

**BUKURU CELESTIN**

**AMKEMI**

**& SNARKY PUPPY**

# FOREWORD

I've been around music as long as I've been on the planet. I love it not only because it reminds me some of the happiest times that I've had in my childhood, but also as a form of expression. As a human, I believe that Someone behind the scenes has a love deep enough to put all things in order for us to enjoy them, and so I have a deep love for that Being. His Love is what I like to express, and the way that I feel most connected to It is through music. I can not imagine living without it. Music is about respecting those around you and giving chances to others. What I got from Michael (League) is learning how to listen deeper and being creative with the few things you have or the new things you've just learned. I remember him telling me to make the song touch people even though they don't understand the words I'm saying. Music is powerful- it can touch emotions and change moods. For that reason, I will always keep it close to me.



-Bukuru Celestin, 2013





## 1. NDAGUKUNDA

*music & lyrics by Bukuru Celestin  
produced & arranged by Michael League  
horns arranged by Michael League  
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## 2. SHIMA

*music by Michael League, lyrics by Bukuru Celestin  
produced & arranged by Michael League  
horns arranged by Michael League  
© Guby 2013*

## 3. NYABUGINGO

*music by Bukuru Celestin & Michael League, lyrics by Bukuru Celestin  
produced & arranged by Michael League  
horns arranged by Chris Bullock & Michael League  
© Guby 2013*

## 4. AMKENI

*music by Michael League & Bukuru Celestin, lyrics by Bukuru Celestin  
produced & arranged by Michael League  
horns arranged by Michael League  
© Guby 2013*

## 5. NTUMBERO

*music by Michael League & Bukuru Celestin, lyrics by Bukuru Celestin  
produced & arranged by Michael League  
horns arranged by Mike "Maz" Maher & Chris Bullock  
© Guby 2013*

## 6. MUZOGEZAHE

*music by Michael League & Bukuru Celestin, lyrics by Bukuru Celestin  
produced & arranged by Michael League  
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# POSTSCRIPT

I first met Bukuru in 2009 through the Music Lab at Jefferson Center and its czar, the one and only Dylan Locke. Snarky Puppy has been visiting the lab in Roanoke on a regular basis for years, working with young musicians there and helping to foster their growth. On this particular visit, Dylan told me that there was a kid from Burundi with over 40 songs fully composed, recorded, and produced on one of the lab's computers- with that kid playing all of the instruments. I snuck into the control room that night and listened to about 15 of them, which totally floored me. I met Bukuru the next day, and we immediately started plotting a collaboration.

It was probably one of the more interesting collaborations I've ever been a part of, involving Snarky Puppy, Bukuru, and the great jazz drummer Ari Hoenig (who has also spent his share of time in Africa learning folkloric musics). Together, we recorded a song of B's ("Yesu") and a song of Ari's ("The Painter"), on which Bukuru and his three younger sisters added vocals. [If you're interested in these, by the way, you can find them as free downloads on the album page at [ropeadope.groundupmusic.com](http://ropeadope.groundupmusic.com).] It was such a blast that Dylan and I started to plot an entire album, which you're holding in your hand, thanks to a grant from Chamber Music America and a lot of time and effort from the staff at Jefferson Center.

The process was a very interesting one. As I said, Bukuru had already demoed everything on Garage Band, so my role was basically to take the music out of a 100% authentic Tanzanian/Burundian context and meld it with Snarky Puppy's sound and strengths. The whole point of making this record was to see what happens when two completely different musical cultures fuse, so there was a delicate balance to be kept between getting creative as an arranger/producer and not totally corrupting the rich musical tradition of Bukuru's culture. The rule I came up with was "the vocals must not have to change." Everything that I did to these songs, I did 100% around the vocals. In B's music, every song uses 1, 4, and 5 chords. There are no songs in minor keys. There aren't even minor CHORDS. It blew my mind! This kid was able to write 40+ songs, all with beautifully different melodies and hooks, on top of the SAME THREE MAJOR CHORDS. So we sat down together and I started putting different textures, feels, tempos, chords, and grooves underneath his music. The only exception was the song "Shima," which I actually wrote and Bukuru set lyrics and a melody to.

After re-demoing each song with my (very drastic, in most cases) changes in July 2012, I went back to New York and gave the material to the pups. We reconvened in February 2013, and tracked the entire album in just one week ("JT" laid down all of his drum tracks in one day). It was an absolute pleasure recording Bukuru, his three younger sisters, and the choir from his church in Roanoke. I had to stop several times during the recording to appreciate exactly what was happening- the musical and cultural exchange that went on between the band and Bukuru's family is something that I'll remember forever. And although this is technically a gospel record and that B's purpose is very specific in his songwriting, I hope the power of the music transcends our own faiths, creeds, and cultures, so that each of us may connect with whatever it is that makes us feel small, and makes us feel joy.

**-Michael League, 2013**

# CREDITS

**BUKURU CELESTIN** // vocals

**EPHRAZIE NIYONZIMA** // vocals

**ELVANIE NIYIBIGIRA** // vocals

**FURAHA NDAYISHIMIYE** // vocals

**ROANOKE INTERNATIONAL CHOIR** // backing vocals (on Nyabugingo, Ntumbero, & Amkeni)

**MICHAEL LEAGUE** // electric & baritone guitar, 6 & 12-string acoustic guitars, electric bass, Moog bass, keyboards

**BOB LANZETTI** // electric guitar

**CORY HENRY** // Hammond B3 organ & Fender Rhodes

**MIKE MAHER** // trumpet & flugelhorn

**CHRIS BULLOCK** // tenor sax, flute & clarinet

**NATE WERTH** // percussion

**JASON "JT" THOMAS** // drums

**BILL LAURANCE** // piano (on Muzogezahe)

*produced by Michael League.*

*mixed by Nic Hard in NYC.*

*mastered by Scott Hull at Masterdisk NYC.*

*engineered by Jake Dempsey & Michael League at the Music Lab at Jefferson Center in Roanoke, VA.*

*artwork by Michael League & Emilia Canas Mendes.*

*overseen by Dylan Locke.*

*made possible by a grant from Chamber Music America.*



Bukuru would like to thank God, his parents, sisters and brother for their support, Michael League and Snarky Puppy, Dylan Locke and everyone at the Music Lab and Jefferson Center, Sam and Susan Belisle, Joslaine Austin, David J. Higgs, Jaylord Barr and Ashley Delton, Jeanette Vuocolo and everyone at Chamber Music America, The Doris Duke Foundation, Foundation for Roanoke Valley, Norfolk Southern Foundation, Fridays After Five, City of Roanoke Arts Commission, Virginia Commission for the Arts, The National Endowment for the Arts, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Carlos Aranguren, Skip Brown, Otu Kojo, Jake Dempsey, AJ Johnson, Ed & Katherine Walker, John McBroom, Scott Hull, Nic Hard, and Heather Krantz.



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**MUSICLAB**  
*at Jefferson Center*