cardiff University, and regularly gives masterclasses and presentations on his work at other institutions in the UK, Ireland and South Africa. He was composer-in-residence for the Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival 2017, NewMusicSA Indabas in 2008 and 2015, Festival Capriccio-en-Maine 2017, and for the South African National Youth Orchestra Courses in 2005 and 2013. He is Course Director of the Vale of Glamorgan Festival's Peter Reynolds Composers Studio. Robert studied at the University of Cape Town and at the Royal Academy of Music, also holding the Manson Fellowship at the RAM in 2001-2002. He completed his PhD at the University of Southampton in 2007, where he was supervised by Michael Finnissy.

Robert is an experienced conductor, currently working as director and conductor of the Cardiff University Contemporary Music Group. With this ensemble he recorded “Only Breath”, a CD of contemporary Welsh choral music for the Ty Cerdd label in 2018, and will give world premiere performances of two recently-discovered early works by Peter Maxwell Davies in April 2020. In 2014 he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

(rage) rage against the (2018)

Matthijs van Dijk (b. 1983)

Composer's note:

While I've written many pieces dealing with death in a broad sense (having lost a parent at 18, it would only be natural that it would work its way into my music), I don't often write works that are directly about my own mortality. Taking a lot of inspiration from Dylan Thomas' poem "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night", specifically the chorus "Rage, rage against the dying of the light.", most of (rage) is about pondering the inevitable (specifically THE moment), swinging from acceptance to being terrified, raging and pleading, to almost "welcoming" it – an internal monologue something those of us who deal with depression regularly have to confront.

Musically, while recently I've been including many electronic dance music gestures in my pieces (with (rage) being no exception), the above mentioned chorus nudged me in a direction to include several tips-of-the-hat to my "first love" - rock and metal - with the cello taking the roll of electric guitar, banging out elements that could potentially be played by artists as Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin and Rage Against The Machine.

Matthijs van Dijk is a composer and arranger, as well as an active chamber and orchestral musician based in Cape Town, South Africa. Van Dijk has written several commissions for numerous chamber ensembles and orchestras, such as the Carnegie Hall affiliated Decoda Ensemble, I Musicanti & Peter Donohoe, the LGT Young Soloists, Naomi Sullivan, and the Signum Quartet.

In 2003 van Dijk won the Priaulx Rainer Prize for composition and in 2006 he was the recipient of the SAMRO Overseas Scholarship for Composition. In 2005 he received a Kanna Award nomination for his work with Karen Zoid and the Sontonga Quartet at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees.

In 2016, as Composer-In-Residence at the Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival, van Dijk collaborated with Rivonia trialist and freedom fighter Denis Goldberg with their piece *Moments In A Life*, which was premiered by an ensemble of leading local South African and international performers with Goldberg himself narrating. In 2018, van Dijk was Co-Composer-In-Residence at the Johannesburg International Mozart Festival, sharing the residency with long-time collaborator Lungiswa Plaatjies.

Having been active in the film industry since 2005, in 2014 he formed the South African Film Orchestra in collaboration with Simon Ratcliffe and Sound & Motion Studios, as a vehicle to promote and record soundtracks in South Africa. Van Dijk's soundtrack work includes commercials, short films launching the Welsh and English rugby mascots, the animated series *Jungle Beat* (such as the Palm Springs International Short Film Festival "Best Of The Fest" winner "*Can't Touch This*"), 80 short films for M-Net West Africa, as well as the award-winning short film *Loot*. Outside of his own music, van Dijk has worked as an orchestrator on soundtracks for two episodes of the BBC documentaries *Africa's Trees Of Life* (music by Matt Nicholson), the short-film *Tumbleweed* (music by Josh Wynter) and Philip Noyce's *Catch A Fire* (music by Philip Miller). Since 2005, van Dijk has been involved with the annual South African Horrorfest, performing live soundtracks to classic silent movies, such as *The Phantom of the Opera* (2005), *Nosferatu* (2006) and *Metropolis* (2012), collaborating with members of rock-groups Lark and

Terminatrix as the Makabra Ensemble. Other silent film work includes co-founding PhotoPlay with flautist Louisa Theart in 2019, a chamber ensemble promoting new South African composers by performing new soundtracks for short silent movies.

As a violinist, van Dijk co-founded The Night Light Collective (formerly The ShhArt Ensemble) with Galina Juritz, Sarah Evans and Nicola du Toit, a chamber music ensemble made up of composers dedicated to writing and performing new South African art music. Performances include launching Biblioteek Productions' "Co/Mission" concert series, the 2015 TEDx in Cape Town (with Mr Sakitumi & The Grrrl and Inge Beckman), and "VOMO", with Juliana Venter, Cara Stacey and The Motorcycle Orchestra. As an ensemble with a flexible configuration of players, it has collaborated with artists such as Lungiswa Plaatjies, Larissa Johnson, Brydon Bolton and Nicky Schrire, including performances at the 2018 Johannesburg International Mozart Festival, the 2018 ALTERnatives Festival, and the 2019 Makhanda National Arts Festival.

In 2019 van Dijk launched his ongoing podcast "The South African Composers Archive", a series in which he asks South African composers/improvisors the same eleven questions in an attempt to create an aural archive of the South African New Music scene, while showcasing the incredibly varied musical voices the country has to offer.