

## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **‘A Soul of Light’: Angolan Tenor Nelson Ebo and Belgian Composer Dimitri Arnauts Team up to Honor and Support Human Rights and Dignity through Music in Angola and Africa**

News provided by Dimitri Arnauts on Thursday 17th September 2020

Quote by Mr. Nelson EBO, Soloist:

*“I am deeply grateful to Dimitri Arnauts for composing this marvelous piece of art. I developed a deep connection to the music as it spoke to my lived experience.”*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRUSSELS (Belgium), NEW YORK (USA), LUANDA (Angola)

Thursday 17th September 2020, 12:00am (Brussels Time)

## **SUMMARY**

The New York-based Tenor Nelson EBO and Belgian composer Dimitri ARNAUTS are releasing on Friday 18th September 2020 the new result of their ongoing artistic collaboration: a song for Tenor solo and virtual Symphonic Orchestra, called ‘A Soul of Light’.

Based on a saying by the Hindu philosopher and mystic Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), the 7min song is featured in an Art Video evoking the suffering and hope of the Poor, the Hungry and the Homeless – in seven facets corresponding to the Seven Works of Mercy of the Christian faith.

The song will be made freely available in video- and audio streaming to all audiences, but the musical release aims to have another dimension and positive impact : from the music page on, the generous listener can freely navigate further to the donation page of MOSAIKO, a Dominican-led and inspired NGO active in Angola, that promotes, advocates and furthers Human Rights in that country – so long battered by the scourge of war.

The song ‘A Soul of Light’ will be followed in the future by more collaborations between Mr. Ebo and Mr. Arnauts.

## **THE MUSIC & THE PERFORMER**

Lyrical Tenor **Nelson EBO**, currently living in New York, is the first performer of this newly composed song. Nelson Ebo was born in Angola in 1984 during the civil war. Since childhood, he struggled against that war and illness which claimed the lives of both parents and several siblings. With his powerful tenor voice and musical soul, Nelson was able to lift himself out of hardship while inspiring all those who heard him. It is that tragic but also hopeful experience that Mr. Ebo has tried to express in his deeply moving interpretation.

Nelson Ebo declared: *"I am deeply grateful to Dimitri Arnauts for composing this marvelous piece of art. I developed a deep connection to the music as it spoke to my lived experience."*

The music of 'Soul of Light' is an original composition written by **Dimitri ARNAUTS**.

Dimitri Arnauts (°1973) is a Belgium-based composer who has dedicated himself to uplift and delight hearts, souls, and minds through the reaffirmed beauty of melody, tonal harmony, polyphony, fugue and counterpoint, and through the innumerable colors of instruments and human voices.

Dimitri Arnauts said: *"I feel very honored and blessed by the fruitful collaboration with Mr. Ebo, and I believe he has recorded the best possible performance of my song: one full of emotion, dignity and hope – but without trying to escape the cruel reality of suffering and despair: instead, elevating both towards the Creator, in a lament infused with a nearly prophetic nobility and urgency. I sense we both did our utmost best to sincerely serve the cause of the Poor and the Afflicted in Angola, Mr. Ebo's country of origin that is very dear to his heart."*

The whole project was written, recorded, and produced during the Lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Web address of the project:

<https://www.africanmuse.art/souloflight>

Or also on

<https://www.dimitriarnauts.com/souloflight>

<https://www.nelsonebo.net/soul-of-light>

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## ABOUT

## ABOUT THE SOLOIST

Nelson Ebo was born in Angola in 1984 during the civil war. Since childhood, he struggled against that war and illness which claimed the lives of both parents and several siblings. With his powerful tenor voice and musical soul, Nelson was able to lift himself out of hardship while inspiring all those who heard him.

At the age of 14, Nelson was first introduced to choral music in his local church. His fascination with opera began by chance when he heard a CD of opera luminaries Luciano Pavarotti and Placido Domingo and taught himself to sing like them. He began to sing in Casa 70 in Luanda to pay for his own education and family's wellbeing.

In 2001, Nelson was invited to sing at a human rights song contest organized jointly by the UN and the Angolan Ministry of Justice. Impressed with Nelson's extraordinary talent, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation supported Nelson to pursue the study of music in Spain.

In 2008, Nelson moved to the USA as a scholarship student at the Hartt School of Music where he studied with Wayne Rivera. In 2011, Nelson auditioned for and was accepted as a "resident artist" at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia where he studied with the renowned voice teacher, Bill Schuman.

Nelson has won awards from the Gerda Lissner Foundation, the Giulio Gari Foundation and Opera North and has performed in concerts in the United States, Europe, and Angola. In 2011, Marcello Giordani, a renowned tenor, invited Nelson to perform with him in concerts in New Jersey and Sicily. From September 2011 until May 2013, Nelson Ebo sang at different music events of the Academy of Vocal Arts, Philadelphia.

In 2012, 12 years after leaving Angola to study singing abroad, Nelson was invited back to Angola by Carlos Cunha to perform at the 14th anniversary of Casa 70. Through this concert, and the support of the First Lady of Angola, Nelson has returned numerous times to give concerts in Angola and Portugal and continue his professional development in Italy and Germany, where he currently resides.

[www.nelsonebo.net](http://www.nelsonebo.net)

## ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Dimitri Arnauts (°1973) is a Belgium-based composer who has dedicated himself to uplift and delight hearts, souls, and minds through the reaffirmed beauty of melody, harmony, polyphony, and counterpoint, and through the innumerable colors of instruments and human voices. He has written numerous works of various sizes and settings, being mainly cantatas, psalms, oratorios, concertos, symphonies, and symphonic poems, and other vocal or orchestral works.

As an autodidact, Dimitri feels free to follow the paths of his heart, both in the aesthetics of his music as in the emotion and message it aims to convey. He established from the very beginning the foundations of his musical art on the proven strength and poetic power of tonal harmony, euphony, complex polyphony, fugue, and counterpoint.

This science of the art of music writing, he wanted to rediscover it for himself and learn it in an autonomous manner: without theoretical study or academic recipe-books that would have him ending up fixed, dried out and losing his path to peer pressure... instead, by following only the voice of his heart, the means and visions of intuition, the desire of his soul and the capabilities of his spirit.

Musically, Dimitri Arnauts admits humbly and gladly to be a modest and indebted disciple of the great Johann Sebastian Bach, at whose service he had the privilege to be moved, formed and inspired – through a year-long vocal practice of his Cantatas, Passions, Oratorios as a chorister.

His first concert contribution as a composer occurred in June 2012, when an excerpt of his tone setting of Psalm 100 (11') was performed by the Choir and Orchestra of the Chapelle des Minimes in Brussels, under the direction of Julius Stenzel.

In 2018 he conducted the premiere of his 'Requiem Sancti Michaelis' (50') at St.-Catherine Church, in Duisburg, Belgium. In May of the same year, his four-hands piano suite 'Humble Memories' (90') was premiered at BOZAR, Brussels, on the new Maene-Barenboim straight-strung piano.

He completed that year choral and orchestral conducting courses, in Oxford, UK (James Jordan and Steve Pilkington, USA) and in Sherborne, UK (with Maestro Rodolfo Saglimbeni, Venezuela and Amy Bebbington, UK), and film music composition courses at the HKU Utrecht, The Netherlands (with Pr. Rens Machiels).

He has also been selected to participate in the first edition of the International Masterclass 'Sacred Music Today' in Stockholm, Sweden, under the high patronage of the Lutheran Church of Sweden and the Pontifical Council for Culture of the Catholic Church.

The same year, his chamber music contribution to the international Flute Infinity project was premiered at the Slovacki Theatre in Krakow, Poland. This project resulted in a collective CD, issued by the DUX label, and proposed for nomination at the Polish Classical Music Awards by the label.

Dimitri started a position as Artistic and Choir Director of St-Cecilia's Choir at Saint-John-the-Evangelist Church in Tervuren, Belgium, as of December 2019.

He has published four albums of original music online, comprising organ solo works, choral works, vocal improvisations, electronic six-part fantasies, piano and synthesizer musings and two full-length concert movies, totaling about 9 hours of new music, as well as numerous creative art videos and music clips.

His music has been premiered, performed or recorded internationally in various places: Belgium (BOZAR Brussels, Duisburg), Poland (Slovacki Theater Krakow, Tokarnia), United Kingdom (Chester, London), Germany (Hamburg), Lebanon (Beirut), Austria (Vienna), USA (New York, Princeton, etc...)

In early 2020, four of his planned symphonic premieres were cancelled due to the COVID-2019 Crisis and ensuing international restrictions.

During this COVID-19 Confinement period, he composed and produced a set of music videos with new original soundtracks, in collaboration with several established or upcoming artists from the USA, Lebanon, Austria, Belgium, Japan and Hungary.

In Autumn 2021, Dimitri's first full-size chamber opera will be created at the old Laeiszhalle-Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, Germany.

Dimitri is also founding member of the new international composer collective Muse11, and an active member of the Flemish Composers' Archipelago COMAV...

[www.dimitriarnauts.com](http://www.dimitriarnauts.com)

## ABOUT MOSAIKO

Mosaiko I Institute for Citizenship is an Angolan non-profit institution contributing to a culture of human rights. Founded by Dominican missionaries (Order of Preachers – Catholic Church) in 1997, it was the first institution in the country to explicitly undertake the mission of promoting human rights in Angola.

Guided by a strong social commitment, Mosaiko's goals are respect for human dignity and the development of Angolan society through contributions by one and all.

The promotion of human dignity relies greatly on the eradication of ignorance through critical thinking and the encouragement of an attitude of active citizenship. Therefore, Mosaiko seeks to disseminate, as widely as possible, such research studies and findings, so that they might become accessible to different audiences, contributing to the formation of a strong public opinion and a civil society with a spirit of initiative.

Therefore, because people are always the greatest wealth of a country, there is an overwhelming need for citizenship and human rights to become fundamental values for the sustainable development of Angola!

To this end, Mosaiko does not limit itself to “the management of everyday life,” nor does it intend to “work for” but “work with” the different participants in Angolan society, adopting a working strategy that encompasses constructive dialogue and the positive transformation of precarious situations involving various social actors.

Based on the outskirts of Luanda, but working in collaboration with various local groups, Mosaiko develops its operations in most provinces of Angola.

Since its foundation in the thirteenth century, the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) has been dedicated to preaching the Word of God and to promoting the Human Being as an entity. The fundamental dimensions of its charisma – community life, prayer, and continuous and systematic study of the Word of God, as well as the Social Sciences and Humanities – are totally oriented toward preaching and the promotion of human life. Since the beginnings of the Order, this role has been shared by different groups – nuns, brothers, sisters and lay persons – constituting in this way a Dominican family that performs its task in complementarity.

Throughout its history, this way of living has inspired generations to carry out anonymous works, with some initiatives and figures standing out. For instance, in the thirteenth century, the first University of Paris operated in the newly founded priory of the Dominicans; in the troubled fourteenth century, a lay Dominican, Catherine of Siena, played an important role in European politics by convincing the Pope to return to Rome; in the sixteenth century, in the heart of the New World, Bartolome de las Casas introduced anti-slavery preaching to a small Dominican community, and later, as a Dominican, began a relentless fight in favour of the native populations; during this period, another Dominican, Francis Vitoria, a teacher at the University of Salamanca, laid the groundwork for what would become international law; more recently, in the twentieth century, French Dominican, Louis-Francois Lebret (who drafted the encyclical “Populorum Progressio”) launched the ‘Economy and Humanism’ movement, dedicated to cooperation and development.

It is in this multi-secular tradition that the Dominicans in Angola were inspired to create Mosaiko I Institute for Citizenship.

<https://mosaiko.op.org/>