

Denise L.L. Onen (b.1995) is a South African-born Ugandan/Zambian sonic artist and cultural practitioner known for her work's eclecticism, intensity, and immersive quality. She approaches sound-making as a form of audio alchemy—a transformative process that distils layered life experiences into uncanny and graceful expressions.

Education

2023 - Present | **MMus in Musicology** (by Dissertation) - University of Cape Town, UCT, ZA
“*Graphically scoring and analysing Film Sound Design as a form of Electroacoustic Composition*”

10.2024 - 03.2025 | **Media Art** - Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe, HfG, DE
Intercultural Music and Media Practice Exchange

2014 - 2018 | **BMus in Music Technology** - SACM, University of Cape Town, UCT, ZA

Awards

03.2025 | PACT Zollverein Residency, with Gugulethu Duma and Camille Lacadee | Essen, DE

2024 | Baden-Württemberg Scholarship | BWS, DE

2024 | *Nominee* - Best Music for Digital Film | Fak’ugesi, Tshimolongo, Wits., ZA

2024 | Myra Chapman Department Scholarship | UCT, ZA

2023 | Oct, Nov. **Fellow**, DAAD Arts and Media Program | DAAD, DE

2022 | *International Nominee* for *Oram Award* | PRS Foundation, Radiophonic Ins.,UK

2018 | SAMRO Bursary | SAMRO Foundation, ZA

Sound Design

2024 | [Eyes to See](#) (Documentary) dir. Haneem Christian

2023 | [Lemkus for Nike Footscape](#) (Advertisement) dir. [Haneem Christian](#)

2023 | [Still Connecting](#) (Multimedia Film) - Edinburgh Fringe Film Festival dir. [Faye Kabali-Kagwa](#)

2023 | [Nëpp Nëppel](#) (Multimedia) dir. [Elijah Ndoumbe](#)

2022 | [All my Ex-Lovers are Dead](#) (Stage Play, [sound design as soundtrack](#)) dir. [Dara Beth](#)

2022 | [LAM](#) – SportsScene RSA (Advertisement) dir. Haneem Christian

2021 | [Deliver Me](#) – (Documentary) Paper Crane Collective dir. [Jannous Aukema](#)

Awards: Best Southern African Short Documentary - African Human Rights Festival
Features: CIFF, Encounters Documentary Festival

2021 | [Prayers for Sweet Water](#) – British Film Institute, CT (Documentary)

Awards: Sundance Jury Prize Nominee, DIFF Best Short Documentary,
New Fest: Emerging Black LGBTQ+ Filmmaker

2021 | Still Bloom – [Zoey Black Productions](#) (Documentary), 2021

2020 | [Bienvenue A Ma Table](#) (Multimedia installation) – For [Elijah Ndoumbe](#), Forecast Forum, 2020

Composition

2024 | [Spore Berlin](#) (Documentary) Studio Johannes Förster, AFF architects, the Schöpflin Foundation

2024 | Democracy (String Quartet + Tape) - Commissioned by the [Signum Quartet](#)
with the support of the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation

2023 | [Original Score, About Happy Hippos and Sad Peacocks](#) (Essay Documentary)

dir. [Johannes Förster](#) & [Elkin Calderón Guevara](#)

World Premiere - Visions du Réel, Nyon, Switzerland

Seoul Animal Film Festival, South Korea: **Special Mention**, OKO International Ethnographic Film Festival, Kyiv, Ukraine - **Award: Festival Team Special Prize for Cinematic Innovation & Craft**
Festival Villa del Cine, Villa de Leyva, Colombia - Award: **Premio Fossil Best Short Documentary**

2023 | [Usque ad Sidera Tellus](#) (Choral Work SATB) - Commissioned by Dr. John Woodland for Vox CPT.
2023 | Delela (Stage Play) - dir. Tiisetso Mashifane wa Noni
2022 | [Siyamphimbili](#) - (Choral Work SSAA), Commissioned by Dr. P Shangkuan, Calvin University
2022 | [Composer, I AM](#) - SportsScene RSA (Advertisement) dir. Haneem Christian
2021 | [Original Score, Prayers for Sweet Water](#) (Documentary) - British Film Institute CT

Mixing and Mastering

2024 | Eyes to See (Documentary) dir. Haneem Christian
2023 | Mix & Mastering Engineer, [Salon Kewpie - The Legacy Project](#) (Short Documentary) - dir. Haneem Christian, GALA Archive, District Six Museum
2022 | Mix Engineer, I AM - SportsScene RSA (Advertisement)
2022 | Mix Engineer, [The SenseMaker Project](#) (Documentary) ACDI, Western Cape Water Caucus, UCT
2022 | Mix Engineer, [City Occupied](#) (Documentary: Housing Crisis) - Lionfish Productions
2022 | Mix Engineer, [Decentralising Music Making in South Africa](#) (Documentary) - Stiff Pap/Umuzi 2022
2021 | Mix & Mastering Engineer, Deliver Me - Paper Crane Collective (Documentary), 2021
2021 | Mix & Mastering Engineer, Prayers for Sweet Water - British Film Institute CT (Documentary), 2021

Artist Features + Collaborations

2023/24 | [sounding the body as a site](#) (installation), Interaction designer: Lucy Strauss
Oscillations Exhibition, 27.04 - 19.05, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, DE
Broadcast: [Sound Art from Southern Africa](#) Deutschlandfunk Kultur DLFK
Workshop: Sonic Inquiries and Practice, Centre of Humanities Research, UWC, Cape Town, ZA

2023 | [Sound Designer](#), *The Theatre of Beauty: Imvuselelo* by [Koleka Putuma](#) (Installation),
Premiere: National Arts Festival Makhanda, ZA
'The Dancing Mushroom' dir. Haneem Christian - MIND Foundation's INSIGHT conference, Berlin, DE

2023 | Sound Designer, [The Revolution will not be Televised; It will be live-streamed](#) by Koleka Putuma
Premiere: National Arts Festival Makhanda, ZA
features: World Expression Forum WEXFO, Lillehammer, NO
International Literature Festival BuchBasel, CH

2021 | [Surviving Solitude](#) (Immersive Audio Piece)
Featured Artist, Surviving Solitude - ICA UnInfecting the City Public Arts Festival, ZA
Featured Artist, So Creative Summit (Digital Storytelling Exhibition) - British Council

2021 | [Remnant Wading Space](#), for installation by [Blk Banaana](#)
Featured Sound Artist, Our Bodies are Clocks Made of Water, LAPA Residence, Johannesburg, ZA

2021 | Backing Vocals and Keyboard/Electronics, for [Pushing Portals](#)
In collaboration with [Dumama](#), [Jannous Aukema](#), and [Kamil Hassan](#).
The Mutha_Ship Landing, ZA and Found Sound Nation

Work Experience

2024 | **Sound Mentor**, Free Film School, Cape Town, ZA
2023 | **Sound Mentor & Engineer**, *Brave Futures* Film Initiative OTV, Cape Town, ZA
2021-2022 | **Sound Engineer, Audio Restoration**, *The EAR Academy*, Cape Town + Online