



DakhaBrakha

Marko Halanevych / *Vocals, Darbuka, Tabla, Accordion, Trombone*

Iryna Kovalenko / *Vocals, Djembe, Bass Drums, Accordion, Percussion, Bugay, Zgaleyka, Piano*

Olena Tsybulska / *Vocals, Bass Drums, Percussion, Garmoshka*

Nina Garenetska / *Vocals, Cello, Bass Drum*

Wednesday Evening, March 29, 2017 at 7:30

Michigan Theater

Ann Arbor

Media partnership provided by Ann Arbor's 107one and WDET 101.9 FM.

Special thanks to Jenna Spinei, Cara Graninger, Michael Malis, and Allison Radell for their participation in events surrounding this evening's performance.

DakhaBrakha appears by arrangement with Riot Artists.

In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

PROGRAM

This evening's program will be announced from the stage by the artists and will be performed without intermission.

ETHNO-CHAOS: DAKHABRAKHA REINVENTS UKRAINE'S UNSUNG ROOTS MUSIC WITH GLOBAL FINESSE

A shadowy procession to the pounding of drums and to the murmur of a cello morphs into an anthem, an invocation, a wild and wacky breakdown. Drones and beats, crimson beads, and towering black lambs wool hats all serve as a striking backdrop for an unexpected, refreshingly novel vision of Eastern European roots music. This is the self-proclaimed “ethno-chaos” of Ukraine’s DakhaBrakha, a group that feels both intimately tied to their homeland, yet instantly compelling for international audience.

“We just want people to know our culture exists,” muses Marko Halanevych of DakhaBrakha, the remarkable Kiev-based ensemble that has broken down the tired musical framework for Ukrainian traditional music. “We want people to know as much as possible about our corner of the world.”

The quartet does far more than introduce Ukrainian music or prove it is alive and well. They craft stunning new sonic worlds for traditional songs, reinventing their heritage with a keen ear for contemporary resonances. With one foot in the urban avant-garde theater scene and one foot in the village life that nurtured and protected Ukraine’s cultural wealth, DakhaBrakha shows the full fury and sensuality of some of Eastern Europe’s most breathtaking folklore. Refined yet saucy, eerie yet earthy, Ukrainian music has languished in relative obscurity, though its achievements are diverse and sophisticated: complex polyphonic

singing with interlocking lines so tight the ears buzz, long and philosophical epics, humorous ditties, instrumental virtuosity, and raucous dance tunes. Ritual and ribaldry, urbane composition and rural celebration, Asian influences and Western harmony all combine to give contemporary musicians a true wealth of potential sources.

DakhaBrakha knows these sources well: the three female vocalists have spent many summers traveling around Ukraine’s villages collecting songs and learning from elder women in remote areas. Like these village tradition-bearers, they have spent years singing together, a fact that resonates in the beautifully close, effortlessly blended sound of their voices. Marko grew up steeped in village life, and draws on his rural upbringing when contributing to the group.

Yet the young musicians and actors were determined to break away from purist recreations and from the stale, schmaltzy, post-Soviet remnants of an ideology-driven folk aesthetic. Urged on by Vladyslav Troitsky, an adventuresome theater director at the DAKH Center for Contemporary Art, a cornerstone of the Kiev arts underground, the group resolved to create something radically different. They wanted to experiment, to discover, to put Ukrainian material in a worldly context, without divorcing it from its profound connection to land and people. That’s why tablas thunk and digeridoos rumble, filling out DakhaBrakha’s sound, and yet never overshadow the deeply rooted voices

and spare, yet unforgettable visual aesthetic.

“The beginning was pretty primitive,” recalls Mr. Halanevych. “We tried to find rhythms to match the melodies. We tried to shift the emphasis of these songs. We know our own material, our native music well, yet we wanted to get to know other cultures and music well. We started with the Indian tabla, then started to try other percussion instruments. But we didn’t incorporate them directly; we found our own sounds that helped us craft music.”

Through this experimentation and repurposing of instruments from other cultures to serve DakhaBrakha’s own sound, the band was guided by the restraint and elemental approach that owed a debt to the emotionally charged minimalism of Philip Glass and Steve Reich. “At the same time as we explored ethnic music, we got interested in minimalism, though never in a way that was literal or obvious,” Mr. Halanevych explains. “The methods of minimalism seemed to us to be very productive in our approach to folk. The atmospheric and dramatic pieces that started our work together were created by following that method.”

This mix of contemporary, cosmopolitan savvy and intimacy with local traditions and meanings cuts to the heart of DakhaBrakha’s bigger mission: To make the world aware of the new country but ancient nation that is Ukraine. “It’s important to show the world Ukraine, and to show Ukrainians that we don’t need to have an inferiority complex. That we’re not backward hicks, but progressive artists. There are a lot of wonderful,

creative people here, people who are now striving for freedom, for a more civilized way of life, and are ready to stand up for it.”

Program note courtesy of Rock Paper Scissors, Inc.

ARTISTS

DakhaBrakha is music quartet from Kiev, Ukraine. Reflecting fundamental elements of sound and soul, the Ukrainian "ethno chaos" band creates a world of unexpected new music. DakhaBrakha was created in 2004 at the Kyiv Center of Contemporary Art "DAKH" by the avant-garde theater director Vladyslav Troitskyi, and given the name that means "give/take" in the old Ukrainian language. Theater work has left its mark on the band's performances — their shows are always staged with a strong visual element.

After experimenting with Ukrainian folk music, the band has added rhythms of the surrounding world into their music, thus creating the bright, unique, and unforgettable sound of DakhaBrakha. They strive to help open up the potential of Ukrainian melodies and to bring it to the hearts and consciousness of the younger generation in Ukraine and to the rest of the world.

Accompanied by Indian, Arabic, African, Russian, and Australian traditional instrumentation, the quartet's astonishingly powerful and uncompromising vocal range creates a trans-national sound rooted in Ukrainian culture. At the crossroads of Ukrainian folklore and theater, their musical spectrum is at first intimate then riotous, plumbing the depths of contemporary roots and rhythms, inspiring "cultural and artistic liberation."

In March 2010, DakhaBrakha won the prestigious Grand Prix prize named after S. Kuriokhin, in the sphere of contemporary art, and confirmed its place in the culture once again. In March 2011 DakhaBrakha was discovered by Australian Womadelaide and began their ascent in the international music scene. They have since played more than 300 concerts and performances and have

taken part in major international festivals throughout Eastern and Western Europe, Russia, Asia, Australia, and North America. DakhaBrakha has also collaborated with international musicians including Port Mone, Kimmo Pohjonen Cluster, Karl Frierson, Steve Cooney, Inna Zhelannaya, Kievbass, Djam, and David Ingibaryan.

UMS welcomes DakhaBrakha as the ensemble makes its UMS debut this evening.

MAY WE ALSO RECOMMEND...

- 3/30–4/1 *Complicite/Simon McBurney: The Encounter*
4/12 *A Far Cry with Roomful of Teeth*
4/15 *Sanam Marvi*

Tickets available at www.ums.org.

ON THE EDUCATION HORIZON...

- 3/30 *Renegade Pre-Performance Talk: The Encounter*
 (Power Center Lobby, 121 Fletcher Street, 7:00 pm)
 Must have a ticket to the 3/30 performance to attend.

Educational events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.