

MEKLIT HADERO

THIS WAS MADE HERE: A DIASPORIC ODYSSEY



MAY
19–21 2016
YBCA FORUM

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#MEKLIT

YERBA BUENA
CENTER FOR
THE ARTS

WELCOME TO YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS



Our organization was founded in 1993 as a citizen institution that would be home to the diverse local arts community while serving to connect the Bay Area to the world. YBCA's mission is to generate culture that moves people. We believe that culture—a collection of art, traditions, values, human experiences, and stories—is what enables us to act with imagination and creativity, to act socially, politically, and with conviction. Culture instigates change in the world.

We believe that more and different kinds of people need to be defining culture today and that more people need to have access to cultural experiences that are relevant to their lives and their communities. We need new definitions and new experiences that bring people together regardless of their differences in order to make the inclusive and equitable culture we need today. We believe that the arts should be on the front line of change and that cultural institutions exist to spur and support big societal movements. Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, we are committed to kindling inclusive culture that cultivates empathy, awakens personal and societal transformation, and reaches for a world fueled by inspiration. The need has never been stronger than now, and there is no better place than YBCA to answer the call. We are so glad that you are here. We are grateful for your cultural participation, and we hope you will come back and enjoy all that YBCA has to offer.

Warmly,

DEBORAH CULLINAN
CEO of YERBA BUENA
CENTER FOR THE ARTS



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YBCA Presents



This Was Made Here is made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Photo by Ibra Ake

Meklit Hadero, *Vocal, guitar, thumb piano, and krar*
Sam Bevan, *upright and electric bass*
Marco Peris Coppola, *tupan/davul drum and percussion*
Colin Douglas, *drum kit*
Henry Hung, *trumpet*
Geechi Taylor, *trumpet*
Alan Williams, *trombone*
Howard Wiley, *saxophone*
Astu, *vocals*
Tsedi, *vocals*

A NOTE FROM THE CURATORS

MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH
CHIEF OF PROGRAM AND PEDAGOGY



CHINAKA HODGE
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF PROGRAM
AND PEDAGOGY



Can we design FREEDOM?
What does EQUITY look
like? Why CITIZENSHIP?
YBCA is spotlighting artists
whose work responds
to or complicates these
questions.

Meklit's ethio-jazz piece, inspired by music-centered migrations, responds deftly to all three provocations. *This Was Made Here* has freedom, equity, and citizenship at its core. It asks what jazz becomes when it leaves North America, crosses seas and land to East Africa, and returns.

As curators, we echo these questions with more of our own: "Who gets to make the city?", "Who gets to make the music?", and maybe most controversially, "Who gets to view the music?" If jazz is a system built on call and response, what happens to the music if there's a disruption to feedback? Fewer artists can afford to live or work in San Francisco and Black audiences dwindle in an over-priced city. Throughout the history of African diaspora, music has been our respite, our safe space, our primary means of historicizing and agitating. It is now, and has always been, a dangerous act to be vocal and African. It is now, and has always been, an overtly political act to appreciate jazz. It is imperative that YBCA holds up this unique and necessary voice, right now.

Meklit pieces together what has been dismembered. She, African and American; Habesha and Californian. She, jazz and rock. She, soul and rap. Her music isn't simply multiple sounds melded, but in fact, the accurate cataloging of varied experiences housed in one body, one mouth, one sheet of music. It's impossible to speak of Meklit's music without also saying the sounds to which it responds. So we say *Mulatu*, we say *Nina*, we say *Sade*. Listen to Meklit and hear her point us towards *Florence* and machines, *The Weeknd* and his croons, and all manners of *Joni* and her California. Her lyrics establish a poetic bloodline; as much *Dunbar* as they are *Dylan*, as much *Angelou* as *Ai*, and equal parts *Bukowski* and *Brooks*.

It is this skilled binding that attracts us to Meklit – she pieces together what seems not to match. We welcome Meklit, who works as a prism does, employing her unique perspective to blend and cast an array of breathtaking color. The reader hears her own joys, breakups, sorrows, and triumphs cloaked in lyricism.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Sonic lineage is winding. It curves through personal histories, shapes how we listen, embeds rhythm within us, and hooks melody into memory. It comes to us as folk music from our homelands, and from all the places we feel as home, far-flung though those distances may be.

In mid-2011, my band and I performed shows across Ethiopia. One evening I saw Dr. Mulatu Astatke, the Godfather of Ethio-jazz, in our Addis Ababa audience. We were over the moon at his presence. A legend was among us! Post-performance, he took me aside and asked an unexpected question:

Why were we playing the music in exactly the same way it had been played forty years ago?

With a single sentence, he stopped me cold.

One might have expected a legend to appreciate a tribute. But for him, it wasn't only about enjoyment. It was also about intention. Yes, he had liked the show, but he was eager for something bigger-picture. Dr. Mulatu had come up as a jazz musician in 1950s and 1960s New York, a time when American jazz was rapidly expanding outward, shape shifting,

defining and redefining itself. He was carrying that spirit as much as he was carrying the spirit of highland pentatonic melodies. In that moment, standing next to the emptied-out theater, he both took me to task and tasked me. He told me I had to find something to contribute to this music, that I would have to experiment, maybe fail a few times, and find a way through.

These songs are my attempt to grapple with that tasking. Slowly a process emerged, and I followed the sound down long corridors and into wide-open spaces made for dancing. The grappling was done with love, excitement, and the expectation that it was actually possible to create a music both familiar and unfamiliar to those who love Ethio-jazz, and Joni Mitchell, and Nina Simone.

I was born in Addis Ababa, and grew up in Brooklyn, Florida, and Iowa. It was here in the San Francisco Bay Area where I was raised artistically. All my sonic lineages exist in this music. Yet through these sounds, I also hope to reflect something deeply American. Diasporas of all kinds are growing; culture and music define and redefine themselves with every movement of people. This was made here.



Photo by Camille Seaman

ARTIST PROFILES



Photo by Rus Anson

MEKLIT HADERO

Vocal, guitar, thumb piano, and krar

Meklit's music is imbued with poetry and multiplicity, from the hybrid sounds of the tizita (haunting and nostalgic music) of her Ethiopian heritage to the annals of jazz, folk songs, hip-hop, and art rock. Listening to Meklit transports us beyond the confines of the national space of Africa or America, inspiring us to bridge frontiers between languages, tribes, and disciplines. Her songs celebrate the newness of life and the hyphens that bring us together.

Meklit has released five studio albums, and is currently signed to Six Degrees Records. She is a TED senior fellow, and has been an artist in residence at New York University, Purdue University, the University of Missouri, and more. She has also held residencies at arts institutions such as the de Young Museum in San Francisco. She was the curator of *Resonate*, a performance series at the Atrium at Lincoln Center in New York, she is a former codirector of the Red Poppy Art House in San Francisco, and she currently serves on YBCA's board. In 2011 Meklit cofounded the Nile Project with the Egyptian ethnomusicologist Mina Girgis. Meklit has toured extensively across the United States, the UK, and east Africa, and has been commissioned to create new work by the MAP Fund, the San Francisco

Arts Commission, and the San Francisco Foundation. Meklit holds a BA from Yale University.

SAM BEVAN

Upright and electric bass

Since moving to San Francisco in 1999, Sam Bevan has established himself as one of the most versatile and creative bassists in the Bay Area. Bevan canvasses a large musical landscape where jazz, funk, R&B, folk, and Afro-Cuban disciplines joyously intermingle. His sound responds to the history of modern jazz, yet it's his composer's ear that informs his overall concept. Bevan explains, "Since I began my musical life as a pianist, including experiences composing and arranging for pop/rock, jazz, and salsa bands, I have gained a much broader sense of the role of the bass. I am very content providing support, as part of the rhythm section, as well as listening for appropriate moments to push the music into new territory. My goal is to introduce interpretations of the music that are interesting and creative without compromising the lead melodic instrument."

MARCO PERIS COPPOLA

Tupan/davul drum and percussion

Marco Peris Coppola is an Italian percussionist focused on the tupan/davul, an old-world drum found in countries as diverse as India, Bulgaria, Egypt, and Brazil. His musical trajectory is centered in Balkan sounds and rhythms, although his history includes years as a coleader of a samba troupe and a decade of playing brass music across Italy, Argentina, and the United States. As a cultural strategist and booker, he leads the beloved Bay Area powerhouse Inspector Gadjé Balkan Brass and is one of the forces behind the Kafana Balkan series, described by *SF Weekly* as "The best crazed Balkan Brass Band dance party."

COLIN DOUGLAS

Drum kit

The Grammy-nominated drummer, percussionist, and educator Colin Douglas was born in New York into a musical family. As the son of a music producer, he grew up experimenting with many different instruments and soon settled



Photo by Cody Pickens



Photo by Cody Pickens

on drums and percussion. He went on to study percussion at the Lawrence University Conservatory of Music and the Manhattan School of Music, where he worked extensively in both the classical percussion and jazz drum set programs. After college he became interested in the world of Latin percussion, studying in Cuba and the San Francisco Bay Area with many master percussionists. He has lived and played professionally in the Bay Area for sixteen years. Douglas has performed and recorded with a diverse group of musicians, ranging from Latin acts such as Jesus Diaz y su QBA, Ray Obiedo, and the Wayne Wallace Latin Jazz Quintet (with whom he received a Grammy nomination in 2013), to R&B and rock acts such as Donna Summer and Slash.

HENRY HUNG

Trumpet

Henry Hung is a Grammy-winning multi-instrumentalist, arranger, and composer who has toured throughout the United States, performing music spanning a spectrum of styles: pop music with David Byrne, the Decemberists, Thao Nguyen, TV on the Radio, Guster, Big Star, and Guard; jazz with the Woody Herman Orchestra, Stanley Clarke, and Jimmy Cobb; hip-hop with Deltron 3030 and Souls of Mischief; and world music with Quijeremá, Kotoja, and the Grammy-winning Pacific Mambo Orchestra. Locally he performs with many creative Bay Area groups, most notably his band the Klaxon Mutant Allstars and Emplifier. Hung has composed and arranged music for the documentary *Lids* and short films *Look Both Ways*, *Seduction*, and *Pick Me Up*. He has premiered new work with Hope Mohr Dance at ODC. For trivia aficionados, Hung also performs all of the brass instruments in the video game *Team Fortress 2* and the audio tour for The Alamo in Texas.

ALAN WILLIAMS

Trombone

Alan Williams plays the trombone. Sometimes loudly. Born in Buffalo, New York, and raised in Denver, Colorado, Williams has spent the past twenty years playing with a wide variety of artists, ranging from the country rockers Drive-

By Truckers to tap dancer Jason Samuels Smith to quirky indie-popsters CocoRosie and boogaloo pioneer Joe Bataan. He has a passionate sound rooted in tradition and influenced by such past and present masters as Dicky Wells, Lawrence Brown, Gary Valente, and Ray Anderson.

HOWARD WILEY

Saxophone

Howard Wiley is the type of person who exemplifies the word “character” from both sides of the spectrum—by having it, and by being one. Always willing to take the music or the conversation to the next level, it’s rare to end the music, or the conversation, without a smile on your face. Born in Berkeley, Wiley displayed the seeds of his musical talent at a young age and found himself playing in the most nurturing of all environments for young African American musicians: the church. Wiley’s music is a direct reflection of his youth, which gives his music simplicity, honesty, and integrity. He has developed into a complete artist in the sense that he possesses a great awareness of the past while he continues to make statements and ask questions about the future.

ASTU

Vocals

Astu is an Eritrean American vocalist and songwriter based in Oakland. Influenced by jazz, soul, gospel, and hip-hop, her voice and songs are reminiscent of the old days while staying true to the movements of her generation.

TSEDI

Vocals

Tsedi is a singer, songwriter, and DJ who currently resides in Oakland. As a first-generation Kenyan immigrant, migrating to the United States from Ethiopia, she embodies the nomadic lifestyle and identifies as a “third culture kid.” Tsedi’s musical approach is diverse and, much like her background, inspired by movement and the nuances of culture. Drawing from a variety of genres, including reggae, gospel, soul, afro-house, jazz, and hip-hop, she uses fusion to express her nomadic musical stories.



Photo by Ibra Acke

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Sam Bevan, my bass player of three years, who worked very closely with me on the arrangements of this music. And to my band, who spent six months developing these tunes and bring their full selves to every note and drumbeat. Also to Jorga Mesfin, Ethio-jazz saxophonist extraordinaire, who spent many hours schooling me while we were on the road with the Nile Project in 2015.

Thank you to YBCA, my artistic home, for believing in this work.

Thanks to the MAP Fund for their invaluable support in commissioning *This Was Made Here* in 2014.

Thanks to Six Degrees Records, who will be releasing this music to the world next year.

And finally, thanks to each of you for your presence, your open ears, and being a part of this debut. May the music fly!

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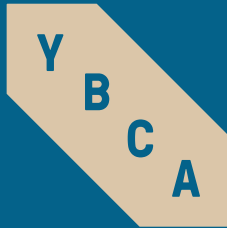
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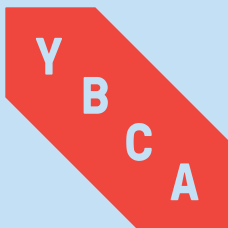
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