

“Encounters and Collisions”

October 15th, 7:00-8:30 p.m. in the Nelson Music Room

Free Performance on East Campus

Romance Studies & FHI

Performers:

Sara Serpa- voice
Caroline Davis- alto sax
Marta Sanchez- piano
Erik Friedlander- cello

Music by Sara Serpa
Words by Igiaba Scego

(from *La mia casa è dove sono - My Home Is Where I Am* - translated by Aaron Robertson)

Sara Serpa presents her new work "Encounters and Collisions", a commission by Chamber Music America, drawing inspiration from Igiaba Scego's *My Home is Where I Am*, a memoir that reflects on identity, migrations and conflicts, and post-colonial relationships between Africa and Europe.

“In the summer of 2020, as I browsed through the bookshop Livraria Travessa in Lisboa, I came across a yellow covered book that read “*A Minha Casa É Onde Estou*” (*My Home is Where I Am*). As someone who constantly interrogates what the idea of “home” means, I bought the book. I read it in a few days, loving every page, realizing how much it connected with my research on Europe’s colonial past/ present relationship, but this time from the perspective of a Black Somali-Italian woman, Igiaba Scego.

My Home is Where I Am is a memoir, based on Scego’s experience as the daughter of Somali immigrants in Italy. Through a moving narrative, it focuses on the double identity of Italians of African origin, while denouncing Italy’s colonial past and its sexist and racist legacy in the present. It is also a beautiful homage to her mother and father, imagining emotional maps between Rome and Mogadishu.

Although Italy and Portugal are different countries, there are parallelisms in how their societies have responded (by denial and silence) to its colonial past. Some situations and episodes narrated by Scego could have happened in Portugal too. The present situation, with thousands of African migrants dying on the Mediterranean is a tragedy that is impossible to ignore. I searched for ways to contact Igiaba and after a few months we talked on the phone. I told her how inspired I was by her work and that I wanted to write music for her story. She accepted my idea and directed me to Aaron Robertson, who had translated her book to English. ([you can read some excerpts here](#))

Fast forward to 2022! I finished and premiered my Chamber Music America Commission entitled ***Encounters and Collisions***, in February, based on Igiaba’s book, featuring my long-time collaborators Ingrid Laubrock, Erik Friedlander and Angelica Sanchez. Tonight you will listen two different musicians from the original ensemble, Marta Sanchez and Caroline Davis, musicians with whom I have a musical relationship and that are shaping the New York music scene”

ABOUT SARA SERPA:

Sara Serpa Lisbon, Portugal native Sara Serpa is a vocalist-composer and improviser who implements a unique instrumental approach to her vocal style. Recognized for her distinctive wordless singing, Serpa has been immersed in the field of jazz, improvised and experimental music since first arriving in New York in 2008. Described by the New York Times as “a singer of silvery poise and cosmopolitan outlook,” and by JazzTimes magazine as “a master of wordless landscapes,” Serpa started her career with jazz luminaries such as Grammy-nominated pianist Danilo Perez, and Guggenheim and MacArthur Fellow pianist Ran Blake. As a leader, she has produced and released ten albums. The latest is Recognition, an interdisciplinary project that combines film with live music in collaboration with Zeena Parkins, Mark Turner and David Virelles. Serpa was voted #1 Vocalist of the Year by the 2020 NPR Music Jazz Critics Poll, Musician of the Year 2020 by Portuguese magazine Jazz.pt and Female Vocalist-Rising Star 2019 by the Downbeat Magazine Critics Poll. She has collaborated with Ingrid Laubrock, Erik Friedlander, John Zorn, Nicole Mitchell, André Matos, Guillermo Klein, Linda May Han Oh, Ben Street, and Kris Davis, among many others. Serpa currently teaches at The New School, New Jersey City University and is Artist-In-Residence at Park Avenue Armory. She is the recipient of Chamber Music America New Jazz Works Grant 2019, New Music USA 2019, New York City’s Women’s Fund 2020, USArtists Grant from Mid-Atlantic Foundation for the Arts, and the 2021 Herb Alpert/Ragdale Prize in Composition. Serpa has been active in gender equity in music and is the co-founder (along with fellow musician Jen Shyu) of Mutual Mentorship for Musicians (M3), an organization created to empower and elevate women and non-binary musicians. www.saraserpa.com