

## PRESS BOOK

CUE, Monday 26 June 2010

# Going transcontinental via Paris and Joburg

By Atiyah Khan  
Cue reporter

If you ask who is one of the kookiest musicians that South Africa has to offer, Carlo Mombelli springs to mind. But, apparently, he is only mildly kooky compared to the French musicians with whom he is performing at the Paris-Joburg gig tonight, which is definitely one of the highlights at this year's Jazz Festival programme.

It's a mixing of two cultures and headspaces. Mombelli admits he is the normal one out of the bunch. "I am Mary Poppins, I am Mary Poppins!" he shouts, continuing. "They're off their rockers!" referring to the French musicians.

Paris-Joburg is an avant garde collaborative project that is set to explode on stage tonight. I managed to watch the piece when it toured Cape Town earlier this month and it is a mind blowing transcontinental jazz experiment.

The local contingent is led by Mombelli on bass with his Prisoners of Strange: Siya Makuzeni (vocals,

trombone), Marcus Wyatt (trumpet) and Justin Badenhorst (drums).

Maniacal soundmaster Braka heads up his French quartet with Lucia Recio (vocals), Nicolas Stephan (tenor and alto sax) and Daniel Malavergne (tuba).

Braka himself is not unlike a musical mad-scientist on drums. He uses sound effects from ordinary objects, such as toys, together with vocals, trombone, various percussive instruments and turntables. This is well contrasted by the quirky humour laced in Mombelli's playing as bandleader.

After two months of touring, Mombelli, though exhausted, still talks excitedly.

He explains the background of the project: "I was working on a project called Lutherie Urbaine with a company in Paris that builds musical instruments out of rubbish.

"They established it worldwide and asked me to handle the same project in South Africa. Braka was involved with them and that's how we met."

"Braka heard Prisoners of

Strange, fell in love with the musicians and said we needed to do something together. He came up with the concept of Paris-Joburg."

The repertoire presented by the double quartet consists not only of original compositions by both Mombelli and Braka, but also Parisian standard pieces interpreted and re-arranged by Mombelli, and famous original South African compositions interpreted and re-arranged by Braka's quartet. The process combines writing and improvisation with traditional standards.

The project has been running for a few months and the same repertoire was played first in Paris, and then in South Africa, where both quartets fuse styles of Valse Musette from Paris and 50s and 60s Sophiatown jazz.

It is something that should not be missed by anyone remotely interested in the beauty of improvisation and sound experimentation.

*Paris-Joburg Project is at the DSG Hall today at 7.30pm*

Mail & Guardian, Friday June 11 to 17, 2010

## Funky ha-ha from half a Dadaist

Yunus Memoniat

When I first saw that *Paris/Joburg* consisted of four (later five) wind instruments, two drummers, two vocalists and a bassist, my heart sank just a little. I was hoping there would be some electricity – a synth or an electric guitar. But once the music began, my fears were put to rest.

Carlo Mombelli's wilds his Prisoners of Strange ensemble to electric effect and the textures that emerge are subtle and nuanced, sometimes quite loud and raucous, and always interesting.

I saw the *Paris/Joburg* performance, which featured Mombelli's band with Braka's French Quartet, live at Wits University on June 6. The band has in its ranks one-and-a-half Dadaists. The French composer/percussionist Braka, who quadruples as clown, MC, trombonist and DJ, is the full-blown Dadaist. He injects humour and warmth into the proceedings, while Mombelli, the half Dadaist, plays with the music as well as with the audience's expectations. Delighted by Braka's antics, Mombelli is bemused when surprises are launched – in jokes are rife within this band.

Indeed, humour is an essential ele-



Carlo Mombelli and Braka in rehearsal. Photo: Willy Vainqueur

ment of the band's apparent spontaneity. Mombelli is undoubtedly the leader, but the members playfully simulate a kind of power struggle, reflecting their anarchist leanings. And the arrangements betray an irreverent concept of unity, belying the labour that goes into such a tight performance.

Jump cuts, shifting time signatures, contrasts in volume, tone, note and timbre – all these are performed with great technical facility, and a certain eclecticism of structure

allows jazzy elements to mingle with Edith Piaf and vocal motifs from Stockhausen's *Stimmung*. But it's all ultimately held together by compositional acumen – and great bass riffs.

The wind instruments produce especially interesting textures, roaring together or creating soft and mournful chords, sometimes breaking the smooth surface with syncopated toots from Nicolas Stephan on alto sax and hoots from Daniel Malavergne on the tuba. Meanwhile, the two singers, French chanteuse

Lucia Recio and Siya Makuzeni (who also doubles on trombone), explore the vocal range in both harmonious and atonal concert.

French cultural memes pervaded the concert, which was organised as part of a South Africa-France exchange by the French Institute and associated organisations. But I failed to discern the Sophiatown theme, which Braka referred to post-performance.

The piece about humour, with Recio leading an Indian seminar in laughter, worked well, evoking mirth in the band as well as in the audience. Drummer Justin Badenhorst's solo in the penultimate piece seemed influenced by a solo from Billy Cobham's *Spectrum*, an influence well worth embracing and developing. Trumpeter Marcus Wyatt and Stephan blew enjoyable solos, while Braka laughably proved a competent trombonist. When Mombelli's bass strayed from its rhythmic function, Malavergne's tuba filled the vacuum and he revelled in turning his unwieldy instrument into a source of strange.

Mombelli's music continues the tradition of the avant-garde, keeping in mind that the avant-garde was modernism's assassin, enlisted to

murder tradition. As such, he makes music that reproduces the sounds, methods and aesthetics of a music that shocked listeners, especially from the 1950s onwards. But if once upon a time these elements were shocking, today they tend to border on cliché – perhaps only for those long in the tooth. The young people at the concert seemed entranced and for some it was their introduction to the avant-garde – laudable in an age kicked off by the Spice Girls and now dominated by that dreadfully pornographic pop "avant-gardist", Lady Gaga. A battle for the soul of the avant-garde, perhaps?

After the concert one twenty-something said she had been overwhelmed at some moments, but found the provocations of the tuba attractive. She seemed to have enjoyed the overall experience. That is perhaps the function of Mombelli's intervention: to continue to reopen the closures imposed on us at every turn and to remind listeners that the avant-garde tradition isn't dead, it just smells funny.

*Paris/Joburg* plays in Knysna on June 12 (venue to be announced) and at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown on June 28. More on



# PARIS/JOBURG

## aller-retour

Mail & Guardian, Friday June 25 to July 1, 2010

■ The irrepressible Lilliput Children's Theatre Company continues with its season of classic fairy tales adapted and directed by Elton John Duffy. **Pinocchio**, based on the Carlo Collodi classic, tells of the little wooden puppet who has to prove himself to be honest, and trustworthy before he can become a real live boy. In this version Pinocchio also teams up with a naughty Bafana Bafana supporter, Lampwick, and is taken to a soccer game, instead of going off to school. If you go and watch the show in any Bafana Bafana clothing or wearing your favourite World Cup team's clothes, you stand a chance of winning a prize.  
>>Baxter Concert Hall, Main Road, Rondebosch. Until July 10. Book at Computicket or the Baxter Theatre on (021) 685 7880.

### Visual arts

■ Few artists articulate the tensions between high and low art, art and commerce, exoticism and eroticism, popular culture and astute critical analysis, modernism and post modernism as acutely as Russian-born, South African based Vladimir Tretchikoff. The painter, who passed away in South Africa in 2006, defied the canons of good taste to become one of the best-selling artists of the 20th century. Ordinary people loved his work for its vibrant, voluptuous bliss and beguiling mystery, art critics in the 1960s and 1970s scorned it as the epitome of post-war suburban kitsch, postmodern critics in the

### CINEMA – 3 TO SEE

- **Broken Embraces.** Pedro Almodóvar's great new melodrama
- **Endgame.** Excellent account of SA negotiations in the late 1980s
- **Good Hair.** Good hair doccie

>> Movie reviews, Pages 22 to 23

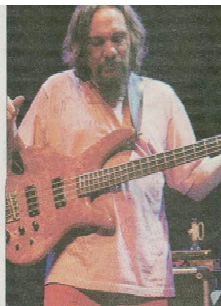
**Auditorium 1, CTICC, June 25.**  
**Right: Carlo Mombelli and French percussionist and composer Braka will perform at DSG Hall, June 28**

1980s embraced him as the icon of a new generation of playful, ironic artists and introduced his work to a hip new audience. These restless and troublesome dualities are given a breath of new life in **Tretchikoff and Me**. Curated by Andrew Lamprecht, this group exhibition juxtaposes original vintage prints by Tretchikoff with works in response to Tretchikoff by young and emerging artists.  
>>Salon91, 91 Kloof Street, Gardens, Cape Town until July 21.

■ **This Is Not Final** is an exhibition of artwork by the Master of Fine Art students at the University of Cape Town. Focusing on raw talent rather than finished product, it takes 1970s conceptualism's thinking around "process as practice" as its starting point. Curators Bettina Malcomess and Peter Van Heerden, themselves both young rising stars in the visual arts, have assembled varied new explorations in painting, video, new-media, print, sculpture and installation to expose and question accepted modes of representation within contemporary art practice.  
>>Michaëlis Galleries, UCT, 31 - 37 Orange Street, Cape Town. Until July 10.

### Music

■ "I sing about the search for our African soul, which we must teach how to love again," said **Simphele Dana** when questioned about the political billing of her Sama-winning album, *The One Love Movement On Bantu Biko Street*. It's this African soul that Dana celebrates with audiences at The Vibrations Continental Music Showcase on June 25. It's a Proudly Pan African showcase including performances by Senegalese singer songwriter



Cheikh Lo, Kunle Ayo, Nomfusi & The Lucky Charms, Afro-Latin jazz combo Tucan Tucan, marimba maestro Bongani Sotshononda, percussion ensemble, Manding Kan and the debut appearance of young R&B vocalist Zoe.

>>Auditorium 1, CTICC, June 25, 6pm. Entrance is R300. Book at Computicket. Tel: 021 461 2385.

■ Iconic Xhosa composer, singer, story-teller and multi-instrumentalist **Madosini Manqineni** and New Cape composer and guitarist **Derek Gripper** release their much-anticipated new CDs in a double concert on June 25. Madosini's masterful performance of original compositions for *Uhadi*, *Umrhubhe* and *Istolotolo* were captured in a single morning as a series of unedited takes of her latest compositions. The CD, titled *Eparadesi Nkosi Uzube Nam*, is a beautifully recorded document of one of South Africa's great performers. Derek Gripper and Uddai Mazumdar's recording re-invents Gripper's unique New Cape classical folk guitar compositions by incorporating some of the most virtuosic tabla playing Capetonians are likely to hear in many a year.

>>The Forge, 12 Windsor Road Kalk Bay, 8pm. Entrance is R70. Seating is limited. Booking is essential.

African music as well as Scandinavian folk song now" says songbird Melanie Scholtz. Evolving as an artist is one thing, but in an age where band consciousness is king, one wonders whether Scholtz isn't slightly worried that an Afro-Scandinavian folk tip might alienate the urban jazz audience she's worked so hard to develop over the past decade. "Jazz is a conversation" she replies, "in any conversation there's someone talking, listening and responding." Catch her with her new band Love Apples, Gorm Helfjord, Andrew Lilley, Charles Lazar and Jonathan Sweetman and guest, Norwegian saxophonist Frode Nymo. >>DSG Hall, Grahamstown, June 25, 5pm. Entrance is R65 to R70. Book at Computicket.

■ **The Paris/Jo'burg Project** is a trans-continental encounter between avant-garde South African bass master Carlo Mombelli and iconoclastic French percussionist and composer Braka, the once off concert channels the compositional methodology of American saxophonist Ornette Coleman's "harmolodic" double quartet and South African pianist Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath to fuse the lyrical and melancholic triple time of Valse Musette and the luminous quadruple time of South African jazz. The French quartet of Lucia Recio, Nicolas Stephan, Daniel Malavergne and Braka have rearranged vintage Sophiatown jazz from the 1950s and 1960s. Likewise, Siya Makuzeni, Marcus Wyatt, Carlo Mombelli Justin Badenhorst have rearranged several Parisian standard pieces.

>>DSG Hall, June 28, 7.30pm. Entrance is R65 to R70.

Compiled by Miles Kcylcock

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and mais, but I am still unsure, aware that it was white people who wrote the memo. It may not be a bad thing, but it's a thing nonetheless.

The reason I ended up there in the first place was because I feel as though I don't live as much as I exist. I needed to get into the car for pleasure and not necessity, because the to-do lists that govern my existence have left me bored and boring. I wanted to inject a little old-school pleasure into my existence – a little analogue to my digital.

Not far from the sculpture park is the downtrodden township of Diepsloot, which is a perfect example of the enormous fissure between those who live and those who exist. Driving through there on the way back to Jo'burg, I found myself thinking: "I wish more black people could live more."

I recall a Sunday morning, a few months ago, when a cashier at a supermarket scanned and packed a box of croissants that were part of my groceries and asked: "What do these things taste like?" I was heartbroken that she had worked there for so long and never tasted them. I gave her one and had asked why she'd never tried them. Her shyly given answer was: "Because these expensive things are for white people".

This isn't about one race being wealthier than the other, but about the limitations that poverty and lack of exposure inflict on people's minds. But life, as it happens, has its own small justices. The person who talked us through each artwork and told of the history of the Nirox Sculpture Park with admirable knowledge was a young black female curator-in-training who gently insisted I see a new work by conceptual artist Willem Boshoff. This simple yet poignant sculpture depicts the days that some prominent struggle heroes spent in prison during apartheid.

Neat lacerations, etched into slabs of stone, represent thousands of days spent resisting a terrible system. They are a reminder of the resilience one needs if one is going to make a move towards improving the lot of the underdog.

## Improjazz,n° 172, 26 Décembre 2010

Alors que le concert d'Aulnay consistait plutôt en l'alternance équilibrée de morceaux de *Township Jazz* et de musette, celui d'Épinay fut plus musette que *Township Jazz*. Et ce, malgré le tout premier morceau joué à Épinay (*Scullery Musette Department*). Ce titre provient de *Scullery Department*, écrit par Kippie Moeketsi et d'un air de musette. Début 2010, à la fin du concert de Cape Town, Marcus m'avait répondu que ce morceau était extrêmement difficile à mon souhait d'assister à un éventuel concert où il ne jouerait que des standards de jazz sud-africain. Je fus en partie comblé lors de ces deux concerts lorsque je reconnus ce titre.



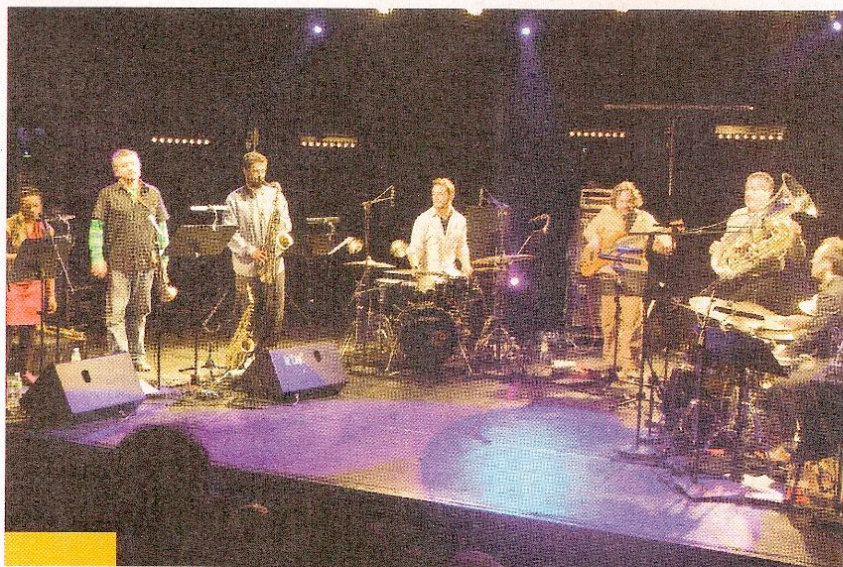
Panopie de bugle, flûtes et trompette appartenant à Marcus Wyatt © Veit ARLT

J'attends avec impatience les nouvelles expériences de Marcus Wyatt à partir de 2011. Lors du dernier concert, il m'a indiqué qu'il était question qu'il rejoigne à Bâle...

Olivier LEDURE  
Dimanche 26 décembre 2010.



## TÊTES D'AFFICHE



PARIS-JOBURG  
(valse africaine)  
le 12 novembre à  
Epinay-sur-Seine.

## LES COULEURS DE L'AFRIQUE NOMADE

**MUSIQUE. 25 CONCERTS  
À TRAVERS LA SEINE-SAINT-DENIS :  
LA 22<sup>e</sup> ÉDITION DU FESTIVAL  
AFRICOLOR SE VEUT LE  
RENDEZ-VOUS DES « ITINÉRANCES »**

**V**ingt-cinq concerts déroulés sur un mois dans plus d'une vingtaine de communes de Seine-Saint-Denis ainsi qu'à Achères (78) et Bonneuil-sur-Marne (94) : Africolor version 2010 affiche son dynamisme créateur. Lancé

en 1989 au Théâtre Gérard-Philipe de Saint-Denis, le festival est progressivement devenu itinérant. Une option porteuse à laquelle l'édition 2010, intitulée Itinérances, fait directement référence. Au départ, Philippe Conrath, le directeur de la manifestation, entendait seulement préciser que la volonté de changer de ville à chaque concert, de valser d'un

style à l'autre à chaque étape, constituait la richesse d'Africolor. Et puis l'actualité politique s'est chargée de donner un nouvel écho à la thématique choisie : « *Le mot "itinérances" permet de confirmer que la rencontre et le croisement des énergies musicales demeurent notre force face à ceux qui n'ont de cesse de figer notre identité, d'exclure l'autre et de nous enfermer dans des frontières fortresses* », affirme-t-il avec force.

**Un dialogue musical novateur**

L'édition 2010 porte haut et fort la reven-

dication de l'homme-orchestre du festival, tant les sonorités y prennent une multitude de visages. Des artistes reconnus par leur communauté côtoient les jeunes espoirs de la création africaine contemporaine, les projets inédits croisent les esthétiques musicales, musiciens occidentaux et africains s'unissent pour un dialogue musical novateur. Au menu cette année : le maloya de Danyèl Waro, les Sénégalais Omar Pène et Daara J Family, le cosmopolite Lokua Kanza, le jazz slamé de Vincent Courtois et Ze

Jam, l'éthioproove de Mahmoud Ahmed, l'hommage à Slimane Azem par Takfarinas, la griotte de Bamako Adja Soumano, la fougue guinéenne des Espoirs de Coronhie, l'hommage à Alain Peters de l'amicale Ma-Zo (Moriarty et Marjolaine Babysidecar), la transe des chasseurs du Mali ou des gnawas d'Essaouira, le jazz contemporain du Bruit du [sign] et le danseur éthiopien Melaku Belay, le groupe occitan Lo Cór de la Plana et les musiciens d'El Maya el Assila (Algérie du Sud), Michel Godard avec le flûtiste Jean-Luc Thomas et Yacouba Moumouni du Niger, ou encore le blues de Bethany & Rufus. Pour Philippe Conrath, nul doute que ce métissage musical en perpétuel nomadisme permettra de « *réaffirmer, face aux dérives politiques vers la déchéance et l'expulsion, quelques principes de remue-ménages sonore, posant l'errance et le nomadisme comme un droit fondamental* ».

Letizia Dannery  
12 novembre au 24 décembre.  
[www.africolor.com](http://www.africolor.com)