

"The pleasure of the true dreamer does not lie in the substance of the dream, but in this: that there things happen without any interference from his side, and altogether outside his control. Great landscapes create themselves, long splendid views, rich and delicate colors, roads, houses, which he has never seen or heard of..."  
(Karen Blixen, "Out of Africa")

## NEW SOUNDS AND PERFUMES OF AFRICA

### project by Silvia Belfiore

African music plays a particularly important role; the interest that it can arouse is extraordinary; the far-reaching attention for music cultivated in the Africa of today is remarkable, like the pattern in light, true dichotomies between different parts of the continent, between country and city, between collective and individual sense, between tradition and modernity, between authenticity and irrelevance.

African music is characterized above all by never-ending metric mixtures, exceptionally complex syncopation and rhythmic counterpoints: clarity and transparency are necessary for independence of lines.

***"Finding and internalizing the underlying pulse,...and drilling the various lines, first in small increments, then as whole musical ideas – both separately and in combination – until the beauty of the clear, Contrapuntal textures is achieved. No small feat, this requires exceptional commitment."***  
(Mark Boozer, Atlanta - Georgia)

***"While works of African pianism use a lot of rhythmic repetition and overlapping cross-rhythms, I find the hardest challenge is bringing out the dominant voice by giving it more stress and rhythmic independence. I find that this process of creating textural hierarchies within the voices of a piece is different from the textures of most Western piano compositions."*** (Darryl Hollister, Boston - Massachusetts)

***"African piano pieces make a different use of the division of beats. In classical music beats are the grand symbol of rhythmic organization, but African music manages to adapt to conventional figurations of beat with difficulty."*** (William Chapman Nyaho, Waterville - Maine)

## My Commitment to African Music

My interest in today's classical music began in the Eighties when I came into contact with the world of composers; after winning a scholarship I attended the famous "Ferienkurse für neue Musik" in Darmstadt (1986, 1990, 1992). Since then, I have focused my attention on this kind of music and in the 500 concerts I have taken part in, I have often included music by living composers of the historic 1900s. Moreover, since 1998 I have been the artistic director of "Omaggio a ..." (Tribute to...), the international festival of modern music in Acqui Terme (Italy). In addition, various composers have dedicated their works to me and I have presented their first performances.

From here on, my curiosity for the African continent, better expressed as my interest in the classical music in Africa, developed with the question: is there particular regard, an interest, is there activity? My discovery was thrilling! The wide-range attention to classical music in today's Africa is amazing. The composers place their tradition directly on the pentagram. For example, the creativity of Euba derives from the influence of both African and western music cultures and his compositions blend the two elements. I often add music by Stefans Grové (born in 1922 in Bethlehem, Orange Free State, South Africa) to my concerts as it offers an interesting example of 'white African' culture. One of the first African composers to take up cultivated music and put traditional music on the pentagram was Kwabena Nketia: he was for Africa what Bartók was for the music of the western world. His concept of tempo and rhythm consistent with the patterns of popular music from Ghana and other African countries was revolutionary and became the foundation for research and study throughout the world. Popular African music often makes use of conditions to be described: ceremonies, moments of life and history. For example, "Nonyana" (The Ceremonial Dancer) is an energetic figure wrapped in a cloak of dark bark wearing a hairdressing topped with a scarlet bean and ostrich feathers: the curious creature portrayed is the center of the great secret *domba* - the ceremonial dance of the female circumcision school Venda. In Onovwerosuoke's "Studies in African Rhythms" every name is depicted by a dance. In 2012, I recorded a CD "Omaggio all'Africa" with works by: Grové, Onovwerosuoke, Cage, Rahim. Nketia, Uzoigwe.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOIZmpn6v3g>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwJwS8q3LGs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpqSCe-MDUE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKa6-nm5qzU>

**This all-involving project is an unending search that captivates progressively stimulating the most diverse creativity. Up to now I have performed classical African Music in Ethiopia, Germany, Italy, Kenya, Peru, Tanzania, Togo, South Africa, United Kingdom, Ivory Coast, and United States. Currently, I'm a consultant for the Federation Africaine de Musique Chorale.**

### About me

I graduated in piano from the Conservatory of Alessandria with Massimo Paderni. I have a degree with maximum marks in Music from the University of Bologna followed by various courses of specialization with Szidon, Kontarsky, Micault, Damerini, Masi, Gottlieb, Celibidache and Rattalino. After winning a scholarship I participated in "Ferienkurse für neue Musik" in Darmstadt in 1986, 1990 and 1992. Actually, in Paris, I'm involved in a Master in the University Paris8 (Music Department) with a thesis: *Écriture et oralité dans la musique africaine actuelle. Compositeurs contemporains de l'Afrique sub-saharienne du nord-ouest*. I recorded for the state television in Moldavia, Globo television in Brazil, Radio Bavarese and RaiRadio 3. I recorded seven CDs as a piano soloist and in chamber formation with a classical and contemporary repertory. Composers such as Bortolotti, Brizzi, Cisternino, Clementi and Grové as well as Kurshner, Lohse, Vieru, Sadoh, and Onovwerosuoke have dedicated their works to me. I am also involved in research and census taking of musical assets for the "Istituto per i beni musicali in Piemonte". I teach piano at the Conservatory 'Vittadini' in Pavia as well as hold workshops and masterclasses at various institutes, music schools and universities in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Togo and California. For my interest in the most varied forms of expression and artistic collaboration, I have had more or less 500 concerts as a soloist and in chamber formation in Brazil, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Italy, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mexico, Moldavia, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Tanzania, Togo, United Kingdom, and United States. Since 1998 I have been the artistic director of "Omaggio a..." an international festival of contemporary music in Acqui Terme (AL).

[www.silviabelfiore.it](http://www.silviabelfiore.it)

# solo piano repertory

## SILVIA BELFIORE

### African composers

ANDRE VINDU BANGAMBULA (Congo) LULLABY  
(1953-)

MICHAEL BLAKE (South Africa)  
(1951-)

FRENCH SUITE (1994) - 11'  
First Dance  
Second Dance

AKIN EUBA (Nigeria)  
(1935-)

THEMES FROM CHAKA 1 (1996) - 9'

STEFANS GROVE' (South Africa)  
(1922-2014)

IMAGES FROM AFRICA (1999): - 6'  
n. 3 Invocation of the Water Spirits  
n. 4 Lamenting Birds

NONYANA (THE CEREMONIAL DANCER) (1994) - 5'

ZAUBERHAFTE MUSIK (2010) - 20' \*

KWABENA NKETIA (Ghana)  
(1921-)

BUILSA WORK SONG (1948) - 2'  
DAGARTI WORK SONG (1967) - 2'  
VOLTA FANTASY (1967) - 4'

PAUL OGUNBOYE (Nigeria)  
(1979 -)

EKITISONIC (2008) - 4'

NKEIRU OKOYE (Nigeria/USA)  
(1972-)

AFRICAN SKETCHES: Dancing Barefoot in the Rain - 3'

FRED ONOVWERSUOKE (Ghana)  
(1960-)

STUDIES IN AFRICAN RHYTHMS (1984-2008): - 12'  
n. 1 Okoye  
n. 4 Tunis  
n. 5 Jali  
n. 6 Iroro  
n. 7 Herero Wedding Dance  
n. 20 Miner's Chorus \*

GAMAL ABDEL RAHIM (Egypt)  
(1924-1988)

LAMENT (1974) - 8'

GODWIN SADOH (Nigeria)  
(1965-)

THREE DANCES (1994-2001): - 10'  
n. 1 AtilogwuDance  
n. 2 Beggar's Chant  
n. 3 Yungbayungba

3 MOONLIGHT DANCES FOR PIANO (1984-1993) - 9' \*

JOSHUA UZOIGWE (Nigeria)  
(1946-2005)

TAKLING DRUMS: n. 2 Ukom - 7'

GIRMA YIFRASHEWA (Ethiopia)  
(1967-)

SEMEMEN (2005) - 10'  
THE SHEPHERD WITH THE FLUTE Prelude no. 1 (1998) - 6'

\* *pieces dedicated to Silvia Belfiore*

## Related pieces

JOHN CAGE (USA) (1912-1992)	Mysterious adventure (1945) for prepared piano
CLAUDE DEBUSSY (France) (1862-1918)	Le petite nègre (1909)
LOUIS MOREAU GOTTSCHALK (USA) (1829-1869)	Bamboula op. 2 (danse des nègres) (1844-45) Le bananier op. 5 (chanson nègre) (1846)
SCOTT JOPLIN (USA) (1896-1917)	Bethena, a concert waltz (1905)
DARIUS MILHAUD (France) (1892-1974)	Saudades do Brasil op. 67 (1920)
ALBERTO MOZZATI (Italy) (1917-1982)	Little Harlem's Boy - 1'
CYRIL SCOTT (Regno Unito) (1879-1970)	Dance nègre (1908)
GIOVANNI SOLLIMA (Italy) (1962-)	Bêri (2002) - 7'
HECTOR VILLA-LOBOS (Brasil) (1887-1959)	African Folk Dances op. 57 (1914-15) - 11' (n. 1 op. 47: Rags/Farrapos - n. 2 op. 57 Kankukus - n. 3 op. 65 Kankikis)

*"The singular beauty of African melody lies in its capacity to raise the spirit even when it tells a sad story. You can be poor, unemployed, you can live in a rickety hut, and yet that melody inspires you with hope". (Nelson Mandela, "Long Walk to Freedom", 1994 / Year in which Mandela became the first President of the free and multi-ethnic South Africa)*

