



DEREK GRIPPER



Derek Gripper is a Classically trained contemporary guitarist and composer, who has performed in Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Brazil, India, Namibia and all over South Africa.

Derek began his formal musical training on the violin at the age of six. After studying classical music for the next thirteen years, he began to look further afield for musical inspiration. This search took him to India where he studied South Indian Carnatic music. On his return to South Africa he decided to focus on the guitar, trying to find a new direction for the instrument. He was attracted to the use of multiple layers in the music of Oliver Messiaen, the African-influenced structures of Steve Reich, as well as to guitar arrangements of the music of J.S.Bach.

It was when he met up with Cape Jazz trumpeter Alex van Heerden that he realised how his previous studies could contribute to the stylistic development of a music style unique to the Western Cape. The two musicians' first recording in 2002, *Sagtevlei*, laid the groundwork for an entirely new Cape music, a music hailed by the press as "avant-goema." Here the compositional techniques of contemporary classical music were used to support the melodic and improvisational nature of Goema, the carnival music of Cape Town. This recording laid the groundwork for his first solo album, *Blomdoorns*, a series of compositions on an experimental eight-string guitar. Here the rhythms he had heard in India were fused with Cape style melodies and cyclical motives, in a simplified guitar language that was entirely unique yet unmistakably influenced by the Cape's rich and diverse musical history.

Over the next few years he further developed this musical language, switching to the traditional six-string guitar in 2004. After experimenting once more with the possibilities of classical music, he settled into performing only this New Cape music, using a guitar by the great German Luthier Hermann Hauser III. The 2008 CD "Ayo" documents the first series of compositions for this instrument, exhibiting the influence of musicians such as Brazil's Egberto Gismonti and Mali's Toumani Diabate.

It could be said that the music that Gripper creates is South Africa's answer to musicians such as Gismonti and Heitor Villa Lobos: classical trained musicians from the "South" who have used their skills to develop new directions in the music of their home countries. It is also interesting to note that many of the European or

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American composers that he was initially attracted to were profoundly influenced by African music, using its complex cyclical structures and collectivity as the basis for new movements in twentieth century music.

Discography

- Sagtevrei 2002 (open record)
- Blomdoorns 2003 (open record)
- Ayo 2008
- Songs for the Swans Left Behind 2008 (pfeffermintzgreen) vinyl
- Alex 2009
- Blomdoorns remaster 2009
- Sagtevrei remaster 2009