

The Canadian Centre for Ethnomusicology presents:
Saturday, March 14, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.

The Mboya Nicholson Trio

at Convocation Hall

The Songs

Like a Carousel
And Mountains Bow
Train Whistle
The Tone of Blue
Never Crossed My Mind
Sometimes I'm Happy (Youmans)
Ancestor's View
It's You

INTERMISSION

Ruminating at the Suite
Melodic Faces
Sunlit
Oshun
Mood Indigo (Ellington/Blgard/Mills)
Vistas and Horizons
Two Griots from the Easy

*(All music composed by Mboya Nicholson
unless indicated)*

Personnel

Mboya Nicholson, piano

Pianist Mboya Nicholson has been performing and composing for 25 years. He leads a trio and a nonet called the Mboya Nicholson jazz Orchestra. Mboya lived in New Orleans for 7 years, where he attended the University of New Orleans and also soaked up as much of the music and culture of the city as possible.

Kessler Douglas, bass

Much sought after, bassist Kessler Douglas comes from a wealth of musical influences, ranging from Debussy, to Ray Brown. After completing his studies in Ottawa Kessler returned to Edmonton, and is frequently found playing various music venues around the city, and on the road.

Dan Skakun, drums

A consummate drummer and a teacher for over 40 years, Dan is a well respected drummer who has shared the bandstand with a host of luminaries, from Slide Hampton to Ted Nash; and from Tommy Banks to P.J. Perry. He currently teaches drums and performs a variety of music.

About the Compositions

My diaspora always intrigued me. And jazz was always the most satisfying mode of expression for me. The compositions performed tonight represent my philosophy which involves the idea that my diaspora is my ultimate identity - pieces of all of it- because African descendants are the result of a vast synthesis of elements from more than one African location, that traveled through the Middle Passage with a terrorized mass of humanity from many different African homelands. Their contributions and impact affected and shaped the Americas and Europe through cultural traditions, culinary traditions, folklore, music and more. And while it's true we are not a monolith, since people of African descent are of a multitude of African origins, it's also not a coincidence for example, that old storytelling traditions in Haiti and Jamaica both share the phrase, "Crick Crack" (Or Krick Krack).

The songs represent different memories and influences, The compositions are inspired by folklore, elders, and history, and more. My aspiration towards the timeless, rather than the four corners of an era's fickle zeitgeist, goes along with what I try to teach my students about playing jazz. I believe they need to trust that simply playing without obsessing over sounding 'new' or 'relevant', will ultimately display your individuality and your relevance. The "you" part of the equation is the modern part. Your perspective, manifested in your phrasing, your sense of dynamics, your choice of how you play - that is modern, because in all of music, even if you play a song a hundred people have played, you are what has never happened before. So just play what you hear; that's the modern part of so-called modernity.