



Love; Liberty

Levi Wataka conducts the Nairobi Music Society choir and the Nairobi Orchestra as they perform a medley of songs.

Soloists: Peter Nyabuto, May Ombara, Caleb Wachira, Michael Muraguri, Tania Tawk and Meble Birengo.

FRIDAY 29th APRIL 7PM | KENYA NATIONAL THEATRE,
SATURDAY 30th APRIL 6PM | Harry Thuku Rd, Nairobi.

Tickets to be purchased in advance through nairobi musicsociety.org
Ksh. 1,000 Adults | Ksh. 800 Students



Nairobi Music Society Concert

29th and 30th April 2022



Senzenina: This South African protest song is traditionally sung at funerals and protest marches. It was important during the anti-apartheid movement.

Senzenina means “What have we done” with the implication “what did we do to deserve this?” The version performed tonight has been reworked by our conductor Levi Wataka and is presented in a much more peaceful and lyrical setting.

Villager’s Chorus: From Gioachino Rossini’s opera *William Tell*, set in 13th Century Switzerland, tells the story of a famous archer, William Tell, leading a revolt against the ‘foreign ruler’, Gessler. The most famous part of the story is when William is forced to shoot an arrow off his son Jeremy’s head. The Chorus performed tonight is from the first act, where the villager’s celebrate a wedding announcement and join in a song of love, marriage, and work.

Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves: Giuseppe Verdi’s *Nabucco* (1841) tells the biblical story of the conquered Jews, exiled from their homeland by the Babylonian King Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar). Verdi noted, “This is the opera with which my artistic career really begins. And though I had many difficulties to fight against, it is certain that *Nabucco* was born under a lucky star.” *Va pensiero, sull’alidorate* (Fly, thought, on golden wings) or the “Chorus of Hebrew Slaves” is the best-known song from the opera. It paraphrases Psalm 137, a lamentation by the Israelites upon their exile. At Verdi’s funeral a crowd of mourners spontaneously sang “Va, pensiero;” twentieth-century Italy viewed it as an unofficial national anthem for a unified country

Prisoner’s Chorus: ‘*Fidelio*’ (originally titled *The Triumph of Marital Love*), is Ludwig van Beethoven’s only opera. The libretto, with some spoken dialogue, tells how Leonore, disguised as a prison guard named “*Fidelio*”, rescues her husband Florestan from death in a political prison.. With its underlying struggle for liberty and justice mirroring contemporary political movements in Europe, such topics are typical of Beethoven’s “middle period”. The “*Prisoners’ Chorus*” (*O welche Lust*—“O what a joy”), an ode to freedom sung by a chorus of political prisoners.

The Lord is My Shepherd: Franz Peter Schubert was an Austrian composer who, despite his short lifetime, left behind a vast oeuvre, including more than 600 secular vocal works, seven complete symphonies, sacred music, operas, incidental music and a large body of piano and chamber music. Schubert's uncommon gifts for music were evident from an early age. However, he gave only one concert of his own works in his career, in March 1828. He died eight months later at the age of 31, due to typhoid fever. His setting of Psalm 23 which is one of the psalms with the most settings, is a beautiful and lyrical melody with angelic harmonies entwined.

Dunia ya Rero: This Giriama tune has been arranged by I Kinyanjui and E Mbinji. The lyrics literally translate to: Today's world with troubles and sorrows, Leave the sins of this world and come back to Christ, Punishment awaits anyone that doesn't listen, I warn you to leave all the worldly sins

Ngulo: A traditional KiKamba song arranged by Boniface Mganga who arranged several Kenya folksongs and performed them with the famous Muungano Choir. Boniface took lessons with the legendary Graham Hyslop who initiated the style of adapting and arranging Kenyan folk tunes for use in sacred songs – the most famous arrangement by Hyslop being the Kenyan National Anthem, which is based on a Pokomo lullaby! *Ngulo* is about a pumpkin thief!

Singo Jadolo: This composition is by David Otieno who wrote and arranged a lot of songs for use in a sacred context but also for use in the sacred class of the Music Festivals. This is one of his most popular compositions and the lyrics are based on religious text similar in context with American Spirituals of the Deep South. A loose translation of the lyrics are: Jesus my redeemer is passing by; he calls us all to come; come rejoice. We shall meet Him when we go to heaven.

Kokoliko: This composition by Dr Henry Wanjala is in the style of a Luhya spiritual. The text is based on the story of the disciple Peter who denied Jesus three times and, as Jesus had predicted, the cockerel crowed three times after the denials which made Peter weep in self-pity at his weakness. *Kokoliko* is the sound of the cockerel.

Nimerudi Mashambani: A song by famous composer David Zalo uses a rumba beat which comes out as an instrumental motif towards the end of the song, imitating the style of rumba played on guitars. The song was composed to encourage people to reverse the rural-urban migration trend of the late 80s and early 90s.



Interval



Anvil Chorus: This chorus is from Giuseppe Verdi's 1853 opera *Il trovatore*. *Anvil Chorus* is the English name for the *Coro di Zingari* (Italian for "Gypsy chorus"). It depicts Spanish Gypsies striking their anvils at dawn – hence its English name – and singing the praises of hard work, good wine, and Gypsy women. The piece is also commonly known by its opening words, "Vedi! Le fosche".

Habanera: Georges Bizet, a child prodigy and talented pianist, lived a short, productive life. Bizet based *Carmen* (1875), perhaps the best-known opera in the world, on a novelette by Prosper Mérimée. In the opening scene the gypsy Carmen seduces a soldier, Don José, by singing the sultry "Habanera" comparing love to a beautiful, rebellious bird ("L'amour est un oiseau rebelle"). The chorus responds with "Prends garde a toi!" (Take care, young man!).

Funiculi Funicula: This Neapolitan song was composed in 1880 by Luigi Denza to lyrics by Peppino Turco. It was written to commemorate the opening of the first funicular railway on Mount Vesuvius. It was presented by Turco and Denza at the Piedigrotta festival the same year. The sheet music sold over a million copies within a year. Since its publication, it has been widely adapted and recorded.

Brindisi: This song is from the opera *La Traviata* (The Fallen Woman) by Giuseppe Verdi has become immensely popular and is among the most frequently performed of all operas. A *brindisi* is a song in which a company is exhorted to drink. The word is Italian, but it derives from an old German phrase, (ich) bringe dir's – "(I) offer it to you", which at one time was used to introduce a toast. The term is often used in opera. Typically, in an operatic *brindisi*, one character introduces a toast with a solo melody and the full ensemble later joins in the refrain.

Let's Do It: This song by Cole Porter is the first of his "list songs", it features a string of suggestive and droll comparisons and examples, preposterous pairings and double entendres, dropping famous names and events, drawing from highbrow and popular culture. Porter was a strong admirer of the Savoy Operas of Gilbert & Sullivan, many of whose stage works featured similar comic list songs. The first refrain covers human ethnic groups, the second refrain birds, the third refrain marine life, the fourth refrain insects and centipedes, and the fifth refrain non-human mammals.

Song for the Mira: A contemporary folk song in the Celtic style, written in 1973 by Allister MacGillivray, speaks of a longing for, and eventual return to, the serenity of

the Mira River region of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada. Brought to international attention by Anne Murray and covered more than 300 times, the song has become a standard in the Celtic repertoire and something of an anthem in Nova Scoti.



The performers

Conductor:

Levi Wataka is a graduate of Music (Bmus) and is completing his Master of Music Education degree from Kenyatta University. He continues to study conducting with *Rodolfo Saglimbeni*, *Denise Ham* and *Toby Purser* through the annual George Hurst Conductors' Course in Sherborne, England. Levi has participated with the Nairobi Orchestra for more than 16 years, playing percussion, 2nd clarinet and keyboard. He serves on the orchestra committee and as principal resident conductor. He regularly conducts the *Nairobi Music Society Choir*, and has also conducted choirs and orchestras for adults and children in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Scotland, Italy and Venezuela. Levi has been the Director of Music at St. Andrew's School, Turi and the Aga Khan Academy in Nairobi and currently serves as Assistant Director of Music and teacher of sports at Peponi House Preparatory School. He served as the resident conductor with the *Kenya Conservatoire of Music Orchestra* for more than ten years where he now regularly offers assistance to young conductors, working towards an orchestral conducting curriculum for this institution. He is currently Musical Director with the *National Youth Orchestra of Kenya* and the Nairobi Children's Orchestra. Levi also conducts the Safaricom Youth Orchestra, assisting Dr. Duncan Wambugu. He is also a director with the *Art of Music Foundation*, working closely with Elizabeth Njoroge at the Ghetto Classics and the Link-Up programmes. Levi serves on the boards of the *Kamili Organisation*, working towards training for psychiatric nurses to provide improved mental health care across Kenya and the Mt. Kenya Academy Schools. One of his main interests is to help develop further the structures and curricula for instrumental music education in Kenya, working closely with schools, cultural organisations and institutions of higher learning. Levi has recently completed a national diploma in Early Childhood Development and Education, and spends some time pursuing this through the *Muziki Changa* music programme for infants and toddlers.



Soloists:

Tania Tawk is a Kenyan citizen of Lebanese origin. She was born in Togo and schooled in Lebanon and France, and has chosen to settle with her family in Kenya. She has sung for many years with the *Nairobi Music Society* and *Cantabile Chorus*. She has been singing and playing the piano since she was seven years old. She has also performed several recitals in both Beirut and Nairobi. She studied opera at the *National Conservatoire of Music* in Beirut, as well as through the ABRSM in which she received her advanced certificate in opera singing.

Caleb Wachira is a music director, a music educator and a performer. He is the Music Director at *Khweva Arts Company*. With Khweva, he has composed and directed the music for a number of African-story Musicals such as "Rira" staged at Braebun School theatre, amongst other productions in different theatres in Kenya. Wachira is also the music director at Aperture Africa where he directed the music for the award-winning musical Cinderella. He is the choir director at the Lenana School, a private voice and woodwind tutor and a classically trained singer. He has worked as a music instructor at the Precious Blood Girls High school and continues to volunteer as music instructor at the Starehe Boys Centre and School, his former High School. Wachira is currently teaching voice and woodwind at the SABIS international school. Wachira is a tenor known for his role as a soloist for the *Nairobi Music Society*. His first big role was in Handel's Israel in Egypt as a tenor soloist. He later took the role of "Figaro" in the opera "The Barber of Seville"—a production by OPERATION Classics. He has sung in various Operas, recitals and concerts around East Africa. He is currently the assistant vocal director and a lead role in the Kenyan Opera "Nyanga Runway Grandmother"; a production by the Baraka Opera Trust.

Jacqui May Ombara is a performer and vocal instructor. She is a chorister at the All Saints' Cathedral Nairobi and a resident conductor at the Kenya Conservatoire of Music Symphony and Women's Orchestras. She is also the music director of the Junior Chamber Orchestra. May is also a member of 'The Four Sopranos', an all-female quartet.

Anthony Mwangi is a passionate, dedicated and self-motivated Opera singer, music performer and teacher with experience also in playing piano, the organ and percussion instruments. He always seeks new and exciting challenges, successfully utilizing his talent, voice, skills and experiences gained in an environment that provides career growth; Striving to make positive change in life and the society as he equips students with performance, composition, and theoretical skills while also being extremely meticulous and pursuing the highest excellence while on the performing stage. He has worked with the *Nairobi Music Society* as a Soloist and Choral singer, Director of Choir, All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi, SfP Conductors Organisation, UK, Main Cast member in Nyanga, An Opera that premiered in October in Nairobi, KE, an Educator, Choral principal

and Conductor in various institutions and organisations in Kenya & more so, a philomath (one who loves learning) and melophile (one who loves music).

Meble Vilika Birengo is a Trombonist, Mezzo-Soprano; and Conductor with the Kenya Conservatoire Symphony, the Women Orchestra, as well as The Salvation Army Ladies Brass band'. Meble has held solo parts with NMS as well as being part of trios, quartets, and chamber choruses across the years. Her musical background is rooted in the church; – growing up as a pastor's daughter meant being ready, for solo parts, leading worship, conducting, or picking up a brass instrument. Her technical skills in music are grounded in exposure to Orchestras and ABRSM's accreditation for Voice, Music Theory, and Trombone. One of her original compositions "In Service for the Lord" has been arranged for Brass by Band Master Kortin and performed by Staff Brass bands in Sweden, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Kenya. The arrangement has options for voice and Saxophone. Meble is currently working with The Salvation Army International Social Justice Commission based in New York as the "International Learning and Impact Specialist" where she is strengthening the response to Research and measurement that lead to the realization of the UN SDGs. She is working directly with survivors of Modern Slavery and Human trafficking as well as empowering global Fair-Trade Initiatives on measurement aspects. Meble loves to cook and wishes if she had a big kitchen, she would invite the audience for a meal after the concert.

Michael Muraguri, tenor, performed as a soloist with *Nairobi Music Society* in Handel's *Voices for Hospices* in 2015. He has sung with *Nairobi Music Society* for a couple of years at this point and with other choirs notably Buruburu Blessed Sacrament choir. Michael is happy to sing and perform and finds it relieving and providing balance and is another creative outlet from his technical career.

Peter Nyabuto, in his first ever vocal audition, tried to sing in an opera. Unfortunately the rasp in his voice did not match the timbre requirements of Verdi's 'La Donna e Mobile'. This did not stop him. He went on to explore other genres and styles, being particularly drawn to contemporary African music. Since then, he has been active in the music industry as a singer, instrumentalist, composer and teacher for over ten years. He has a Bachelor of Music Degree and has had vocal training in Sauti Academy under Natalie Lukkenaer. Nyabuto has worked with the Kenya Conservatoire of Music, the Nairobi Orchestra and many other ensembles and played at various festivals in Kenya and beyond including the Safaricom jazz festival and the Blankets and Wine festival. This however is his first time singing with the NMS choir and he is honoured to have had this opportunity.



NMS Choir:

Sopranos: Audrey Mugwe, Audrey Wairimu, Auma Joan Omollo, Brenda Kariuki, Mumbi Mutonga, Charity Kamau, Caroline Omondi Ohonde, Christine Muchira, Claire Muthoni, Faith Njoroge, Grace Waruguru, Jackline Awuor Oguttu, Jacqui May Ombara, June Samo, Kate Mbinya, Lucy Kimani, Mary Theresa Odhiambo, Maryjane Oote, Meble Birengo, Mildred Owuor, Nancy Mutonyi, Njeri Kabiru, Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo, Susannah Price, Tania Tawk, Vallerie Annemary

Altos: Catherine Kola, Claudia Wanjiru, Erika Teufel, Irene Muriithi, Lynn Mutheu Huma, Mercy Buku, Syokau Mutonga, Peta Meyer, Waitherero Chege

Tenors: Anthony Mwangi, Caleb Wachira, Charles Kamotho, Docktor Njathika, Emmanuel Omondi Aloo, Francis Wambua, Mike Muraguri, Nicholas Andrew Obara, Paul Kisenyu, Paul Wechuli Wafula, Sam Gitau, Steve Mutua

Basses: Chege Waitara, Evans Wanga, Francis Oludhe, Martin Mogusu, Michael Mwangi, Patrick Anyanga, Willy Simons.



Nairobi Orchestra:

Violins: Stephen Ongoma (Leader), Diana Keta, Stella Karani, David Ralak, Frederick Lameck, Rehema Kabare, Tim Mututi, Eva Kimenye, Ruth Bitutu, Job Marutu, James Laight, Angela Wamaita

Celli: Sally Davies, Stephen Kamau

Double Bass: Julius Okello

Flutes: Rachel Lusava (& Piccolo), Heleen Haven

Clarinet: Pravin Maleya

Oboe: George Ndung'u Gichero

Bassoon: David Richmond

French Horn: Gwendolyn Anding, Cyndicate Kabei

Trumpet: Bill Rowe, Andy Stephens

Trombone: Mark Anding

Tuba: Jenny Wafula

Percussion: Grace Muriithi, Daniel Pamba

Keyboard: Benaars Ongidi



Acknowledgements: I would like to express my gratitude to the performers today – the singers, the rehearsal pianist (Benaars Ongidi), Levi Wataka (the conductor) and the Nairobi Orchestra for their willingness and enthusiasm, to put on this concert – the second we have put on, since December 2019! We hope that this year we will be able, as a Society to continue our usual programme of choral rehearsals, and put on some recitals as well as our annual concerts at Christmas. Thank you also, to Patrick Anyanga who has designed our very inspiring posters for the last five years and has lent much support and expertise.