

WORLD MUSIC SERIES

OKAIDJA AFROSO,

VOCAL, GUITAR, PERCUSSION, DANCE
with

Maputo Mensah and Fiaindratovo Manavihare,
vocal and percussion

Tuesday, March 22, 2022

Hatch Recital Hall

7:30 PM



UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

Eastman
School of Music

100 YEARS | 1921-2021

PROGRAM

Selections will be made from the pieces below and announced from the stage

Kenkle

Aton Ke Aton

Akamo Nnane

Obe Moko

Akpakai

Baawa

Fire Fly

Palm Wine Sea

Osee Ka

Faako Nsumi

Aishetu

Afterlife Voyage

Timi Timi

Ninmaa Tso

Kpee He

OKAIDJA AFROSO IS EXCLUSIVELY REPRESENTED BY

BERNSTEIN ARTISTS, INC. WWW.BERNSARTS.COM

MEET THE ARTIST

OKAIDJA AFROSO

Okaidja Afroso was born into a family of musicians and storytellers in the village of Kokrobite on the west coast of Ghana. He began his career as a dancer with the celebrated Ghana Dance Ensemble. As he toured internationally Okaidja expanded his artistic reach becoming a master multi-instrumentalist, singer-songwriter, and arranger. His uncle was the town's notorious composer who spared no one with the songs he wrote about life in their small fishing village. Okaidja's mother was a colorful lead singer in her spiritual church. Her powerful songs of praise earned her the name "the spiritual singer." As a young boy Okaidja sang while he worked on fishing boats. The fishermen would sing a cappella songs as they worked, and

MEET THE ARTIST

Okaidja passed the long days learning the songs of the great sea. At the age of 19, Okaidja was accepted as a professional dancer for the prestigious Ghana Dance Ensemble at the University of Ghana's Institute of African Studies. He became well known for his energetic stage presence and excelled in his performances of the Ga fetish dances. The Ghana Dance Ensemble gave Okaidja the opportunity to study with the best teachers in the country. In 1997 Okaidja toured the United States with the Ensemble. Later-on that year, he traveled solo throughout Germany teaching Ghanaian music and dance before moving to the U.S. to join Okropong, a traditional Ghanaian music and dance group directed by Obo Addy.

Okaidja's first album, *The Traditionalist*, is his raw and emotional interpretation of the folkloric songs he grew up singing. His second album, *Obutu Apla*, ventures away from the strictly traditional and it was heavily influenced by Okaidja's inquiry into the African Diaspora. Okaidja's career shifted as he began to do extensive research into the connections between Ghanaian music and the music of the African Diaspora. Out of this passionate inquiry, his band Okaidja & Shokoto was formed. Through Shokoto, Okaidja created music that draws from multiple cultural influences from the past and the present. The result was a dynamic fusion of traditional and contemporary African rhythms with the diverse music of the African Diaspora. After dancing and playing percussion for so many years, Okaidja followed his soul's calling and taught himself how to play the guitar. He spent countless hours trying to give voice to all melodies in his head through this new medium. By learning completely on his own, through his relentless desire to play his unique style of music, he inadvertently created a guitar style that is so distinct that many accomplished guitarists tell him to avoid formal training so he does not lose his pure, inimitable sound. The guitar brought out a different sound and inspired Okaidja to write songs unlike anything he had created before. His album, *Messenger*, reflects the journey that he has been on as a messenger, carrying communication between the traditional world of his native homeland and the contemporary landscape of this modern-day. Okaidja's songs tell the stories of his people and follow their journeys through the disparate lands where they were scattered. It is an album that speaks to the soul. In 2017 Okaidja released his album, *The Palm Wine Sea*, which brings together the deep understanding of Okaidja's own musical transitions and the inspiration of Africa throughout Latin America. The music of *The Palm Wine Sea* is the music of the human experience. It is joyous, tragic, and uplifting. It embodies the vast perfect/imperfect shared human story.

Shortly after the release of *The Palm Wine Sea* Okaidja was commissioned by Portland Repertory Theatre to rearrange the folk gospel tune "Children Go Where I send Thee" for the Playwright Paula Vogel's *Civil War Christmas*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GoRzLRHHWW>. On this task Afroso tapped into his background to incorporate the Ghanaian fishermen singing style with his own vocal colors that captures the essence of African and African American music. In 2018 Okaidja was approached by the Los Angeles based dance company "Jacob Jonas The Company" to compose and original music for the piece "Crash" <http://jacobjonas.com/the-work/performance/crash/>

UPCOMING EVENTS AT EASTMAN

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

EASTMAN CENTENNIAL

Women in Music Festival: Lunchtime Concert and Eastman Wind Orchestra/Eastman Wind Ensemble

Lowry Hall, 12:00 PM

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre, 7:30 PM

Free admission

Thursday, March 24, 2022

EASTMAN CENTENNIAL

Women in Music Festival: Eastman@Washington Square, Composers Forum: Georgina Derbez, and Fourth Thursday Concert: Nathalie Draper premiere

First Universalist Church of Rochester, 12:00 PM

Virtual Concert, 3:30 PM

Memorial Art Gallery, 7:30 PM

Free admission

Thursday, March 24, 2022

Eastman Percussion Ensemble


Kilbourn Hall, 7:30 PM

Free admission

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the “Great Hill People” and “Keepers of the Western Door” of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people on whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.

Information about upcoming Eastman concerts and events can be found at:

www.rochester.edu/Eastman/calendar

 www.facebook.com/ConcertsAtEastman

Kilbourn Hall fire exits are located along the right and left sides, and at the back of the hall. In the event of an emergency, you will be notified by the stage manager. If notified, please move in a calm and orderly fashion to the nearest exit.

Please note: The use of unauthorized photographic and recording equipment is not allowed in this building. We reserve the right to ask anyone disrupting a performance to leave the hall.

Restrooms are located in the Wolk Atrium near the rear doors of Hatch Recital Hall. Fully-accessible restrooms are available on the first floor of the Eastman School. Our ushers will be happy to direct you to them.

Supporting the Eastman School of Music:

For Information on Eastman’s Centennial events and campaign, please visit