

(source quote – from email conversation after performances of the Saskia Laroo Band April 30-May 4, 2013 in Zimbabwe at the Harare International Festival of the Arts or HIFA)

From: Saskia Laroo <saskialaroo@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 9, 2013 3:47 PM
To: Bagorro, Manuel
Cc: gavpete@gavpete.com; byrdspeak@hotmail.com
Subject: RE: Online Artist Survey

THanks a lot Manuel, till soon, be well!
many music greetings, Saskia x

> From: mbaorroro@arnesthahall.org
> To: saskialaroo@hotmail.com
> CC: gavpete@gavpete.com; byrdspeak@hotmail.com
> Date: Thu, 9 May 2013 11:16:50 -0400
> Subject: RE: Online Artist Survey
>
> It was an ENORMOUS joy having you at the festival Saskia - thank you so much for your enthusiasm, artistry and incredible performances. I look forward to working with you in the future.
>
> Warm regards,
> Manuel x
>

> From: Saskia Laroo [saskialaroo@hotmail.com]
> Sent: Thursday, May 09, 2013 10:37 AM
> To: Bagorro, Manuel
> Cc: gavpete@gavpete.com; byrdspeak@hotmail.com
> Subject: RE: Online Artist Survey
>
> Dear Manuel,
>
> Just wanted to write you a personal thank you, it was a huge honour to meet you, much success w your new position!
> The world should know about the very unique and great HIFA festival and it 's history. I am trying to create a concert registration DVD for DjazzTV in the Netherlands. Pls let me know if I can do anything for you and we hope for the possibility to be back next year!!!
>
> Many greetings from Hartford, CT
>
> Saskia Laroo +1860 8699531
> Warren Byrd +1860 9972410
> www.saskialaroo.nl
> www.warrenbyrd.com
>

AA A B I U

(source article – see below:)

<https://bangordailynews.com/2013/07/23/living/from-zimbabwe-to-maine-new-bay-chamber-music-director-brings-extraordinary-mix-of-talents/?ref=relatedBox>

From Zimbabwe to Maine: New Bay Chamber music director brings ‘extraordinary mix of talents’



Emily Burnham | BDN

Manuel Bagorro, new artistic director for Bay Chamber Concerts, inside newly renovated Union Hall in Rockport.

By **Emily Burnham**, BDN Staff • July 23, 2013 10:04 am

Updated: July 23, 2013 10:05 am

On the surface, Rockport, Maine, and Harare, Zimbabwe, have little in common, but Manuel Bagorro chooses not to focus on that which divides people. Bagorro, a native of Zimbabwe who recently started as artistic director of **Bay Chamber Concerts and Summer Festival** in Rockport, tends to see music and art as the great unifiers of humanity.

“People in Rockport are truly committed to the arts, more than you might expect,” said Bagorro, 45. “That heritage has fed into people’s cells, which is different, for me, from growing up and living in Harare, a place where the arts are such a struggle to acquire and explore. The arts are part of the identity here, though the need and desire for them is the same as in Harare.”

Bagorro replaces outgoing artistic director Thomas Wolf, who retired last year. Wolf founded Bay Chamber with his brother Andrew in 1961 and programmed it for 50 years, and has left quite a legacy to live up to. Bagorro’s infectious energy already has injected new vitality into one of the oldest chamber music festivals in the state.

The season kicked off in early July, and on Thursday, July 25, will bring the world premiere of a piece by composer Paola Prestini, performed by the International Contemporary Ensemble, soprano Jessica Rivera and violinist Cornelius Dufallo, along with performances of works by everyone from Bach to John Cage. Concerts continue each weekend through Aug. 30.

Bagorro understands the transformative power of the arts. He grew up assuming that at age 18 he would leave home for a larger city with more opportunities. He moved to London, where he performed for a decade as a concert pianist on the competition circuit. By his late 20s, however, he hungered for more.

“I realized how much I missed the organization side of things, the curating. After about 10 years in London I wanted to do something new, and I wanted to

do it in Zimbabwe,” he said.

In 1999, he founded the **Harare International Festival of the Arts**, a five-day festival showcasing music from multiple genres, theater, dance, poetry and visual arts. Zimbabwe has a long, difficult history of civil unrest, financial instability and human rights abuses — a state of affairs that might send others in the opposite direction, but gave Bagorro even more incentive to bring something positive and creative to his homeland.

“It was a wonderful privilege to feel involved in it, despite the rather terrifying fortunes of the country at the time. It was this jangling, vibrant, beautiful thing. It was clear very early on that it had legs,” he said. “I’m still involved in some capacity, though it now has a life of its own.”

Six years ago, he moved to New York, where he is still primarily based. Part of his goal upon moving to the U.S. was to establish a program that brought music and the arts to underserved populations, such as those in prisons, hospitals, homeless shelters and senior centers. Eventually, his interests brought him to Carnegie Hall, where he and others established a program called Musical Connections.

“I wanted to bring musical and creative experiences to people who were not ticket buyers, but who were there for another reason,” said Bagorro. “Art and music can truly change the lives of people who have been marginalized.”

It was at Carnegie Hall that he met Thomas Wolf. As a friendly gesture, he invited Wolf to the Harare Festival — and to his surprise and delight, Wolf accepted. Shortly after that, Wolf asked Bagorro to put his name in as a candidate for the artistic director position at Bay Chamber. The rest is musical history.

“Manuel has an extraordinary mix of talents ... He understands and is knowledgeable about many musical genres, not just classical music,” said Wolf

in an email. “I have seen his ability to develop musical programs in difficult settings. When you add to the mix that he is a wonderful guy, you obviously have a winner.”

Bay Chamber’s hallowed place in the artistic universe of midcoast Maine has long been established, and Bagorro is aware of the expectations the community of both summertime and year-round residents have for its programming. Already, however, there are big changes.

There will still be Brahms, Beethoven and programming common to chamber music festivals worldwide. There will also be performances of strikingly contemporary works by the likes of John Zorn, Pauline Oliveros and David Lang, set for 9 p.m. Friday, July 26, in Union Hall in Rockport, a brand new venue for Bay Chamber that features table seating and a bar. There will be street performances from Found Sound Nation, in locations in Camden, Rockland and Rockport Aug. 14-16. There will be jazz on the water, featuring the Bill McHenry Jazz Quartet, set for 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 17, at Rockport Marine Park.

This Thursday, July 25, will bring the 7:30 p.m. concert at the Rockport Opera House, which pairs music from Bach, Cage, Stravinsky and others with the specially commissioned piece from Prestini, “The Hubble Cantata,” inspired by astronomer Mario Livio’s writings and images captured by the Hubble Space Telescope in recent years. Those images will be projected onto a special scrim hanging in the opera house during the performance.

“To me, this is a community ripe for new challenges, new experiences,” said Bagorro. “I say to people, ‘Look, you may never have heard music like this, but the visual arts you’re taking in around here are incredibly challenging. Let’s program some contemporary music that reflects that. Let’s have a concert where you can have a glass of wine as you enjoy the music. Let’s do something new and exciting.’”

For this season, the task is to strike a balance between the traditional and the progressive. Considering Bagorro spent a decade organizing an arts festival in sub-Saharan Africa, he seems more than up to the challenge.

“I’m blown away by the friendliness and interconnectedness and passion of this community. Plus, every day that I’m here I get to look out my office window at this incredible view,” he said, gesturing to the panoramic sight of white boats and deep blue ocean in Rockport Harbor. “It isn’t hard to love this place.”

A full schedule of Bay Chamber’s 2013 programming can be found online at **baychamberconcerts.org**.

Have feedback? Want to know more? Send us ideas for follow-up stories.

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