



Mac McKenzie & The Cape Town Goema Orchestra

“Goema Symphony No. 1” – Cape Town, August 2010

Gerard "Mac" McKenzie comes from a family closely linked to Goema. His father Sam McKenzie ("Mr. Mac") was an accomplished banjo player who coached Gympie Street's Cornwell Carnival Troupe during the 1950s. Mac's recording career began in 1986 as bassist, vocalist and composer for the highly original "Goema Rock" band The Genuines. The group recorded a groundbreaking debut album entitled *Goema* (as opposed to "Ghoema," which was felt to have a more traditional connotation). The album was published by Shifty Records, whose recording artists included Koos Kombuis and Johannes Kerkorrel, positioning The Genuines in the broader Voëlvry Movement. Their initial audience was the multicultural alternative Rock scene centred around Johannesburg's notorious Jamesons Club.

The Genuines recorded a second album with Shifty Records in 1987 entitled *Mr. Mac & The Genuines*. With less Rock grit, the album was a purer tribute to the group's Goema roots and featured Mac's father on banjo. At this moment in Cape music, it was extraordinary for a contemporary group to show interest in what was considered "old-fashioned" music. The Genuines toured Europe in the early 90s, recording a third album, *Chasing the Voodoo*, in Holland in 1991. The Genuines' final album, 1993's *Nights with the Cape Gypsies*, was produced by Cape Town's Mountain Records and saw the group move into a smoother Cape Jazz direction. Switching to guitar, Mac lead a modest ensemble entitled Namaqua in the late-90s and then returned with much success in 2003 with The Goema Captains of Cape Town, which saw him formulating "Penthouse Goema" arrangements characterised by a sophisticated and mellow Cool Jazz feel. In recent years, Mac has turned his attention to a more symphonic approach to Goema composition with an old-school preference for handwritten scores. His first "Classical Goema" showcase took place in September 2009 under the banner of his NPO The Cape Town Composers' Workshop (which provides free musical education) and featured the inimitable "F Major Goema." Since then, Mac has grown in confidence and recently completed the score for "Goema Symphony No. 1," an extraordinary achievement for a self-taught composer.

The Cape Town Goema Orchestra is an ensemble that includes Mac's musical "brother," bandmate from The Genuines and The Goema Captains of Cape Town and long-time collaborator, multi-instrumentalist Hilton Schilder. Mac will be leading the orchestra on electric guitar while Hilton plays percussion, melodica and mouth bow. Also participating are highly-acclaimed bow player, Langa resident Madosini as well as renowned vocalist Ernestine Deane (of Moodphase 5ive and *Dub for Mama* fame). 5-String violinist Rayelle Goodman and flautist Heather Roth also feature in the star-studded 26-piece collaboration. The instrumentation of the symphony includes traditional Khoi-San bows, African xylophone, Cape Malay banjo and a melodica to reproduce the *Boere Orkes* tones of the accordion/concertina. Mac believes that Goema is the most representative style in South Africa, assembling and reflecting our country's diverse cultural influences. Mac's Goema draws on the spirit of the *moppies* and *liedjies* of Klopse culture but, with his symphonic approach, he demonstrates the style's enormous scope. "Goema Symphony No. 1" is expected to spearhead a series of symphonies and performances. Mac's hope is that classical music academics will start paying attention to Goema in addition to European traditions.

Promo Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dg-e65r2HU>

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