

Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle in Maputo

Phillip Gossett, the American musicologist and authority on Rossini wrote about the composer: " no composer in the first half of the 19th century enjoyed the measure of prestige, wealth, popular acclaim or artistic influence that belonged to Rossini. His contemporaries recognised him as the greatest Italian composer of his time." His achievements in opera caused the work of his predecessors to be forgotten, his contemporaries, Bellini and Donizetti, worked under his shadow, and even Beethoven, piqued by his international recognition, resorted to snide remarks about him.

By the age of 37 he had written over 40 operas, but, in 1829, after completing Guillaume Tell, he retired to live in Italy, but suffered prolonged and painful illness there (mainly in Bologna, where he advised at the Liceo Musicale and in Florence).

He composed hardly at all during this period, but he went back to Paris in 1855. Here his health and humour returned, together with his urge to compose, and he wrote over 150 piano pieces, songs, small ensembles, including the graceful and economical Petite Messe Solennelle (1863). These works were only performed at his salon, for private audiences, which included most of the great artistic and public figures in Paris at the time. Rossini refused to have them published. He referred to them as Péchés de vieillesse ('sins of old age').

On first hearing the Petite Messe Solennelle, the listener is tempted to adapt a remark attributed to Napoleon III and declare that the piece is neither little, solemn nor especially liturgical in spirit. Even Rossini's Don Camilloesque inscription would suggest that he himself inclined to such a view: "Good God – behold completed this poor little Mass – is it indeed music for the blest 'musique Sacrée' that I have just written, or just some blessed musicv 'Sacrée musique'? Thou knowest well, I was born for comic opera. A little science, a little heart, that is all.

This evening is offering a rare occasion for lovers of music and cultural events to enjoy a unique evening of Italian classical music repertoire. Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* were never performed in Mozambique. The project stands on a regional collaboration between artist from South Africa and Mozambique, with planed concerts in Maputo.

A collaboration between South African & Mozambican artists

The vocalists, 18 members of the choir VOCALIS from Mozambique and four soloists will present the entire oeuvre, accompanied by piano and harmonium.

Mozambican Artists

- Stella Mendonça - Soprano
- Sonia Mocumbi - Alto
- Choir *VOCALIS*
- Geoffrey Gallagher - harmonium

South Africans Artists

- Herman Theron - tenor
- Otto Maidu - bass
- Susan Steenkamp-Swanepoel - piano
- Eddie Clayton - conductor



The choir VOCALIS with the Swiss ambassador Theresa Adam & husband



Stella Mendonça is Mozambique's pioneer opera singer and first lady of song. She was graduating from Conservatoire National Supérieur de musique et danse in Paris and Lyon. She has been working as an independent artist, focusing on recitals with Italian belcanto repertoire and oratorios in the US, Europe and Africa. She teaches voice to young talents in her own opera studio belcanto in Berne and is founder of the project MeetingCultures together with Maria João Pires, educating and promoting young talents in the field of music and art in Africa. In 2002, she was the producer and art director of Mozambique's first opera production (Carmen by Bizet), performing the main role.

As from 2003, Stella has been focusing on recitals with Italian belcanto repertoire and oratorios in the USA, Europe and Africa.

She is the co-initiator of the African opera project *Terra Sonâmbula* (www.TerraSonambula.com), together with the writers Mia Couto and Henning Mankell.

After her return to Mozambique in 2013, she was opening the music school *MUSIARTE*, a joint project between SONÇA international and Universidade Pedagógica with the mission to provide music education for talents as from early age. www.SONCAinternational.org/MUSIARTE

The choir ensemble *VOCALIS* founded in 2012, was preparing this exciting Rossini oeuvre in the past months under the personal guidance of the founder Stella Mendonça. *VOCALIS* is proudly presenting its repertoire for the first time to a larger public audience within this project.



Sonia Mocumbi studied voice and piano in Switzerland, with the pianist Mac Pantillon and received her diploma of voice with the mezzo-soprano Lise Hoffman-André, followed with master classes with Maestro Denis Hall and Stella Mendonça the opera studio Belcanto in Berne. She participated in various concerts as a soloist in Switzerland, France, the United States, Spain, South Africa and Mozambique.

Herman Theron is one of the leading classical singers and stage performers in South Africa and was trained by one of the best tenors that ever graced the world's opera stages; the Swedo-Russian tenor, Nicolai Gedda. Herman is being mentored by one of the most successful opera spearheads in the world right now, Yves Senn of L'Avant Scène Opéra from Switzerland. It is through that partnership that they founded Reakopana Opera in 2011. Up to date he produced and staged *Candide* (Leonard Bernstein) in South Africa and Switzerland, as well as a Rossini opera – *L'Occasione fa il Ladro*, including Voice Master Classes. The casts and stage direction were from Switzerland, France, South Africa, Colombia and Italy. Herman's focus is to develop young talent and empower them to participate in a vibrant industry and become productive contributors to society as artists and to prepare the next generation of performers right now. Herman has performed extensively in South Africa, Switzerland, as well as France and Italy.





Otto Maudi performed Telemann's Ich Will Den Kreuzweg Gerne Gehen and Brahms's Requiem in Dallas, Texas. Charles Gounod's Messe Solenne, Mozart's Requiem and Rossini's Stabat Mater with the Roodepoort Pro Musica Opera Company under the direction of Weiss Dubbel.

Mr. Maudi performed Verdi's Requiem with the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra and the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra. Beethoven Symphony No. 9 with Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra and the KwaZulu Natal Philharmonic Orchestra. Mozart C minor with the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra. Rossini Petite Messe Solenne in Port Elizabeth. Mr. Maudi continued to perform Handel Messiah with the Pretoria Orchestra. He also performed Phillip Miller's Rewind: Cantata and

Bongani Ndodana-Breen's Credo.

Susan Steenkamp-Swanepoel studied for five years at the Conservatoire for Music in Pretoria. She then furthered her studies at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Cologne. She achieved several diplomas in organ and piano as a concert pianist, teacher and accompanist for the above institution as well as UNISA.

She worked for 20 years at the Opera School, Technikon Pretoria. Susan is still the organist for her local church since 1977 and examiner for UNISA music exams since 1986. In 1990 Susan was appointed as Senior Repetiteur for the Opera Department at the State Theatre Pretoria.

In 2000, she joined The Black Tie Ensemble as coach and accompanist and as such, she travels everywhere with The Black Tie Ensemble. She accompanied The Black Tie Ensemble members in Austria and in China, where they performed several concerts in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai at the invitation of the Department of Foreign Affairs and in Japan at the invitation of the Department of Arts and Culture to perform at the Aichi World Expo as well as at the Freedom Day Celebrations in Tokyo.

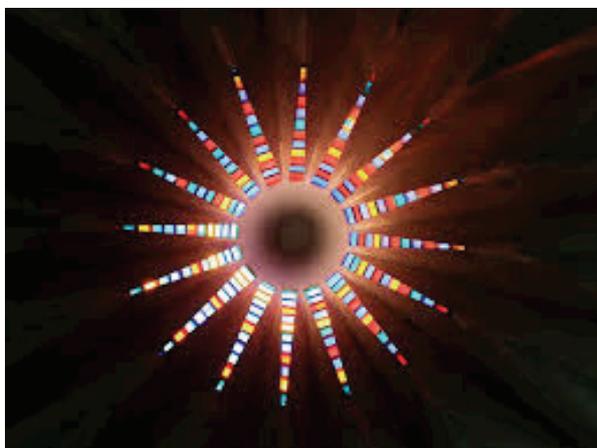
Susan has worked closely with numerous famous conductors and accompanied well-known classical singers at various prestigious occasions and works with Stella Mendonça for many years.



Illumination of POLANA church

Our light designers plan to illuminate this iconic church, inside as well as outside.

The inside illumination of the church will be entirely created through the illumination of the glass windows and present the church in a light never seen before.



Program

La Petite Messe Solennelle, Gioachino Rossini, December 6, 2014 19:00

**Stella Mendonça, Soprano
Sonia Mocumbi, Alto
Susanna Swanepoel, Piano
Eddie Clayton, Conductor**

**Herman Theron, Tenor
Otto Maldi, Bass Baritone
Geoffrey Gallagher, Harmonium
VOCALIS, Choral**

Part I

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| 1 | Kyrie - Christe | Soloists and Chorus |
| 2 | Gloria - Laudamus | Soloists and Chorus |
| 4 | Gratias | Terzetto – Alto, Tenor & Bass |
| 5 | Domine Deus | Solo - Tenor |
| 6 | Qui Tollis | Duet – Soprano & Alto |
| 7 | Quoniam | Solo - Bass |
| 8 | Cum Sancto Spiritu | Soloists & Chorus |

Part II

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| 9 | Credo | Soloists & Chorus |
| 10 | Crucifixus | Solo – Soprano |
| 11 | Et resurrexit | Soloists & Chorus |
| 12 | Preludio religioso | Harmonium and piano |
| 13 | Sanctus | Solo & Chorus |
| 14 | Agnus Dei | Alto solo & Chorus |

01h45