

Wouter Kellerman

Two voices



Two Voices is the breathtaking new album from SAMA winning, internationally renowned flautist Wouter Kellerman. Featuring guest artists Senegalese singer Lamine Sonko, songbird Nianell, pianist Wessel van Rensburg and others.

Mixed by Grammy winner Husky Hoskulds.

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For the Fans

TWO VOICES



‘**T**he two voices are my voice and those of the musicians I collaborated with on this album,’ Wouter Kellerman explains in the liner notes of his latest release. ‘They are also the voices of my influences – African and otherwise...’ The SAMA winning flautist already demonstrates an eclectic mix of influences in his own work. When this is augmented by a series of collaborations with a varied set of highly individual musicians, the result is an aural experience that takes the listener through musical terrain with an unprecedented number of stylistic twists and turns. ‘When I collaborate with someone, I try and adapt to them and get out of my comfort zone,’ Kellerman explains, speaking over the phone from Melbourne during a break in his Australian tour. ‘That makes it really interesting because you discover new music and new aspects of your own music making.’

One example of the collaborative creative process that gave rise to the songs on *Two Voices* was Kellerman’s work with guitarist Paul Carlos, his co-writer on much of the music on his previous album. ‘Our collaboration usually works like this,’ the flautist explains, ‘we do a yoga session together and then afterwards we just sit and play music – really just playing anything that comes into our heads. We have no structure, no concept of

what we want to do, we just play. Most of it doesn’t sound very good, but we’ll hit on one or two things that work and then just go with them and see where they take us.’

The opening track on the album, ‘Cape Flats’ was written in this way. ‘We were sitting and playing, and I just thought to myself, “Why do I even need to change the note?” My whole attitude to music is to touch its roots, the core of it. I feel that too much of the music today is created by intellectual activity, rather than coming from the heart. So I thought, “Let me just try and play one note for as long as I can.” “Cape Flats” came out of that. I was just trying to be as expressive as I could while playing one note and Paul just played two chords and the song grew out of that.’

Among Kellerman’s other collaborators on the album are Senegalese vocalist Lamine Sonko, much loved South African songbird Nianell and pianist Wessel van Rensburg. The back-up musicians include some of South Africa’s most well established and trusted session players such as bassist, Victor Masondo and guitarist, Mauritz Lotz. The recording is co-produced by Kellerman and local hit-maker JB Arthur. The music runs seamlessly through genres and styles that one might normally think incongruous: Senegalese folk songs, tango, Irish hornpipe tunes (with a strong African flavour), rap and jazz. There is a risk, with all of this

CLASSICFEEL's Warren Holden speaks to flautist, Wouter Kellerman about his new album, *Two Voices*, an impressive feat of stylistic diversity and collaborative music making.

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wondrous variety that the finished product may end up fragmented and scattered. But this is not the case with *Two Voices*, because there is one factor common to all tracks and all the ideas represented on the album, and that of course, is Kellerman himself.

'People are complex beings,' he says, 'and musicians are complex, and I want to challenge this concept that an album has to have just one type of music. I get bored listening to a lot of albums out there. Take an album of Mozart or Bach flute sonatas, for example. You don't need an hour of flute sonatas – one sonata's enough and then you want to listen to something else. An album should be an expression of who you are at that moment. I listen to lots of different music – classical, jazz, hip hop, folk and roots. This album is an expression of who I am and what I like. The decision to put it all on one album was a difficult one to make at first because it's contrary to traditional wisdom. My thinking is that the listener might like and relate to one song, and then the next one will be something completely different but it will stretch the listener a bit. As a musician, I'm saying, "Maybe you like this, but here's something else, maybe you'll like that too." It's challenging the listener, which is what I enjoy when I listen to music.'

Kellerman's musical training was entirely in the classical field. The flute was his instrument of choice from the moment his

parents took him to his first symphony concert. He later went on to become one of the country's top young flautists, playing in the South African National Youth Orchestra. But even while he was learning his trade as a classical performer, he listened to all kinds of music and knew that eventually he would need to find a way to express those influences. However, the transition from orchestral performer to composer and improviser was not always smooth.

'I found it a huge stumbling block at first. As classical musicians, we always read music; we don't often create or improvise new music. In the beginning Paul Carlos and I were both classical musicians and we thought that we were both equally clueless when it came to improvisation, so we felt comfortable improvising together. I remember the first time we decided to try and improvise something and we said, "Okay, but how do you improvise? What do you do? Well, I suppose you just play whatever comes into your head and see if it sounds good." So that's what we did.'

Two Voices offers listeners the opportunity to experience some of the musical adventure that Kellerman and Carlos first embarked on then, and which still continues, now with several equally intrepid fellow travellers. It is a listening experience that offers multiple rewards to music lovers of all persuasions. **CF**