

CHARLIE BARBER:

Afrodisiac

LOVE, RITUAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL

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|----|----------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Incantation – sunset | 5:20 |
| 2 | Spirit of the Ancestors | 3:01 |
| 3 | Jaliya | 5:24 |
| 4 | Mbira Music | 4:04 |
| 5 | Orixa | 3:46 |
| 6 | La Luna Roja (The Red Moon) | 4:50 |
| 7 | Crux fidelis / Nhemamysasa | 4:20 |
| 8 | Magic Talisman | 2:24 |
| 9 | Gris-gris | 4:25 |
| 10 | Husago (Thunder Cult Dance No 1) | 2:17 |
| 11 | Sovu (Thunder Cult Dance No 2) | 2:44 |
| 12 | Mbira Music / Si ascendero | 3:47 |
| 13 | Voodoo Hymn | 3:54 |
| 14 | Afoxé | 2:57 |
| 15 | Mahororo (Celebration) | 3:03 |
| 16 | Incantation – sunrise | 5:29 |

MUSICIANS:

David Jean-Baptiste – bass clarinet
Sacha Johnson – vibraphone, bongos,
congas and percussion

Jonathan Helm – marimba, djembe
and percussion

Semra Kurutaç – piano
Niamh Ferris – viola
Ashley John Long – double bass
Rhiannon Llewellyn – singer
Charlie Barber – harmonium

with

Seckou Keita – kora
Chartwell Dutiro – mbira

PRODUCTION:

Charlie Barber – executive producer
James Clarke – producer & engineer

CD mixed and mastered by James Clarke

Recorded and mixed at Tŷ Cerdd Studio,
Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff
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Further information:

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FEATURING **SECKOU KEITA** – KORA
CHARTWELL DUTIRO – MBIRA
– AND ENSEMBLE OF CLASSICAL MUSICIANS –

AFRODISIAC

It is a universal phenomenon that a large amount of magic exists within popular and old religions: incantation, prayers for the dead or fertility, incense, the collection of medicinal herbs, liturgy and ritual. **Afrodisiac** is a personal journey and exploration of ritual, love and magic through the cultures of Africa and the African diaspora.

Created by composer Charlie Barber, **Afrodisiac** brings together an ensemble of seven classical musicians performing alongside two highly respected artists of traditional African instruments: Seckou Keita, an inspired and charismatic performer of the *kora* (the West African harp–lute) and Chartwell Dutiro, a maestro of the *mbira*, (the Zimbabwean ‘thumb piano’).

Charlie Barber

Composer Charlie Barber has a deserved reputation for creating and producing innovative performance and touring projects. He has worked in a wide variety of musical genres: orchestral and chamber works, film, video, music–theatre and dance.

His music draws on a wide range of influences and models bringing these together in a highly personal synthesis. Although the music of the American minimalists in the late 70s formed a starting point for his own music, equally important was the use and deconstruction of the music of the past and the influence of World music.

An important and crucial element has been his work across a number of different artforms, including dance, film, installation and performance art. This has resulted in a rich series of collaborations with artists in other disciplines.

His recent recordings and touring projects include: **Ludwig**, a musical tribute to Beethoven; music for Jean Cocteau’s **Blood of a Poet**, a surrealist classic of early cinema; **Boulevard of Broken Dreams** for string quartet; and **Salomé**, for percussion quartet and voices written to accompany the 1923 film starring Alla Nazimova.

THE MUSIC

Constructed as a series of musical episodes that take place during the course of a night, **Afrodisiac** begins at sunset and ends with sunrise.

Sunset [tracks 1 - 6]

The evening of this imaginary ritual begins with **Incantation: sunset** – an invocation of African deities – and **Spirit of the Ancestors**. The singer’s chants conjure up two names: *Xango*, a warrior god, divinity of thunder, fire and male sexuality; and *Oyá*, a warrior and sorceress, divinity of the wind, hurricanes and underworld gates.

The two instrumental tracks that follow are based on the characteristics of the featured traditional African instruments: **Jaliya** refers to the art of the Jali – the hereditary professional musicians in West Africa who sing and play the harp–like *kora* – whilst **Mbira Music** is type of a ‘moto perpetuo’ based on the rhythmic characteristics of the Zimbabwean *mbira*.

An **Orixa** is a spirit or deity that reflects one of the manifestations of God in the Yoruba spiritual or religious system that has spread throughout the world, particularly across South America. *Eshu* is the messenger between human and divine worlds; *Ozain*, an Orixa of the forest who owns the *omiero*, a holy liquid of herbs used in ceremonies; and *Yemayá* is the divine mother.

Una rama de canela, un puñado de romero,
una cucharada de pollen de flores

*A branch of cinnamon, a handful of rosemary,
a spoonful of pollen from flowers*



The first section finishes with two contrasting vocal tracks. **La Luna Roja** (The Red Moon) is based on a short fragment of a Tunisian recitation whilst the variations on the *mbira* tune ‘Nhemamysasa’ (Temporary shelter) are juxtaposed with a 6th century hymn for feasts of the Holy Cross (**Crux fidelis**).

Crux fidelis inter omnes, Arbor una nobilis
Nulla silva talem profert, Fronde, flore, germine
Dulce lignum, dulces clavos, Dulce pondus sustinet

*Faithful Cross, above all other, One and only noble Tree
None in foliage, none in blossom, None in fruit thy peer may be
Sweetest wood, and sweetest iron, Sweetest weight is hung
on thee*

Night [tracks 7 - 13]

The central section begins with **Magic Talisman**, an aural version or interpretation of a curious arrangement of numbers sometimes called a ‘magic square’. These 4,000 year old magical combinations of numbers are found in a number of cultures, including Egypt, sometimes engraved on stone or metal and worn as talismans. Here, metal percussion (cymbals, triangles) mark in time/duration the sets of numbers.

Hoodoo is a form of African–American traditional folk magic developed from a number of separate cultures and magical traditions. **Gris-gris** is a *hoodoo* talisman that protects the wearer from evil or brings luck. Often it is in the form of a small cloth bag containing herbs, oils, stones, bones, hair, nails, grave dirt, or other personal items. The vocal melody is a well-known 18th century French song, *Plaisir d’amour*, masquerading here in an upside–down variation of the original tune.

Plaisir d’amour ne dure qu’un moment, Chagrin d’amour
dure toute la vie.

*The pleasure of love lasts only a moment, The pain of love
lasts a lifetime*

Husago and **Sovu** are both re–workings of a dances performed by the Ewe people of Ghana, West Africa. The dances are from the Yeve cult – the cult of the God of Thunder – a secret society with its own language, customs, songs and dances. The drum patterns have been retained whilst the other instrumental parts are new inventions.

The reprise of **Mbira Music** has new instrumentation – this time is set alongside a Mozarabic chant from the 7th century (Si ascendero)

Si ascendero in caelum, Domine, tu ibi es,
et si descendero, in infernum ades.
Mitte manum tuam, Domine; libera me ex inferno inferiore.

*If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there,
If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there.
Reach out Thine hand, O Lord; deliver me from lower hell.*

A Haitian *voodoo* service often begins with a series of Catholic prayers and songs in French. In **Voodoo Hymn** these elements are represented by the hymn *Crux fidelis* and the mirror inversion of the French song *Plaisir d’amour*.

Sunrise [tracks 14 - 16]

The spiritual rituals that originated in Africa flourished across the Atlantic as Candomblé, which arrived in north eastern Brazil in the 17th century. Candomblé is a complex religion that celebrates multiple deity–like saints that act as intermediaries. The music performed at the ceremonies is called **Afoxé** and is often performed throughout Brazil, particularly during Carnival, with no affiliation with the religion, and this version echoes its dance–like rhythms.

Mahororo (Celebration) is based on another a traditional *mbira* tune of the Shona people in Zimbabwe. The vocals and text are similar to those in *Orixa*.

Incantation: sunrise returns full circle to a final invocation of the ever–present deities and a reflection on the elusive and sometimes painful nature of love.