

Nokuthula Ngwenyama

“Mother of Peace” and “Lion” in Zulu: Nokuthula Ngwenyama embodies the two meanings in her name as an internationally recognized artistic force. Her performances as orchestral soloist, recitalist and chamber musician garner great attention. *Gramophone* proclaims Ms. Ngwenyama as providing “solidly shaped music of bold, mesmerising character,” and the *Washington Post* describes her as playing “with dazzling technique...and deep expressiveness.” As a composer, *Uptown Magazine* recently featured her as “A Poet of Sound.”

Ms. Ngwenyama gained international prominence winning the Primrose International Viola Competition at 16. The following year she won the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, which led to debuts at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC and at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. In 1998 she received the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant.

Since then, she has performed with the Atlanta, Baltimore, and Indianapolis symphonies, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the National Symphony Orchestra, amongst others. She has been heard in recital at Tokyo’s Suntory Hall, the Louvre, the Ford Center in Toronto, and the Maison de Radio France. Festival appearances include Chamber Music Northwest, Vail, San Diego’s Mainly Mozart, Marlboro Music Festival, Spoleto USA, Unbound Chamber Music Festival and Burgundy’s Musique et Vin.

Upcoming appearances this 2017-18 season include the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia and the People’s Concert Series in New York performing the Brahms Sextets with Jaime Laredo, Pamela Frank, Milena Pajaro-van de Stadt, Sharon and Keith Robinson, for whom she also writes a string sextet to be premiered January 2020 in celebration of Phoenix Chamber Music Society’s 60th season. She also appears with the Dover Quartet performing the world premiere of her viola quintet *Primal Message* (inspired by the Arecibo message) and curates the ASU/Kerr Cultural Center and Phoenix Chamber Music Society’s joint presentation *Composer’s Choice*: the first new music series in the Phoenix metropolitan area featuring works of 21st century composers in film, television and beyond for an intimate chamber setting.

Recent season highlights include an appearance with the Sinfonietta Cracovia performing Penderecki’s Viola Concerto. She also performed world premiere performances of her works in Phoenix (*A Bishop’s Processional for Violin and String Orchestra*), Los Angeles (*Sonoran Storm for Solo Viola*), Xi’an, China (*Above the West*) and Durban, South Africa (*Sonoran Storm for Viola and Orchestra*). Ms. Ngwenyama gave recitals in Los Angeles and Oakland with the world premiere of Byron Adams’s Sonata for Viola and Piano, and appeared with Bruno Mars on *Saturday Night Live*. Ms. Ngwenyama also performed at Nexus Hall in Tokyo’s Chanel Tower and the Xi’an Conservatory of Music, where she is a visiting professor. She was also chosen for the coveted Duncanson Artist-in-Residency at the Taft Museum.

Ms. Ngwenyama’s performance at the White House, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the radio show *Performance Today*, also featured artists Wynton Marsalis, James Galway and Denyce Graves. She has testified before Congress on behalf of the National Endowment for the Arts and is a respected educator, having served as visiting professor at the University of Notre Dame and at Indiana University. Ms. Ngwenyama is past-director of both the Primrose International Viola Competition and the American Viola Society. She spearheaded an award-winning string program for Biltmore Preparatory Academy, a public school in Phoenix, Arizona, and performed with the Japanese group The Surfing Godzillas as both instrumentalist and

vocalist. She is a member of the band Secret Element, joining multi-platinum producer and instrumentalist Gardner Cole and singer Anna Vivette in sound creation for television and film.

Born in California of Zimbabwean-Japanese parentage, Ms. Ngwenyama studied at the Colburn School's Community School of Performing Arts before attending the Curtis Institute of Music. As a Fulbright Scholar, she attended the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, and received a Master of Theological Studies degree from Harvard University.

Ms. Ngwenyama has composed since childhood and was first recognized in a Los Angeles Unified School District competition. She later studied theory, counterpoint, and composition under Dr. Herbert Zipper, Mary Ann Cummins, and Warren Spaeth at the Crossroads School for Arts and Sciences. While at the Curtis Institute of Music, her theory teachers included Edward Aldwell, David Loeb, and Jennifer Higdon. Her works have been performed in the United States, China, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Czech Republic. She is the first composer in residence of the Phoenix Chamber Music Society, appointed in their 57th season.