

## Khoi'npsalms

In this music theatre production of 'Khoi and psalm [music]', in which no dialogue is used explicitly, South African Khoi music on bow, saxophone and blik'nsnaar is played by Garth Erasmus. Garth's 'Khoi memory music' laces into shards of 16th century Genevan psalm melodies played, on flute, by Marietjie Pauw and, on organ, by Francois Blom. On these accompanying programme notes, psalm melodies are referenced by composer and date, and extracts of psalm texts are translated freely (by the musicians themselves) from the South African texts by 'Totius', written in Afrikaans (1937). These programme notes set out, for the audience, a narrative to the music production.

In this production, Khoi music, now virtually extinct, is newly created and imagined amidst fragments of, and improvisations on, six Genevan psalm melodies. The psalm melodies were composed by Loys Bourgeois and Guillaume Franc, and date from Strasbourg, 1539. The complete set of 150 Genevan psalm melodies was published under the curatorship of John Calvin in 1562. The melodies were brought to the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, by the 'Hollanders' of the Dutch East India Company, or the 'VOC'. The Dutch administration to the Cape brought with them the Dutch translation of the Genevan (French) texts that was penned by Petrus Dathenus in 1568. As from 1773, the Cape Dutch speakers used a newer Dutch translation. In 1937, Totius (J.D. du Toit)—an Afrikaans poet, church minister and Afrikaner-cultural activist—translated the texts into Afrikaans. These texts are still used by some Reformed Churches in South Africa.

We extract the psalm texts and melodies from conventional scenarios (where they are usually intended as spiritual tools) and, instead, weave these psalms into memories of Khoi music, in order to engage with shared, violent histories. The texts of the Judaic-Christian psalms, indeed, reference stories of violence and subjugation, here remembering the ancient Judaic conquests of land and resistance to imperialism, and two centuries of French Huguenot persecution, to name but two examples. The recurring translation of psalmic texts, with every translation carrying its pertinent social re-contextualisation, remind us of the manipulative nature of contextual translation: When Totius of the Afrikaners, for instance, translated the texts, he was voicing protest against British imperialism in South Africa over the Afrikaners, but he was not self-critical enough to foresee that the pro-Afrikaner texts would become metaphorical weapons in the Afrikaner's social engineering of people subjected under apartheid. He was also not visionary enough to sense that the harms legislated in 1948 would persist—, still, 70 years later.

### ***Khoi, wind, water / Psalm 42***

Khoi music on bow reminds us of the first peoples who lived at the Cape. These people saw foreign ships with sailors come to land, brought to the tip of Africa by winds from the north and the east. Sailors were shown where fresh water was to be found. Psalm 42 (Bourgeois, 1551) reminds of the thirst for water:

*Like an antelope in arid stretches of land, my soul thirsts for water, for quiet [...]*

### ***Land of God, for the VOC / Psalm 8***

The need for water became a greed for land, sanctified. Psalm 8 (Franc, 1542) reminds that:

*There is no land so far, or wild, oh Lord, that it falls beyond your reach. Your name shines in majesty, everywhere. [...] What is humanity? [...] You allow humans to rule unto the furthest outposts of sea and land [...]*

### ***VOC Song of triumph / Psalm 47***

Jan van Riebeeck delivered a prayer that was scripted by the VOC when he arrived at the Cape in 1652. The prayer conflates religious justification for land, commerce, power of the VOC, and the subjugation of 'these wild and barbaric peoples'. The VOC began an imperial reign at the Cape. Psalm 47 (Bourgeois, 1551) claims the Imperial God as the highest King over all peoples:

*Rejoice, oh nations, rejoice! Clap your hands and testify [...] to the Lord your joy [...] He is King of the heathen [...] He is the highest, He is exalted.*

### ***Khoi Song for highest justice / Psalm 45***

Khoi music became quiet, erased. For human survival, Khoi persons learnt new languages and new skills. Psalm 45, a love psalm in the Judaic texts, sings of a 'just' king, as also scripted by Totius. When the text becomes the poetry of a Khoi speaker, he longs for 'highest righteousness'. Flute and organ sense an outpouring of emotion, and are drawn in to accompany the Khoi narrative:

*My heart, moved by sensing, will sing intimately, strongly, of a king. My tongue, moved by poetic fire, is like a pen that writes with artistic skill [...] Clothe yourself with weapons for a victorious battle, oh hero, so that your majesty may ride in all glamour and triumph to find highest righteousness [...] From your house of ivory there sounds a wonder-filling stirring of calming string music.*

### ***Song of anguish / Psalm 62***

Khoi musicians learned to play new instruments—to adapt. The saxophone (with flute and organ) sounds a song of mourning that becomes a song of anguish. The song wails of a wall that has already been destructed, 'pushed over', as in the words of Psalm 62 (Franc, 1542):

*For how long, still, do you seek the downfall and injustice done to a man who is deeply in need, oh cruel tormentors? [...] You seek the destruction of a stone wall that has already been pushed over.*

### ***After the drought, rain / Psalm 65***

Sounds of anger and anguish linger on to defy easy interpretations of histories of genocide, erasure, self-righteous centering and greed. Psalm 65 (Franc, 1545) sings of rain and harvests. These words remind us of an abundance that was intended for the whole earth and her peoples.

*After these times of fearful drought, there is an abundance of relief [...] from furthest fields and kraals [...] there is ample rainfall [...] there are cattle in the hillsides and they prance to the fields with joy [...] there are lavish, grown, fields of wheat.*

### ***Wind, blik'nsnaar***

Psalm 65 also sings of 'wind songs'. The wind continues to blow. Genevan psalms become increasingly quiet. The Khoi artist has built a new instrument, the 'blik'nsnaar' ('can-and-strings'): the blik'nsnaar helps us all to remember.

With 'Khoi'npsalms', the bringing together—of historically impossible relationships of music-making—helps us to re-imagine intimacies and care amidst remembering.

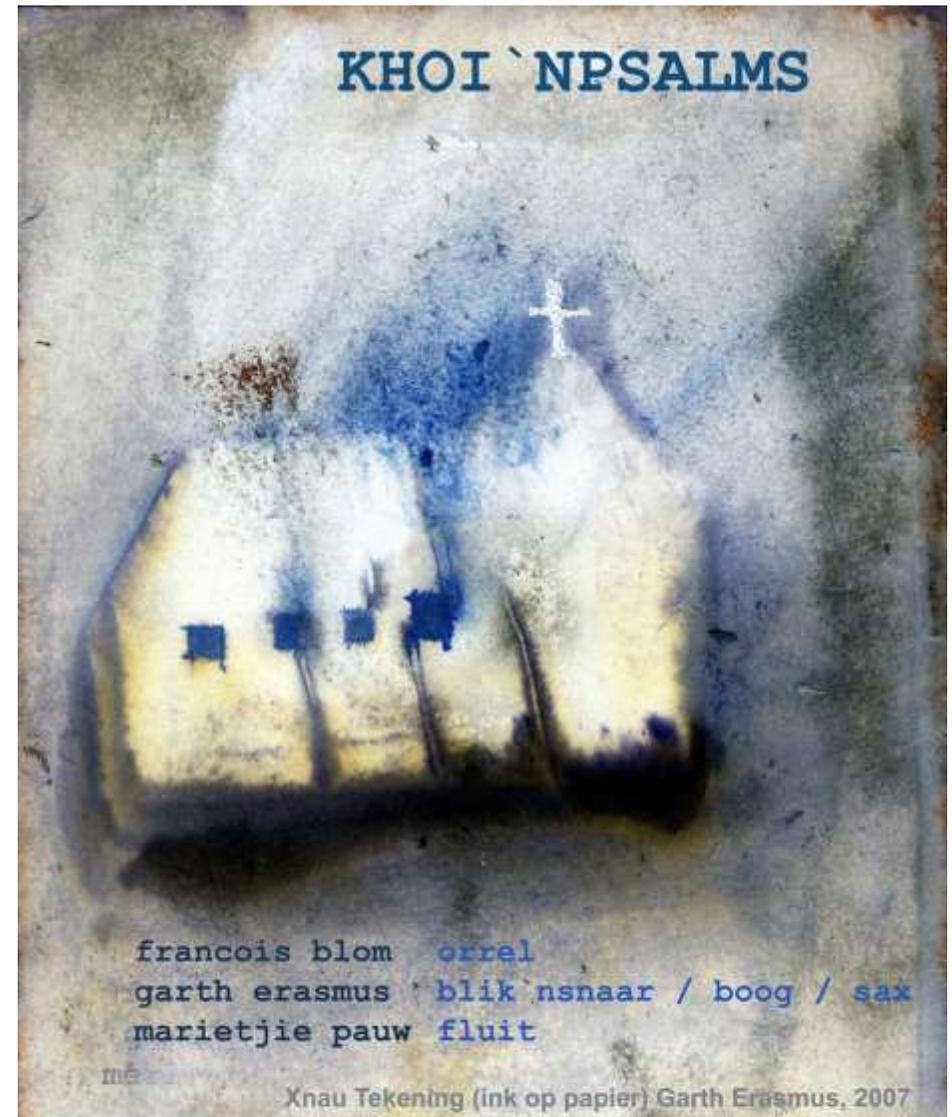
## Musician biographies

**Francois Blom (organ)** was the organist at the Dutch Reformed Church, Stellenbosch West Congregation, South Africa, for eleven years (until 2018). He was a member of the World Youth Choir in 1998, 1999 and 2000. He was a member of *Stellenbosch Camerata*, under choral direction of Acáma Fick, from 1998 to 2002. Francois is also an actor, a cabaret pianist, a choral assistant and accompanist. *Khoi'npsalms* is his first collaboration with Garth Erasmus and Marietjie Pauw. Francois can be heard playing the organ in the film *Nege fragmente uit ses khoi'npsalms* (Kaganof 2018), a filmic response to the music production, *Khoi'npsalms*. Contact: frankflower@gmail.com

**Garth Erasmus (Khoi memory music)** is a visual artist and musician. He taught at the Zonnebloem Art Centre, District Six in Cape Town, from 1982-1997. In 2005 he was the Arts Education Officer at the Iziko SA National Gallery in Cape Town. He is a former chairperson of Africa South Art Initiative (ASAI) and is an active member of art projects such as Vakalisa Artists Group; Community Reflections Arts and Performance Group; 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 and poetry group, *Khoi Khonnexxion*, who toured European music theatre festivals in 2018. He also plays in the music group *As Is*. He is an instrument maker, and his creative work includes composition, inter-medial creation, and improvisation. Garth and Marietjie Pauw have collaborated on music productions such as the erased history of forced evictions from 'Roesdorp' (the colloquial term for an area in Stellenbosch), as well as the living and dead memories of 7 Joubert Street (Stellenbosch). These duo collaborations have been re-produced as critical film art (Aryan Kaganof 2016, 2016 and 2018). *Khoi'npsalms* was filmed in March 2018 by Kaganof, produced under the title *Nege fragmente uit ses khoi'npsalms* (2018). Contact: gtserasmus@gmail.com

**Marietjie Pauw (flute)** completed doctoral research in music at the University of Stellenbosch in 2015. Her artistic research engages with the curating and performance of South African flute compositions, and free improvisation, as decolonial aestheSis. She is a post-doctoral researcher at Africa Open Institute for Music, Research and Innovation, University of Stellenbosch. She has published articles in *South African Music Studies*, *Acta Academica*, *LitNet Akademies* and *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa*. She has released two compact discs, including a flute duo recording with Barbara Highton Williams titled *Fofa le nna* ('Fly with me', a title that references a composition by the South African composer, Neo Muyanga.) In 2015, she and Garth Erasmus presented a duo production that explored the erased history of forced evictions from 'Roesdorp', Stellenbosch. This production, presented in the Rupert Art Museum, was filmed by Aryan Kaganof (with films titled *Kreun*, 2016; and *Khoisan ghost kreun*, 2016). In June 2018 she and Garth improvised music to Kaganof's score, *Suiwer*, on the living and dead memories of 7 Joubert Street, Stellenbosch, filmed by Aryan Kaganof as *Suiwer in Blauw* (2018). The music production, *Khoi'npsalms*, was filmed as *Nege fragmente uit ses khoi'npsalms* (Kaganof 2018). Contact: empauw@gmail.com

Programme notes produced for *Music Theatre Now 2019*, Rotterdam. Cover art: 'Xnau Drawing' (ink on paper) by Garth Erasmus, 2007. Date and venue details indicated for first performances in March 2018.



5 Maart 07:00*	Rynse Kerk, Stellenbosch
6 Maart 07:00*	VGK, Cloeteville
7 Maart 07:00*	St. Mark's Katolieke Kerk
8 Maart 07:00*	Moederkerk, Stellenbosch
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