

update on composer-in-residence activities, february/march 2015

revolting music

i received an invitation from the goethe institut, brazil, to curate an intervention to interrogate the place of protest music and art in the global south in the 21st century as part of a conference the goethe institut is hosting this year called 'episodes of the south'.

<http://www.goethe.de/ins/br/lp/kul/dub/med/eps/pt13957917.htm>

my work in response to this invitation comes directly out of on-going research into the history of protest music in south africa and tracking how this type of aesthetic activism has been either affected or transformed in south africa since the advent of democracy in 1994.

In preparation for launching our interventionist project in sao paulo in june 2015, i travelled to brazil and uruguay in february and march so i could begin to understand the parallels that exist between communities of artists and their song activism in these two south american countries and those in south africa.

brazil has the dubious honour of being the country with world's largest black population outside africa, yet is accused by many locally and abroad for its perceived denialism concerning racism.

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/24/opinion/vanessa-barbara-in-denial-over-racism-in-brazil.html?ref=international&_r=0

until as recently as march 1st, 2015, uruguay was known world-wide as the country with a beetle-driving, hitchhiker-lifting activist president who deftly refused to alienate himself from his working-class roots and who's radical views on economic growth included turning his country into the first 21st century state dealer-of-marijuana.

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/03/01/world/americas/ap-lt-uruguay-president.html>

today both these south american countries continue to hold firmly onto forms of protest music-making that remain deeply rooted in african aesthetics, having both been recipients of africans pilfered and dislocated forcefully during the trans-atlantic slave trade.

my journey there in february and march became a very fruitful reconnaissance mission and has resulted in my meeting scores of musicians, painters, architects, teachers and traders who i will be enlisting to help enliven the streets of sao paulo during the week of June 7th to 14, 2015 with stories, music, food and mass installations.

we hope this intervention, entitled "massa revoltante" ("a revolting mass"), will help engender greater collaboration between countries in south america and south africa on the theme of aesthetics in politics.

on madness

our production entitled “madness - a preliminary sketch” was programmed as the opening work at the very popular “infecting the city” arts festival in cape town this year.

following a week of very intense rehearsals in two school halls in khayelitsha during the first week of march, we performed to capacity audiences on march 9th and 10th at the historic groote kerk in church square, cape town (the legendary burial ground of cape colony founding govenor, simon van de stel).

the production design sought to elaborate on my on-going research into ways of introducing the premise for black aesthetics in genre of opera. mounting the production therefore offered an ideal opportunity to further my understanding of the ways in which opera might be a form of political posturing and subversion after taking on african forms of expression inspired by locating it within a community like khayelitsha. please find a copy of the programme note here:

<http://infectingthecity.com/2015/artwork/madness-a-preliminary-sketch>

attached are images and brief (and somewhat bizarre) brief captions off a blog by ashram hendricks:

<http://ashrafhendricks.com/blog/infecting-the-city-2015/>

INFECTING THE CITY 2015

For the uninitiated, Infecting the City (ITC) is an annual public arts festival held in the heart of Cape Town city. The aim of the festival is to bring performance art, galleries, music and cinema into the open visual space of the business district... for free. The very first ITC started way back in 2008 but this would be my first time attending.



A woman plays a violin during her performance known as “Madness – A Preliminary Sketch” in Grootte Kerk, Cape Town. “Madness” is a multi-media work including a choir, live music ensemble & animated visuals.



A man plays piano during a performance known as “Madness – A Preliminary Sketch” in Grootte Kerk, Cape Town.



A young woman from the choir performs during a performance known as “Madness – A Preliminary Sketch” in Grootte Kerk, Cape Town.



Overview of the performance known as “Madness – A Preliminary Sketch” in Grootte Kerk during the annual Infecting the City. This event drew over 150 people who all attended for free.

neo muyanga, wiser composer-in-residence, march 2015