

**TOWNSHIP MUSIC: THE PERFORMANCE AND COMPOSITIONAL  
APPROACHES OF THREE NEOTRADITIONAL MUSICIANS IN DURBAN**

by

**SAZI STEPHEN DLAMINI**

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## PREFACE

The aim of this study has been to locate a subcultural aspect of neotraditional music performance, and relate this to the broader historical, social, political, economic, and cultural processes of lived experience. In looking at the performance and compositional output of three township neotraditional musicians, I have attempted to focus on the individual construction and articulation of this lived experience. I have sought to link individuals to aspects of social and historical circumstance, perhaps to account for the undeniably social basis of performance generally. In this respect I have also recognised a common, overriding perception by the three township neotraditional performers, namely that of their pursuits as straddling a continuum of performance experience and epoch. In this way I have been led to examine elements which characterise this continuum in the urban black social experience. Thus, the bulk of the second chapter has been informed by existing archival documentary materials, scholarly studies of the socio-economic, political, cultural and social performance developments among urban Africans in and around Durban prior to 1960. Several interviews with neotraditional performers of this era have also gone towards augmenting a backdrop for the emergent social performance practice of the townships since their consolidation from about the late 1950s onwards.

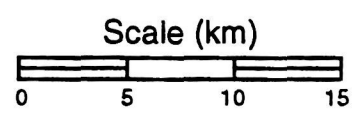
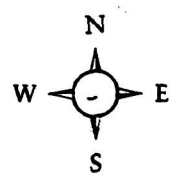
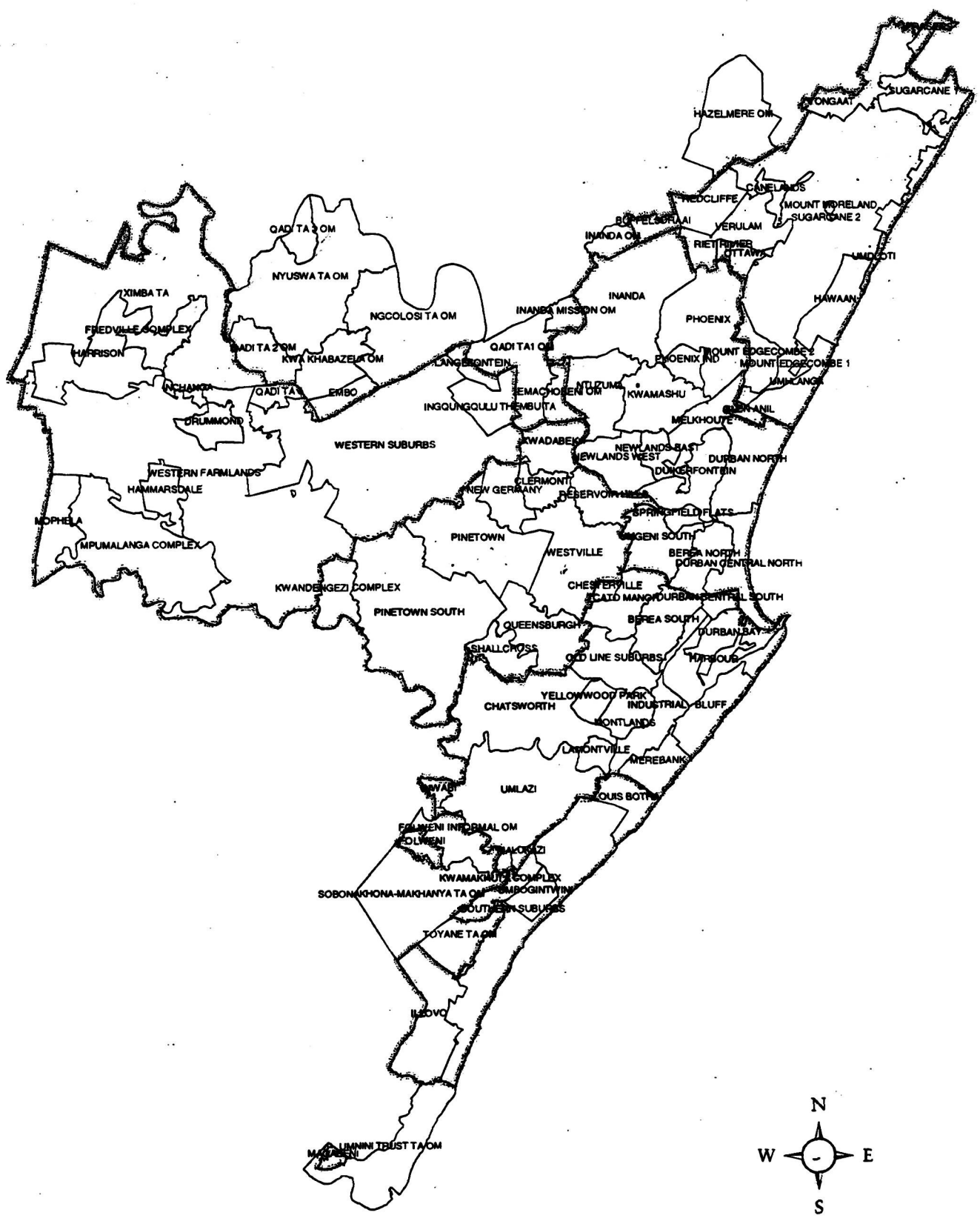
It is from this melting pot of experience that I have attempted to pick up the threads that link the present subjects with what had unfolded before their time. However socially and culturally disjunctive the advent of the townships might be construed, it is as well the dynamics of such conjunctive and disjunctive experience in social performance practice which stand out clearly as symptoms in the course of urban black performance development.

I have viewed the experience of the township as manifest in the lives of its citizens, here typified by the three subjects. I have sought the processing of the elements of the environment and its articulation in their individual compositional and performance styles. In the third chapter is delineated the influential aspect of learning and its effect upon the total expressive potential of the individuals. From a close scrutiny of contributing factors in the formative experiences of individual musicians, there emerge elements which highlight the intertextual and coeval nature of lived experience of the three subjects.

The inclusion in the first chapter of my early musical consciousness acknowledges both the individual and the shared, social aspect of the musical performance experience. It is also in the intertwined careers of individual musicians that one of the most pertinent theoretical assumptions of this study finds resonance - namely the potential to be changed by, as well as to change, the experience of others (Jackson 1989).

Chapter 4 seeks to account for the widespread employment of the guitar, especially in Natal and KwaZulu, as a primary instrument of neotraditional performance expressivity. The section on the tin-guitar exemplifies a general, grassroots understanding of the intervallic possibilities and rudimentary harmonies potentiated by neotraditional musical experiences. Chapter 5 deals with the stylistic approaches of the three subjects to performance and composition. An attempt is made to highlight their individual manipulation and understanding of the elements of form and structure, melody, harmony and rhythm. Chapter 6 focusses attention on the reproduction and representation of the music of the three subjects on records, radio, live performance and the print media.

# Greater Durban Metropolitan Area



Data Source: Urban Strategy Department, City of Durban  
 Map produced by: GIS Laboratory, Geographical and Environmental Sciences, UND

## Chapter 1

### TOWNSHIP MUSIC : THE PERFORMANCE AND COMPOSITIONAL APPROACHES OF THREE NEOTRADITIONAL MUSICIANS IN DURBAN

#### 1.1 Introduction and some theoretical issues

This thesis was initially conceived of as an overview of township performance culture in KwaZulu-Natal, covering most of the African townships in the region formerly known as Natal. In this form, the premise of the study was that South Africa's black townships' adaptive, marginally urban and complexly organised societies manifest equally diverse musical performance cultures. However, the object of an ethnography of *one* township's performance culture proved difficult in terms of time and resources needed to undertake such research. This is partly due to the wide diversity of the townships' cultural performance practices. These are comprised of the music of religious cultural groups and various Christian church denominations, including the Africanist, the Ethiopian and Zionist sects, the music of indigenous Nguni religion, the music of the school, the *shebeen* subculture, the informal songs of drinking, African classical and secular choral music, *isicathamiya*, *mbaqanga*, *afro-jazz styles*, *gospel music*, *soul*, *blues and jazz*. There is also *maskandi*, and the music of the neotraditional dance styles of *ingoma*, *gumboot*, *pantsula*, *kwaito* and other lesser known individual and subcultural innovations, further diversifying township neotraditional performance.

The need to pay specific attention to the complex role of the social, cultural, economic, historical and political processes in the construction of these modes of performance, demanded a drastic paring down of the scope of research, in terms of geographical space and area of focus. As a township dweller, a performer and music student, the challenge has been to find a voice, a way of talking and thinking about an aspect of township performance, especially that which I feel I am a part of. In this study, I have aimed to share and engage a lived aspect of township music with some of the pertinent discussions within the study of South African black urban performance culture.

Focussing on the music of Abbey Duze Mahlobo, Muziwakhe 'Madala' Kunene, and the late Bruce Madoda Sosibo, I have attempted to interpret the essence of their individual compositional and performance styles in the context of prevailing cultural, social, historical, political and economic processes. One of the reasons for focussing on these three individuals is my perception of their collective and individual experience, the convergent and divergent aspects of their stylistic development.

The broader circumstance of township social existence is attributed to pervasive processes of a historical, political, cultural, and geographical significance. The particularity of this environment has impinged on the social performance behaviour, including musical performance and composition, of inhabitants. Thus to a large degree, the individual and social experiences of the three subjects whom I have chosen are marked by a significant degree of commonality. Of primary interest is the manner in which each of the subjects has distilled

diverse elements of this experience into an individual expressive style. Furthermore, the development of each musician's approach to their primary instrument of composition and performance - the guitar - has led me to consider their particular experiential and other musical developmental resources on which to base their individual stylistic approaches to the instrument. Such an orientation has pointed to the pertinence of experience, both social and individual, and ways in which such experiences are processed by individuals. In this way I have been led to adopt the notions of indivisibility and ambiguity of lived experience (Jackson 1989). In this approach I have found resonance in the views which consider

*'Experience as a boundless process, and the need to break away from closed systems and completed structures in order to escape the static categorising of life into the legal, the political, the economic, the social, the historical, without the fear of losing identity and authority' (Jackson 1989:16).*

Through this thesis, I seek to articulate the intertwining of my own experience with that of the subjects. The coeval nature of our collective experience has challenged me to focus on elements which determine the individuality of each subject in their approach to composition and performance. This relationship between the self and the subject, has exerted considerable influence on the very process and nature of this ethnographic inquiry. I have been unable to distance myself from processes impinging on the subjects' broader consciousness and responses to their total environment. Indeed I have shared with the three musicians, significant moments in the course of their stylistic development. This opportunity has enabled me to articulate viewpoints and experiences which I have, at some level, felt strongly in common with the subjects.

Our Nguni heritage, language, persisting indigenous traditions and beliefs in the townships, the uniform institutions of socialization, the school education system, a broad Christianity, are arguably some of the most pertinent issues of our individual and collective musical development. It has been of primary concern to articulate this commonality as well as delineate the subtle and important differences in individual stylistic approach. This study further seeks to highlight and explain issues of convergence and divergence as they are embodied in musical composition and performance. Thus I have sought a significance for my position, bearing in mind its theoretical and methodological implications for the traditional relationships between subject and object, the observer and the observed:

*'The "self" cannot, therefore, be treated as a thing among things; it is a function of our involvement with others in a world of diverse and ever-altering interests and situations' (Jackson 1989:3).*

This blurring of boundaries of experience between the self and the subject has resulted in an unavoidable oscillation of focus, emanating from a situation in which I have had to treat my own experiences as primary data. It is along this path that I have become aware of the inadequacy of everyday language to convey concepts perceived as being simultaneously *inside* and *outside* of the experience of the self. A similar dilemma is manifested in mediatory stances assumed by township neotraditional performance - particularly that which seeks to express and acknowledge a complex and largely untenable social condition in the broader

environment. It is such township performance practice that has sought to interpret an experience of the pervasive social processes in its environment for comprehension by the *outside* world. On the one hand it has been the attention of the idealised 'other' that has been appealed to, to reinforce condemnation of a subjugated condition of black South Africanism under apartheid. On the other hand has been a need to interpret prevailing processes for comprehension and transcendence by the majority of the oppressed communities on the *inside*. Such a dichotomous orientation complicates the exercise of explaining and reaching conclusions, opening a way for a multiplicity of voices and a conceptualisation of culture and the processual relationships within it.

The study acknowledges the difficulty inherent in the task of relating and representing "lived experience", its "dialectical irreducibility" and the fact that "lived experience is never identical with the concepts we use to grasp and represent it" (Jackson 1989). The transmission of experience in the totality of its ramifications, is rendered problematic precisely because lived experience,

*'overflows the boundaries of any one concept, any one person or any one society... As such, it brings us to a dialectical view of life which emphasizes the interplay rather than the identity of things' (Jackson 1989).*

## 1.2 Situating the subjects

The first international production of guitarist Madala Kunene's music was a 1996-released CD, *Kon'ko man* (B&W Music BW058). The recording was a consequence of Madala Kunene's discovery in Durban by a London-based record producer, which Kunene described:

*'It was around November of 1994, when a group of people from London visited Durban. I was performing in a downtown venue called Jam & Sons playing my last song of the evening, "Mata gota fri". These people came in and started to dance, and I could see that they were obviously enjoying what I was playing. After I had finished my set, I was introduced to Robert (Trunz), Airtto (Moreira) and Jose' Neto. We shook hands and they told me how much they enjoyed what I was doing' (Kunene 1997).*

Following this introduction, Kunene was asked to record some of his compositions for a compilation CD of South African music. Included in the session were compositions by other South African musicians, among them alto saxophonists Barney Rachabane, Mandla Masuku, and Rachabane's son Leonard, who plays tenor and soprano saxophones:

*We did a collective session, Freedom Countdown, for the overseas recording company (B&W Music). They must have liked my songs because soon thereafter, I was asked to record a solo album. This I did - and the album was called Kon'ko man. My intention had been to call it Isiqomqomane, but the producers had changed the name because they could not pronounce the word "isiqomqomane" - so they called it Kon'ko man. Originally the name of the album was going to be Isiqomqomane' (Madala Kunene, Apr. 1997).*

The release of the CD effectively launched Madala Kunene's international performance. At the time of writing, a volume of Kunene's substantial compositions - produced with the backing of international musicians and a highly-trained studio recording production team - was to be released globally. Live recordings and launching appearances by Kunene have already taken place in South Africa, London and Switzerland, with more engagements planned to promote his music internationally. Some of Madala Kunene's recent performances include appearances at KwaZulu-Natal's South African Cultural Festival in Nantes, France in October of 1997, and at the Northern Lights Festival in Tromsø, Norway, in January 1998. These developments represent a radical change to Madala Kunene's performance career since he began playing a three-stringed tin-guitar as a young boy in the streets of Durban in the late 1950s.

Madala Kunene was born in the Durban shantytown settlement of Cato Manor in the early 1950s. Mkhumbane, as the settlement was named by its predominantly African inhabitants, was famed for its social and political turbulence, and a diversity of leisure-time practices. Musical performance, and especially guitar playing, has been one of the lasting legacies of Mkhumbane's remembered history. The boisterous shantytown was forcibly dismantled by the state military and the city's municipal personnel in 1958.

The demise of Durban's urban African shantytowns and the relocation of many of their citizens to the peri-urban townships derailed most of the processes and structures that were already in place or evolving in the cultural expressions and performance practices of urban Africans. Until this turn of events, urban black neotraditional performance had been one of the major adaptive strategies of Africans in dealing with urbanisation. The variety and richness of such developments catered for the equally diverse cultural groupings that had evolved in Durban since the early part of the twentieth century (Erlmann 1991). With this in mind I have sought the roots of township neotraditional performance in social processes and milieu that were undermined by the destabilisation and eventual destruction of the 'pre-township' society of Mkhumbane (Cato Manor).

Madala recounted the events of the day his family was forcibly removed from Jibacoat section of Cato Manor after the army personnel had demolished his parents' cottage:

*'...When my father refused to dismantle, they tied our cottage with chains and pulled it down with a vehicle called a "Saracen", an army vehicle. They pulled it down, breaking all the furniture as the building collapsed with everything inside it...we cried..'* (Madala Kunene, Apr.1997).

The official orderliness sought by the implementation of the KwaMashu housing scheme was never actualised at any stage of the eviction operations, and events assumed nightmare proportions for the victims:

*'It was 'another' day, it was like the end of the world. As our cottage was falling down another one was falling down alongside it, because we were refusing to leave our lands - the places where we were born and from which we were now being evicted. There was nothing we could do about it then because of the whites, and we were small in the eyes of their law. Searching in the rubble, we moved aside the corrugated-iron sheeting in order to salvage the little that was left of our possessions. Everything was then piled onto the waiting trucks....each truck would load up to five families and their possessions. This caused a lot of quarrels and squabbling over the precious belongings. One person would be saying "this is mine" and another one also claiming the same item as theirs. Piled together like that with our possessions the trucks dumped us at a place called KwaTiki in the township's G-section, in a four-roomed house. All four families were crammed into a single four-roomed house no matter how many family members there were in each family' (Madala Kunene, Apr.1997).*

The material losses suffered by evicted families were exacerbated by the lack of privacy, autonomy and security normally imbued by an organized family structure. For a brief time, there remained a measure of solidarity and support among families such as Madala's in the company of their immediate neighbours from Jibacoat. However, this small concession did not last as, according to Madala:

*'Time went by and we were all staying together, until we were moved once more to a place called Emapulangweni and the families were separated. My family was allocated a single room to live in, at the back of which was another room already occupied by another family. This was to be our own house but we were sharing it with another family whom we did not know. They had been evicted from Newclare, a section of Mkhumbane that was known as Mkhalandoda. Another family that we knew from Two Sticks was shoved together with another from Jibacoat. We did not know one another, but because people get along well and love one another, we stayed and we are still alive today' (Madala Kunene, Apr.1997).*

Both Madala Kunene and the late guitarist, percussionist and composer, Bruce Madoda Sosibo, were born in Mkhumbane in the early 1950s, while Duze Mahlobo was born in the nearby township of Lamontville in 1956. Both Duze Mahlobo's parents had been active members of the vibrant ballroom and tap-dance scene in Durban from the 1940s until the early 1960s. Growing up in the township of Lamontville, Duze was introduced to jazz-inspired tap-dancing by his piano-playing father. When the family relocated to KwaMashu township in 1962, Duze encountered and fell in love with the guitar. To a significant degree, all three musicians share interwoven social experiences of childhood, adolescence and early performative careers. As children they experienced the social, economic and political repercussions of outlawed black urban citizenship. Their families were forcibly relocated to the African township of KwaMashu, northwest of the city of Durban. If the conditions

imposed by resettlement proved too harsh for constituted family units such as that of Madala Kunene, the fate of Cato Manor's unmarried and widowed women was even more bleak. The late composer and percussionist Bruce Sosibo's widowed mother faced such a situation, having lost her husband early in 1959 due to tribal violence in Mvubukazi location, an area in the Madonela district of Umzimkhulu. Busisiwe Sosibo, a younger sister of Bruce, recounted her family's experience of resettlement:

- *'I never got to know my father when he was still alive. He passed away when I was six-months old...that is why I never knew him. We were brought up by our mother in the old timber settlement in what is now the B-section of the township, Emapulangweni' (Busisiwe Sosibo, Aug. 1997).*

The partial relaxation of stringent regulations set down by the Durban municipality in 1959, regarding women's rights to remain and work in the city, had provided the Sosibo family with the only practical loophole to qualify for accommodation in KwaMashu. Also emanating from the municipality's final resettlement and removal policy were many stumbling blocks, in the form of clauses whose effect was to deny African women the right to live and work in Durban:

- *'...meshing pass-law regulations with practical considerations and the total amount of formal housing to be provided in KwaMashu. As was the case for a man, a woman would only acquire personal permanent domiciliary rights to live in Durban if she had either been born in the city, or had been formally employed by one employer for ten years or by various employers for fifteen years' (Edwards 1996: 121).*

Such conditions excluded the majority of women from qualifying for either a permanent residential status in the city or resettlement in KwaMashu. Other clauses and amendments to the policy further compounded the women's problems by connecting their status to the legal domiciliary status of men. In the township of KwaMashu, a woman lost her right to occupy a township house if her husband died. Furthermore, divorced and separated women, or those deserted by their husbands, lost their right to live in Durban unless they were formally employed (Edwards 1996).

This aspect of the resettlement policy proved fateful for many township dwellers, and adversely affected the destinies of families and individuals who fell foul of its stipulations. Busisiwe Sosibo, the sole-surviving member of Bruce Sosibo's family, related the repercussions they suffered when their mother, as a result of retrenchment, could not support the family:

- *'.....a rule was enforced which stipulated that a family's home would be taken away from them unless one of its members held a steady employment. Those were difficult times, the regulations were stringently enforced by the "blackjacks". It was around 1968 and the "boers" were bearing down heavily on the people' (Busisiwe Sosibo 1997).*

As the only surviving male member of the family, Bruce, who was a Form One (Grade 9) student at Sibonelo High School at the time, was compelled to abandon his studies and seek employment. It is his early experience with the harsh workings of the apartheid administration which later informed his compositions and the textual elements of his songwriting as we shall see. Seeking employment as an unskilled labourer at the height of apartheid was a morally degrading experience, involving the negotiation of a web of administrative mechanisms which were enforced zealously by a race-obsessed civil service bureaucracy. The experiences of black South Africans as subjects of pass regulations enforcement have been documented in literature and prose, poetry, drama, the visual arts, law reports, magazines, newsprint as well as in musical composition and performance. Among the three main subjects of this study, Bruce Sosibo, as a result of his early encounters with the alienating labour administrative practices of the late 1960s, was more sensitized towards the repressive institutions which enforced the pass laws.

Below are lyrics to one of Sosibo's compositions, "Ipasi" ('the passbook'):

<i>Ngithe ngihamba</i>	<i>(As I was walking)</i>
<i>Bangibuz'ipasi</i>	<i>(I was asked for a pass)</i>
<i>Kulomhlaba kababa</i>	<i>(In my fatherland)</i>
<i>Kulelolizwe</i>	<i>(In this country) [from Excerpt 1.2]</i>

A self-taught township guitarist, Sosibo composed this song on the guitar. Later he arranged it for the group ZANUSI, of which he was bandleader, composer, drummer, and percussionist from 1988 until it finally disbanded in 1991. An arrangement of the song "Ipasi" for tenor saxophone, trumpet/trombone, two guitars, electric bass, drum-kit and percussion, as it was recorded for Gallo Music Productions in 1990, appears as Transcription 12 in Appendix III. The song represents one aspect of Sosibo's conceptual storehouse, particularly the influences of *marabi*-based progressions. It was Sosibo who was comfortable in interpreting all of the popular music styles such as *pop*, *rock*, *soul*, *jazz*, *gospel*, and locally derived and indigenous idioms of *mbaqanga isicathamiya*, *maskandi*, *ingoma* and *amahubo*. I have attempted above, to link the dynamics of location and the lived environment to township neotraditional composition. The details of day to day township existence was a contentious issue for most expressive art forms that emanated from the township. The overwhelming sense of restriction and immobility that is engendered by the physical and mental boundaries that are imposed by the very siting and architecture of the township has always challenged transcendence on the part of the occupants. The limitations of choices towards the achievement of this ideal have called forth resourcefulness and creativity, as well as nurtured feelings of anger and frustration, as Duze Mahlobo puts it:

*'The location (township) is a concentration camp. It was designed for the population, the so-called black man, so that he could not escape. (Because) in every township, if you remember well, there are only two exits. Some, like Lamontville and Chesterville are cul-de-sacs...one and the same...the entrance and the exit. Ja...it is a concentration camp. No one possessing a mind capable of beauty could have built the location...could design the location as it exists' (Duze Mahlobo, Apr.1997).*

The most visible and reasonably accessible aspect of Mahlobo's performance career was when he was guitarist, composer and arranger for the short-lived but influential MALOPOETS. MALOPOETS was a Durban-based performance group whose membership was made up of the ex-members of two township bands, AFRIKA and THIRD GENERATION. The former was from Mamelodi Township in Pretoria and was led by flautist Abie Cindi while THIRD GENERATION were a KwaMashu band. It was in this band that Duze first played professionally, as well as being the first in which he and Bruce Sosibo came together professionally on stage, prior to their involvement with MALOPOETS.

MALOPOETS was more than a band in that their extended personnel included artists, poets and writers such as Eugene Skeef, Mafika Mbuli and the late Ben Langa. This aspect of MALOPOETS linked them strongly to the radical black literary world of *Staffrider* magazine, in which articles by MALOPOETS members appeared for some time in the first few years of the magazine's publication (*Staffrider* vols. 1, 2 and 3 : 1978-1980). A founding member MALOPOETS, Duze Mahlobo arranged, composed, and interpreted indigenous African musical influences, and was largely responsible for the trademark conceptual elements of style for which the band became famous. Often such original compositions and interpretations of indigenous and African urban popular performance traditions were considered too political by recording companies, music promoters and apartheid state security. The MALOPOETS line-up of 1979 consisted of Pat Sefolosa on percussion, vocals and saxophones; Bruce Sosibo on drums and vocals; Duze Mahlobo, lead guitar and vocals; Sam Shabalala, guitar and vocals; Pat Mokoka, electric bass and vocals. Around 1978, I was profoundly captured by MALOPOETS' music, imbued as it was with images of black resistance, indigenous religious symbols, poetry, and African spiritualism.

Writing the liner notes for the band's ill-fated debut album entitled *Rebirth-Malopoets (AM 1001)*, leader Patrick Sefolosa positioned the band's conceptual style firmly within South Africa's post-1976 ideological, social and cultural debates of African nationalism:

*'THANKS TO ALL THE WOMEN IN AFRICA WHO ARE EXPECTING. THROUGH THEM THE FUTURE LEADERS OF THIS DARK CONTINENT WILL BE BORN'*  
*The great musician John Coltrane died on 17th July, 1967. Eleven years later, to the day, THE MALOPOETS were born. The group searches in their music for an authentic, indigenous African sound. As the name suggests (MALOPO - Sotho for Spirits, POETS - interpreters of the spiritual language), they pledged themselves to the enunciation of the wisdom of the Spirits that are hovering over us all the time and of which we are consciously aware' (Pat Sefolosa 1979).*

The album itself juxtaposed images of indigenous African religion, especially in the tracks 'Exikwembu' (It's God); 'Call of the Spirits'; and 'Meropa Badimo' (Drums of the Spirits), with the ritual symbolism of birth, rites of passage, African solidarity, celebration and the affirmation of individual and social African identity. The themes alluded to by the texts of songs from this album, with titles such as 'Bamakweru' (Brothers and Sisters); 'Me M'Afrika' (I The African); 'Regomotse' (We're Silent, We're Not Speaking); 'Thabi' (Happiness,

Marriage); and 'Maboko' (Celebration), resonated with the experiences of the emergent African political and cultural consciousness in South Africa. It is undoubtedly the contentiousness of such issues during South Africa's apartheid era, which led to the 'disappearance' of the master tapes of the album before it was commercially released. In Appendix II is included a brief example [Excerpt 1.1] of the song 'Me M'Afrika' (I The African), as it was performed live by MALOPOETS in a concert at the University of Zululand in the middle of 1979.

It was the band's overt and radical African political leanings that ruled out most of the financially lucrative venues for MALOPOETS. The liberal university and college circuit was thus one of the ways in which they were able to popularise their music among a sympathetic, youthful and politically sensitized audience,

*'...at that time we couldn't play in white clubs, that's where we could have made the money. As far as I remember we only played at the beginning in one white venue in the yacht harbour...there was that fish and lobster restaurant...but then we had to apply to Pretoria for a special permit. That must have been around 1977, 1978' (Ellinor Hermann, MALOPOETS manager, Nov.1997).*

A subject which Duze Mahlobo is reluctant to discuss freely is his time in exile, a period which clearly represents individual experiential struggles that have left him largely bitter and disillusioned. It was around 1981 when Duze left South Africa with his wife to live in Zimbabwe. The move virtually dissipated MALOPOETS' original conceptual orientation. Eluded by success in the country of their birth, the remaining band members soon left South Africa to seek better opportunity abroad. Thereafter their music seems to have lost a certain earthiness and conceptual integrity that had sustained the band during the hard South African phase of its existence. Duze was decidedly critical of the band's debut album, which was recorded in exile:

*'That was "cheapline". The sense of South African roots was alienated ...they also killed the sound by including an electronic keyboard' (Duze Mahlobo, Jul.1997).*

Mahlobo was referring to the band's Paris produced album, entitled Malopoets (CCP Record Co.1984). The overseas production had lost sight of the cultural symbolism imbued in the band's image within South Africa. The producers had chosen, for the album sleeve, to pose the band in front of a museum collection of Central and West African indigenous religious artefacts - fertility dolls, totems and masks. The contradictions were further compounded by the band members' appearance in 'designer' jeans, processed leatherware, sports sweaters and 'American basketball' sneakers. The band's stage attire during their South African phase had consisted of pan-African caftans, beads, sandal footwear and often unclad torsos. In his criticism, Duze felt strongly that a group comprising culturally emancipated Nguni, Tswana, Shangaan, Pedi and Sotho youth would have been more respectable donning local beads, hairstyles and hide materials such as shields (Mahlobo 1997).

The issue of his departure and the insecurity of exile are not among Mahlobo's favourite subjects:

*Duze: Yes, my brother. That is how things turned out...You amaze me by asking me*

*about painful issues... (At this point Duze starts to tune his guitar)*

*Sazi: ...So...from there onwards, what directions did your musical development take?*

*Duze: I was very much frustrated by the band ...working with a large band frustrated me a lot, but it also made me grow to be able to incorporate much more. Much more is now possible - I have been afforded a larger scope. In this way it also helped me because I had never dreamt that I would be able to play solo guitar. For three years I worked very hard, playing alone without public performance and studying at the same time. I had to develop a solo repertoire - I was living in Zimbabwe at the time.*

*Sazi: Where were you studying...What was the name of the school?*

*Duze: ...Nongoma...I think that was the name - because it was in Bulawayo.*

*Sazi: ...those are Nguni names...*

*Duze: Yes, they are of Zulu origins...it was Nongoma Training College. It was not called a music college. If I remember correctly the teacher's name was....I once saw him in a local television programme on his visit to this country. He was travelling with his ensemble. He used to teach marimba and mbira. I keep forgetting who his surname was.*

*Sazi: Did the college have a music department?*

*Duze: Yes, and they used to deal solely with mbira and marimba - and that is where I learnt these instruments ...marimba, mbira and also umakhweyana bow. I had been introduced to the latter instrument while I was still in Johannesburg - by the mineworkers. In Pretoria too, rural migrant workers possessed a fuller knowledge of traditional instruments. We used to visit them in the compounds - and they had come to trust us because we showed them respect. That is where I came across this knowledge.*

*Sazi: Did you then leave for Europe immediately after Zimbabwe?*

*Duze: Yes. It was becoming very complicated to return - one could not cross the borders back and forth easily. I opted to go (West) Germany, where I could not be recognised. While I was not happy to do this, I still had no choice.*

*Sazi: Did you regroup as MALOPOETS when you were abroad?*

*Duze: No...never.*

*Sazi: Who did you perform with then while you were in exile?*

*Duze: Bheki Mseleku, Steve Neil...an African American bassist and former husband to singer Busi Mhlongo, percussionist Dumisani Mabaso who is based in Germany... also with Reiner - a German, on bass. I am just counting the people I performed with, and not in any order. I also played with Thebe Lipere...the percussionist, Eugene Skeef, an Italian tenor saxophonist, Julio and his brother, Steve, who played drums. We were only performing my music.*

*Sazi: Where can one get hold of that music?*

*Duze: It was lost.*

While living in London, Duze was briefly involved with an innovative group of musicians who called themselves LOOSE TUBES. Included as Excerpt 1.3 in Appendix II is an original composition by Duze, which he arranged in exile for two saxophones, drums and guitar.

Since his return to South Africa in 1989, Duze Mahlobo has found it hard to work with established musical performance outlet institutions, market-oriented record producers, and the mainstream promoters of South African township music. Mahlobo's initial disillusionment has matured into a frustrated impatience and alienation that has all but immobilised his uniquely creative approach to township neotraditional performance. Duze has effectively resorted to a form of exile in KwaMashu township, never venturing out of the "concentration camp", where he is presently undergoing initiation in the practice of healing with traditional medicines, *ubunyanga*, and divining with ancestral spirits, *ubungoma*.

### 1.3 Situating the self in relation to the field

The township, as a focus of musical and ethnographic enquiry, has continually drawn my attention since I began to perform professionally and study music formally in 1987. I strove towards the articulation of a particular orientation - and this I have felt in common with the different township musicians that I have associated with - a strong orientation in the prevailing social, cultural and historical developments in South Africa generally and as far as these processes affect township neotraditional performance specifically. In the wake of the 1976 black students' revolt, such developments have consistently manifested in protest and resistance against the apartheid onslaught on black South African society. It is in neotraditional township music and other genres of the performance, literary, and visual arts that the most eloquent expressions against the effects of apartheid have been articulated.

In the discussions that follow, I have placed both the subject and the self within the black South African peri-urban township experience. I have used musical compositions and lived experiences of the three township neotraditional musicians, to highlight the relationships I perceive between their stylistic approaches to composition and performance. Furthermore, I have sought to position the significance of these approaches in relation to the broader theoretical developments within ethnomusicology.

Following Keil and Feld (1994), I have sought to link the multi-thematic processes which characterise the study of South African urban black music with the performative processes of township neotraditional composition and performance. I have also been engaged by their notion of the 'groove' - the range and freedom of interpretation which the term conceptually encompasses - and the possibilities for the construction of meaning and relevance out of a concept whose starting point is a "participatory consciousness". Engaging such a consciousness among the subjects together, as well as between myself and the individual subjects, with the pertinent but fragmentary processes comprising 'lived experience' and its problematic reconstruction is, in a way, a quest for the reassuring peculiarities suggested by the "groove" notion:

*'Music Grooves. We've got a duality, maybe a double duality, in the title... that repetition and redundancy... That's where a groove comes from... When we say, "It grooves", we're also saying there's something that's regular and somewhat sustainable, identifiable and repetitive... part of the duality is that as music grooves, there is always something new and something familiar. Amiri Baraka's "changing*

*same" ...We groove on reality...reveling in the repetition and redundancy of information with minor but frequent variations' (Keil and Feld 1994:22-24).*

The extent to which I have been exposed to the music of the subjects of this study affords me a measure of an 'insider status' - a privileged awareness of certain aspects of the field - which emanates directly from participation. Beyond an informal exposure to the careers of the three musicians, Bruce Sosibo and I were members of ZANUSI, a neotraditional township sextet which disbanded in 1991. During a recording session of ZANUSI'S only album in 1990, the band's regular bassist - Thami Mtshali - left the country to appear at the South African ZABALAZA ARTS AND CULTURE festival in the United Kingdom. As a result Duze Mahlobo substituted Mtshali on electric bass for the rest of the recording session. The recording coincided with Mahlobo's return from nearly ten years in exile in Europe, following his brief residence in Zimbabwe in the early 1980s.

In common with all three subjects of this thesis, I speak Zulu and share with them an interest in neotraditional township guitar performance styles. The similarity in our experiences of socialization and township musical mentorship binds us firmly together in a broad regional and epochal expressive continuum. By undertaking to do research, I have wittingly distanced myself from a certain, entrenched social vantage point by. The mediating role I have thus assumed is that of interpreter, translating the experience of marginalised musicians for comprehension by the central institutions of scholarship. The asymmetrical nature of this relationship calls for a negotiation whose form I cannot yet claim to grasp. In this way I am challenged to produce a thesis whose primary goal is accessibility and comprehension by the very people whose experiences have informed its writing. It is my sincere hope that the ideal which such a goal represents is acknowledged by my own inept attempts at observation and representation. South African black township performance as a field - presently lacking as it does a sustained local scholarly attention - has required a balance of my own interpretations with approaches of a few scholars who have undertaken a sojourn in this direction. Thus I have turned consistently to the writings of the likes of Ballantine (1993), Coplan (1980;1985), Edwards (1989;1996), Erlmann (1991;1996), and Hamm (1983;1988), whose pioneering studies I have used as a springboard for my discussions wherever possible. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge a methodological thrust of the essays of Jackson (1989) in which he deals with, among other issues, "the experience of Self and Other",

*'...the dissolution of the boundaries of experience between the observer and the observed.....and the recognition that we are continually being changed by as well as changing the experience of others' (Jackson 1989:3).*

I first encountered Duze Mahlobo and Bruce Sosibo in performance in the middle of 1979. They were then still members of the group MALOPOETS, and had come to give a concert at Amanzimtoti Zulu Training College, where I was a matric student. Ex-MALOPOETS manager, Ellinor Hermann, had the following to say about the impact of her own initial experience of this formidable pan-ethnic group,

*'That was in The Stable Theatre....I think it was 1976...the guys from MALOPOETS played there and, for me being German and for the first time having heard African*

*music, and not only the music but the whole stage performance....that involvement ...the drums...I was so fascinated...and I went with the German Vice-Consul there' (Ellinor Hermann, ex-MALOPOETS manager, 1997).*

It was not long before MALOPOETS went to Johannesburg to record their ill-fated debut album. I missed all of their 1980 appearances because then I had entered Fort Hare University in the Eastern Cape. By the time I returned to Durban towards the end of the year, the band had relocated to Johannesburg, and soon thereafter they disbanded.

Many years later I saw Madala Kunene in performance at the now defunct Community Arts Workshop, which was then a part of the Durban Trade Exhibition Centre complex. It was 1988 and I had just started my formal music studies at the Natal Technikon in Durban. Performing with Madala was Bruce Sosibo, whose five-year sojourn in France had just come to an end. Sosibo was fronting a three-man neotraditional band called ZANUSI, for which he composed, played drum-kit, African percussion and sang. The third member of the trio was Theo "Cilo" Magutshwa, a trumpet player, singer and percussionist from KwaMashu township. In this group Madala Kunene sang lead voice, played acoustic guitar and *isitotolo* mouth-harp. All three musicians were wearing beads, red-ochre on their exposed torsos and diviners' *imifece* dancing rattles on their ankles and wrists. By this time, Bruce Sosibo had adopted the trademark of a miner's helmet, made of aluminium, complete with a socket for affixing the underground miner's lamp. While Sosibo had not directly encountered the coercive labour conditions of the South African mining industry, the hat was a symbol of the subjugated African migrant workers' experience, a condition typifying the employment status of the majority of black South Africans. In performance, Bruce would use the helmet on his head as an extension of his drum kit, playing 'cow-bell' rhythms on it.

I had last seen Bruce in 1983 at his deceased parents' house in KwaMashu's 'C' Section, practicing acoustic guitar. He had been waiting for over a year for his passport and visa to travel abroad and regroup with other members of MALOPOETS. A friend from my home township of Magabheni, Sipiwe Mkhombe, asked me to visit with him to his grandmother's house in KwaMashu because he thought I should meet his neighbour and jazz-guitarist, the late Phoyisa Mabi. Thus in KwaMashu, Sipiwe's extended family and Bruce's and Phoyisa's had been neighbours since the early 1960s. The intertwining of experiences inherent in these relationships was confirmed in an interview I had with Duze Mahlobo:

*Sazi: Now, how did you and Bruce come to play music together when you were growing up?*

*Duze: It was through Phoyisa (Mabi), Mhlawuli's brother. He introduced me to Bruce....when he (Phoyisa) was still alive.*

*Sazi: Was Phoyisa playing back then?*

*Duze: He was playing long before we did. You see, this is how I came to play, jamming together like that until I met Bruce and others like Caesar Ndlovu - and we formed THIRD GENERATION.*

As self-taught township musicians and primarily guitarists, our musical development has been subjected to similar challenges. It is in response to these challenges that each musician has evolved a characteristic, individual approach. In turn, these have influenced and reflected an engagement with processes of the social, cultural, political and economic environment. It is in the individual choices in relating to this environment, through musical performance and composition, that one perceives an ongoing, dynamic interaction between the subjects' and other musical styles and performance genres. In their forging of links between the disparate strands of an uprooted culture, one senses an intense activity embodying innovation, synthesis, reinvention and ordering of stylistic and social meaning, a reinterpretation of tradition and of symbols of historical and cultural significance.

#### **1.4 Consciousness shared and translated**

In choosing to study the music of the three neotraditional township musicians I had hoped to juxtapose a profile of the individual subject with the social environmental elements, such as may explain the observable characteristics of style and its development. However, my principal method of gathering data, namely the interview, soon proved to be most challenging to my own ability of manipulating interpersonal relationships. What had initially been clear as a straightforward, logical, even cold scientific formulation, seemed to ask dearly of the everyday, human and vulnerable essences of being. To that end I had to garner a significant measure of trust and understanding between myself and the subjects. While this is possibly taken for granted within the inter-generational relationships among township youth generally, the details on which a reliable "understanding of the other's experiences" could emerge, are often too submerged even for the most accommodating and trusting of interview subjects. Furthermore it would seem that normal people do not, as a rule, tally up their experiences for analysis and publication. I realised the challenge inherent in the attempt to order meaningfully one's cumulative consciousness and lived experience. Indeed I have often found scant justification in the present context, for past decisions requiring of one's most scrupulous consideration. In order to simulate a position I would be in as a subject, I have included my own personal history of performance experience. Thus what follows below is an attempt to construct a tradition and cultural heritage, as well as one that has enabled me to relate to historical, cultural, ideological, and psychosocial elements of human social performance behaviour. While the object of discussing my own childhood might seem to deviate from the main thrust of this thesis, I am convinced of the value of resonance of the actual 'lived experience' with theoretical and perhaps impersonal reconstructions of popular history.

I was born in 1960, a seventh child in a family of five girls and five boys, at Dududu<sup>1</sup> Mission Station in the Umzinto magisterial district on the Natal South Coast, about 20km up the Umkomaas river, close to where the Amahlongwa river springs up from the ground in a clump of tall sedge and rush. My mother, Kito, is the youngest child of my late grandfather,

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<sup>1</sup> *Dududu* a Zulu term meaning 'combined action' or 'performance together'; also the name of one of the Zulu king Mpande's regiments (Doke-Vilakazi 1990:170).

Notata, a descendant of the Mbedu clans of the old Qwabe<sup>2</sup> kingdom.

The name Kito, is short for 'Kitomena', otherwise Cato Manor, the sprawling shantytown outside Durban, whose consolidation approximates my mother's birth in the early 1930s. My father was born in the Mthwana area of Umzimkhulu in the Transkei. He is the eldest son of Laleni (Philemon), the son of Msali, a grandson of Fodo kaNombewu, the ruler of the Nhlangwini clans of the East Griqualand. It is recorded that Henry Francis Fynn, the first colonist of Natal,

*'....made many trips in search of ivory which he bought amongst others from chief Fodo, leader of the Nhlangwini.....He established a kraal at Umzimkhulu where he was host to Shaka when the king launched his attack against Fodo in 1828' (Warner 1980:17).*

It is also highly probable that the family was 'missionized' by Wesleyan Methodist missionaries shortly after this, because from then on, the family was called Sibutha, after Fodo's eldest son, Sibutha, a name which has since become the family's 'surname'. When my father, Madoda 'Goodfriday' Sibutha, left home to find work in Natal in 1946, he changed his 'surname' to Dlamini. Below is my father's explanation of the necessity for the 'surname' change:

*'Dlamini is the ancestor of the clan, and this is how the different clans are collectively recognised among the Natal and Zululand clans. We are of the Swazi royal lineage' (Conversation with my father, Madoda 'Goodfriday' Dlamini, Aug.1996).*

My father later recited to me the names of the eldest sons, linking the present family to Sibalukhulu, the son of Dlamini. Below is what he said:

*'I am Madoda of Laleni (Philemon), the son of Msali of Sibutha of Fodo of Nombewu of Gasa of Mencwa of Makhatha of Nkundlazibomvu of Mdhlovu of Magaduzela of Sibalukhulu of Dlamini....those are your ancestors as they were told to me by my father' (Madoda 'Goodfriday' Dlamini, Sept.1997).*

As is customary with African Christians, my mother adopted my father's family's religion on marriage. Thus my earliest musical experience is hearing my mother humming a refrain from a Methodist church hymn, while immersed in her day to day chores. On a farm, these tasks included foraging for firewood, cutting grass for thatching the huts or for making mats and other household utensils, and hoeing the fields. Often, when she was grinding fresh corn on a stone or pounding it dry inside a hollowed-out tree-trunk, *isigqulo*, she would hum under her breath. The thudding, drum-like sounds of the *isigqulo*, punctuating the hymn at regular intervals, would cause the ground to vibrate underfoot and echo far in the hills beyond. In the evenings at prayer, my mother would teach us, the children, to sing from the Wesleyan Methodist hymn book *Amaculo AmaWesile* (1926), which was originally only published in Xhosa. Some of the melodies of the hymns have remained embedded in my memory even as I absconded from church in my early teens. Appendix III includes a transcription of a

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<sup>2</sup>*Qwabe* the name of one of Malandela's sons, the ancestor of all known Zulu Kings; 'uqwabe' also refers to a large calabash-resonated 'musical bow' of the type that is braced with a string to the middle of the stave (Doke-Vilakazi 1990:718).

Wesleyan hymn, to illustrate the kind of musical materials which informed my earliest musical vocabulary. The challenge in singing the hymns at home was to add interesting harmony parts in the alto, tenor, and later the bass voices. My father was employed in the town of Umkomaas some 20km away and only came home over the weekends. On these occasions the evening prayer took the form of a mini-church worship service. My father would read by candle or lantern, from the Zulu translation of the bible, then he would preach from the text he had just read. Thereafter he would select a hymn from the Xhosa Wesleyan Methodist hymnbook for the family to sing. Then followed the praying, all family members praying simultaneously and aloud, similarly with the recitation of *The Lord's Prayer* in Xhosa, at the end of which, my father would say grace and the session would finally be over. Most of the children would have to be shaken awake from our last kneeling positions. Through this ritual, I was introduced to the missionary church music repertoire, its melodic and harmonic organisation and as much as this informed the more secular performance practice of the mission station.

At Dududu Mission during the early 1960s, secular musical activities were communal and centered around the church during the festive Christmas and New Year holidays. The mission itself was comprised of four church denominations - the United Congregational Church of the American Board of Missions, the Anglican Church, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church - all of whom, with the exception of the Catholics, hosted these youth-oriented gatherings. During one such gathering - referred to as *ihlahla*, meaning 'leafy branch or tree' - various choirs would perform songs, most of which were popular choral songs from radio, schools' secular repertoire, renditions of adaptations of popular songs by bands and performers such as the WOODYWOODPECKERS' "Buyan 'Ekhaya", Miriam Makeba's "Igqirha" (the click-song), Letta Mbuli and many others. Although the performances took the form of a competition and the audience sometimes bid money to request a favourite choir or a song, there were no prizes awarded, nor was there adjudication. *Ihlahla* was held solely for the enjoyment of the choirs' music performances, the exchanging of Christmas presents and well-wishing messages written on cards.

Bidding represented the assimilation of an urban popular performance practice by rural and mission dwellers, which was paralleled by a similar appropriation of the more 'acceptable' repertoires of secular, proletarian urban performance. It did not constitute any significant role in the overall proceedings of *ihlahla*, bordering as it did on gambling. The practice was known to cause squabbles among the concert patrons, as the evidence below suggests. An excerpt entitled *Ikonsathi eBantusport*, from a sketch by Lindi Makhanya, was recorded by Gallo (GE 879) and is quoted in Erlmann (1991):

*'...The sketch then describes how the young migrant "with five shillings which I earned after hard labor at Point by carrying human excrement" gets involved in the bidding process that rapidly heat up to a general tumult:*

*C: Order please, order please, be quiet. With this ten-cent piece, I am saying you do not know anything about music.*

*B: Sis, this is no music at all, is this the way how you sing in Johannesburg? With my penny I am saying that they must sit down, they do not know music.*

*I do not want to see them here, they must sit down.*

*C: Order please, order please! You do not know music. Someone has paid a penny instructing you to sit down. Let us now give that Durban lady and her boyfriend "Reserve" a chance to sing so that we can listen to their music.*

*B: They are fighting. Stop it! I told you that I do not want to attend such gatherings. Just look now, we will be arrested during the very first days of our arrival here in Johannesburg.*

*(Excerpted from Erlmann 1991:86).*

The mission version of the bidding practice was, however, a mild ritual when compared to the boisterous occasion recounted in the above excerpt. It was more of a source of humour, adding on a dimension of drama to the music dominated *ihlahla* programmes. The biggest and the most well-organised choirs were those made up of youth belonging to the denomination which was hosting the event. They were referred to as *home choir*, and their repertoire included songs that were sung by other, predominantly urban-based choirs that had recorded and were heard on the radio. Other songs were adaptations of popular urban music and dance styles like the *twist* and the *phatha-phatha*, as well as syncretic choral a cappella styles such as *imashi* and *umbholoho*.

There is strong evidence linking the diverse performance developments that centred around mission and surrounding rural culture with the assimilation of American minstrelsy and rural polka traditions by Africans in far flung areas of Natal. Such a link has been pointed out by Erlmann,

*'...another interesting semantic parallel that ties the entire nexus of weddings and "isicathamiya" back to minstrelsy, it should be noted that by the 1930s those wedding songs that were performed in a straight line became also known as "ameleki", "boloha or umbholoho" - terms the older generation of listeners still prefers to "isicathamiya". According to Doke and Vilakazi, "ameleki" is a term that refers to the American Board of Missions - their practices, texts and personnel - the predominant and earliest Christian mission in Natal. "Bholoha or "umbholoho" are etymologically related to Xhosa or Afrikaans for "polka" and are defined as "dance with boots on (as on farms on festive occasions, Nigger minstrels, etc) and a "rough concert or night carnival party" (Doke-Vilakazi 1972 cited in Erlmann 1996:53).*

*Umbholoho* has been associated with children's music, and is regarded by some as a secular manifestation of the Wesleyan hymn and a direct precursor of today's black popular music (Mthethwa 1980:24). I have transcribed from memory, one memorable *mbholoho* song (Transcription 14), which also fits the category of wedding songs, *izingoma zomshado*. The song, *'Iyo yo ma' (Oh oh mama)* is a lament by a woman who is rejected by her husband and her in-laws. Its structure is antiphonal, with the leading voice repeating the call "Iyo yo yo yo ma" while the chorus answers with a varying text phrase each time. The chorus voice parts are harmonically arranged in the typical Western and mission-hymn influenced SATB:

*Leader: Iyo yo yo yo ma*  
*Chorus: Ngashiy'abazali*  
*Ngayogana*  
*Leader: Iyo yo yo yo ma*  
*Chorus: Ngaliwe ngaliwe*  
*Ngaliw'emzini wam(i)*

Translation: *(Oh oh oh mother*  
*I left my parents*  
*To get married*  
*Oh oh oh mother*  
*I have been rejected*  
*By my inlaws)*

The majority of such songs were accompanied by stepping movements, known as *istep*, often incorporating synchronised arm, hand and stylised but 'chaste' body movement. A well-rehearsed choir or group would induce members of the audience to participation, usually by joining the frontline of singers and imitating the *istep*, or fanning the choir with a scarf or handkerchief, and performing the congratulatory womens' high-pitched vocal ululation, *ukukikiza*.

There were also many smaller, a cappella, mixed vocal groups as well as all-male quartets, quintets, octets and individual soloists. Their repertoire included songs like "*Go Down Moses*", "*Swing Low Sweet Chariot*", "*Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen*" and "*Amazing Grace*", as well as original, vernacular compositions in this genre. Most of these songs had been popularised by local, vocal male recording groups such as THE BEAM BROTHERS, THE KING'S MESSENGERS QUARTET, THE UMLAZI NO-NAME BROTHERS, to name a few, among whose famous songs were "*Thezi*", "*Ubuhle Belanga*". Some of the groups were made up of male mission dwellers, parents who spent most of the year working in Durban, living mainly in the single-sex hostels or lodging with township families. The reaffirmation of bonds of kinship and the homeboy networking necessitated by migrant working life, expressed itself among other activities, in the formation of some such vocal performing groups, some of whom were adapting the styles of popular Durban-based *mbube* groups such as LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO and EMPANGENI HOME TIGERS.

My uncle, Fa Khuzwayo, who also worked in Durban in the middle 1960s, fielded such an all male a cappella quintet in the *ihlahla* gatherings. I remember their uniforms of white jackets and shirts, red ties and black pants. The repertoire of such groups tended away from the working-class, proletarian orientation of the *mbube* groups, and more towards a hymnal and *imusie* derivatives of the jubilee songs and hymns of the Sankey school. One of my uncle's favourite songs in this style was called "I Dream Of A Beautiful City". Remarking on the pervasive influence of the turn-of-the-century African-American jubilee song and minstrelsy, Erlmann has noted that,

*'Amakholwa (Christian believers) audiences throughout Natal celebrated the descendants of former slaves as their "music heroes" and by the turn of the century, minstrelsy had reached even the remotest rural areas in Natal and elsewhere in southern Africa' (Erlmann 1991:61).*

The *mbube/isicathamiya* choirs did not participate in the *ihlahla*. The church environment was probably not suited towards the 1960s *isicathamiya* styles, whose lyrics were largely proletarian and uncensored. An early song from this period of LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO comes to mind, whose lyrics went thus:

*Akuzinq' umbhede  
Amabele ngumcamelo  
Izandla ziyangiphathaphatha dali wam  
Umlom' uyangiqabula*

which translates into:

*The buttocks are the bed  
The breasts are the pillow  
The hands of my darling caress me  
The mouth kisses me*

[See Imbongi: Side 1 Track 4; and also Ngqongqotha Mfana: Side 2 Track 6].

I must have been one of the youngest participants in the *ihlahla* of 1966, a few months before I started school at Dududu Bantu Community School. Together with four of my brothers and a friend who sang bass, we started a six-member a cappella group, led by my eldest brother, the late Sizwe Dlamini. Sizwe, who had spent the early part of his boyhood with my grandparents in Koloni, the eastern Cape Colony, was adept at singing the predominantly Xhosa schools' choral songs and secular mission-school styles from that part of the country. When he came to Dududu to finish his primary school education, Sizwe regularly stood in for Mr Cele to conduct the school's senior choir. He taught us many songs, including "*Stagger Lee*", a song that was very popular with mission and school performing groups in the 1960s. Our group did not have a permanent name, choosing to name ourselves differently for each occasion - names such as 'Modern Boys', 'Shooting Stars' and 'Special Style'. Participation in social performance of *ihlahla* helped to shape my early conceptualisations of musical form, its melodic, rhythmic and harmonic aspects. But more importantly is the inculcation of a particular set of aesthetics, those of mission-based secular performance. The indigenous Nguni music, enshrined as it was in the social and cultural practices of a category of society which Christian families denigrated as a rule, was largely inaccessible to us in its contextually relevant and dignified forms. With a few exceptions, Christian families, together with the church and the school, generally considered it 'rude' to sing indigenous melodies, let alone dance the traditional *ukusina*. My own parents were not an exception in this respect. My mother was *manyano*, the Wesleyan Methodists' womens' union and my father was *udodana*, the male counterpart of the church's cultural, social and religious organisation. My paternal grandparents, coming as they did from a long line Christianised Xhosa families were, however, more secular in their approach to religion.

My grandfather, Philemon ka Msali, was a 'man of the people', often hosting men's gatherings at his homestead, a practice normally accompanied by traditional beer-drinking, singing and dancing, social debate, and tales of ancestral heroism and eminence. Sizwe had absorbed all of this in his boyhood, and when he joined his siblings at Dududu, he taught us to be proud of this heritage as well. From him we learned the Xhosa children's songs, the dances of the *Bhaca* youth and the art of stick-play, *intonga*. Sizwe also taught us how to swim in the Amahlongwa river, to spear field-mice and to box.

It was at this time that we became acquainted with tin-guitars. My second eldest brother, Njeza, had been taught to make and play tin-guitars by my maternal cousins Benjamin and Aaron 'Fan-doh' Khuzwayo. Thus we learnt to play the rudimentary tonic-subdominant-dominant progressions in the fifth position on Njeza's six-string tin-guitar. At first we did not have any melodies to sing to these progressions, not even our extensive *ihlahla* or Wesleyan hymnal repertoire. My family, who had never bought a gramophone, did not own a radio until 1967, circumstances which held back such repertorial and stylistic influences on our musical development.

The most popular music on Radio Bantu's Zulu broadcasts towards the end of the 1960s was the neotraditional *mbaqanga* style of the likes of West Nkosi, Simon 'Mahlathini' Nkabinde, and the *sax-jive* styles of 'Bra' Sello and Zacks Nkosi, among others. A Saturday morning programme called "Ezamabhungu Namatshitshi" (literally translated as 'for young warriors and maidens'), was hosted by the late SABC soccer commentator Elijah "Thetha" Masombuka, and featured a 'top ten hit-parade' of the latest neotraditional, *sax-jive*, *mbaqanga*, and *simanje-manje* 'hits'. Among the most famous groups and personalities of this era were ABAFANA BENTUTHUKO, "Bra" Sello, Simon "Mahlathini" Nkabinde, MAHOTELLA QUEENS, 'Q' SISTERS, IZINTOMBI ZESIMANJE-MANJE, West Nkosi, "Mshengu" Shabalala, ISIBAYA ESIKHULU, MAKGONA-TSOHLE BAND, MTHUNZINI GIRLS. There were other lesser-known groups in both *mbaqanga* and *sax-jive* genres, but at this time very little, if any, of the old African jazz *marabi*-based *mbaqanga* styles were being aired on the radio. If they were played at all, the artists and/or the titles of the tunes were not mentioned.

In 1968 my family moved to the township of Magabheni, close to the coastal town of Umkomaas. The township had been built in 1958 to accommodate the shack-dwelling families of a shantytown that was known as Makhalfukwe. The siting of the township also facilitated the supply of African labour to a nearby paper-mill at SAICCOR. In 1968 the township consisted of about eight-hundred four-roomed households, two small single storeyed hostel compounds, at least five newly-built church buildings, a primary school, a sportsfield and a tennis court. The paper-mill fielded a formidable team of *ingoma* dancers and a team of *gumboot* dancers. During Christmas holidays the mill held a party for the families of its employees, a function that was held in the township's sportsgrounds. It was at these occasions that I was introduced to these genres of performance. Sometimes a member of the Zulu royal family or the king would pay a visit, and the mill would display the dancing teams. A memory lingers of an occasion when the king, Goodwill Zwelithini, whom we unreservedly adored as

children, came to visit that part of the country. We had been highly excited at the prospect of seeing the king and the *ingoma* and *gumboot* dancers performances. Alas, the king only came to visit SAICCOR and was feted behind a fence and bushes within their premises. We could only watch from behind mesh-wire and brush while the king and his entourage were served turkey and champagne. We did not see either *ingoma* or *gumboot* dancers perform, and on our way home... we cried. In emulating the *gumboot* dancers, we formed little troops and went to the town of Umkomaas to dance for the whites, who occasionally threw some coins on the ground at us. We used to wear discarded cardboard sorgum-beer containers around our legs to obtain the slapping sound of the rubber boots, which were worn by the adult dancers. The latter would normally tie around their ankles, empty shoe-polish cans filled with small stones or pebbles, to add a 'rattle' effect to the percussive thuds and slaps of their black rubber galoshes.

When I passed Standard 6 at Magabheni Primary School I went to Adams College, the Amanzimtoti Zulu Training School as a boarding student, where I spent five years, matriculating in 1979. While there were no structured music courses at Adams College, I met students from all over southern Africa. Among these was a building student from Soweto, Ignatius "Iggy" Madeira, who was a left-handed guitarist. Igi owned a nylon-string guitar, on which we used to play popular black-American soul tunes. We also played popular township songs like "*Igqirha*", the so called 'click song', Allen Silinga's "*Ntyilo Ntyilo*", as well as 'rock' tunes by Jimi Hendrix, The Beatles, and Crosby, Stills and Nash's widely popular album and song entitled "*Suite Judy Blue Eyes*". I knew the lyrics and parts of the songs in this album even before I came to 'Toti, as the college is fondly referred to by its far-flung graduates. It was Igi who first told me about Duze Mahlobo, who had been a student at the college a few years before my time.

I have gone some way towards documenting the formative years of my musical experience. I hope to illuminate, beyond the significance of the intertwining elements of experience, the multiplicity of influences which potentiate the total expressivity of contemporary neotraditional performance. It has always been a challenge for township musicians to reconcile all the facets of the black South African performative experience in a single expressive style.

### **1.5 Methodology and theoretical issues to be considered**

My approach to this study has been largely influenced by the broadest notions in anthropological and cultural studies. Such notions pertain to ethnographic representation of others, the way in which the ethnographers' experience becomes embodied in the way they choose to interpret and understand the experiences of their subjects. This approach recognises a research and interpretive process in which the way we construct others reveals something about the way we are constructed ourselves (Clifford 1987).

Firstly, the active process of the ethnographic encounter between the self and the subject warrants attention in terms of its implication for the subsequent analysis and meaning-making

that is part of writing ethnography. Secondly, in a study based on the actual processing and construction of this experience within cultural performance behaviour, a more complicated scenario emerges, hence the multi-tiered notion of the mediation and processing of lived experience. Bearing in mind the imbalances inherent in the established methods of participant observation and the manner in which such methods privilege the separation of subject and object in traditional empiricism, I have adopted the notion of "*radical empiricism*",

*'...a philosophy of the "experience" of objects and actions in which the subject itself is a participant (Edie 1965 cited in Jackson 1989:3).*

As a methodology and discursive style, *radical empiricism* acknowledges the elements of experience that are "transitive" as well as "substantive", "conjunctive as well as disjunctive" (Jackson 1989). It is the interactive and intersubjective elements of the relationships between myself and the three subjects of this study that resonate with the method of radical empiricism, affording me the opportunity to treat my own experiences as primary data:

*'Experience, in this sense, becomes a mode of experimentation, of testing and exploring ways in which our experiences conjoin or connect us with others, rather than the ways they set us apart' (Jackson 1989:4).*

This study purports to be an ethnography of performance experience, whose primary quest is the representation of this experience in such a way as to retain the 'livedness' of the subject. The interpretations and relationships I have drawn between actions, events, individuals, and institutions are by no means final. Performance, frozen as it is in time and space, has been shown to possess meaning only through a process of negotiation. Performance and composition by subjects of volatile, ever-changing processes in the social, cultural, political, and economic environment is also subject to this inconclusivity as individuals, groupings and societies formulate new strategies and responses to resist, anticipate, or cope with change:

*'Like culture, performance cannot be represented other than a moment in a process: "culture" and the "play" as such do not exist' (Erlmann 1996:19).*

The implications of Erlmann's assertion for ethnography cannot be more succinctly captured than in the statement,

*'...and similarly, the resultant textual representations - transcripts, videos, and so forth - are little more than fragmentary protocols, loosely strung together and accompanied by "remarks and apologies on transcription and translation" (Erlmann 1996:19).*

Jackson (1989), like Erlmann (1996) and Seeger (1987), refutes the idea of closure and completeness of the traditional discursive genres in anthropology and cultural studies, and has ascribed such tendencies to seek systematic organisation and conceptual order as,

*'...not so much "representations" of the inherent orderliness of the world as forms of wishful thinking - obligative truths or "post festum" rationalization whose relationship to lived experience remains indeterminate...we must critically examine the ways in which a preoccupation with pattern and order is linked historically to a concern for controlling nature and other human beings, a form of instrumental*

*rationality'* (Dewey 1929; Horkheimer and Adorno 1972; cited in Jackson 1989:13).

It is issues such as those raised above that have influenced my approach to the ethnographic and writing process, and have challenged me to:

- scrutinize the nature of my own involvement with township neotraditional performance, to explicate interexperience and intertextuality and evolve one way of looking at the development of a style.
- acknowledge my limitations at reconstruction and interpretation of an aspect of social history, in particular that of the historically marginalised black communities, of which I am part.
- realize the yawning distance which exists between the actual experience and apposite vocabulary to relate such an experience.
- recognize the need for more research into the various issues raised by this study, with a view towards a more enlightened position, from which decisions regarding musical education and the formulation of township schools' music curricula could be undertaken.

## Chapter 2

### **Durban-Mkhumbane-KwaMashu: a socio-historical appraisal of neotraditional music performance within the shantytown-township-city continuum of the urban black social experience**

This chapter seeks to outline relationships between the pervasive social, political, economic, and cultural processes on the one hand, and the developing urban music performance traditions on the other. The bulk of material covering the years up to 1960 emanates from regional documentary source materials, particularly the black newspaper *Ilanga laseNatali*, and scholarly, bibliographic reconstructions of black urban social performance practice (Allen 1993, Ballantine 1993, Coplan 1980/1985, Erlmann 1991/1996, Maylam and Edwards 1996). In contrast, I deal with the period after 1960 in keeping with the theoretical and methodological thrust of the thesis, that is, as experienced by the subjects of this study. I have already touched on the problems attendant in attempts at pinning down the fleeting, temporal nature of 'lived experience' which, according to Jackson,

*'...accommodates our shifting sense of ourselves as subjects and as objects, as acting upon and being acted upon by the world, of living with and without certainty, of belonging and being estranged, yet resists arresting any one of these modes of experience in order to make it fundamental to a theory of knowledge' (Jackson 1989:2).*

It is with some measure of trepidation that I have attempted to reconstruct, from a collage of materials representing the experience of "actual events, objects, and interpersonal relationships" of *the past*, a setting for a further interpretation and anchorage of contemporary behaviour. The uncertain, elusive nature of experience renders its own conception difficult because lived experience,

*'...avoids narrowing down to either the subject or the object, theory or practice, the social or the individual, thought or feeling, form or flux' (Jackson 1989:2).*

The chapter thus serves only as a backdrop, a crucible of the mentoring perceptions of performance and its role in the urban social experience. In the rapidly changing conditions of urban African citizens at the close of the 1950s, it is perhaps not unreasonable to look at musical performance practice as one of the cornerstones of stability. Such a practice will certainly go some way towards attempting to retrieve, reinterpret and rehabilitate its own idealized past.

#### **2.1 A social history of township neotraditional performance in Durban**

The most pertinent writings and thinking on the city's social, anthropological, political, cultural historical dynamic have only recently been published (Maylam and Edwards 1996). Earlier, a pioneering scholar of urban black performance in South Africa, David Coplan, emphasized the "need to place contemporary performance within the processes that produced it" (1980:ix). More recent studies of local urban, social and political history have acknowledged the importance of "the organisation and occupation of urban space, living space, cultural space, political space and space for pursuing material ends and its

bearing on the historical processes of culture change" (Maylam and Edwards 1996:2). A significant text in the study of the development of Durban's performance culture was authored by Veit Erlmann, in which he reconstructed the influential processes in the development of some of today's most popular performance genres. Among these are *isicathamiya*, *gumboot*, *ingoma*, *church choral* music, *secular choral* music, *marabi*-derived musics and neotraditional *mbaqanga* styles as well as *maskandi* (Erlmann 1991; 1996).

The occupation of the township as a physical, cultural, political, social, living space, is inextricably tied to the history of black urbanisation and its concomitant politics. Consignment by government decree of the bulk of African urban dwellers to the peri-urban townships in the 1950s, has proved to be a fateful development in the future of all South Africans. The dynamics which characterise existence under complex political, social, cultural and economic circumstances such as those experienced by the majority of Africans in Durban after the Second World War, were deeply inscribed in the variously evolving performance styles and genres. The diversity of Durban's performance traditions has already been dealt with by Erlmann, whose studies focussed on some of the earliest developments up to the beginning of the Second World War (Erlmann 1991).

Of primary relevance in this respect was his observation of an existence of a close relationship between the various performance traditions, "characterised by a deep-reaching osmosis of forms and styles which cut across social class differences" (Erlmann 1991:56). Such a symbiotic relationship was the direct function of an emerging society in the process of consolidating a dynamic and expressive performance culture.

It was a pervasive rural/urban consciousness and the changing orientations and interpretations of its dichotomous possibilities that informed and shaped diverse neotraditional performance approaches such as those of the three individuals who are the focus of this study. It is the strength of this urban/rural consciousness within neotraditional compositional approaches since the late 1970s which has characterised the three composers' attempts at transcending its fragmentary connotations.

## **2.2 The township experience within neotraditional composition and performance**

The subtopic looks at the township as an imposed environmental and social construct whose consequences bear significance for the contextual processes of music performance production and composition. The process of relocating shantytown citizens to peri-urban townships such as KwaMashu, subjected its victims to physical trauma of dislocation and a disruption of stable conditions for everyday existence. Banishment, in its total disregard for the important spiritual and material attachments that societies reserve for their physical environment, is difficult to account for in terms of its implications for the continuity of black urban performance traditions. It is in this regard that an in-depth study of township neotraditional performance in Durban, and its relationship to the shantytowns' historical and social processes, could justifiably be regarded long overdue and requiring serious scholarly attention.

The events leading up to the relocation of Mkhumbane residents to KwaMashu had only exacerbated the social tensions that were already prevalent in the condition of urbanisation and industrialisation. It is in this light that the decades preceding 1960 are regarded as having involved an intensification of "the historical conflicts and divisions within South African society as a whole" (Coplan 1980:387). The tensions emanating from such conflicts and divisions transcended social boundaries of existence in their consequence for private and intimate relations, especially the complex relationships between individuals, and those amongst family members. A reconstruction of Mkhumbane domestic relationships around 1959 points out the complex nature of these 'arrangements':

- *Men and women owned or rented accommodation in Mkhumbane. Many women were household heads, supporting their own children, and living with and often also supporting their own female relatives. Many men were not household heads, but rather rented bed space or a room from a shack owner or renter, who could also be a close and older male or female relative. Men, bonded by ties of kinship, rural origin, the workplace, or simply masculinity would share accommodation. There were also similarly constituted households of women. Nevertheless, most of the shackland community was made up of men and women living together as partners. A substantial number of these couples were not formally married under either Christian or customary rites' (Maylam and Edwards 1996:116).*

The officially decreed specification for KwaMashu houses totally undermined the coherence and stability of domestic and interpersonal social relationships that had been maintained in the diversity of 'arrangements' of co-habitation and co-existence. Such complex spatial ordering of social and traditional cultural relationships was also acknowledged by the same officialdom that oversaw the relocations. A 1958 municipal survey of shack areas outside the Cato Manor Emergency Camp revealed just over half of the men legally entitled to live in the city being legally married, and furthermore that, *'In spite of the remaining men not being legally married but living in what the survey referred to as "marriages of convenience", all couples and dependants were to be moved into the single-site, single-nuclear family part of KwaMashu. The majority of the couples in the area had more than one child or other dependants' (Edwards 1989:177).*

Mkhumbane residents were not only relocated to KwaMashu, but also to all of the newly established townships such as Clermont, Chesterville, Lamontville and the old Baumannville township had existed alongside Mkhumbane. Other townships such as KwaMashu, Umlazi, KwaMakhutha, Magabheni, Klaarwater, Ndengezi and Mpumalanga had been established during and after the demise of Mkhumbane. All of these townships, to a greater or lesser extent, inherited some of the shantytown's displaced families. As a result, township residents came to be comprised of individuals with diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

Accounts of the pervasive social performance practice of the late 1950s Cato Manor lead one to assume the roots of township neotraditional music to have been well established by the time the shantytown was finally destroyed in the early 1960s. However, performance practice, social behaviour and attitudes of ex-Mkhumbane families were markedly different from those fresh from the countryside. As a result, some measure of

tension existed between the more conservative members of township society, the mission and rural urbanising individuals and families, the male inhabitants of the single-sex hostel community and the city-bred proletarian families from Mkhumbane. A widely used derogatory term was '*inzalo yaseMkhumbane*', literally 'progeny of Mkhumbane', to refer categorically to the social practices of Mkhumbane people. Such common shantytown practices as womens' beer brewing and selling, petty trading of household goods (the *shebeen*, the road-side fruit and vegetable stall, the male youth practices of street-gambling with dice and playing cards, the *stokvel* traditions) were a major source of interest, fascination and disapproval for the rest of township society. As a result such practices, besides the generation of a much-needed income, offered an alternative channel for social and individual expression to the state and church-approved norms of social behaviour like going to school, attending church and respecting the authority of the dominant white culture.

It is arguable that the social divisions which finally came to characterise township political violence from the 1980s onwards were attributable in part to the heterogenous social experiences of early township inhabitants and the exploitation of such differences by the apartheid machinery to undermine black political unity and crush its resistance. The roles of township neotraditional performers in the 1970s and the 1980s included those empowering the heterogeneous experiences of black society and undermining the fragmentary view of Africans as espoused by apartheid ideology of separate development. Such a role, however, was never easy to assume in the light of political, social, and economic contradictions that were placed in the path of cultural performance expression.

There were overriding reasons for tactical resistance strategies that would play down the ethnic aspect of the South African black identity. The most obvious reason was the exploitation by apartheid of such differences like language and culture, to demarcate the South Africans from a total cultural experience made possible by their diversity.

### **2.3 Neotraditional music performance in Mkhumbane social practice**

I was privileged to overhear a conversation between Madala Kunene and Elias Ngidi, a KwaMashu mainstream jazz guitarist, singer and multi-instrumentalist who also spent the early part of his youth in Mkhumbane. Ex-Mkhumbane inhabitants often reminisce fondly about the place of their youth, to which they refer nostalgically as '*Ezintabeni*', literally 'on the hills'. If one asks how it was on the hills, the response may be preceeded by a longing sigh as of somebody who had to relinquish something precious. More often than not the answer itself is a question....

A: In the 'hills'? You want to know what it was like in the 'hills'?

Q: ... Yes...

A: Why?...or (So..what do you want to know about the 'hills'?) etc. etc.

In many ways a society closed or even frequently violent to outsiders, Mkhumbane was also a place where urban working-class society, the educated African elite, the curious and fascinated visitor from the countryside, all congregated on weekends to partake of the shantytown's assorted leisure-time practices. Beyond what could be felt, tasted or heard, the immediacy of this social and cultural environment was an urgent, cutting-edge experience of both the power and the efficacy, the vulnerability and the strength of the

hegemonic social, political and economic order. Even to this day, a sense of propriety pervades the memories of those who share the experience of the 'hills', such as Madala and Bra S'dumo (Elias Ngidi):

*Madala: You know what 'bafo', (slang for 'brother'), many people claim to know the 'hills' who have never once been there...*

*S'dumo: Ya. I know a lot of folks like that...but it's easy to catch them out, right?*

*Madala: Sure. All you have to do is ask them, in public, if they remember 'Twinqi'... and if they say they do, all you have to ask is 'How was Twinqi?'...then you will know if they grew up in the 'hills' or not!*

[Both were adamant that one could not possibly ever forget the spectacle that was Twinqi, playing the bones, 'amathambo', and dancing. But the most striking thing about Twinqi, as my informers spoke, was his height and the size of his head]:

*Madala: ...because bafo, Twinqi stood no more than a metre in height, but he had an oversized head the size of a full-grown pumpkin. He used to move around the shantytown, performing for the public who threw coins at him. Everyone knew Twinqi, whose mesmerising dance is near impossible to describe ....it had to be seen, bafo..."*

*S'dumo: It was both funny and sad...definitely haunting...mesmerising in some kind of way...jerky, spasmodic vibrations and contortions of his little frame, to the incessant rhythm of the bones he was playing in one hand...a totally captivating one-man performance of quite rare originality...all on his own!*

*Madala: Bafo, there is no way you could be from the 'hills' and not know Twinqi...his head was too big to forget bafo...*

*(Eavesdropped conversation between Madala Kunene and Elias Ngidi, Jul. 1997).*

While viewing a permanent photographic exhibition at The Cato Manor Room of KwaMuhle Museum in Durban's Ordinance Road, I was accosted by somebody who said to me over my shoulder, "I know those hills like I know myself....those were the last bitter days". He was referring to the pictures that we were both now looking at, depicting the demolition of the shantytown of Mkhumbane in the late 1950s and the race riots of 1949. That is how I was introduced to Hamilton Dlamini, a Cato Manor-born car-salesman, band-leader and tenor saxophonist. Dlamini was emphatic in his insistence that Mkhumbane was not the hell it was made out to be in documentary and official municipal reports:

*'It was very pleasant...nothing like you see in the township today with its funeral processions every Saturday... One rarely saw that in Mkhumbane, as anybody who was born there can tell you. I was...and I grew up in the neighbouring township of Chesterville' (Hamilton Dlamini, Nov. 1997).*

At this stage of my research I was intrigued by a dimly understood performance practice in Mkhumbane, the so called *nikabheni*<sup>1</sup> street musical performance. I took my cue and

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*nikabheni* a set of practices comprising the early urban forms of proletarian, street musical performance in and around Durban. Centred around the periurban shantytowns such as Cato Manor (Mkhumbane), the performances were rewarded by on-lookers with coins thrown at the performers' feet for the latter

asked Hamilton Dlamini what he knew of *nikabheni*, to which he said:

*'Do you have time to come to my office as I am officially at work. I often come here during my tea break to look at these exhibitions and reminisce about the 'hills'. If you want to know about the nikabheni...come with me. I will tell what I know about it' (Dlamini 1997).*

Hamilton Dlamini gave me a clue as to the colonial origins of the *nikabheni* performances, or at least their association with the early African experience under industrialisation and urbanisation. According to Dlamini, the early Mkhumbane *nikabheni* performances were associated with a man which everybody only knew as Malarha, descended of African-European parentage and thus a 'Coloured', or more commonly referred to derogatorily as a 'Boesman', which is Afrikaans for 'Bushman':

*'Usually around Christmas and New Year, one would encounter the 'nikabheni' performers, moving around in groups and entertaining onlookers. Sometimes they would stop outside a household, singing and blowing on whistles as they played on their drums. People would then come out onto the street to look, throwing pennies, farthings and other coins towards the performers. Usually barefoot, the performers wore red skirts and white paint on their faces. On their heads they put on old hats or some other 'raggy' headgear, which gave them all a tattered appearance. They were males, and most of their members seemed to fit an average age of thirty years and above... The performances died out with the demolition of Mkhumbane' (Hamilton Dlamini, Nov.1997).*

The above description corroborates accounts of transformation, in the hands of 'coloured' and black musicians, of American minstrelsy during the last decade of the nineteenth century:

*'...they not only imitated an American idiom, but they also transformed it creatively into a genuine black South African urban tradition that had ramifications far into the modern styles of the 1920s and 1930s' (Erlmann 1991:32).*

A further influence of the Mkhumbane *nikabheni* could have been the McGregor bands of the Rand shantytowns, who went around drumming support for the *stokfel* (Coplan 1985; Ballantine 1993). The assimilation of the Scottish fife by township and slum youth, which precipitated the birth of 'penny-whistle' *kwela* music cannot be discounted, especially when viewed against the *nikabheni* evidence of red skirts, an appearance which compare well with the tartan kilts of the Macgregor bands. The whistles mentioned by my informant could well have been flageolets, casting thus the influence and seedbed for later

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to retrieve. The *nikabheni* practice dates back from the city's colonial and early industrial period up to the beginning of the 1960s.

musical developments such as *kwela* further than the Reef (Coplan 1985; Allen 1993). However, another illuminating relationship between *nikabheni* and other neotraditional performance styles came to light in an interview with Simon Ntshangase of Umlazi, one of the largest black townships in Natal, situated some 20km south of Durban. Ntshangase began singing with various *isicathamiya* groups in 1950, and at about the same he also studied music formally under William Mseleku, who taught from Valbro Chambers in Victoria Street. According to Ntshangase, Mseleku had 'followed in the footsteps' of the veteran neotraditional composer and performer, Reuben T. Caluza, to study music abroad before returning home to teach and perform. Mseleku was a contemporary of composer, comedian and variety troupe leader Nimrod Makhanya, who founded the BANTU GLEE SINGERS (Ntshangase 1997). Ntshangase associates *nikabheni* with performance activities in the old ICU Hall at 117 Prince Edward Street after the end of the Second World War:

*'Nikabheni' was largely an invention of one 'Q' Majola, a pianist from eSidunjini Mission, near Appelsbosch. It came from tap dances that took place at the ICU Hall, whose performers wore shoes with iron-tipped heels and toes. Majola had succeeded a pianist who was known as Bhayoyo' (Simon Ntshangase, Nov. 1997).*

According to this informant, the music which was played and danced to around 1949 was "rock and roll music" and that 'Q' Majola was later joined by a group that sang "like *isicathamiya*" (Ntshangase 1997).

The idea of spectators throwing coins at their favourite tap-dancing vaudeville performers and musicians is not at all far-fetched when one considers the tradition of bidding, as undertaken by patrons of the early *isicathamiya* competitions (Erlmann 1991:85). This consideration would then expand the meaning of the term *nikabheni*, beyond a description of any one discrete genre of performance, to include context as well as the social and economic interdependence and obligations of both performers and audience. One senses deeper, fundamental and complex psychosocial adaptive responses at play at this stage of the 'ritualisation' of urban neotraditional performance. The juxtaposition of indigenous performance sensibilities, their entrenched notions of obligation and reciprocity, with the emergent social performance behaviour of the early urban African classes, potentiates an understanding of the attendant trauma and proletarianising influences of colonial missionization, industrialisation, and the hegemony of culture and social domination.

I have presented above, two possible manifestations of the *nikabheni performance*. A third interpretation was suggested to me by Madala Kunene and is mentioned, because of its particular significance, in a chapter that deals with guitar styles (Chapter IV). Such diverse interpretations of the *nikabheni* experience corroborate Erlmann's 'osmotic' relationships, which existed between Durban's disparate neotraditional performance styles (Erlmann 1991:56). The asymmetrical development of these styles and genres has largely been as a result of the privileging function and agendas of powerful economic, political and socio-cultural institutions serving to dilute perceptions of a broad and diffuse African cultural performance expression. In conclusion of this subtopic, I wish to reclaim the legacy of a multifaceted cultural performance resource for exploitation by contemporary township neotraditional performers in articulating an awareness of the complex origins of urban black performance culture.

## 2.4 A social history of neotraditional performance in Durban prior to 1960

The subtopic surveys the period preceeding the township experience, a documented history whose details occupy a marginal space in the subjects' recollection. The average age of the three subjects of this study would render a bulk of this era an 'oral history' whose practices, while they cannot be directly emulated, present an idealised past. It is the achievements of this epoch that are constantly revisited in the contextualisation, reinterpretation, and empowerment of the urban black performance traditions. The impact of social, political and cultural factors in the evolution of Durban's township neotraditional performance cannot be overestimated. Just as the year 1960 is regarded pivotal in the legitimisation of government stranglehold on black political and social expression, so were the ramifications of this form of repression expressed in its influence on the development of urban neotraditional performance (Ballantine 1993:7; Coplan 1980:387)

The uncertainty and instability in African social structure that was a legacy of colonization, was never more starkly realised than around this period of black South African history. Erlmann has remarked on the uniqueness of Durban regarding the evolution of its black performance traditions, owing to the intertwining of 'local social stratification, politics, and the Zulu cultural heritage' (Erlmann 1991:55).

However, the coexistence of diverse performance styles and genres, points to the fragmentary processes of African urbanisation, exploitative industrial expansion, and socioeconomic destabilisation of African and particularly Zulu cultural and performance traditions. A pertinent view of urban change within the broad context of colonization is that,

*'...This process has involved the disruption of traditional social systems, the emasculation of indigenous political authority, the appropriation of bases of economic production, and the imposition by Whites of an alien and discriminatory system of law upon blacks' (Coplan 1980:387).*

The dilemmas and oppositions created by these conditions have elicited varying responses from Africans, depending on the latter's orientation in the urban/rural, traditional/Christian flux and the attendant social value systems. Within this complex equation could be construed the broad African proletariat, the so-called *gxagxa* social category, straddling as it does the conflict-ridden territory between Christianity and indigenous traditions (Coplan 1990:429; Clegg 1981:2). Thus performance practice, being an important aspect of the adaptive social response, manifested the politically, economically and culturally determined status of migrancy and permanent urbanism. Expanding on the radical changes wrought on the African social structure, and the diverse African responses which defined the emerging social categories, Coplan observed the challenging problems as being,

*'...For migrant workers...the extension of rural-based social relations into urban areas to cope with industrial regimentation, labor, and housing; and the restructuring of those relations to incorporate male migrancy into rural systems. For permanent urbanites, the challenge has been to create new forms of sociability in adaptation to the material conditions and power relations of the urban social field' (Coplan 1980:388).*

As a form of permanent urban residency, the township is largely heir to such forms of cultural performance practices as those of the shantytown. A township such as

KwaMashu, whose initial population was almost entirely originating from Mkhumbane, inherited the bulk of the social categories that had crystallized in the shantytown by the end of the 1950s. The diversity of Mkhumbane residency had included,

*'...people from from various strata of society: teachers, nurses, government clerks, policemen, preachers, as well as masses of skilled, semi-skilled, menial and casual workers....and also some, who earned a living through the extensive array of adventures and enterprises that constitutes people's capitalism' (Edwards 1996:116).*

In his essay, Edwards emphasizes the role of these people, officially regarded as marginals, in defining the basic nature and identity of Mkhumbane society. The city's middle class, in its self-appointed role as bearers of acceptable African moral values, was constantly critical of the behaviour and lifestyle of this sector of African urban society. Durban's weekly newspaper, *Ilanga LaseNatali*, an elite publication with articles written in Zulu and English, never reported on the civic and cultural matters pertaining to Mkhumbane. However, at the height of social and political tensions in the middle 1950s, *Ilanga* regularly published reports of crime and violence, dutifully describing in detail murder, assault and rape in the shantytown (*Ilanga* 1957, 1958, 1959). This is how outsiders came to see life within Mkhumbane, giving rise to the name 'Esilaheni' ('at the butchery'), a term coined by one *Ilanga* reader (*Ilanga*, 22 Dec. 1951). Hamilton Dlamini, who grew up in Mjafethe section of Mkhumbane, had this to say regarding everyday existence in the 1950s,

*'It was a lot more peaceful than in the townships, where all you see on Saturdays are funeral processions. People just did not die as often in Mkhumbane and funerals were a rare sight' (Hamilton Dlamini, Nov.1997).*

In the years immediately after the Second World War, the most prominent music in Mkhumbane, alongside American big band swing, was *marabi* or *indunduma*. While lamenting the fact that very little is known about the 'details and foundations of *marabi*', Ballantine (1993) has gone some way towards retrieval of the history of this most celebrated wellspring of neotraditional township music. For the purposes of this study, some important aspects of *marabi*, its attendant social practices, and its influence on subsequent musical developments, need to be highlighted. Of importance in this regard is the association of music with what Ballantine has referred to as,

*'.....a variety of secular social occasions, which usually had in common not only the activity of dancing but also that of consuming alcohol' (Ballantine 1993:26).*

Trumpeter Mike Mvelase, who grew up in Mkhumbane and remembered the music of the shantytown, sang to me the melody of a popular *marabi* song 'Ngihamba noMareyiza' (Mvelase 1997). Erlmann informs us that Mareyiza was a violinist who introduced *marabi* to Durban and mentions two songs, 'Sohamba noMareyiza, Sohamba Kuze Kuse' and 'Silele kwaBhanki' as some of Mareyiza's most popular tunes (Erlmann 1991:83). The former tune alludes to the nocturnal exploits of shantytown musicians, whose popularity could be gauged by the audiences which followed them as they relocated from one *shebeen* or *stokvel* to the next. 'Bank Road' was one of the newer sections of Mkhumbane, to which the tune 'Silele kwaBhanki' (We slept in Bank Road) refers to. Mvelase remembered the music being played on mandolin, guitars and violin, of which he says:

*'The music that came to be known as 'mbaqanga' after the appearance of*

*Mahlathini (Simon Nkabinde)...in Mkhumbane we had called it 'marabi' (Mike Mvelase, Nov.1997).*

According to Mvelase, the most famous *marabi* bands in the 1950s were AFRICAN SWINGSTERS, led by Ellison Temba; ALEXANDRA ALL STARS led by Ntemi Piliso, THE JAZZ MANIACS and HARLEM SWINGSTERS among others. These big bands had been influenced by American big band swing which they heard on records and watched in films such as 'Sun Valley Serenade' and 'Orchestra Wives' in the early 1940s (Ballantine 1993:21). Thus, from initially imitating music of the famous American swing bands of the 1930s and the 1940s such as the Glen Miller Orchestra, Duke Ellington Orchestra, Count Basie's big band, Benny Goodman, Stan Kenton or the Woody Herman Orchestra, black South African jazz big bands sought to incorporate elements of local indigenous musical traditions into their repertoire. One result of these cross-continental musical developments was an exploratory focus and interest in the early urban black performance traditions such as they were encoded in *marabi* music of the earlier decades. The locus of this innovation found its expression largely within the urban African social performance practice of 'Concert And Dance',

*'...characteristically a vaudeville entertainment from 8 p.m. till midnight, followed immediately by a dance which ended at 4 a.m.'* (Ballantine 1993:12).

While a similar institution was difficult to maintain in Durban, due primarily to a relatively small black middle-class stratum compared to the Reef, there seems to have thrived an abundance of talent and musical peerage. Following the innovations and achievements of Reuben Caluza, a younger generation of composers and performers emerged who, despite the lack of support from Durban's predominantly working-class black community, continued to celebrate the city's diverse cultural heritage in their creative efforts. Among the most illustrious of these individuals are William Mseleku, K.E. Masinga, Nimrod Makhanya, Ndaba Majola, Willie Mdhlozini, and Alfred Assegai Khumalo, to name but a few whose cultural performance activities intersected with those of many other performers. Between them, these personalities represent the closest interpenetration of musical performance traditions and styles. For example, an informant who started singing *isicathamiya* in 1950, had recognised in himself a need to learn western music theory, voice technique, piano and organ. Thus he had studied under William Mseleku, who ran<sup>2</sup> classes at Valbro Chambers in Victoria Street, and later under Alfred Assegai Khumalo in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg (Ntshangase1997). Mseleku was a versatile composer and entertainer who, after Caluza, was creatively involved with disparate influences of traditional music and dance, Western classical music traditions, drama, ragtime, jazz and *marabi* (Excerpts 2.1 and 2.2 of William Mseleku's compositions in vaudeville-jazz and *marabi* styles in the accompanying cassette).

A.A. Khumalo, on the other hand, was famous as a classical choral composer and conductor whose choir, the ZULU MALE VOICE PARTY, appears to have enjoyed a prime Saturday morning slot in the South African Broadcasting Corporation's 'Bantu

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*Mseleku* father to the celebrated international jazz musician, Bheki Mseleku, born in the black township of Lamontville, Durban.

Broadcasts' programme after the Second World War (Ilanga LaseNatali, June 1946). Such was the diversity of influences that were accommodated within any single individual expressive style that Ntshangase himself, portraying this broad intergration of performance styles, went on to found 'FIVE ROSES', an all-male close-harmony vocal group which was backed by a guitarist. The group members were Simon Ntshangase on soprano; Jethro Mbatha, alto; Gilbert Mkhize, tenor; and a fellow named Nzuzi on bass (Ntshangase 1997).

The pervasive influence of eminent vocal groups such as the MANHATTAN BROTHERS in the formation of groups like Ntshangase's 'FIVE ROSES', BEAM BROTHERS, UMLAZI NO NAME BROTHERS, THE KING'S MESSENGERS QUARTET, cannot be easily discounted. One of my informants, the ailing jazz-bassist multi-instrumentalist from Chesterville, Claude Shange, pointed out a perception that MANHATTAN BROTHERS were enjoying a 'recording monopoly' in the 1950s (Shange 1997). Shange, who has been incapacitated by a rare bone affliction and is unable to play anymore, was a member of the SHANGE BROTHERS, one of Durban's most celebrated jazz families. During the early 1950s he had played piano for the RHYTHM ACES, a professional jazz dance band led by trumpeter Mike Mvelase. One of the highest points in Shange's musical career was the South African visit by the American jazz pianist and teacher, Professor John Mehegan in 1957. Despite the strangulatory effects of segregation, pass and curfew regulations affecting black musicians generally, Mehegan was able to meet some black jazz musicians.

In Durban, Mehegan was hosted by jazz aficionado and the owner of The Goodwill Lounge, Bambi Naidoo. His was the only venue at which black musicians could attend Mehegan's workshops. Claude Shange was subsequently selected to be the bassist in a pioneering recording session of South African jazz by black musicians. The album was later released as 'Jazz In Africa' (1959), featuring some of the leading black jazz musicians at the latter end of the 1950s. In it was Mehegan and Chris Joseph on piano - Joseph was from Sydenham, and he was also one of the few literate jazz pianist in Durban at the time, among whom could be mentioned Theo Bophela, Lionel Pillay, Claude Shange, and someone whom my informant only remembered as Alexander (Shange 1997). The other musicians in the session were Kippie Moeketsi, alto saxophone; Hugh Masekela, trumpet; Jonas Gwangwa, trombone; and Gene Latimore, drums. Despite a fading memory, Shange, with the help of his niece Nompumelelo Shange, remembered some of the members of RHYTHM ACES early line up: himself on piano; (Mike) Mvelase on trumpet; Khaya, on alto saxophone; Pat, on alto saxophone and Clarence Khumalo on drums (Shange 1997). According to Mike Mvelase, the most visible jazz bands in Durban in the 1950s, besides the RHYTHM ACES, included the TOM NDABA SWINGSTERS, SUNDOWNERS from Lamontville and THE KEYNOTES:

*'There were others who, while they were also very good, were not so popular or well-known. The AFRICAN QUAVERS from Chesterville had players of outstanding calibre...with talents such as those of...Tobias Mbhele on tenor saxophone; Damoyi on alto saxophone; Ndi, on drums; a left handed guitarist, Nyoni, was in this line-up. A fellow known as S'gila played bass for them. Some of these guys have long passed away' (Mike Mvelase, Nov. 1997).*

For musicians such as those mentioned above, the goal seems to have been to attain a level of professionalism that would enable them to be engaged by sophisticated white-run Durban nightclubs and hotels. Ballantine has dealt with the trend of imitation and emulation of black American culture by urban African performers, citing as the most obvious reason for this 'infatuation', "examples for imitation, standards to be striven for and exhortations to achievement" (Ballantine 1993:14). The fondly remembered occasions by members of jazz and vaudeville performers such as Peter Rezant, leader of the MERRY BLACKBIRDS, are those of,

*'...immense pride when audiences confirmed that they could detect "no difference" between his band's performance of a number and the way that number sounded on an imported record' (Peter Rezant quoted in Ballantine 1993:15).*

Such accounts resonate with the experiences of Durban's neotraditional musicians, most of whom were initially self-taught instrumentalists. Such performers were constantly striving to learn music theory and sight-reading skills that would enable them to play the orchestrations of popular big band jazz and dance music. The absence of venues and halls in the townships and shantytowns like Mkhumbane demanded of the musicians to master a certain type of repertoire, one that would go down well with the inner city nightclub and hotel clientele. It was not worth the while of professional bands such as the RHYTHM ACES to play in Mkhumbane because,

*'...Cato Manor gigs were often disrupted by police, drunks or tsotsis. Such venues were not favoured by musicians' (Claude Shange, Nov.1997).*

The alternative for such musicians was to be immersed in the shantytown social performance practice, centered around the most infamous of its institutions, the *shebeen* and the *stokvel*. Professional bands were not always able to survive without playing the working-class establishments such as,

*'...YMCA, eMatramini, the (Natal) University compound, playing for kitchen boys...playing for peanuts' (Claude Shange, Nov.1997).*

Such performers were challenged to transcend their shantytown roots and overcome the everpresent doubt by hirers and white nightclub owners. Thus bands that could be engaged by the city's more sophisticated venues were those that included in their repertoire, ballroom music and Latin American dances such as the rumba, the 'cha-cha', and the tango. THE RHYTHM ACES were such a band, whose leader (Mvelase) had started to play in the Durban (KwaMuhle) Brass Band where,

*'...a white man, a trombonist with the DURBAN CIVIC ORCHESTRA used to teach...Later, I studied harmony with Professor Patrick Chambers in Albany Grove, I was then able to re-arrange overseas sheet music for our line-up of instruments. In those days, we would take a number like "Tuxedo Junction", "A String of Pearls", or "In the Mood", and memorize them from scores. In performance we would play these from memory...and the white audiences would be very suprised when they learnt that we were from Cato Manor...because the solos in these numbers were very complicated' (Mike Mvelase, Nov.1997).*

Mvelase's relationship with the pervasive black neotraditional performance in Durban allows one some measure of understanding the general responses and attitudes of literate

blacks. Firstly, one senses the unenviable position occupied by Mkhumbane's popular musicians, those who played for Africans within an environment of the *shebeen* and the *stokvel*. Black middle-class and Christian values had never found cause to celebrate these eminent institutions of African urban socialization. The striving towards professionalism was both an identification with black middle-class aspirations and a means to avert the untenable fate of a proletarian musicianship. The elitist tendency of the city's leading black newspaper, *Ilanga laseNatali*, cannot be discounted in its attempts to mould the African public's responses and choice in its consumption of the urban black performance product. The newspaper certainly presented an unbalanced picture of proletarian, working-class cultural performance activities compared to its supportive coverage and reviews of school, church and elite performance practice. For columnists such as Walter Nhlapho, African performance seemed to fuel intellectual debates on 'art' and performance aesthetics (*Ilanga*, 4 August 1945). In order to qualify for appreciation and evaluation, African urban performance had to be elevated, to approximate European canons both in terms of its aesthetic goal, socially organising principles and repertorial pigeon-holing. Thus Nhlapho, voicing his dissatisfaction with the mediocrity of the S.A.B.C.'s Bantu Broadcasts programmes in 1945, refers to the items of an already choral-music biased broadcast as,

*'... "madgril" (referring to "madrigal"??) songs based on almost similar melodies but with different wording by the artists. We can dismiss such items which sometimes are crowded in one programme as pale and unworthy reflections of the real art that stirs in our bosoms from cradle to the grave' (Columnist Walter Nhlapho writing in Ilanga laseNatali, Aug. 1945).*

For Walter Nhlapho and other discerning middle-class patrons of African music performance, the S.A.B.C. needed to invite 'composers of standing', in order for them 'to shape the programmes with their knowledge',

*'...we deserve the heavier art of Caluza, Bokwe, Tyamzashe, Mohapeloa and others. These works demand concentrated attention and frequent repetition before digestion is completed, and even then at each new hearing reveal some fresh facets, some nuance, some subtlety that had escaped previous notice. It is in this varied music I feel certain, lies the spirit of both old and new Africa' (Ilanga laseNatali, 4 Aug. 1945).*

The music of Caluza, Bokwe, as well as that of Tyamzashe and Mohapeloa, is closely associated with the 'mission' choral, school and classical musics while that of Caluza may well be the link between these genres and the latterly proletarian styles of *mbaqanga* and *isicathamiya*. The secular musical output of such composers as mentioned by Nhlapho could not be vastly removed from *imusic*, a "prevailing category of music that symbolized the identification with English values" (Erlmann 1991:59). *Imusic* has been associated with Natal African Christian communities in the mid-nineteenth century and is described as,

*'...the least politically overt musical category and as such included predominantly Western classical music, hymns, English ballads, and part songs such as "The Lass of Richmond Hill", as well as Anglo-American ballads such as "They Grew In Beauty Side By Side" and "The Little Brown Jug" (Erlmann 1991:60).*

Thus *imusic* and its offspring, the African 'neotraditional' choral traditions, came to express the values and aspirations of Durban's largely mission-educated political leadership. The influences that *imusic* had absorbed, such as hymns of the Sankey school, jubilee songs, black-American minstrelsy and ragtime, had crystallized in the hands of influential composers such as Reuben Caluza. The ideological and cultural links between black educational institutions in Natal such as Ohlange Institute, Marianhill's St. Francis College, Adams College, the black elite leadership, and African values and morality such as represented by Ilanga laseNatali, found their expression in the type of performance patronised by graduates, adherents and figureheads of these institutions.

The formation of the South African Non-European Arts Congress in 1944 coincided with much heated debate on the role of art versus politics in the articulation of African aspirations (Ilanga laseNatali, Jan. 1946). Walter Nhlapho, the music critic and Ilanga laseNatali columnist voiced his concern over what he saw as a threat to the development of "art: music, literature and painting". In a lengthy article in 1946, he wrote,

*'Even creative minds and interpreters of art, have cast art to the pigs and have become good, bad and indifferent soap-box politicians. Art, it seems must wait until we have attained our elementary rights. This is dangerous and menaces art. But art has long been buried because politics have become a national sentiment at the expense of all art. This neglect has a sequel that tells heavily on us'*

and elsewhere in the same article,

*'Bear in mind, I do not object or highly condemn our political mindedness, but art must side by side with politics have a bearing significance in our forward march and cultivation. Art is better politics than politics. Art is a greater yardstick to progress than all the highfutin' words and superlative phrases of politicians'*

*(Ilanga laseNatali, 26 Jan. 1946).*

Although one becomes acutely aware of Nhlapho's own renaissance regarding the Africanisation of urban performance (Ballantine 1993:60), the social milieu with which his post-war comments are associated, especially Ilanga LaseNatali's comments, offer an insight to the ideological underpinnings of its editorial leadership. For example, the impending visit to Natal by the Prince of Wales in 1946, seems to have sparked a public controversy regarding the appropriateness of entertaining a 'civilised' monarch with traditional Zulu dancing, *ukusina*. A reader's letter to the newspaper, responded to a comment by a sub-editor in which the latter had said that "the time was long past since we had to greet dignitaries by throwing ourselves on the ground", by asking "is Zulu dancing a sin?" (Ilanga laseNatali, 2 Nov. 1945).

The 1940s saw the rejuvenation of African resistance politics and the consolidation of the African National Congress's Youth League. These developments were echoed in a widespread grassroots social and political activity, and seems to have struck a chord with some of the city's leading musical performance practitioners. Of note in this respect is William Mseleku's far-flung interests in both musical performance and socially based organisational activism. It is groups such as those led by Mseleku which sought to reconcile the perceptions of class differences between the educated black middle class and the performance innovations of the urban black proletariat in the 1940s and early 1950s. Their interpretations of the working-class performance styles remain the only forms in

which these styles were documented (Excerpts 2.2 and 2.3). The ambivalence of the broadcasting and recording institutions towards shantytown social performance expressive styles excluded these from popularisation and dissemination via these channels. Thus the later recordings entitled 'Ndunduma' and 'Thula Ndivile' by Nimrod Makhanya's BANTU GLEE SINGERS and Caluza's DOUBLE QUARTETTE respectively, while they may manifest the key musical elements of these styles, do not reconstruct the contextual relationships and the experiential reality of these social occasions. To illustrate this argument, I will quote a published reconstruction of *indunduma* performance and then excerpt the song 'Ndunduma' as it was recorded by the vaudeville troupe, THE BANTU GLEE SINGERS for His Master's Voice in 1932. The object of this exercise would be to listen to the excerpt of 'Ndunduma' (Excerpt 2.3), read Herbert Dhlomo's reminiscence of *indunduma* performance (Ilanga, Jun. 1953), and consider the notion of experience and how different individuals construe lived experience in such a way that it bears significance and meaning for themselves (Jackson 1989).

Thus an *indunduma* experience such as we might construe from a recording of an elite troupe such as THE BANTU GLEE SINGERS, is informed by an interpretation of the *indunduma* performances by a group whose members were certainly not part of this "lowly" institution. This complex also draws attention to the way in which texts arise out of oral traditions, the latter's relationship with the verbal arts as well as the structuring of meaning and experience in performance (Finnegan 1992; Geertz 1975; Kapferer 1986; Vansina 1985).

Both *thula ndivile* and *ndunduma* were regional interpretations of the *marabi* social performance practice in the early part of the twentieth century. *Marabi* music had crystallized in Johannesburg's slumyards, drawing its basic forms, melodic and rhythmic elements from a vast body of repertoire and popular performance. In *marabi* was inscribed a history of popular performance of the diverse South African cultural groups that were subjects of slavery, colonisation and industrialisation. This assimilation into *marabi*, of 'elements from every available performance tradition', emphasized its improvisatory character and thus its significance in the evolution of South African jazz and other neotraditional music styles (Coplan 1980:206; Ballantine 1993:25). *Thula ndivile* was a form of *marabi* that had sunk deep roots in Johannesburg's Western Native Township, to the extent that the location itself came to be known as '*Thula ndivile*' (Twala in Coplan 1980:210). The music has been described by Coplan as adaptations of the melodies of Xhosa traditional music to keyboard performance by itinerant Xhosa musicians. *Thula ndivile* probably predates *marabi* because of its Cape-based origins, where the Xhosa people had been in close contact with white missionary and colonial influences for longer than most South African indigenous ethnic groupings. Queenstown's early ragtime and 'dixieland' jazz ensembles, the DARKTOWN Negroes and Meekly Matshikiza's BIG FOUR, had inherited colonial performance practices such as the 'soiree' and the mission-originating 'tea-meeting', as well as the practices of providing whites with 'black American variety entertainment' (Coplan 1980: 209; 1980:211; 1985:131). More relevant with regard to the primacy of *thula ndivile*, is an assertion by Dan Twala, '....It was not as polished as *marabi*' (Dan Twala quoted in Coplan 1980:210).

In Durban, both *thula ndivile* and *indunduma* dances were associated with black-owned innercity performance spaces, social clubs and dance halls such as Seme's Hall, Ematramini, C.D.Tusi's dance hall, African Social Club, African Workmen's Club and other establishments that had thrived between the world wars (Erlmann 1991). *Thula ndivile* is said to have emerged in Durban as a result of the post-war influx of Xhosa and Sotho migrants who 'brought with them a repertoire of performance styles that carried strong Xhosa and Sotho connotations' (Erlmann 1991:81). An account of a typical *indunduma* concert, its music and audience was given by playwright, poet and journalist Herbert Dhlomo:

*'Ndunduma concerts were real refuse dump affairs, musically and morally. They were attended by degenerate young elements, the uninitiated newly-arrived country bumpkins and the morbidly curious. The people danced to the accompaniment of an organ and a most cacophonous 'orchestra' of small tins filled with pebbles. The atmosphere was obscene. For the first time in the history of Bantu entertainments liquor was introduced.*

*The functions were like nightclubs of the lowest order. And yet what naturally talented players the ragtime and ndunduma concerts had! Vampers (as they were called) who improvised many 'hot' original dance and singing numbers at the spur of the moment, and who play or accompany any piece after hearing the melody once, and did so in any key; fellows who played music not because it was fashionable, but because they were born musicians - helpless victims of a Muse that gave them fire which consumed them as they could not control it, nor knew nor cared what it was; men who, like tribal bards of old, created beauty they knew not and flung it back unrecorded to the elements which gave it birth' (Ilanga laseNatali, 20 Jun.1953).*

It is difficult to localise the influential stylistic movements after the war in Durban. This is partly due to the paucity in the documentation of local performance culture by the region's leading publications. Informed inferences can be drawn from types of performances and recorded music spots of the 'Bantu Broadcasts' programmes of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Although such performances and music may justifiably be understood as of the type that met with the approval of the dominant social classes within the African society, the phonographic and film mediums had already proved to be influential among urban African city dwellers. An appraisal of the musical performance culture in Durban after the war reveals a co-existence side by side of a range of styles and genres. For example the 'Bantu Broadcasts' of the SABC, from 1946 onwards, featured music which sought to cater for the diverse African cultural performance sensibilities. It was such early broadcasts which juxtaposed 'ethnic' traditional choirs such as the Xhosa/Pondo choirs from the mines singing traditional wedding songs, leading *ingomabusuku* choirs such as SOLOMON LINDA AND HIS ORIGINAL EVENING BIRDS and MAMEYIGUDA AND HIS DANCERS (Erlmann 1991: 95-110), nationwide famous vaudeville performers such as the DARKTOWN STRUTTERS, SNOWY HADEBE AND COMPANY (an adjunct of the famous PITCH BLACK FOLLIES, led by Griffiths Motsieloa), and the BANTU GLEE SINGERS, a troupe founded by Nimrod Makhanya and modelled on Reuben Caluza's DOUBLE QUARTETTE (Ilanga, LaseNatali, Jun.1946). In the same programme would be featured mission-based choral traditions by the likes of OHLANGE INSTITUTE CHOIR, The

ZULU RADIO CHOIR, REITZ BANTU CHOIR, A.A. Khumalo's AFRICAN MALE VOICE CHOIR, alongside jazz and vaudeville performers such as Peter Rezant's MERRY BLACKBIRDS BANTU RHUMBA ORCHESTRA, and WILLIE GUMEDE AND HIS CONCERTINA BAND (Ilanga LaseNatali, Jul. Aug. Sep. Oct. Nov.1946).

The beginning of the 1950s saw the issuing on record of some of the above groups on labels such as Gallotone, Decca, His Master's Voice, and Troubadour. Thus groups such as DANIEL MARIVATE AND CO. (GB 1168); WILLIE GUMEDE'S SWING BAND, (GB 1289); Rhodesian groups such as guitarist George Sibanda, THE AFRICAN DANCE BAND; PIET RANGKOPANE AND HIS BOYS (GB 1147); The BANTU GLEE SINGERS (GB 1283), were featuring on Gallotone catalogues that were being advertised for sale to the public by record and music shops (Ilanga LaseNatali, Mar.1951). Decca Records, was advertising the 'Latest American Jive Hits by Tommy Dors(a)y (FM 5836); Louis Jordan (FM 5912); Sy Oliver (FM 5889). There seemed to exist a system of song classification based on ethnic lines and an arbitrary stylistic pigeon-holing. Hence titles were followed by descriptions like Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Rhodesian, Jive, Rhumba, Khwela, etc. (Ilanga LaseNatali, Mar.1951). Similarly, mail order businesses such as H.Pollack & Company Ltd. in Johannesburg were advertising "Bantu Recordings" on His Master's Voice JP-series recordings. Under their 'Zulu', 'Xhosa', and Rhodesian categories were listed compositions and performances by groups such as MSELEKU AND HIS MERRYMAKERS (JP15) WILLIE'S MADCAP BAND (JP 109, 110); THE KILNERTON INSTITUTION CHOIR (JP 111, 112); THE GAY ROBINAIRES (JP 113); and THE BANTU GLEE SINGERS (JP 89) among others (Ilanga LaseNatali, Jan.1952).

For many years after the war, the mine industry maintained a public relations campaign through a regular column in Ilanga LaseNatali, aimed at informing the African public of the cultural benefits of labour migrancy. The mining houses had taken it upon themselves to organise their African labourers' leisure-time activities. In sport for example, they played rugby, soccer, cricket and tennis. The mines' correspondent listed a total of 18 mines with 6000 African rugby players fielding 202 rugby teams; a total of 87 soccer fields had also been provided, as well as facilities for cricket and tennis (Ilanga LaseNatali, Jun.1946). The most touted opportunities that the mines offered though, were cultural performance activities, especially *ingoma* traditional dance competitions, as in a column headed 'Why Your Menfolk Decide To Go There':

*'You will be glad to hear that the Mines direct your menfolk's way of living so that they, your menfolk, can keep alive the traditions of the people from whom you have sprung. The mines do not want to see your menfolk forgetting their old way of living. When you at home see your young menfolk prepare to go to work on the Mines you may wonder if they will remember the "traditions", the best teachings of the Tribe. It is only natural that you should think about this. Good traditions are dear to any worthy noble. You realise that the Mines are a long distance away and that anything will be new to your young menfolk - different people, different surroundings. But you need not be disturbed about this. The Mine baases understand. They see your point of view; they know that your young menfolk will not want to forget their old way of living. Therefore the mines arrange what are known as Native Dances, which are held as often as possible.*

*The idea of these Native Dances is to give pleasure to your menfolk; and a properly organised dance is a complete relaxation after hard work. Tribal dancing is a joy to your menfolk, and they dance so well and brightly that the White men look on with interest. The movements are brisk and lively. Only healthy beings could keep up the pace as your menfolk do. A big Native dance wants great deal of organising, and the success of these happy occasions requires that the Mines and the representatives of your menfolk know how to co-operate in the arrangements, etc, etc. (Ilanga laseNatali, Oct.1951).*

An earlier article in Ilanga laseNatali, subtitled "Dancing And Music", under the heading "Working On The Mines" had reported:

*'Among recreational facilities it is desirable that other things even besides sport should be found. As we told you before, and there is no harm in repeating it, a Brass Band composed of Africans plays at week-ends in the Compound for the edification and entertainment of the Mine labourers. It is pleasant to lie on the grass in the sun and listen to good music. This pleasure is within the grasp of your menfolk when they work on the Mines. Your traditional dances play a large part in your lives, and on the Mines this is not forgotten by the Mine baases. Dancing areas are set apart in the Compound, and the Tribal dances are encouraged at the week-ends. Inter-Mine competitions are arranged, and on the Mine even Inter-Tribal dances take place. These cause tremendous enthusiasm. This is another instance of the Mines blending the traditional form of recreation with the modern European way of life, which is always beckoning to the Mine African through his contact with the Reef. In any one corner of the compound he may listen to European music played in a European fashion by fellow Africans, and in another corner he can watch his traditional dances with traditional African music, chanting and singing' (Ilanga laseNatali, Sept.1945).*

I have quoted at length the mines' recruitment campaign, if only to convey the patriarchy and racism that interpreted Africans' cultural performance adaptive behaviour. The articles were written in English, and translated word for word into Zulu in an adjacent column of the newspaper. This co-optation of Africans by the central institutional processes through appeals to their cultural performance sensibilities was subsequently emulated by the state in its effort to undermine the political mobilisation of Africans. From the middle of the 1950s, such attempts by government to acquiesce the growing resistance against the implementation of apartheid legislation, were aimed at the African institutions of religion and traditional political leadership. Towards the latter end of the 1950s, the dominant issues inside Natal's leading black newspaper, Ilanga laseNatali, were the many reports of church meetings and conferences that were being held nationwide by the various church denominations. On the eve of the 1958 Treason Trial, the newspaper gave a wide coverage of church denominational activity, the high profile overseas travels of the church leadership, with local conferences and annual general meetings attended by representatives and church members from most parts of South Africa. Amicable meetings between the leaders of the most powerful of the Separatist churches with Nationalist government officials in Pretoria, were widely reported. While the contents and agendas of these meetings were never revealed to the public, their reportage conveyed an unmistakable sense of pride and achievement, as the following article in Ilanga reveals:

*'PRETORIA- the presidents of the African Congregational church and the Moderator visited the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr Verwoed - they arrived in a car in the Union Buildings and were led by the minister's private secretary, Fred Bonard, who ushered them into Dr Verwoed's office - they were also shown around the other offices of the minister. They returned in high spirits because they had been able to consult with the minister' (Ilanga laseNatali, Aug. 1958).*

In another report of the previous month, also in Pretoria,

*'Mr S.S. Potgieter of the Department of Religious Affairs met with Zion heads and gave them advice as they are planning to amalgamate - and he set out the conditions for the official recognition of their amalgamation' (Ilanga laseNatali, Jul. 1958).*

The newly built townships were being adequately provided with new church buildings despite the fact that infrastructural facilities in other areas of social services like health and cultural performance were lagging far behind. Church activities such the opening of new church buildings, the zoning and sitings of these, the ceremonies of 'turning the sod' for yet more church buildings, took on celebratory dimensions and were being imbued with a significance of social cultural performance. An annual general meeting of the Lutheran United National Church which took place over a period of six days in Cato Manor in 1958, also included a day-long trip to open a new church building in Clermont Township (Ilanga LaseNatali, Jul. 1958). What was remarkable in this high profile, state-endorsed church activity was the fact that it was taking place during the Treason Trial and a blanket State of Emergency - at a time when the Emergency Regulation curfew was enforced, in which

*'Gatherings of more than ten people were prohibited by government in the urban centres, among them the greater Durban and Pietermaritzburg areas' (Ilanga laseNatali, Jul. 1958).*

During the same period of the Treason Trial and the State of Emergency in 1958, the following announcements appeared in Ilanga LaseNatali:

- a big meeting of the Zionist New African Bethesda Church of Christ in Maphumulo in the Natal midlands
- the first major A.M.E. conference in Durban, held at the A.M.E. Church in Chesterville Township, and attended by delegates from as far afield as Nqabeni on the South Coast and Newcastle in Northern Natal
- a convention of the *amadodana*, the 'sons' of the Bantu Methodist Church of South Africa, held in Clermont Township, with delegates from Durban, Port Shepstone and Pietermaritzburg
- a Presbyterian *manyano* annual general meeting in Clermont
- a meeting of the Ethiopian Church In Zion Of South Africa, with representatives of the following regions: Inanda, Sobantu (Pietermaritzburg), Bergville, Gillits, Gezibuso, Rossburgh - on the occasion of the opening of a new church building in Inanda.

The profiling of religious institutional activity was paralleled by equal publicity, again accorded by Ilanga LaseNatali, to the government's consolidation of the homeland policy strategies, and the domination of Zulu traditional politics by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi. In a letter published in a front page by Ilanga LaseNatali, Buthelezi had invited all the Zulu

chiefs to a meeting whose agenda was to revive 'Inkatha kaZulu', a movement that had been initiated by the late king, Solomon ka Dinuzulu. The guest of honour at the meeting was going to be the Bantu Affairs Commissioner, A.J. Turton (Ilanga laseNatali, Jul. 1958). The gathering was following close on the heels of a publication of a Government Gazette notice empowering the chiefs to enter and search homesteads for *ugologo* liquor and livestock without a search warrant. The chiefs, according to this decree, could delegate such powers to whomever they chose. Furthermore, if it was found that the chiefs or their *induna* headmen were not performing their duties to the satisfaction of the Secretary for Bantu Affairs, their actions would be investigated. A chief or *induna* found guilty of this misdemeanour would have their pay cut, or alternatively be liable to a fine not less than one-hundred pounds (Ilanga laseNatali, Aug. 1958). This state of affairs severely disempowered the chiefs in terms of their ability to negotiate meaningfully and on equal terms with the government on behalf of their subjects - being rendered as they were, mere agents for the implementation of the central state's policy to control the lives of Africans. On the other hand, the chiefs were being co-opted by government into interfering with the day-to-day lives of their subjects.

Developments such as above served well to erode individual and social integrity of Africans. Thus neotraditional performance, driven as it was by assertions of independence and expression of choice and alternative view, could only be strangled by such an environment. In the available popular recordings by African neotraditional musicians during the 1950s, song-titles seemed to be preoccupied with nominal subcultural descriptions of musical, dance or fashion styles. Textual compositional materials were focussed on the dominant images and issues of day to day urban African existence. Titles such as 'Kwela Rhumba', 'London Kwela', 'Umshovo', 'Nylon Baby', 'Mali' (money), 'Maphoyisa' (the police), 'Makhaza' (the cold), 'Lover Come Duze', 'Mali Yami' (my money), 'Bengithembile' (I was trusting), 'Baleka' (Run), 'Dog's life Kwela', were given to some of the more popular recordings at the end of the 1950s (Ilanga laseNatali, Jul-Oct. 1958). These topical concerns in musical composition would suggest a life experienced without security and stability offered by home and family. While the compositions may not have exhibited any processual understanding of the large political moves and the state's strategic orchestration of the social, political and economic terrains, they saw and expressed the African's proletarian urban alienation from within. The recording industry itself must have targeted the migrant and rootless urban labourers, those who could spend their hard-earned money on the palliative diversions provided by gramophone and radio entertainment. The opiate potential of this music was quickly realised and exploited by the state sponsored broadcasting and recording institutions. Most of the music could not be heard live, with the studios assuming full control of the production and presentation of the music in their efforts at grooming 'stars' or securing lucrative stylistic formulae to exploit.

Attitudes that developed among township musicians - in response to their perception of the instrumental role of radio and the recording industry in muzzling their voices - included those of a calculated criticism and ambivalence towards the musics that were very much offshoots and 'manipulated' innovations of the *marabi* - *African jazz* continuum. The type of *mbaqanga* that was embraced by the oppressive processes and exploitative institutions, as well as other neotraditional and ethnic traditional performance genres that were

privileged by these mechanisms, elicited suspicion and disfavour among the 'conscientized' elements of strategic black resistance. It was an unfortunate outcome of this strategic stance against the divisive policies of state which necessitated a calculated ambivalence and even 'deprecation' of the ethnic manifestations of indigenous culture and performance.

It was indeed a transcendental leap in perception for neotraditional township performers who, by looking afresh at their 'roots', strove to evolve discourses in performance which sought to empower the very practices which the apartheid system had imbued with fragmentary potential. It is my contention that this is the domain of township neotraditional musicians, which manifests itself typically in the three subjects of this thesis.

### Chapter 3

#### **Experiences of learning: the dominant musical influences on the three neotraditional musicians**

This chapter attempts to identify influences that have determined each of the three subject's cumulative skills as well the experiences which inform their individual approaches to composition and performance. In a township situation, the absence of any structured musical tuition is further exacerbated by the alienation of traditional institutional practice. The ritual and ceremonial practices of pre-colonial Nguni societies - which acknowledged the relevance of their indigenous social, political, religious and cultural institutions - may have adequately catered for the mentoring and nurturing processes towards an expressive performance specialisation. In view of the radically altered environment, and the collective social experiences of urban Africans, a few points are worth noting regarding Duze Mahlobo, Madala Kunene, and Madoda 'Bruce' Sosibo. All the three musicians

- share a strong Nguni and a predominantly Zulu birthright
- were born within three years of one another in the early to middle 1950s
- were all less than ten years of age when their parents settled in KwaMashu Township
- employ the guitar as their main instrument of composition and/or performance
- manifest developmental and professional careers which frequently intersected
- are completely self-taught instrumentalists.

Furthermore exists, among these three township musicians, a significant body of a shared social experience. The context of their social being is such that it would be impossible to relate the story of any one individual to the exclusion of the others' experiences. Indeed, had they been born a hundred years earlier in pre-industrial Zululand, they would have belonged to the same regiment. While the points that have been noted above are largely symptomatic of an uncontrollable 'pre-destiny', other elements, especially those that allowed each individual a certain degree of choice, have been harnessed by each in such a way as to harmonise as well as emphasize their individuality.

I have chosen to engage with the implications of this individuality in a chapter dealing with style, in order to highlight an observation I share with Coplan. In my appraisal of individual expressive styles of the three musicians I have adopted his "view of performance as a discrete behavioural subsystem possessing characteristic modes of processing and communicating information" (Coplan 1980:4).

While these stylistic approaches could be referred to as neotraditional, because they employ Western style instruments and are modelled on such conditions for their consumption and contextualisation, the particular choices of a mode of delivery, the social vocabulary and communicative style all delineate a characteristic individual processing, grasp and interpretation of similar experiences, diverse musical styles and influences.

### 3.1 The subjects' assimilation of early mentoring influences

A Zulu proverb, '*ukhamba lufuze imbiza*', is literally translated to mean 'the water-pot resembles the cooking-pot' (Doke-Vilakazi 1990:337), and rings true indeed in the case of both Duze Mahlobo and Madala Kunene. The parents of both were very much a visible part of Durban and Mkhumbane performance culture. Duze's father, Ndabenhle Mahlobo, was a tap-dancer with a Durban troupe, the AIRPORT SHOTS, in the 1940s. Mahlobo subsequently trained and led his own group, THE STREAMLINES, who performed to live jazz and ballroom as well as "anything else that you could sing... anything that was rhythmic" (N. Mahlobo 1997). I had come to KwaMashu to interview Duze, and I was not at all aware of his father's involvement with the vaudeville scene in Durban after 1945. When the older man overheard what we were talking about, he joined us in conversation, confessing a much regrettable lapse of memory...

*Duze: I was taught by my father at a very young age, who insisted that I dance in my unwieldy school 'bovver boots' while he danced in his steel-capped shoes. My 'bovver' shoes were then affixed with shoemaker's metal tabs under the toes and heels because of my eagerness to attain the same 'clicky' sound as my father's. Only now do I realise the teaching method he was applying. At the time I did not know any better. He was trying to train me to control and discipline my feet as I was very impulsive then... which I still am today!*

*Mr Mahlobo: ...He had large feet and could not do this...*

(demonstrates a 'toe-heel' tap, approximating a 'double quaver' rhythmic figure).

*Now then, he would not have been able to execute a movement such as...*

(taps a rapid 'quintuplet' rhythmic figure using both feet).

*Duze: That's what he was trying to control and because I was floundering, I had to start with an uncapped pair of boots. At the time I thought he was shortchanging me as 'his' gave a nice 'click, click, click' sound.*

*Mr Mahlobo: It's not 'them'!*

*Duze: Of course I didn't understand then and it used to upset me real bad. Still, being a child, I had to do it and in the process of trying I earned myself a nickname, Ququdu<sup>1</sup>, due to the sound I always managed to elicit from my stiff boots. As time went by, my father started to include me in concerts in Lamontville and other places I cannot remember...where I would 'ququdu' away, performing tap-dance.*

*Mr Mahlobo: ...And the Zulu "isicathulo"...the gumboot. I used to teach them that as well.*

*Duze: Of course, gumboot-dancing. Over and above that, there was a piano at home, I used to listen and watch my father play. He used to play that too, even although it was not his main pursuit. I would often try to imitate him...that's how I started to play the piano. When we moved house to come to KwaMashu, the piano was sold as it was too heavy to move around.*

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<sup>1</sup> 'qu-qu-du' - a Zulu ideophone, an onomatopoeic term deriving from a triplet rhythmic figure, in this case a sound by especially 'boot-clad' feet stepping on a hard surface.

Listening to this exchange between father and son, I was taken by surprise on realising the deep bonds that exist between them. This was a kind of warmth that is drastically lacking in day to day parent-child communication, bonds which normally get submerged under tensions of the present and enduring insecurity and anxiety among black township families. I have known the situation of unemployable offspring among township families to cause stress and deep resentment between family members, especially in cases where the family depends solely on the elderly parents' meagre pension for survival. I think that Duze's father, as a result of his own experiences as a performer, has come to understand his son's frustrations better. When I wanted to know the type of music Mahlobo and his troupes were tap-dancing to in the late 1940s and the early 1950s, I was told,

*'At that time it was jazz...but wait a minute...it was anything really... anything that was rhythmic' (N. Mahlobo 1997).*

*Sazi: So then, your initial experiences on stage were as a tap-dancer...but tell me, how did you become an instrumentalist?*

*Duze: I was not playing any instrument then. I was very young then....about eight years old when I was tap-dancing. I fell in love with an instrument that my family owned at home. I was crazy about the piano, and I used to play on our acoustic upright whenever I could. When the family left Lamontville to come here, I decided to learn another instrument. We did not bring the piano over here... we could not carry it, so I tried the guitar...in the 1960s. When we arrived here in 1963, I decided to learn another instrument. I chose the guitar, which I carried on playing, even though I really had no idea what I should be doing*

*(D. Mahlobo 1997).*

Madala Kunene was similarly influenced by his brothers and a father who was an amateur musician in Mkhumbane during the 1940s and 1950s:

*'We used to make wire toy-cars which we played by pushing around...among other games of childhood. The time came for us to play nikabheni like our older brothers, but they did it differently' (Kunene 1997).*

In the absence of traditional institutions and rites of passage marking the transition from boyhood to adolescence, the *nikabheni* social performance practice had come to play an important role in the lives of Mkhumbane children. The changed economic circumstances demanded impelled minors to start earning as soon as they could in order to supplement inadequate incomes of a large number of urban African families. According to a 1956 Durban municipal survey estimation,

*"...the vast majority of African unskilled workers living in either Lamontville or Chesterville earned a monthly wage of between ten and fifteen pounds a month. The majority of the remaining men in these areas earned a monthly wage of less than ten pounds a month" (Edwards 1989:176).*

In interview, Madala emphasized the blurring of play and work which characterised participation in the *nikabheni* performance practice,

*'This is the kind of pastime and employment that we emulated from our older brothers. In my family, my father performed in this way - but theirs was not nikabheni. There was a name by which they called their performances, but at the time I was still too young' (Kunene 1997).*

Ensembles such as Madala's father's performed in the *backyard* shebeens and ramshackle venues of Mkhumbane, where illicit liquor was brewed and sold. It would be natural to assume such venues being out of bounds for many young *nikabheni* performers. Madala described his father's group as follows:

*'They used to play, with my father playing the guitar. There was a friend of his, Ernest Khoza, who also played guitar. Someone else danced, Vonco Khumalo was his name - there was also someone else known as Dixie. They were a group and had grown up together' (Kunene 1997).*

Madala Kunene's reminiscences corroborate those of other informants regarding amateur *shebeen* performers and solo dancers who often kept rhythm for *ndunduma* performances by playing *amathambo*, the bones (Ngidi 1997, Kunene 1997, Mvelase 1997).

*'We grew to love this as we watched them perform. Later...we tried to do the same thing, but differently. We used to leave the Jibhakhoti vicinity of Mkhumbane, and go to play where the Coloured and Indian people lived' (Kunene 1997).*

Without a doubt, the young boys' *nikabheni* performance practice had come to characterise the cosmopolitan spirit of the shantytown's multi-cultural society, as Madala recalls of their sojourns into these predominantly Coloured and Indian areas of Cato Manor,

*'There was a place known as EmaKhaladini, down there near Abrahams, where we used to perform during New Year and Christmas holidays. We would come back with a mound of tickes, farthings, half-pennies, half-crowns and shillings. We would walk back to Jibhakhothi to sit down and share the pickings' (Kunene 1997).*

The earning potential of this activity attracted the participation of adults, providing income for them as well, as Madala recounts,

*'We all shared equally with an adult person who acted as manager for our group. He would collect the money while we played, and when we had finished, he would pay us all equally and also pay himself ...the same amount as the rest of us. This went on until the time we were told to leave dismantle our homes and move to KwaMashu' (Kunene 1997).*

### **3.2 Pervasive musical traditions and their influences on neotraditional township musicians**

The most significant musical influences, since at least the latter end of the nineteenth century, have predominantly come from America. Erlmann has traced the early influences of American blackface minstrelsy, initially mediated by white South African performers, and its appropriation by mission, rural, and urban Africans (Erlmann 1991). Some of the more lasting and pertinent black South African music performance styles, such as

*marabi*, *isicathamiya*, the mission-church, school secular choral traditions, and dances, are traced to the influential American performance styles. Among these styles are ragtime, blackface minstrelsy, jubilee songs, polkas, of the turn of the century. Later on in the early twentieth century, dances such as the "Charleston" and the "Jitterbug" were imported and assimilated into local African performance, so was dixieland jazz and dance big-band swing. Hamm has also plotted this pervasiveness of African-American musical influences on black South African performance culture (Hamm 1988). Hamm's study seeks to explain the political and cultural determinants, contradictions, problems of mediation and representation attendant to the reception and subsequent exchange of musical influences between the two countries. The importance of Hamm's studies for the present discussion lies in the extent to which he deals with the African-American musical influences on black South African musical performance from the 1960s up to the 1990s.

The most influential American popular music of the 1950s, while it did briefly attract the attention of a discriminating black African listenership and patronage, did not sustain its influence among South African blacks generally and, as Hamm has observed,

*'Early rock'n'roll drew more directly on Afro-American music styles than had any previous American music available to black South Africans... But no elements of early rock'n'roll penetrated popular African styles' (Hamm 1988:20).*

This ambivalence of urban African society to rock'n'roll stemmed from representation of the music in local media and white controlled institutions of music reproduction and distribution. First imported to South Africa by white entrepreneurs for consumption by the country's white youth, the type of rock'n'roll that found its way to South Africa, was that performed by white performers such as Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly, Elvis Presley or Bill Haley (Hamm 1988:18). Thus South African blacks largely rejected rock'n'roll - as Hamm puts it,

*'Though a few musicians recognized rock'n'roll's stylistic dependency on African American music, the black population saw it as as music by white performers for white audiences, generating controversies among the white population of little concern to blacks' (Hamm 1988:21).*

In contrast, the *twist*, whose popularity peaked among black South Africans in the first half of the 1960s, was "associated with black Americans from the beginning" (Hamm 1988). In Durban, this popularity of the *twist* was echoed by the recording of "Zulu Twist" by Victoria (Busi) Mhlongo and the Durbanites [Gallo GB 3303], of whose assimilation Hamm has observed that,

*'Some of these (recordings) were more or less literal imitations of the American twist - fast rhythmic, cast in twelve-bar blues form...'* (Hamm 1988:22).

The patronisation of the Africanised version of the twist by the Bantu Programmes of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, helped to sell radios, with black radio ownership in South Africa increasing twentyfold during the lifetime of African twist (Hamm 1988:25). In the middle 1960s, the music and the concept of *soul* soon took root among black South Africans, especially because of its resonance with black aspirations for dignity and respect in a degrading and ambivalent capitalist social environment. Preceded by the tumultuous events of Sharpeville and the crushing of the mass democratic struggle waged by the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress in 1964

- soul music accompanied the rise to prominence of the late Dr Martin Luther King. The music itself was a manifestation of the cultural ideals of the black American civil rights's struggle. In some of the most radical compositions and performances in the broader "soul-music" genre, were inscribed core moral and social principles as espoused by prominent leaders such as Dr Martin Luther King himself. In soul were blurred the resilient social and moral boundaries characterising the divide between the secular and the sacred. King's protege's and disciples, among them the Reverends Jesse Jackson and James Cleveland, were leaders in the field of African-American soul/gospel performance and recording in the early 1970s.

In South Africa took place some interesting developments in response to the affirmative tone set by the imported African-American soul. Recognizing the music's potential for the expression of positive black images, local bands soon appropriated the genre for their own expressive priorities. Hamm mentions the initial difficulties inherent in the penetrative potential of the genre,

*'This music was so dependent on the sound of electric instruments (guitars, basses, organs) that imitation and assimilation could not take place without them, and few black Africans had access to the kind of money needed to buy or even rent such equipment' (Hamm 1988:28).*

One of the first South African bands to make its mark in this style were THE FLAMES, a Durban band made up of the Fataar brothers, Steve on guitar; Brother, on electric bass; Ricky, on drums; and Blondie Chaplin, guitar. In the late 1960s, THE FLAMES were among the earliest bands to successfully emulate soul, among other predominantly "Coloured" bands such as THE FANTASTICS and the INVADERS, both of whom were from the Cape. Following the success of these groups - which included a four-star billing for THE FLAMES "Burning Soul" LP in America's Billboard magazine and a South African golden disc award for the INVADERS - a number of township-based soul bands had sprung up by 1969 (Hamm 1988:28). This genre, dubbed "soul jazz" by the local black press, came to be popularly known as "Soweto Soul", on account of the bulk of the bands originating from the Reef, and especially from Soweto neighbourhoods. It is this music which became an urban expressive alternative to the negatively imbued aspects of SABC and Gallo-sponsored neotraditional *mbaqanga*. The patronisation and domestication by the ethnically differentiated South African Broadcasting Services of performances by the likes of Simon "Mahlathini" Nkabinde, "Mshengu" Shabalala and other *isimanje-manje* and *mqqashiyo* "groaners" and groups since the early 1960s, had increasingly alienated the politically conscientized urban African audiences.

Highlighting an important difference between "Soweto Soul" and African-American soul, Hamm observed that,

*'This "soul jazz music" of the INNE LAWS, the BLACK HAWKES, and similar early groups - the SOUL GIANTS, the EARTHQUAKES, the MOVERS, the TEENAGE LOVERS - represented a synthesis of American and African musical elements, rather than the mere imitation of American soul. It was purely instrumental, to begin with' (Hamm 1988:29).*

Another important difference is the secular basis of the South African version of soul,

which owed nothing to the local religious musical forms and church traditions. Local Christian mission church and school influences had resulted in SATB vocal, and predominantly a cappella religious expressive styles compared to their Africanized evolution in the American black churches in the south. American soul music retained a close relationship with the spirituals and gospel music of the African Americans. "Soweto Soul" became the feature of the popular musical festival performances all over South Africa in the 1970s. In the early 1970s the biggest ever black music festival, the PINA-CULO Music Festival - held annually at Umgababa Holiday Resort on the Natal South Coast - featured most of the popular soul groups. Apart from the Reef, Orange Free State and the Cape Province, a number of these bands came from Durban and Pietermaritzburg, and included bands such as the MOVIE-MOVIES, PURPLE HAZE, JAZZ DIGGERS, GROOVY CATS, DRIVE, EXPRESSIONS, KORI MORABA among others. Bheki Mseleku, the Lamontville-born international jazz pianist, saxophonist and multi-instrumentalist, was one of the key members of the EXPRESSIONS. Bruce Sosibo himself was a bassist with the KwaMashu-based PURPLE HAZE, one of his earliest involvements with professional music performance. Bruce's sister, Busisiwe Sosibo recalled in an interview that,

*'(Bruce)...started out playing bass guitar. I think his first band was called BLUE PACIFIC or some other similar name. I remember that they were sponsored by a Mr Myeza from D-section (KwaMashu), who used to work for Orchard Butcheries and often bought musical equipment for them. Later on Myeza could not sustain his sponsorship and the band split. Bruce continued playing for various bands until he joined the THIRD GENERATION. But before this he had played for PURPLE HAZE, with guitarist Eugene Mkhize and others like bassist Ernest Khwela and Thami Khumalo. PURPLE HAZE itself disbanded, very much still unknown because they were not recorded. They then formed the THIRD GENERATION with Sis Gloria (Msomi), Ernest Mkhize, Caesar Ndlovu and others. For a while it looked like they were going to record, but this also did not happen. They encountered many problems and finally disbanded. It was after this that they formed the MALOPOETS' (Sosibo 1997).*

Thus since the early part of the century the most strongly-felt influences of foreign popular music styles were *big-band swing, rock'n'roll, jazz, rock, black American soul and gospel* music. All of these influences were, until as recently as the 1970s, only accessible to the majority of South Africans through private acquisition of commercially available recorded music. Alongside these influences has been assimilated the local genres of musical performance, through the radio, phonograph, live performance and by virtue of their being part of the local, social musical performance practice. Among the most influential of these genres has been the indigenous performance traditions of *ingoma* and *amahubo* ceremonial songs, childrens' musical and oral performance practices, choral styles of both religious and secular repertoire, the neotraditional *mbaqanga* and *simanje-manje* styles, the *maskandi* rural and migrant-workers' performance traditions.

The individual choices exercised by township neotraditional musicians along the processes of importation, imitation and assimilation of foreign and local musical influences, have been largely determined by the symbolic significance and meanings attached to the ability of the musicians to express themselves in these modes. Various styles have been

associated with the social expressions of consciousness in terms of class, standard of education, ideology, degree of urbanisation, religious affiliation etc. The embracing of the diverse musical performance styles has mirrored the complexly organised urban African societies as well as catered for the expression of an equally diverse social, cultural, political and economic orientation of these societies. Thus musicians themselves have incorporated into their expressive styles elements which facilitate their communication with the particular social group - which could be the same social group as that to which they belong or, in other cases, the targeted audience could well be outside of the originator's own social group.

A fusion of disparate styles by neotraditional musicians, especially after 1976, was a direct result of a shared experience of subjugation which was officially justified by difference and diversity. In their exploitation of the diverse performance expressions of urban and rural Africans, conscientized neotraditional composers sought to empower the equally diverse cultural experiences of black South Africans and play down the differences that were emphasized in the divisive apartheid ideology. Remarking on the changes that had taken place in music composed around Durban and Johannesburg between the years 1959 and 1969, the late John Blacking observed that such a development,

*'was not so much a response to external influences as a reflection of the momentous political changes that were taking place. For this was the decade in which Black Consciousness and the idea of Black Power crystallized and came into the open, and in which blacks finally realized that they could not expect generosity or common sense from a dominant white minority, who deprived them of their land and of the right to vote and to move and sell their labor freely within their own country, and who maintained this dominance by spending profits of the economy chiefly on benefits for whites and on police and military forces to control the blacks' (Blacking 1980:196).*

The emergence of politically conscientized township neotraditional performers and groups after 1976 was a direct culmination of these perceptions among black South African youth generally. A generation before, similar constraints had elicited similar strategic responses from politically conscientized band leaders and composers, within developments that were discernible in the early urban African neotraditional expressions, primarily of *marabi*, *isicathamiya*, *African-jazz/mbaqanga*, *kwela*, *vaudeville*, and protest theatre after King Kong.

### 3.3 Foreign popular music influences

Duze Mahlobo, in acknowledgment of the fact that prior to the formation of MALOPOETS in 1978 he had scarcely paid any serious attention to 'African' music, said to me:

*'We did not initially have the conviction...we were under the spell of American music, pop and all that stuff...jazz, you see. We were not at all ruled by African music - I would not lie to you and say we were...'* (D. Mahlobo 1997).

Mahlobo was referring to his experiences in his first professional band, called THE THIRD GENERATION, in the early 1970s. At this time, Duze himself was influenced by the musical styles of black American guitarists George Benson and Eric Gale. His fellow

guitarist in MALOPOETS, Samson Shabalala, was described in the programme notes for their University of Natal lunch-hour concert appearance, as follows:

*'His travels in music have seen him graduate from commercial pop-soul music to the present vein.'* (Programme notes for a University of Natal free lunch-hour concert, Durban, 26 Feb. 1979).

And of drummer Bruce Madoda Sosibo in the same flyer,

*'Started teaching himself to play by listening to the SHADOWS - hence his nickname 'Bruce'<sup>2</sup>* (Programme notes, University of Natal, Durban, 26 Feb. 1979).

Among the numerous bands in which Bruce served his apprenticeship was a band called PURPLE HAZE, which took its name from the popular Jimi Hendrix composition of the same name. It was for this rock-influenced outfit that Bruce first played bass and later, the drum kit. It was this experience which informed the many facets of the MALOPOETS' repertoire, leading some show reviewers to comment on the band's live appearance in Johannesburg's Market Theatre, that,

*'This group of musical performers have their own wonderfully original sound - a potent brew of reggae, jazz, calypso, mbaqanga, and the bush noises of animals'* (Oswald Mtshali writing in *The Star*, 13 Sept. 1980).

A Dome journalist also gave her impression of the detectable influences in the group's style,

*'The Malopoets have an entertaining yet unaffected stage act. Playing a reggae-influenced brand of African Jazz, they produce a spiritual sound which occasionally extends to subtle funk'* (Mandy Tomson's interview with Pat Sefolsha, Dome No. 4, Oct. 1979).

Three of the songs from the band's Fire (1982) album bore discernible influences of reggae. These tracks were "Easy Come Easy Go" on Side 1 and on Side 2 are the songs "Bula Bulani" and "Love To Marley" - the latter being a dedication by Sefolsha to the Jamaican-born guru of reggae music, the late Bob Marley. The last track of the album is a song entitled "Latikweni", whose danceable rhythms betray a definite 'funk' influence with strong African melodic and rhythmic elements. This song could also easily be associated with the West African *makossa* and *highlife* traditions. MALOPOETS seem to have largely limited the influence of 'foreign' popular music to reggae. Their criticism of, and resistance to *pop* and *disco* influences was well-publicised, as a 1980 interview by PACE magazine editor Vusi Khumalo reveals,

*'Pat Sefolsha recalls with a sensitive mind their lean and mean days in Durban when, as the only group that did not yield to the ravenous disco sweep, they lived thin, and had virtually nowhere to perform for anybody. In Durban, he says, people are into disco and nightspots. Nobody gave them an ear'* (Pace, Dec. 1980).

An introduction by a Drum magazine showbiz reporter confirms the band's stance regarding commercial music by saying,

*'Five vibrant young musicians comprising Malopoets, who struggled against the consequences of their dogged refusal to play commercial music amidst a plethora of*

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce - a nickname for Madoda Sosibo - whose full name was Madoda Simon Sosibo - after Bruce Welch, a guitarist in Cliff Richard's backing band, THE SHADOWS.

*dreaded disco, are today modestly poised to enter the international jazz arena' (Drum, Aug. 1982).*

And, in the words of MALOPOETS front-man Pat Sefolsha,

*'We will not sell out - we are proud of our roots, not ashamed of them. We will always remain based in Africa, otherwise it would defeat the purpose of our sound and message'*

*(Pat Sefolsha interviewed by Mandy Tomson in Dome No.4, 1979).*

It is often mentioned how MALOPOETS' refusal to go commercial brought them many hardships. They would often go without food, unable to support their families, and often had their musical instruments repossessed. The repercussions for MALOPOETS' uncompromising stance were perhaps more bearable to the band as a group, when one considers the sustained efforts by Bruce Sosibo to make his mark as a commercially viable solo artist. Sosibo composed a sizeable repertoire of songs which, while employing his original interpretation of black South African urban-based and traditional musical idioms, also sought to appeal to a wider consumer market. Some of these songs found their way into the tape medium via a number of sessions which Bruce intermittently undertook in his effort to appease a need for individual self-expression and accommodate his openness to the many musics that filled his multifaceted 'soundscape'. His sensibilities towards indigenous African music as well as the neotraditional and urban musical developments of *marabi*, *African-jazz*, *kwela*, *mbaqanga*, *maskandi* and *isicathamiya* amongst other styles, found their way into his many compositions for solo guitar and vocal, small acoustic ensembles and acoustic-electric band formats.

In order to highlight Bruce Sosibo's diversely influenced approach, I have excerpted and transcribed some of his compositions in Appendices II and III respectively. More than anything else, these compositions and performances point to the disparate styles and influences that have been processed by individual South African neotraditional musicians. Sosibo's musical output reflects the unique, social, and lived experiences of young black South Africans, especially after the post-1976 crises.

Some of Sosibo's original compositions, the bulk of which date from the late 1970s, are: 1. "I Want To Be Famous" (Excerpt 3.1) - I first heard Bruce sing this song and accompany himself on acoustic guitar in the backyard of his home in KwaMashu Township, Durban, at the beginning of 1983. He and guitarist Sam Shabalala had been waiting for nearly two years to obtain visas to travel abroad to join the rest of MALOPOETS. Transcript 15 (Appendix III) is a sample of the acoustic guitar style used to accompany the lyrics below, sung in English:

*I wanna be famous  
But when  
I wanna be famous  
But how  
While the devil  
Interrupts my way  
I'll have to be polite  
I'd rather be lucky so  
When the cunning devil  
Calls around*

*So maybe he won't even notice  
 By the time I'm gonna strike him down  
 On the ground  
 Oh this is true now  
 I wanna be smiles someday  
 He will never return  
 When he's gone gone  
 He will never come back  
 Once he's gone gone away  
 He will never look back  
 When he's gone gone  
 He will never return  
 Once he's gone away  
 Once he's gone  
 He'll be gone  
 Gone away*

2. "Stop Apartheid" (Excerpt 3.2) - this guitar and voice composition is reminiscent of the 'funky' black American soul style such as that of Curtis Mayfield. The bass plays a two-note pedal figure, a fifth and root of a minor key, on the fourth and the first beat of the measure respectively. The sparse three-voice chording is only three attacks per measure, on the last half of the upbeat of the first beat; a crotchet triplet on the second beat, the first note of the triplet is tied to the note of the first chord ; the leading voice in the chord progression corresponds to the second, the third and the fourth degree of the minor scale. A short excerpt, whose lyrics appear below, and a sample measure, is transcribed in Appendix II (Transcription 3.2):

*Thula mntwana (Be quiet child)  
 Mus'ukukhala (Do not cry)  
 Owa mntwana (Hush child)  
 Mus'ukukhala (Do not cry)*

4. "Lies" - this song, written in English, is reminiscent of Pat Metheny's "Folk Song" from his milestone 80/81 (1980) album with Dewey Redman and Michael Brecker on tenor saxophones; Charlie Haden on bass; and Jack Dejohnette on drums. Sosibo's composition, which did not incorporate any interlude material as in Metheny's "Folk Song", revolved around E major and F# minor, both chords being supported by a bass-pedal E note. The text material is personal, and much like in the pop songs, an acrimonious statement to an erring loved one. Bruce recorded this during a demo-taping session, singing in duet with a male singer and accompanying himself on acoustic guitar:

*It's not a day without you love  
 Here next to me  
 Just next to me  
 I feel sad so sad  
 Throughout the day  
 If I don't see you love  
 If you don't come to me  
 I don't hate but all I hate*

*Is when you told me lies  
It's like a long day  
Without you love  
If I'm without your love  
When I'm without you love*

5. Sometime around 1990, Bruce invited me to a studio where he was overdubbing some vocal tracks to a composition entitled "Emily". We often harmonised on some songs within the ZANUSI repertoire. The song was reggae influenced, and hinted in its rhythmic structure to Bob Marley's popular song, "Jammin". Also, the orchestration was reminiscent of Stevie Wonder's treatment of the same tune. I have taped a short excerpt of Bruce's keyboard orchestration, which included a synthesizer bass line (Excerpt 3.3). Below are the lyrics to "Emily", to which I sang the backing vocal part during a studio overdubbing session:

*Emily I believe you're gonna save my soul  
Welcome into my life Emily I need your love  
No one knows what tomorrow may bring  
As long as we got love  
Emily, embrace me with your love  
Don't let me down  
Come close to me and save my soul  
No one knows what tomorrow may bring  
As long as we got love*

### **3.4 Local musical influences: jazz, marabi, mbaqanga, kwela, neotraditional urban, and other indigenous musics**

The primacy of the jazz influence on South African urban black performance has been documented by Ballantine (1993), Coplan (1980;1985), Hamm (1988), and Allen (1995) among others. I cannot think of any more fitting justification for the importance of the jazz influence to the evolution of South African black urban musical traditions than Ballantine's introduction to his seminal work, "Marabi Nights - Early South African Jazz And Vaudeville" entitled 'Memory, History and Context', which I have taken the liberty of quoting at length:

*'In the rich panoply of black urban popular musical traditions in South Africa, the "jazzing" tradition lays claim to a special place. This jazzing style has a history vibrantly stretching back to the early years of the century but also bears the traces of even older sources; it has a history of openness to change and to creative engagement with other styles but also of fierce battles around such issues; it has a history shaped by, but also shaping itself in resistance to, the fundamental social and political stakes of a deeply repressive and exploitative social order. And its range of musical idioms has been a repository for some of the country's finest creative energies, now increasingly being celebrated internationally. In short, the jazzing tradition can claim credentials which define its makers as bearers of one of South Africa's proudest cultural heritages' (Ballantine 1993:1).*

Ballantine's reconstruction of urban social performance history focuses on the retrievable aspects of *marabi*, the music and the social processes which nurtured it. The evolution of this, the earliest known pan-African urban musical idiom in South Africa, is closely tied with the ever-changing social environment, largely as a result of colonial missionary influence, industrialisation and urbanization. It is perhaps only this environment, characterised by an unprecedented social flux, which facilitated the juxtaposition and cross-pollination of the subcontinents' most pervasive performance cultures to give birth to *marabi*, a music that has been aptly compared to the *blues* (Ballantine 1993:5). It is not surprising then, given the above considerations, that the most pervasive influences on contemporary musicians, especially those who have consciously sought to link with past urban musical traditions, are easily traced to *marabi* and other influential music styles that emanate directly from it. It is a measure of the resilience of *marabi* that it did not succumb to the onslaught of the most powerful exports of American culture.

The overwhelming influences of American big band swing were shaped into an authentic black South African jazz expression, in the form of *African jazz* or *mbaqanga* and *kwela*, in addition to a host of other regional musical developments which sought to empower the indigenous expressive styles and accommodate popular music influences emanating from the Western world.

Prior to the consolidation of the peri-urban black township, the slumyard was the repository of such cultural performance practices which cradled this legacy of the evolution of black urban performance practice. The predominant jazz-related styles in the late 1950s Mkhumbane were the dance-crazes such as *phatha-phatha*, *kwela* and *jitterbug* (Edwards and Maylam 1996). The most popular musics were those of the close-harmony vocal groups such as MANHATTAN BROTHERS and female stars such Mirriam Makeba, Dorothy Masuka, Dolly Rathebe who all had recorded chart-topping songs at around this time.

According to Duze Mahlobo's father, who led an elite dancing troupe in Durban called THE STREAMLINES, jazz was the predominant music to which his tap-dancing troupe performed. Literate pianists and budding jazz musicians such as Theo Bophela, guitarist James Mbambo, and the late saxophonist Dalton Khanyile, among others (all of whom became members of the Durban jazz band, THE KEYNOTES) were often employed to provide live music for tap-dancing troupes such as THE STREAMLINES (Mahlobo 1997). A notice which appeared in the editorial page of the Durban newspaper *Ilanga laseNatali* in 1945, had hinted towards at the socially elevated status for such troupes and their accompanying swing jazz bands:

*'STREAMLINE SISTERS - After a long interval of absence from the stage, the STREAMLINE SISTERS will appear again at the B.S.C. (Bantu Social Centre) on Wednesday, December 26, assisted by the Swing Metronome Band. During their absence, the sisters have been busy training, and from a group of four, they had increased to a troupe of eight smart girls. The Party which has entertained many audiences here and on the Witwatersrand, has now grown mature, and should present a fine programme when they appear next' (Ilanga laseNatali, 23 Dec. 1945).*

I have mentioned elsewhere how Duze was initially introduced to jazz through tap-dancing. When I asked the kind of music to which he danced, Mr N.Mahlobo was certain that it was the jazz of that time. He subsequently added that besides jazz, his troupe danced to anything rhythmic. Below is an excerpt from one of my interviews with Duze Mahlobo, in which we were joined by his father, Mr N.Mahlobo:

*Mr Mahlobo: It was jazz. But wait a minute...anything which could be sung to rhythmically.*

*Duze: It was any music really - but it was within a jazz situation where the dancing seemed most suited.*

*Sazi: Any particular music or performers?*

*Duze: James Mbambo<sup>3</sup> is one of the people I know who used to play with my father.*

*Sazi: Did you dance to live band performances then?*

*Duze: I got to know him (Mbambo) through my father, who used to hire him to play with Hlakanyane<sup>4</sup>, his original pianist.*

*Mr Mahlobo: He is the oldest pianist I had in THE STREAMLINES.*

*Duze: I am not sure when (pianist) Theo Bophela came to join your troupe... was it before or after?*

*Mr Mahlobo: I am not so sure, because our last pianist was Percy Mkhize. James Mbambo was really young at the time - also the late tenor saxophonist, Dalton Khanyile.*

*(Interview with Mr N. Mahlobo and Duze Mahlobo, Jul. 1997).*

Both pianist Theo Bophela and the late saxophonist, Dalton Khanyile, were literate jazz musicians who became noted "African jazz" exponents. Both became noted composers in the officially so-called "Bantu Jazz" idiom, their careers coinciding with those of South Africa's renowned jazz performers and institutions. Besides their coincident involvement with Durban's most influential jazz bands such as the CHROMATIC SWINGSTERS (which was subsequently enlarged to a big band, the CHROMATIC SWING BAND) and later the KEYNOTES, both men were part of the significant jazz events of the 1950s and the 1960s. Khanyile had toured nationally with the MANHATTAN BROTHERS since 1950 before starting his own combo, the KEYNOTES in the early 1950s. Bophela orchestrated the music for Gibson Kente's play MANANA THE JAZZ PROPHET and was also in Alan Paton's musical, MKHUMBANE in 1959. Prior to this, he had toured Mozambique with a show called AFRICAN REVUE following his participation in the AFRICAN JAZZ AND VARIETY SHOW.

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<sup>3</sup> *James Mbambo* - KwaMashu jazz-guitarist and businessman. His most recent appearances in performance were with the Durban jazz band THE KEYNOTES, which he also led in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. THE KEYNOTES won the band category of the 1965 Cold Castle Jazz Festival in Johannesburg.

<sup>4</sup> *Hlakanyane* - (real name Bobby Mofokeng), Lamontville mainstream jazz pianist who passed away in the late 1980s. Mofokeng was a jazz die-hard who taught jazz to many a youngster from Durban's black townships. Thami Mtshali, the university-taught double-bass player from Umlazi Township and ex-ZANUSI member, cut his teeth in jazz in one of Mofokeng's many performing groups. Bobby Mofokeng's band, BOBBY'S COMBO, was a constant feature of the outdoor jazz festivals in Durban during the late 1970s.

The combined influence of the personalities associated with his father's tap-dancing activities rubbed off on the young Duze, who often imitated their playing on his family's upright piano. When the Mahlobo family relocated KwaMashu Township and sold the piano in the process, Duze decided to learn the guitar.

The proximity of such formidable Durban jazz guitarists as Sandile Shange, Elias S'dumo Ngidi and Allen Khwela among others, influenced Duze Mahlobo to embrace the guitar styles of Wes Montgomery, Joe Pass, Herb Ellis, Barney Kessel and perhaps Chet Atkins. These were among the most influential jazz guitarists and role models to elicit envy and admiration from local jazz guitarists. While it has been impossible for some of Duze's peers who were similarly influenced in the 1960's, to accommodate the ideological changes that have impinged on neotraditional performance since then, it is Sandile Shange who has adapted remarkably to the emerging consciousness. Since the early 1960s, Shange has experimented with *marabi*-based styles, to which he has incorporated his extensive jazz vocabulary. His intermittent career as a sideman during the few but important sessions in the company of Cape-based pianists such as Tete Mbambisa and Pat Matshikiza, has ensured Shange a legendary status and influence to most younger township jazz guitarists. In addition to this influence, Mahlobo has also paid attention to the music of Philip Tabane and MALOMBO. It is from Tabane that he has imbibed the spiritual aspect of interpretation of indigenous traditions.

Duze Mahlobo has sought to encompass all the musical expressive styles which characterise the southern African performance tradition. His stay in Zimbabwe enabled him to learn the *mbira* hand-piano. In order to facilitate an individual approach to the application of this instrument to local and contemporary music styles, Duze Mahlobo has added extra reeds to his *mbira*. Regarding his overall assimilation of local music traditions, Duze's two most discernible influences though are the pennywhistle (the six-hole flageolet) and a very original style of *marabi* and *maskandi* interpretation.

In conclusion, I would like to mention an awareness shared by the three subjects, of the existence of a number of styles. Some of these are imitated and emulated, with techniques and melodies being appropriated at will and favourite lines, runs and phrases memorised. In the end, individual style manifests the results of processing the total musical experience and ordering the elements of this experience in a chosen idiom of expression within neotraditional musical performance.

## Chapter 4

### The guitar in neotraditional township music

The aim of the chapter is to pay attention to the prominent role of the guitar in the regions' diverse musical approaches, and particularly to the use of this instrument by township musicians in and around Durban. Some of the issues that are dealt with include the tin-guitar and its popularity among African male children, its production and technology as it is utilised by youth in both urban and rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal, the most common tunings and harmonic approaches. The discussion is extended to the instrumental styles of the three subjects of this study, the guitar tunings and the technical approaches that they have evolved.

#### 4.1 The pervasiveness of the guitar in shantytown and township social performance practice

The centrality of the guitar as an instrument of both composition and performance in neotraditional music demands that special attention be focussed on the stylistic approaches of the three subjects. This chapter deals with the salient aspects of guitar style by looking at the different tunings, technique and repertoire of the three musicians. Two of the musicians, Duze Mahlobo and Madala Kunene compose and perform on the guitar as their first instrument. Bruce Sosibo, while he occasionally played guitar in live performance situations, his forte' and main instrument was the drum-kit. Often he would use the guitar to compose, and then teach the guitarist in the band the part while he went back to play the drums. This is how he taught me and my brother his compositions during the time we were with ZANUSI.

The guitar is probably the most popular musical instrument in KwaZulu-Natal, a trend that has earned the region a considerable reputation for consistently producing the finest exponents on the instrument in the whole of South Africa. While there are no official records to support this widely-held belief, it is worth noting that besides an unsurpassed tradition of *maskandi* guitar musicianship, the country's leading black jazz-guitar exponents in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s have come from Natal, especially Durban. Among these are the late Cyril Magubane, Sandile Shange, Allen Kwela, Elias Ngidi, Bhabha Mokoena, Vusi Thusi, Bheki Khoza, Bheki Mseleku, Enoch Mthalane, and Johnny Chonco. When veteran trumpeter Hugh Masekela visited Durban in 1991 as the Principal's guest of honour at the University of Natal, he confirmed the city's black musical legacy by asserting that 'Durban is the home of *mbaqanga*' (Hugh Masekela 1991). In view of the fact that the original *mbaqanga* of the 1950s, 1960s and the early 1970s was predominantly guitar-based, Masekela's statement further endorses a perception of the city's black performance culture as one based primarily on the guitar. The organ and keyboard only took root well into the 1970s, following the popularity of the keyboard *mbaqanga* style of the SOUL BROTHERS and the organ-led 'Soweto soul' groups of the early 1970s. Prior to this, the standard instrumentation for turn-of-the 1960s *mbaqanga* normally included two guitars, plus an electric bass.

The pervasiveness of the guitar as an instrument of performance and composition in Durban, is a historical and cultural enigma. The instrument's position within the region's neotraditional repertoire has not yet been fully explained by some of the more plausible postulations that scholars have yet put forward, such as, for example:

- a possibility, as a result of the port's situation on the principal route of the pre-17th century Asian-European mercantile trade, that Portuguese seamen may have introduced the guitar to the coastal Natives (Clegg 1981:3)
- an influence of the three-stringed *ramkie*, thought to have been brought to South Africa by Malay slaves from the Malabar coast of India, developed by the Cape Khoi and subsequently adopted by rural Africans, (Coplan 1980:439)
- a legacy of post-war merchandising, attributed to the nationwide advertising campaigns after 1945, that were capitalising on the popularity of the guitar as a soloing instrument within the American big band swing movement.

The famous trade names of the late 1940s were Wizard, whose models included the 'Arizona', the 'Texas', and the 'Mexicali'. Gallotone advertised two models, named after the popular dance musics of the era, the 'Rumba' and the 'Jive' (Ilanga laseNatali, Oct-Dec.1951, Jan.1952). Around the beginning of the 1950s, playing guitar was associated with status, fashion and glamour that was naively attached to a successful career in music performance. Advertising in the local media was soon capitalising on the proletarian aspirations of material security,

*'Drum magazine and the local Zulu-language newspaper Ilanga laseNatali and, to a lesser extent, the Roman Catholic "UmAfrika" and the very left-wing "Guardian" carried advertisements showing smartly dressed men; wearing a Battersby hat, strumming a Wizard guitar, or listening to the latest records, (Edwards 1997:119).*

An advertisement for a tonic called Phospherine in a 1951 Ilanga laseNatali, had this caption accompanying an illustration of a smartly dressed guitarist playing in front of an appreciative audience, (See Appendix 4):

*'once he was too ill to play his guitar NOW HE IS THE STAR IN A FILM'  
(Ilanga laseNatali, Oct.1951)*

Whatever the reasons were for the popularity of the guitar, the instrument became a vehicle of the expression of an urban cultural performance sensibility. This accessibility privileged the guitar as a musical instrument to a high level of experimentation. One result of this was interpretation of diverse indigenous musical sensibilities and neotraditional musical developments on an instrument that had come to symbolise the essential musicality of Africans caught up in the flux of urbanisation and industrialisation.

The developments of the *kwela*, *tsaba-tsaba*, *phatha-phatha*, *mbaqanga*, *mgqashiyo*, and *simanje-manje* dance and music styles is as directly related to the accessibility of the guitar to shantytown and township communities of the 1940s, the 1950s, and the 1960s, as much as these styles are the products of an itinerant and unsettled lifestyles of urban African musicians. All the above styles are marked by an elevated role for the guitar as both a rhythm and harmonic basis, usurping the role of the piano and organ in the precursor styles of

*marabi*, big-band swing and early ragtime-influenced experiments.

Musically adventurous youth growing up in the urban environment were inclined to start imitating the popular musics of the 1940s, gleaning the influential guitar styles from records. Besides the overarching influence of Wes Montgomery and perhaps Barney Kessel, Jim Hall and Joe Pass, older township guitarists in this stream are likely to point to their overseas heroes in the direction of the likes of Benny Green in the Count Basie Big Band, Charlie Christian (Benny Goodman Sextet and Orchestra), Leslie Spann (Duke Ellington Orchestra), Herb Ellis, and Django Reinhardt (Le Hot Club du France). More often such vocabulary would find its way into the interpretations of local *marabi*-influenced styles by the younger generation of Durban guitarists, such as Allen Kwela, Cyril Magubane, Sandile Shange, Enoch Mthalane, James Mbambo, Bunny Luthuli, Mtimayo (Mfana), Spirit, Sam, amongst others. Elias 'S'dumo' Ngidi, the KwaMashu jazz multi-instrumentalist and is also a mainstream and be-bop jazz guitarist, revealed in an interview, something about the veteran self-taught guitarist Sandile Shange from Chesterville township:

*S'dumo: ... Sandile! Believe me when I tell you that Sandile was the first person to play guitar like Wes Montgomery, without ever having heard Wes playing before. It's true! To the extent that a long time went by until guitarist Chet Atkins visited Durban. I am sure you have heard of Chet Atkins, a fine guitar player himself. When he heard Sandile play, he asked if he had been listening to Wes Montgomery. Sandile said he had never heard Wes. That is when Wes Montgomery's music came to South Africa. The first record of Wes's to come to South Africa was sent to Sandile Shange, by Chet Atkins. When I listened to Wes Montgomery I could not detect any difference between between him and Sandile - I could not say who was who!*

*Sazi: What was the name of the record... S'dumo: ... Eh... Montgomery Brothers, where in Wes Montgomery was playing with his brothers.*

*S'dumo: I think it's 'MONTGOMERY LAND'. Ya...*

*Sazi: What was the year?*

*S'dumo: This was in the early sixties. You know what, there is no other musician I respect more than Sandile.*

*(Ngidi 1997).*

Sandile Shange, alongside other Durban guitarists such as Allen Khwela, Cyril Magubane, Elias Ngidi, and possibly "Spirit", has been the subtle but powerful mentoring force in the jazz-leaning interpretations of indigenous and urban popular music styles. The scant recorded output of such respected black neotraditional township musicians is often lamented.

Included in the accompanying cassette is Excerpt 4.13, illustrating Sandile Shange's guitar style from the album *Sikiza Matshikiza (1976)*, featuring pianist Pat Matshikiza; Kippie Moeketsi on alto saxophone; Duku Makasi, tenor saxophone; George Tyefumani, trumpet; Siphon Gumede, bass; and Gilbert Matthews on drums.

It is worth noting that while Duze Mahlobo openly expresses his criticism (Chapter 3) of the styles of the older township guitarists, such as Sandile Shange, Allen Kwela and Elias S'dumo Ngidi for example, all of them have significantly influenced his own style. Mahlobo's single-line guitar improvisational approach, seventh-chord voicings and voice-leading concept all attest to this subconscious 'tuning in' by younger township instrumentalists to existing urban traditions of marginal and subcultural stylistic interpretations (See Transcripts 1, 1a; Excerpt 4.5).

An important aspect of Duze Mahlobo's style is the influence of neotraditional guitar styles such as the predominantly Zulu *maskandi* and Philip Tabane's MALOMBO. It is through his own original sense of style and processing of the latter influences that has impelled Mahlobo to develop his own tuning systems and finger-picking technique. I will be dealing with these aspects of his style in a later section of this chapter.

Madala Kunene's guitar style can be traced to his formative experience within the *nikabheni* street performance practice in Mkhumbane (Kunene 1997). I have dealt with the shantytown performance practice that was known as *nikabheni* in Mkhumbane in Chapter 2, and especially the various ways in which this practice is remembered by ex-Mkhumbane residents. Kunene had the following to say about the early years of his musicianship:

*Madala: Mmmhhh ... bafu...one started a long time ago, playing 'nikabheni'.*

*Sazi: 'Nikabheni'? ... What is 'nikabheni'?*

*Madala: 'Nikabheni', bafu, was when you got together, a gang of young boys all growing together. One of you would play guitar ... a three-string guitar, another one would dance and money would be thrown on the ground by spectators. It was something like that.*

*Sazi: So, from there you graduated to the big guitar?*

*Madala: I was playing a tin-guitar. if you performed 'nikabheni, it was that kind of guitar, and a tambourine made out of discarded bottle-tops, then there would be dancers. Coins such as stivers, farthings, half-pennies, shillings and tickes would be thrown on the ground for the performers. At the time I was growing up in Mkhumbane, on 'the hills'.*

Strong oral evidence suggests that the guitar was the main instrument of accompaniment to most of Mkhumbane's social performance occasions. This fact is borne out by the frequency of the guitar's appearance in photographs depicting everyday life in the shantytown. Taken in the 1950s, some of these photographs show people drinking homemade alcoholic brews from tins in a shebeen backyard, while others depict youngsters gambling with dice on the street (KwaMuhle Museum photographic collection). Mike Mvelase, a dance band trumpeter who grew up in Mkhumbane recalled some of these scenarios in an interview,

*"The "stokvel" and "shebeen" musicians played mandolins and guitars in return for cigarettes and "isiqatha" or "isikokiyana" (Mike Mvelase, Nov.1997).*

The terms *isiqatha* and *isikokiyana* refer to the illegal alcoholic beverages that were brewed by Mkhumbane women to supplement their incomes, alongside other economic social practices such as the *stokvel*.

## 4.2 The tin-guitar

The tin-guitar, sometimes referred to by music scholars and the Cape Coloured people as the *ramkie*, is probably the symbol of African childrens' instrumental musicality. I was well aware of this tendency when I ventured to ask Duze Mahlobo in an interview:

*Sazi: Did you ever play a tin-guitar?*

*Duze: of course that is where I started... having made one myself. I started by affixing three strings on a tin-guitar and playing that. It sounded good to me. As time went on I added another string. I used to make my own guitars using an empty paraffin or oil can. During those years paraffin was usually bought by the gallon. To make a guitar you would open the tin, put in a flat piece of wood and knock in behind this one, a shorter wooden piece for support. You would then use fishing line for strings. sometimes we would use car-brake cable-wire. This came in a bundle from which you would peel off a string for your guitar, one string at a time.*

*(D.Mahlobo 1997)*

The fashioning of the *ramkie* by township, mission and rural children has been documented widely (Kubik 1974; Rycroft 1977; Coplan 1980, 1985; Dargie 1988).

Coplan gave the following description of the *ramkie*:

*'A small, three or four-stringed plucked guitar developed by proletarian Cape Khoi after a model brought to South Africa by slaves from Malabar, on which were played blends of Khoi and Dutch folk melodies. In time, also adopted by rural Africans, (Coplan 1980:439).*

Dargie, whose dissertation focussed mainly on the two principal musical bows employed in Xhosa traditional music, also mentions that:

*'In addition to the musical bows, two other stringed instruments have been recorded by me in the Lumko district. one is called "igitali", from the English "guitar", and is a three stringed "ramkie" type, used to strum chord accompaniments to songs using the local version of the (Afro-Western) diatonic scale, (Dargie 1988:49)*

Madala Kunene, who used a three-stringed tin-guitar to perform the Mkhumbane boys' version of the Inikabhenil performance, related a similar experience of making Iramkiel type guitars from discarded materials:

*... when I was about six years old, I made my own tin-guitar. we used a kind of wire for strings. I wouldn't know the name, but that wire used to come in a tight bundle...and we used to undo it, each bundle yielding six or five single strings which we teased apart, (M.Kunene, Apr. 1997).*

In my own family, one of my mother's elder brothers used to play guitar in his youth in the 1930s and 1940s. Employed in Durban during the late 1940s, my uncle was familiar with the marabi-type guitar styles of the era. His sons (my maternal cousins) taught one of my elder

brothers, Njeza Dlamini, to make and play tin guitars. This was around 1964 and my family had a home at Dududu Mission Station. Our tin-guitars had six strings, which we normally tuned in intervals corresponding to the standard Western tuning of E A d g b e. My eldest cousin, Aaron 'Fando' Khuzwayo, experimented with various tunings, which enabled him to formulate original chord voicings and fingerings. He used both 'picking' and strumming techniques, and the latter technique was referred to as *ukuvamba*.

When I was growing up in the 1960s, anyone who played a Western style instrument particularly a guitarist, was called a *maskandi*, unlike today where the term has been reduced to refer solely to traditional, and predominantly Zulu instrumentalists and the music that they play on Western style instruments such as guitar, concertina, violin, mouth organ and recently also on electronic keyboard. (See Xulu 1989, Mthethwa 1981, Clegg 1981, Davies 1992, Coplan 1985). Both documented and oral evidence point to the early influence of the *ramkie*-type tin-guitar on neotraditional performance as a widespread phenomenon among African children in both urban and rural environments, especially in Natal. Some of the most popular township guitarists in Durban, such as Siphso Gumede, Allen Khwela, the late Cyril Magubane, the late Bunny Luthuli, Sandile Shange, Joshua Sithole, James Mbambo, Spirit, Mjonas, Bheki Khoza, Bhabha Mokoena, Vusi Thusi, Almon Memela and many others past and present, all started playing on tin-guitars.

#### 4.2.1 The three-stringed tin-guitar

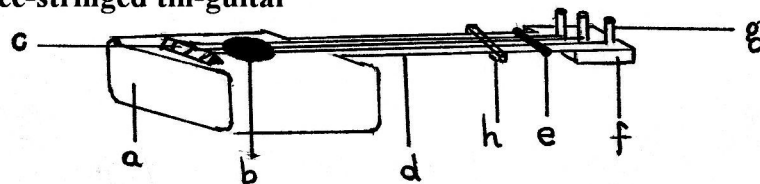


Fig. 1

- a - **igogogo** tin resonator (soundbox)
- b - **imbobo** sound-hole
- c - **ibhiliji** bridge
- d - **umphini** fingerboard
- e - **ikamu/ibhiliji** nut
- f - **ikhanda** head
- g - **izisetho** wooden tuning pegs
- h - **ibhiliji** capostato

The *igogogo* tin resonator (**a**) is often an empty five-litre oil-can. Sometimes a floor-polish tin is used, producing a smaller, banjo-type instrument that may or may not have a sound-hole cut out. An *imbobo* sound-hole (**b**) is cut out to obtain more volume and also to allow the artisan to insert the top block to support the lower end of the fingerboard inside the soundbox. Small holes are then punched along the lower rim of the tin resonator. The strings, made of cat-gut or thin wire material are threaded through the small holes and passed over

the *ibhiliji* bridge (c) and under the *ikamu* nut (e), (often confusingly referred to as a 'bridge'). The *izisetho* tuning pegs (g) on the *ikhanda* head (f) are used to tighten or loosen the strings when tuning. In order to obtain a desired pitch for singing, some players use an *ibhiliji* capostato (h) carved out of wood to tie the strings down at a higher position.

#### 4.2.2 Tuning a three-stringed tin-guitar: a rudimentary triadic harmony

There are a great variety of tunings, intervallic relationships that are possible, utilising the three strings. Indeed, individual self-teaching guitarists develop their tunings to suit particular compositions, and their own interpretations of popular songs. There exists no one particular fingering of even the same chord voicing, as this will depend on the individual guitarist's choice of the basic open-string intervals.

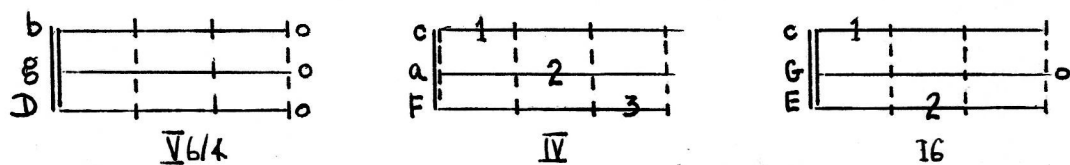
Madala Kunene regards his various tunings as his 'secret', and would not consider showing these to any other guitarist. Kubik, in his study of Malawian neotraditional musicians, has remarked on this perceived need for secrecy by musicians in other parts of Africa (Kubik 1981). Kubik quotes the leader of the Kachamba Brothers band, Daniel Kachamba, explaining the reason for a complicated code he had invented for one of his tunings,

*'have chosen such a difficult name so that it should not be copied by anyone'*  
(Daniel Kachamba quoted in Kubik 1981:96)

During a casual conversation, Madala Kunene revealed that he normally has to tune up to ten different ways in order to be able to play all his repertoire during a single public performance. I will be discussing the various tunings employed by the three musicians who are the focus of this study, in a chapter which deals with style, composition and performance.

Being fretless, a tin-guitar is played chiefly in the open and first positions. Further positions up the fingerboard present problems with intonation. If for example, the three strings are tuned at intervals corresponding to D, G, b of the standard guitar tuning system, it is possible to voice the three primary triads in the key of C major:

I6 (EGC); IV (FAC); V6/4 (DGB) (See fig.2 for the fingerings of these chords)



left hand:

- o open string
- 2 second finger
- 1 first "
- 3 third "

Fig.2

#### 4.2.3 A tin-guitar harmonisation of a popular marabi melody

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system is labeled 'drum' and has 'x' marks above the staff at measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. The second system is labeled '1st melody' and '2nd melody' and shows two melodic lines. The third system is labeled 'guitar' and shows a series of chords in parentheses on a six-string guitar staff.

Fig.3

In order to illustrate how it was possible to voice the basic harmonic framework of *marabi*, *kwela*, *mbaqanga* and other related substyles that utilise tonic-subdominant dominant progressions, I will make use of a popular *marabi* melody. The strumming technique of *ukuvamba*, which was largely used in accompaniment, enabled the young musicians to imitate the popular music styles which they could hear on records and on the radio from about 1945 onwards. The *marabi* melody which I have used in the above example derives from a popular tune in the *African jazz/mbaqanga* tradition. Entitled "Engine Fire", this tune appeared on the B-side of a 78-rpm record by the RADIO BANTU ORCHESTRA (His Master's Voice JP 647) and, its composition is credited to E.Themba - leader of the HARLEM SWINGSTERS, M.Vilakazi, and R.Bopape. The tune "Engine Fire" became immensely popular during the earlier part of 1950, probably because of the widespread airplay it received, being as it was one of the SABC's 'in-house' productions. The melody became widely recognised in most parts of the country, with various lyrics being composed to it. The cyclic, repetitive nature of *marabi* invited this kind of meta-improvisation from the wider public,

*'The melodies superimposed on these endlessly repeating patterns sometimes became legendary; sometimes lyrics were invented as well, and in some instances the lyrics contained political commentary or protest' (Ballantine 1993:26).*

Thus during the middle 1950s at Dududu Mission Station, where my mother grew up, a father sang to his infant son, Mgumuli, the following lyrics superimposed over the chord progression of "Engine Fire" (Excerpt 4.3):

*Dansa Mgumuli*

*Dansel'uLeya*

*Translation: (Dance, Mgumuli)*

*(Dance for Leya)*

It is to this extent that the *marabi* harmonic forms were so entrenched that the sound itself became part of the formative musical experience. Heard both on the gramophone and radio, the music came to inform the compositional and repertorial ideas of youth growing up with an interest to perform, whether vocally or on an instrument. A broad interpretation of the *marabi* forms came to pervade the experimental ensembles put together by mission and urban youngsters. My cousin, Benjamin Khuzwayo, was a member of such a grouping of schoolboys in the early 1960s, playing a one-string acoustic bass constructed out of commercial plywood tea-box and twine-string. Their group consisted of two acoustic steel-

string "Bellini" guitars, two pennywhistles and the "string-bass", as the one-string, box-resonated instrument was called. Kubik has remarked on the possible indigenous prototypes of the "string-bass",

*'It is generally assumed that the one-string bass derives from the African ground-bow. The history of the string-bass in kwela bands, however, has not yet been written, and clarification is still needed on whether the South African version with a tea chest as resonator ultimately developed from traditional African models or was inspired by American skiffle groups, whose music was not unknown in South Africa, (Kubik 1974:39).*

Kubik was reporting on Malawian Chichewa musicians, THE KACHAMBA BROTHERS, who had been influenced by South African kwela *and simanje-manje* styles. What remains unclear are the origins of the instrument and whether it did indeed derive from the ground-bow. The central African origins of this indigenous instrument would suggest a different explanation for its occurrence within a mid-twentieth century slumyard and township musical development in South Africa. The setup in my cousin's group, the use of pennywhistles, guitars and the string-bass, point to a definite influence of the 1950s kwela music. The first pennywhistle melody I learnt in the middle 1960s was 'sung' to, in the following words,

*"Hello Spoki Mashiyen,  
Hello Spoki Mashiyen"*

In Fig.3 is superimposed these two melodies over a *marabi* type chord progression. The result bears a striking similarity to the tunes in the same style as "Engine Fire", that is, the three melodies are interchangeable. I have brought in the above observation in order to highlight the grassroots interpretation, especially by youth, of a music such as *marabi*, an almost subconscious assimilation of an idiom that has become emblematic of a broad South African neotraditional musical expressivity. The tangible outcome of this assimilation was *kwela*, a music whose emergence might well have been impossible were it not for the widespread availability to the slum and township youth, of the tin-guitar technology. Equally important for the evolution of this most popular urban African music style was the accessibility of *marabi* to rudimentary interpretation by African boys on home-made guitars.

### 4.3 The guitar tunings employed by the three subjects of this study

I have mentioned above how Madala Kunene, like other self-taught neotraditional musicians elsewhere in Africa, elects to keep secret his various tunings, for fear of these being appropriated by other guitarists (Kubik 1974:96). This insecurity stems from an experience of exploitation and the politics of copyright and style. For unschooled musicians, who rely solely on their own intuition, talent and wits to discover and construct for themselves a logical understanding of the mechanical elements of music, such an understanding comes from many years of experimentation and meditation. Unlike literate musicians, who take such knowledge for granted by virtue of its multiple reproducibility in the processes of logic and reason, as well as in print, audio and video material forms, non-literate musicians have to discover for themselves most of their skill and knowledge. It is thus not unreasonable for musicians like

Madala to regard their discoveries as secret. Their very livelihood and stylistic individuality hinges on their continued control of this knowledge. Madala's reluctance to reveal his various tunings is worth respecting, and I ceased pestering him any further since he first demonstrated reservations about sharing his knowledge. Instead I have tried to discern a method from the way he talks about music and his conception of the elements of melody and harmony. Some of the introductions to his songs give some clues to the possible intervallic organisation of his open-string tunings. The timbre, attack, and the distribution of Madala's open-string voicings, especially when intoning the *izihlabo*, give an impression of a very individual conception of indigenous counterpoint such as employed by mainstream *maskandi* musicians (Excerpt 4.4). Growing up in a township like both Mahlobo and Sosibo, Madala has assimilated the 'sound' of the *maskandi* tradition from radio, phonographic sources and his individual processing of the indigenous musical elements. This approach attempts to compensate for the social, cultural, and ideological distance which exists between the mainstream urbanising township consciousness on the one hand and migrant, hostel, and rural *maskandi* performance practice and sociopolitical organisation on the other. These are aspects of issues which are at the core of extreme political violence in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal - the political and economic exploitation of the perceived social, class and cultural differences within the African community - especially between the radically politicised township youth and the conservative vigilantism of homeland -based migrant patriarchy. Having said this, I need to reiterate the mediating role of the conscientised township neotraditional performance practice, that which seeks to counter the fragmentary potential of the perceived ethnic and cultural differences.

Bruce Sosibo does not tune his guitar in any special system in order to obtain the *maskandi* intervallic relationships. In the context of *maskandi* practice these are largely achieved by tuning down the first string to a D. The resulting tuning thus obtained is *E A D g b d*. Sosibo achieved the same intervallic relationships by playing on the second position on a guitar tuned in a standard western system. If we look at the higher four strings of a *maskandi* tuning - *D g b d* - we can see how these intervals are obtained, a second higher in pitch, in the second position of a guitar tuned in the standard western tuning system of *E A D g b e*. By playing a barrel A major chord in the second position, the following pitches result on the higher four strings:

- E - on the second fret position of the fourth string;
- a - on the third string in the second fret position;
- c# - on the second fret position of the second string;
- e - sounded open on the first string.

The intervals between the strings in both tunings are in the following order - from the first string to the fourth major sixth; minor sixth; perfect fifth. I have discussed some these observations in relation to Bruce Sosibo's stylistic approach elsewhere in Chapters 3 and 5. Among the three guitarists, Sosibo was the least adventurous with regards to tuning systems, choosing to employ only one alternative tuning to the standard system. This involved tuning down the bass string down to a D. This is the tuning he used in two of his compositions, "We Madoda" (Malopoets-Fire 1982) and "I want to be famous" (unrecorded), both of which are discussed elsewhere in Chapters 3 and 4).

Duze Mahlobo's tunings include, in addition to the standard Western system of *E A D g b e*, several original intervallic relationships which allow him to utilize the open strings and achieve a consistent acoustic 'folky' sound. Some of these tunings are *D A D g b e*; *E A D g a e*; *E C G d a c*; and *C A D g c e*. Transcripts 2 and 3 (Excerpts 4.6 and 4.7), employ the standard guitar tuning system of *E A D g b e*. A common thread running through these is the use of open strings - which facilitate the provision of the bass voice, especially in the chord positions II, VI and V in the key of G major (see chords marked with asteriks in measures 2, 3, and 18 of Transcript 2).

The emphasis on the cadential II and V chords lends a "churchy", liturgical undertones to Duze's approach - with the first transcription evoking the same mood achieved by Cape Town pianist Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) for example, in his composition called "Blues For A Hip King" from his 1976 album of the same title. The liturgical effect is further compounded by Duze's consistent use of the cadential chord I in its second inversion, to precede the V chord (See asteriks in measures 5, 9, 18, and 25 of Transcript 2). Transcript 4 (Excerpt 4.8) introduces the tuning of *E A D g a e* and a typical bass line employing the roots I, V, BVII, II of this tuning in the tonality of A. Transcript 5 (Excerpt 4.9) is an original composition by Duze utilizing the above tuning system. The pentatonic mode which the passage employs lends this a definite African 'feel'. Duze often employs this tuning and typical progression in a variety of metric and temporal settings, some of which include,

- a moderate swing tempo
- a 5/4 meter
- a polymetric, pan-African "two-against-three" meter.

Transcript 6 (Excerpt 4.10) employs the tuning system of *c A D g c e*. The uptempo composition based on this tuning involves a two-bar 'pedal phrase' on the roots bI major, IV major, and I major in the key of C major (See bars 1, 2; bars 5, 6; and bars 9, 10). The phrases are linked by a melodic segment which is harmonised in parallel sixths, creating a build up of tension in the first eleven measures of this piece. This tension is released, in bars 12, 13, 14 and 15 by the employment of a II V I cadence which is set up with a stepwise movement in the bass - which initially ascends with the roots I6, IV, V, (I6). The II V I cadence itself is embellished with a tritone substitution, creating a stepwise descending root movement to the tonic (see bars 13, 14, 15 and bars 32, 33, 34 of Transcript 6).

For his original interpretation of the *maskandi* style, Duze Mahlobo tunes the guitar in the manner *e b g D A C*. During an interview, he played me a short demonstration, which I was unable to transcribe due to its textural and technical complexity. However, I have included an excerpt in the accompanying tape (Excerpt 4.11). When I first heard him play this short texture, I could not help asking:

*Sazi: How have you tuned your guitar now?*

*Duze: This is how I have tuned (plays an arpeggio of the tuning e c g D A C) ...*

*I have only tuned the second and the sixth strings. of course I am now playing my kind of maskandi .... listen!*

Duze does not normally give titles to his compositions. Often, in performance, the

compositions run into each other in a sort of extended medley, lasting anything between two to three hours (Mahlobo 1997).

#### 4.4 The guitar techniques employed by the three guitarists who are the subject of this thesis

All three guitarists use their own individually developed picking and strumming styles. While none of them uses a plectrum in their picking, there is a variation in the extent to which each has developed the use of the righthand technique. For example, Duze Mahlobo employs all five fingers of the right hand, using the thumb in a downward stroke to play the bass strings. The four remaining digits are used simultaneously to play an upward 'chording' stroke or to play arpeggios and single-line voices on the higher strings. The single-line improvisation in Transcript 1 employs all the fingers of the right hand except the thumb. Transcript 2, whose supporting bass-line moves predominantly in parallel with the harmonies implied by the chords, employs a 'clawing' technique involving largely all of the digits simultaneously with the thumb. Depending on the density of the chord, two, three or all four digits are employed simultaneously in sounding a chord. The notes of the melody line, when they are not incorporated in the chord structure, are played independently by any of the fingers.

The technique described above is used extensively in Transcripts 2 and 3, while the rest of the material transcribed includes as well, two-note voicings (Transcript 6 - bars 3, 4, 7, 11, 12, 22, 26, 29 and 30), which are played using the index finger and the thumb. The pulsating, drone-type sound of the *maskandi* interpretive example is achieved by a perpetual motion of all the fingers of the right hand - very similar to typing at a high speed - which undoubtedly requires considerable strength in the right hand to maintain. In other examples, this strength translates into the 'attack' which is characteristic of Mahlobols solo guitar playing - lending his overall style a marked emotional urgency and insistence that is hard to ignore. I think this is the spirit that has largely substituted the lyrical material in Duze's playing for the drama and sheer emotionality of his rendition. Excerpt 4.12 in the accompanying cassette from Duze's February 1990 open-air concert duet with Bruce Sosibo on drums, illustrates the observation I have made above.

Sosibo's own technique on the guitar involved a minimum of single-line playing, consisting largely of strumming and finger-picking styles. The latter were of two types, the first being a useful adaptation of the classical fingerstyle technique employing the three middle fingers plus the thumb. The second picking style was again an adaptation of the thumb-and-index *maskandi ukupika* technique, which Sosibo employed to compose in the *maskandi* tradition. His approach was remarkable in the way it captured both the intervallic 'sound' of *maskandi* tuning and the textural elements lent to the tradition specifically by the entrenched *ukupika* finger-picking technique. The majority of *maskandi* guitarists employ a 'thumb-and-index' picking style. Also, the wearing of fingerpicks on these two fingers is considered ideal for eliciting the dry, clipped attack and the percussive effect obtained with the vibrations, however brief, of the steel strings against the plastic or metal of the fingerpicks. Sosibo, while he did not wear fingerpicks, employed the thumb-and-index finger technique. Ordinarily the thumb picks downwards on the bass strings - principally string numbers 6, 5 and 4 - while the

index outlines the melody on the higher strings. A fully-fledged maskandi technique involves a perpetual pulse motion maintained by the bass voice, using the thumb while the upper voice plays a more syncopated rhythmic pattern. This rhythmic relationship between the two voice parts often results in the perception that the bass voice is singing the melody.

Bruce never fully elicited a perpetual bass voice motion, with the result that his top voice sounded in parallel harmonic rhythm to the bass. Sosibols compositions "Ushemeni" (Excerpt 6.1; Transcription 19) and "Zingalile" (Excerpt 4.1; Transcription 17) illustrate this point clearly. The singer's (Bruce's) own voice sang the 'proper' melody, a role which is normally assigned the higher strings in *maskandi* guitar playing.

It is the interpretive aspect of the three guitarists' styles, regarding other neotraditional performance genres of both foreign and indigenous import, which highlights the individual and the common, social aspects of their performance and compositional approaches. An awareness of this oscillating and accommodating aspect of identity was never more concretely expressed within the collective styles of these neotraditional township musicians than in the song "Disco maskandi" (Excerpt 4.2), quoted below. I first heard this song being performed in 1988 at the Community Arts Workshop in Durban's Commercial Road by Madala Kunene on acoustic guitar and lead vocals; Theo "Cilo" Magutshwa on shakers and vocals; and Bruce Sosibo on hand-drums and vocals. The lyrics of this antiphonal song, which was composed by both Madala Kunene and Bruce Sosibo are as below:

*Call: Iye ye ye ye awo!*  
*Iye am wo wo oh!*  
*Wo ah ha am!*  
*Iwe Madoda nomadalloh*  
*Response: Badlallidisco maskandi*  
*Call: Webantwana sondelani*  
*Nizobuklidisco maskandi*  
*Response: KaMadoda nomadala*  
*Call: KaMadoda nomadala*  
*Response: KaMadoda nomadala*  
*Spoken call: Awuzwe!*

*(Translation: Madoda and Madala*  
*They play "disco-maskandi"*  
*Come closer children*  
*To see the "disco-maskandi"*  
*By Madoda and Madala*  
*Dig that!)*

[The version in Excerpt 4.2 was performed by Madala Kunene and his two daughters at the 1992 Splashy Fen Music Festival].

## Chapter 5

### **Style: composition and performance of neotraditional township music**

The chapter deals with the stylistic approaches of three musicians to performance and composition. By analysing and comparing compositions by the individual musicians, I seek to highlight the pertinent aspects of each individual approach. I will pay a particular attention to the mechanical aspects of neotraditional township music - form and structure, melody, harmony and rhythm - in order to highlight the individuals' manipulation, grasp, and practical deployment of their understanding of these elements.

Interwoven in the discussions on style are issues of representation of the self and society, the interpretation of tradition in neotraditional music performance and composition. Salient in this aspect is the compositional approach of Madala Kunene, whereby he employs materials of Nguni oral performance traditions. His approach has called my attention to the construction of tradition by individuals, the different ways in which individuals construe meaning from traditional beliefs, rituals, and ceremonies. This is a central notion in the writings of Jackson (1989), whose ethnographic experiences among the Kuranko of Sierra Leone have informed the theoretical and methodological approach of this study.

The problematic aspect of this discussion is the loose generic classification of 'neotraditional' township music, which mystifies at the outset a linear evolutionary correlation in terms of stylistic continuity. A case in point would be the pertinent discussion of the *maskandi* guitar style. Scholars of South African neotraditional guitar styles have mentioned *ukuvamba*, (Clegg 1981b:3; Erlmann 1981:76; Coplan 1985:186; Davies 1992:37), in relation to the early approaches to guitar playing. The more recent writings on African working class guitar styles have employed the term to refer to the so-called *maskandi*, a predominantly Zulu rural and migrant instrumental style (Mthethwa 1981; Clegg 1981; Erlmann 1991). The consolidation of a broad understanding of the term *maskandi* to mean both the music and its practitioners can be seen largely as a function of the domestication of such music and its performers by the SABC and the monopolistic recording companies, to the exclusion of a broad section of urban, township musicians. An unfortunate development emanating from this attitude has been an ideological demarcation of style which has, in its realisation at the margins, fed the fragmentary, apartheid perceptions of culture and alienated performers' sensibilities to the broader developments in musical language and influence. The term *maskandi* was used generally to refer to African instrumentalists, and primarily guitarists, and *not to any particular style or genre of performance*. In this original sense the term applied to any guitarist, including township neotraditional musicians, mission-based and rural instrumentalists regardless of their stylistic and generic orientation. The stylistic closure which the term latterly came to connote was largely to the detriment of the highly evolved and diverse urban neotraditional approaches. For varied reasons of ideological and political nature, such developments were rejected and ignored by the recording and state-run broadcasting institutions. As a result, the momentous developments and innovations by township neotraditional musicians went by largely undocumented. The most influential stylists in this regard never attained the stature of the likes of John 'Phuzushukela' Bhengu

or even a Mahlathini Nkabinde. The role models and mentorship possibilities for township guitar styles were thus largely submerged and never could exert influence beyond the local and the subcultural. These conditions have militated against codification, classification, wholesale marketing, and domestication of style as township neotraditional musicians strove for originality, and drawing fine lines of distinction between generic, social and individual identities in their approaches to style.

The perceptions expressed in the above argument pertain to the strumming technique of *ukuvamba* and its employment by neotraditional guitarists other than *maskandi*.

Furthermore is an assertion that the latter term be usefully understood in its original sense, namely that which describes *all* instrumental musicians, especially guitarists. I feel that this would highlight the distortions inherent in mere categorisation as a means to understanding, as well as challenge institutional spokespeople to deal with the diverse neotraditional township expressive styles that are perhaps too glibly expected to fit the rather 'murky' label of *township music*.

Diversified approaches of neotraditional township musicians facilitate the reclaiming of a history from the hegemonic, political, and ideological manipulation by the dominant institutions of mass knowledge dissemination, through a processing of materials of a suppressed memory of a social and cultural performance practice. The pervasiveness of the technique of *ukuvamba* also plays down a view that might put forward, to account for the present day ideological opposition and diversity in stylistic approach, equally opposed imperatives in terms of class and consciousness. The present argument launches such tensions deeper within the fabric and materials of the music itself.

Neotraditional township music such as manifested in the compositions of Duze Mahlobo, Bruce Sosibo, and Madala Kunene is best understood as a cross-pollination of various generic styles and musical influences, processed by individuals from original and assimilated musical elements. For the purpose of my analysis, I have construed style as a function of the individual's experience, a particular way of perceiving and expressing relationships, meaning and value in musical performance, musical knowledge, as well as in institutions, processes and behaviour. From this premise, the analysis involves the 'clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life', culture, or in this case, individual style (Williams 1965, cited in Hebdige 1979:6).

Hebdige maintains that style, like culture, is an ambiguous concept, whose meaning is always in dispute, and as such represents,

*'an area in which the opposing definitions clash with the most dramatic force - even as a scientific term, culture (and hence "style"), refers both to a process and a product' (Hebdige 1979:5).*

The dichotomies which are consciously negotiated by ideologically sensitized neotraditional musicians find reconciliation directly in the essences of individual styles of the subjects of this study.

## 5.1 The stylistic approach of Duze Mahlobo

Musically speaking, both Elias 'S'dumo' Ngidi and Sandile Shange are a generation older than Duze Mahlobo, on whose style I will be focussing. Mahlobo expressed his misgivings about the approaches of both guitarists,

*Duze: You see, a lot of guys that I am fond of such as S'dumo, Sandile, and many others, have turned their backs against performing African music.*

*Sazi: Perhaps that is why I sensed in your music a need to express something else*

*Duze: For instance, you might recognise a simple thing which I play....*

[See Transcript 1, an 8 measure single-line improvisational approach]

*Duze: ....it is ugly - I do not have a proper feeling for it, when I approach it like this. I always feel that the guitar is empty, it is not being played at all. Whereas if I play like this...*

[See Transcript 2, an instrumental guitar tune by Duze Mahlobo]

*Duze : ...Then I feel great. I feel that I have accomplished something worthwhile.*

*Sazi: It's a powerful statement of the roots of South African township music and your consciousness of place in its evolution and musical peerage. I hear Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim) there...very much so. It captures for me an experience and an influence of some of the country's most original jazz musicians...in the townships, of whose roots they were proudly conscious. You know what, this sounds like church...church music.*

*Duze: It creates in me tears whose source I cannot readily pinpoint. It is when I place everything, spiritual and not mere technical articulation, together - you see...*

*(Interview with Duze Mahlobo, Apr. 1997).*

Transcript 1 (Excerpt 4.5) was used to demonstrate Mahlobo's disenchantment with an aspect of jazz improvisation, namely the single-line approach. At the same time his rendition betrays a basic attuning to a melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic patterning that is peculiar to jazz improvisation. I will attempt to address the apparent contradiction in Duze's stance regarding the 'emptiness' of the passage in question. The context of the demonstration in Transcript 1 is the lengthier Transcript 2 (Excerpt 4.6) - which gives us the harmonic basis for the brief single-line improvisation. Because of the placing of the demonstration in the course of the interview, it would not be amiss to 'hear' Duze's single-line 'solo' in the context of the suggested chord progression in the first nine measures, of Transcript 2. I will deal with the analysis in a manner that can be construed in one or two ways, namely that

- Duze's style owes a lot more to jazz approaches than he presently concedes
- the perception of 'emptiness' is a function of Duze's marginality to the formal 'theoretical means' that would enable him to manipulate elements which he has intuitively assimilated from his experience of jazz music.

Transcript 1(a), is a version of the first eight measures of Transcript 2, in which the original melody line has been substituted with the single-line improvisation represented by Transcript 1. The point of the exercise is to prove the validity of Mahlobo's spontaneous improvisation - which he himself critically denigrates - when it is heard in the context of an underlying chord progression. It may be argued that the 'solo' would not sound as 'empty', if only Duze could hear the harmonies simultaneously with his 'improvisation'.

Duze's approach to musical structure and form is very fluid, being informed largely by emotion and mood rather than learned, formulaic principles:

*'The African musical performance expression, in its unadulterated sense, does not originate from being able to read or write music. While I am not against reading and writing per se, I know this ability to kill the original creative spirit. The driving elements lose their essence in translation, thus failing to become what they ought to be. Even one's compositions are influenced by the very music that one is practising. If this is not African music, then a great part of one's self is discarded' (D. Mahlobo 1997).*

For Mahlobo, the skills of reading and writing music represent the deprivation of township musicians, because such skills initially overlook, and eventually suppress the communicative and intuitive sensibilities of the African performative experience:

*'The African performance experience, "yesintu", is not successfully communicated in writing - if at all, the music itself gets really obscured. In this regard one is dealing with a deliberate imposition of white cultural values - to the extent that a musician who does not read or write music becomes an object of ridicule...we laugh at them. But, if you have to play together, there is a problem for the one who reads because they are unable to use their ears' (D. Mahlobo 1997).*

According to Mahlobo, it is the very sound of the notes which communicates itself as music to the 'student',

*'Of course you might have noticed that if you voice any chord, you can hear that it pulls towards a certain sound. It is through listening and following the voices' (D. Mahlobo 1997).*

In the second section of Transcription 1(a) is a demonstration of the above concept, that is, of certain chords tending to pull towards a certain sound. Obviously, a successful application of this approach hinges on an experience - a certain 'aural' orientation to discriminate stylistic compatibility and departure - if not an entrenched, indigenous system of ideas for organising pitch, metrical and kineto-motor relationships. It is the constitution of the musical experience, the processing of the tangible elements of this experience which informs the stylistic approaches of neotraditional township musicians, the majority of whom are self-taught in the absence of organised school or extra-curricular musical tuition. The cultural environment which nurtures individual musical experience becomes relevant in the way it ultimately impinges on the evolutionary processes which mould style. It is in this way that Duze Mahlobo's style incorporates, almost at the level of the unconscious, elements from his early encounter with dance-band jazz idioms, as well as experimenting with mission-based and indigenous dancing traditions.

Duze's father, Ndabenhle Mahlobo, was a dance troupe leader and dance teacher who had tried to incorporate alongside ballroom, tap-dance and jazz, traditional Zulu girls' *isicathulo* routines (N.Mahlobo 1997). For all 'missionized' and school-going African generations, pervasive influences have always included the wide African schools' choral repertoire, especially in the urban townships. All formal training in the latter genres is dogmatically grounded in the diatonic *solfege* system, taught to African pupils to prepare

them for competitive eisteddfodau and schools' singing contests. By the late 1960's and the early 1970s, school choral competitions had become a prominent feature of elite urban performance culture generally, as well as the most successfully organised activity characterising the stringently controlled inter-school cultural contact. Some of the best school choirs came from KwaMashu (Ilanga laseNatali, Apr-Jun.1971). While I am not saying that Duze was influenced to any extent by this type of choral music, I am fully convinced of his heightened awareness of the more dominant forms of the social performance practice. Among such forms would be the (Wesleyan) hymn-influenced secular vocal repertoire, urban children's game songs, mission-style wedding songs, *isicathamiya*, and *umbholoho*. These are all harmonised vocal genres, typically in the Western SATB style and understood by the participants to be part of their *African* musical performance heritage,

*'Even though not all Zulus are Westernised nor have they all accepted Christianity, the school and the mass media have exposed Zulu children at all cultural levels to Western music. It is true that many Africans do not understand the concept of Western and African music, because they have been brought up on Western music; they simply understand music as music' (Mthethwa 1981:23).*

For township youth who are conscious of the existence of an urban African performance culture prior to the enforcement of the township environment, this cultural syncretism often connotes identification of neotraditional township musicianship with *marabi*-derived genres of African urban shantytown performance. In Duze Mahlobo's experience, an awareness of such 'roots' is inculcated in a stylistic approach that has, in very particular contexts of cultural identity in exile, validated a socially and experientially grounded performance expression. That such a grounding and orientation necessarily became a vehicle for articulating the circumstance of the African's struggle under apartheid - demanding an authentic voice for township neotraditional and 'crossover' idioms, including jazz - is explicated in Duze's views as both an agonising challenge and a dilemma,

*'...It's painful because we identify with and empathise with black America...it is good and proper to support our own brothers, and yet it's terrible for us to articulate with any understanding, a set of conditions that only remotely resemble ours. I would understand if we were into jazz music like that of Cecil Taylor, Charlie Mingus ... because those guys were really playing their feelings. I mention those two guys not because they are the only ones...there are so many. I mean, Coltrane - you see - who were really true artists' (D. Mahlobo 1997).*

It is illuminating that Duze Mahlobo, in his engagement with the social discourse which is addressed by the efforts of such *avant-garde* and radical approaches to jazz, has sought resonance with idioms which document the historical evolution of urban black neotraditional performance, and of which his style is 'both a product and a process' (Hebdige 1979:5). In the context of this argument, Mahlobo shared with me an experience of one of his solo performances in front of an audience in West Germany in the early 1980s:

*'There is something that I once played which was so profoundly appreciated. At the time I could never get over the fact these were white people ... and here they were, showing a deepest understanding...I do not know if it was that...of a simple*

*thing... without any sophisticated complication'...*

[At this point of the interview, Duze tuned the lowest string of his guitar to a D, a major second lower than the standard tuning, and started to play Transcript 9 (Excerpt 5.1)]:

*'But I was playing in total silence, by myself - its beauty brings back "that" thing there...that is why I used to call it "The Dawn", because it is a music we used to hear a long time ago, in Lamontville township. The same sounds were also playing in other older townships, like Chesterville - it could also be heard in Mkhumbane - in the morning when a person is at a loss as to what should fill the long day ahead, and playing this music on a guitar. It was not played in exactly the same way as I do now, because the guitarists normally played in the vamping "ukuvamba" style',*

[Demonstrates the *ukuvamba* technique (Transcription 8; Excerpt 5.2)]

*'a "marabi" progression that gets built upon progressively. Its the same thing, and when I change it, it sounds like...'* (Duze Mahlobo, Apr.1997).

[Both the *ukuvamba* demonstration, and its interpretation in the tune "The Dawn" appear in Appendix 5 as Transcription 8 and Transcription 9 respectively]

It is in Mahlobo's composition "The Dawn" that we find juxtaposed, strong manifested influences of the popular developments of the secular, cadential Western colonial missionary hymn (the ubiquitous I; IV; I6/4; V4 *marabi* cyclic chord progression for example), with the neotraditional consciousness of indigenous spiritualism and religion, hereby exemplified by an unmistakable "*Malombo*" influence. The introductory eight measures of the tune, "The Dawn", bear this 'Tabanesque' antiphonal, open-string approach, right down to a de-tuned low D-string. The main body of the tune however, harks back to the displaced accents of the *marabi* chord progression in the *ukuvamba* example.

In the '*Ukuvamba*' example (Excerpt 5.2; Transcription 8), the cyclic harmonies are distributed as follows:

- IV - is substituted with a secondary II-7 chord of its relative minor, in this case chord EGBD in the key of D major. The actual root of the IV chord is only sounded once, on the downbeat of the fourth beat of the first measure
- I6/4 - is sounded once, on the upbeat of the fourth beat of the first measure
- V - the dominant root is heard for almost all of the second measure of the cycle, except for the last upbeat of the measure I - the tonic only comes on the last upbeat of the second measure. It can also be assumed to be the harmony of the first downbeat of the first measure.

In "The Dawn" (Excerpt 5.1), the slowed-down *marabi* cyclic chord progression still spans two measures. The harmonies are outlined by an ostinato bass pattern:

- IV - chord IV is arpeggiated in the melody and the root of the chord lasts for half of the first measure
- I6/4 - spans the second half of the first measure
- V - the dominant chord is only sounded once on the first beat of the second measure
- I - occupies the rest of the second measure.

Mahlobo's style is distinguished by a combination of,

- a four finger-style technique for the right hand, which he has developed to enable himself to play simultaneously the melody, bass-line and harmonies of his compositions, and
- a choice of sound, facilitated by a Jumbo-size semi-acoustic guitar, whose customized bridge mechanism has allowed the fitting of heavy-gauge round-wound strings with the lowest possible fretboard-string action. In this way he is able to elicit a strong, fat sound in attack and intonation, despite the lowered action. In addition is the added percussive and 'overtone' quality of a sound elicited by the vibration of the strings against the metal of the frets.

Transcription 7 (Excerpt 5.3) is an original composition by Duze Mahlobo, in which he simultaneously plays melody, chords and a supporting bass-line. Duze arranged the tune for LOOSE TUBES, a group of UK-based avant-garde jazz musicians. In addition to Mahlobo on guitar, the instrumentation included a drum kit, alto and tenor saxophones (Duze Mahlobo, Jul. 1997).

Another distinguishing aspect of Duze's style are the various original tunings which he employs. A number of the transcripts exhibit this aspect of Mahlobo's approach to composition and performance. For example the phrase transcribed in Transcription 4 (Excerpt 4.8) is from an unusual tuning, in which the second string is lowered an interval of a major second to an A. It is from this tuning that the rendition in Transcription 5 was performed, in a medium up-tempo.

Transcription 6 (Excerpt 4.10) is another original, up-tempo rendition by Mahlobo - and the tuning here is also unusual in that both the sixth and the second strings have been tuned to a C.

Of the three subjects of this study, Mahlobo would appear to be technically conversant with a range of guitar styles, as well as being prepared to grapple with the formal, pedagogic aspect of western music harmony generally.

## **5.2 The compositional and performance style of Bruce Madoda Sosibo**

I will now turn to the compositional and stylistic approach of the late Bruce Madoda Sosibo. Primarily a drummer and percussionist in ensemble settings, Bruce also devoted much creative energy towards composing lyrical material which he realised on the acoustic steel-string guitar. This body of music represents a varied approach, a contrast in style and idiom which can only be accounted for in terms of diversity of musical influences to which Sosibo's musical development was subjected.

I shared with Bruce a valuable apprenticeship in neotraditional township music performance, playing lead guitar for the group ZANUSI from 1988 to 1991. It is from my recollection of the varied experiences of the band, performing locally and around the country, as well as recording an album for Gallo Music Productions in 1990, that I shall rely on as primary data. I will also focus on a period Bruce spent as a core member of the influential group MALOPOETS, for which he arranged and composed, in addition to

playing drums, percussion and singing. A third broad aspect of Bruce's performance and compositional style is an unconsumed solo career, to which Bruce was devoting most of his time right up to the time he was incapacitated by illness in 1995. There exists another dimension to his career, one that intermittently links him to both Madala Kunene and Duze Mahlobo, in a series of projects which unfortunately did not come to be preserved or captured in a light that would show these moments to be significant turns and milestones in performance and stylistic conception of township neotraditional music. My attempt is to highlight some features of these experiential nodes, the co-existence within one individual's conception of style, of diverse influences emanating from the social and cultural environment. Before the birth of MALOPOETS in 1978, Sosibo had been the drummer and vocalist for THIRD GENERATION, a township-based *soul*, *R&B* and *pop* group. This vocal oriented band had included in its line-up, Caesar Ndlovu, Jacob Mbutho, Gloria Msomi, Ernest Mkhize, all of whom were singers. The rest of the group's members were Barney Bophela, keyboards; Duze Mahlobo, lead guitar; Barney Msomi, rhythm guitar and vocals, Ernest Khwela, electric bass (D. Mahlobo 1997). Elsewhere in an interview, Duze mentions how a township guitarist named Phoyisa Mabi<sup>1</sup>, who was Bruce Sosibo's next-door neighbour in KwaMashu's "C" section, had first introduced him to Sosibo, a move that culminated in the formation of THE THIRD GENERATION in the early 1970s (D. Mahlobo 1997).

Except perhaps for an unusual abundance of youthful talent, bands such as THIRD GENERATION were a common feature of South Africa's township music performance scene in the middle 1970s, and of which Coplan was led to observe,

*'The most popular forms of black city music today is imported from the United States and Jamaica, but local soul, rock and fusion styles also have a solid and growing following'...[And perhaps more significant is a realisation that]... 'these popular styles and performers cannot be discussed without reference to South African White-controlled recording, concert and broadcasting industries' (Coplan 1985:193).*

The THIRD GENERATION never got to record their music. Their public career mainly consisted of live appearances, especially at music festivals, which constituted a large part of live music performances during the 1970s. Andersson has described a typical township music festival in Tembisa in the late 1970s, as well as attempted to introduce the salient contradictions, the cultural and ideological debate that was inevitably part of this social milieu (Andersson 1981:154). The festivals were settings for these highly contested representations of township cultural consciousness in their juxtapositioning of disparate

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<sup>1</sup> *Phoyisa Mabi* - around 1983, it was Mabi who introduced me to the jazz-guitar styles of Kenny Burrell, Jimmy Ponder, Melvin Sparks, George Duvivier, George Benson, Earl Klugh among others, as well as the avant-garde experiments of the late John Coltrane, most notably the latter's 1965 album entitled *Kulu se Mama*. Mabi was tragically stabbed to death in KwaMashu township in 1984, following an argument with a mentally-disturbed neighbour's son.

styles and diversely influenced township neotraditional performers. Andersson has pointed out this aspect of black middle-class cultural consciousness, and how some township music festival performance acts came to be symbolic of a dichotomous view of local music. Her basic elucidation of the situation recognised a view which identified with African American popular music styles such as *R&B, funk, soul, disco, motown* primarily because, *'...they were started by blacks. We are not going to listen to any music that doesn't have the international sound because it's backward, right? It's tribal... retrogressive'* (Andersson 1981:154).

While South Africa's and particularly the townships' marginalisation and cultural isolation may well have nurtured a desperation and an exaggerated longing for foreign and ostensibly superior performance products, an equally strong impetus existed in resistance to the fragmentary potential that had been imbued the practice of regional ethnic cultural performance by bantustan politics. The imperatives of black solidarity and the forging of a corporate African identity in resistance to the state's exploitation of cultural differences as a basis for segregation, strategically overrode the integrity of a homogeneous ethnic cultural performance practice. It is such a realisation that would put to question Andersson's rather simplistic elucidation, namely that,

*'The other strain of black consciousness might declare that "ethnic" is where it's at, because it's the original, the untainted pure black music of South Africa. Therefore it's the music that must be supported, and if its origin is tribal then that's just fine, because that is our heritage'* (Andersson 1981:154).

The appearance of younger groups, after Malombo, who were associating their awakened consciousness directly with a spirit of black consciousness, as well as forging an empowered view of their ethnic African heritage, was accompanied by equally conscious choices on the part of individual musicians concerned. Duze spoke of the discussions that had preceded the formation of MALOPOETS, radical ideas that were put forward to counter the challenge of foreign musical influences and the sublimation of an authentic African experience. For someone like Bruce Sosibo, whose formative influences had been rock, soul, r&b and gospel music, the change actualised a long-harboured wish to be 'free', *'...since leaving the funky, disco and commercially oriented THIRD GENERATION...I have had more room to do my own thing'* (Bruce Sosibo quoted in *Drum*, Aug. 1982).

Thus each member of MALOPOETS had brought with them a conception of African musical culture, because,

*'...None of us came from a rural situation, which would have exposed us to the richness of (African) culture. It was more spiritual, and whatever idea each member came up with, we would scrutinize and try to situate it within a perception of traditional performance'* (D. Mahlobo 1997).

A characteristic feature of Sosibo's involvement with MALOPOETS are collaborative and original compositions which bear the hallmarks of his sensitivity towards his immediate cultural environment, the popular social, traditional, and political concerns of the African township community, and his respect for other African neotraditional performance genres such as *ingoma, isicathamiya, Zionist religious performances, and mbaqanga*. I have

selected the collaborative title-track (Excerpt 5.4; Transcription 10) from their 1982 debut album - their second recording effort - "Fire" [MINC (L) 1031], to illustrate Bruce's powerful lyricism and gift in composing pertinent, and perhaps prophetic Nguni texts, as well as his awareness of the popular working-class performance idioms of *ingoma* and *isicathamiya*.

<i>Fire</i>	<i>(Umlilo)</i>
<i>Nangu umlilo emasimini</i>	<i>(There is fire in the fields)</i>
<i>Bhasobh'!</i>	<i>(Beware! [Afr. 'Pasop'])</i>
<i>Uzokubhubhisa wena</i>	<i>(It will destroy you)</i>
<i>Sus'izinkomo</i>	<i>(Herd the cattle)</i>
<i>Emasimini</i>	<i>(Off the fields)</i>
<i>Ngoba zizosha</i>	<i>(Because they will all)</i>
<i>Ziphele zonke</i>	<i>(Be burned to ashes)</i>
<i>Uyavutha umlilo</i>	<i>(The fire is raging)</i>
<i>Sizani madoda</i>	<i>(Help, all you men)</i>
<i>Khaliman'izinkomo</i>	<i>(Herd the cattle)</i>
<i>Emasimini</i>	<i>(Off the fields)</i>
<i>Ziyabhubh'izilwane</i>	<i>(The animals are destroyed)</i>
<i>Ziphelile</i>	<i>(They are finished)</i>
<i>Zinkomo zikababa</i>	<i>(My father's cattle)</i>

[The above lyrics were transcribed from MALOPOETS' "Fire"[1982] album]

The significance of the above text with regards to the escalating violence in the townships at the beginning of the 1980s is startling in its symbolic encapsulation of traditional metaphors of wealth, and its weaving in of the economic implications of disenfranchisement into the discourse of popular resistance. The text could also be construed as a warning to the ruling, and economically empowered classes, particularly the Afrikaaners, whose intransigence in addressing the grievances of blacks was seen to be stoking the 'fires' that would in turn destroy what they valued the most. The term '*Bhasobh'!*' is an ubiquitous warning against trespassing, especially on white Afrikaaner property and households, to warn blacks that the said property is patrolled by a vicious dog. The term derives from the Afrikaans admonition '*Pasop!*', as in "*Pasop vir die hond*" (Beware of the dog), a trademark welcoming sign-plate on the front gates in the majority of white South African households. The transcription of this song which I have attempted below does not do justice to the rhythmic, harmonic, melodic, textual and formal arrangement of these elements, which are only obviated by an aural or live performance experience of the piece. I hope the tape recording goes some way towards remedying this discrepancy.

Perhaps for the first time, Bruce's approach to guitar playing was exemplified by an original composition of his, again for MALOPOETS, entitled 'We Madoda' ('Men'). Besides an individual conception of guitar harmony and voicing, Bruce composed and incisive and poetical response to the implications of poverty and hunger, wrought by the loss of economic independence and money-based capitalist economy. The text strongly suggests recourse to the neglected institutions of indigenous religion for a nation that is proletarianised and hungry. Never before had neotraditional performance been as eloquent and so forthright in its articulation of the untenable conditions of repression.

Below is the text of the song 'We Madoda' (Excerpt 5.6):

*We Madoda*

*We madoda nithini na? (Men, what do you say?)*

*Imfuyo iphelile (The livestock is finished)*

*Sithembel'emalini (We rely on money)*

*Yona ley'engekho (Which we do not have)*

*Safa saphela indlala (We are dying of hunger)*

*Ingabe kwenzajani (What has happened)*

*Madoda nithini na? (Men, what do you say?)*

*Kanti thina siyiliphi na? (What are we to be then?)*

*Kulomhlaba wendlala (In this land of hunger)*

*Madoda nithini na? (What do you say men?)*

*Masiy'esibayeni (Let's go into the cattle-kraal)*

*Siyocela kwabaphansi (To ask of the ancestors)*

*Ukuthi ngabe yini na? (What is the matter)*

*Ngabe senzeni na? (What have we done wrong)*

*(A composition by Madoda Bruce Sosibo, from the album 'Fire' (1982) [MINC (L) 1031].*

I have pointed out elsewhere a perception of Sosibo's heightened sensitivity towards the issues of economic importance and labour administration, attributing this sensitivity to his early experiences as a work-seeking school-leaver in the late 1960s. The early responsibility to take care of his family acquainted Sosibo with the humanly degrading machinations of racial labour administration, apartheid wage labour practices and outlawed black urban citizenship characterizing the black South African experience prior to the 1990s. His sense of a stable Nguni traditional and pastoral existence emanated from his early boyhood experiences, growing up in the Umzimkhulu area of southern Natal and Zululand, herding sheep and cattle,

*'...Madoda is the one who grew up properly at home in Umzimkulu, even though we were all born in Mkhumbane, in Draaihoek. He went to school in Umzimkulu and only left home after passing Standard Two (Fourth Grade), to come to Durban. The name of the school was Mvubukazi Bantu Community School, at a place called Bhala across the Umzimkulu river. After that he was brought to Durban as a result of my mother having succeeded in securing a township house...' (Busisiwe Sosibo 1997)*

Transcription 11 exemplifies the guitar style that informs the MALOPOETS' rendition of the song 'We Madoda'. Typical of MALOPOETS' arrangements, the tune is characterised by a change of feel, introducing a rhythmic dynamic, at times also a melodic or a harmonic digression, but almost always exploiting the polyrhythmic potential inherent in almost all of African music. Also transcribed are the two of the three vocal sections. The third section, which also ushers in a different mood and rhythmic feel, conjures up images of a diviner's performance, complete with high-pitched traditional women's ululation (*ukukikiza*) performance from Sosibo. The text accompanying this part alludes to the loss of social, religious and political identity, and suggests that reconciliation be sought with the ancestral spirits. The same consciousness had pervaded Sosibo's projects after the demise of MALOPOETS and his five-year sojourn in Paris. On one of his brief return visits from Europe, Bruce had bumped into Madala Kunene at KwaMashu Railway station

in 1984,

*'...I met Madoda - Bruce Sosibo - here at the (KwaMashu Railway) station and he said "Hayi bafo", I said "Howzit bafo" and he said "Hayi sikhona". "Are you back?" I asked, and he replied "No I am not, I have to go back soon. But before I go back there is something I want to discuss with you". I said that was fine with me. I was very excited by this exchange because here was a brother who was working abroad and who knew that I was a guitarist. Perhaps it meant that he was thinking of something...But then we never got together until he came back in 1985' (Kunene 1997).*

The events that led to my own membership of the band ZANUSI are tied up with Madala Kunene's reintroduction to music performance after a long absence owing to a successful soccer career. Describing his main activity from about the beginning of the 1970s, Kunene said,

*'...my love for the guitar slowly became eclipsed by my love for soccer. I played a lot of soccer and was very popular, until I was injured in a game. The injury brought about my early retirement - and I also picked up the guitar and started to play again' (Kunene 1997).*

Kunene's come-back was made possible by the return of Doda 'Doc' Mthlane, the KwaMashu-born HARARI guitarist, from Johannesburg. Mthlane had brought with him to Durban, two musicians, Oupa and Tata, to start an 'Afro-music' group called KABASA. When the band first got together in 1980, they used Madala's house in Ntuzuma township northwest of KwaMashu, as a rehearsal room. Short-lived as they were, KABASA was one of the post-1976 'Afro'-oriented groups, among them HARARI, DASHIKI, BATSUMI, TOU, ERA, MALOPOETS, ROOTS, LESOTHO-AFRO, DINOTSI, NATIONAL WAKE, JULUKA, and perhaps of later vintage SAKHILE, BAYETE, SANKOMOTA, to name the more prominent of these outfits. Vusi Khumalo, the editor of the black magazine, *Pace*, who wrote several reviews of music shows and festivals, had this to say on black music performance at the close of the 1970s,

*'Quite a lot of local musicians are adapting to the changing phase of musical awareness, and are drifting into more directive, authentic, traditional trends that have more "African-ness" in them. While on the other hand there is the pull of infectious commercial disco music, most artists are trying to fuse uptempo rhythms, with traditional sounds, to create afro-rock, and afro-jazz brands' (Pace, Dec.1978).*

When KABASA folded in 1981, 'Doc' Mthlane formed a band which he called SONGAMASU, for which he played electric bass (Kunene 1997). This band, for which Madala Kunene played rhythm guitar, consisted of the late Muntu Mkhize, guitar; Mike Mchunu, tenor saxophone; Boy Mchunu, alto saxophone; Theo Magutshwa, trumpet; and Henry Zwane, trombone. Their repertoire was largely influenced by the music of the group OSIBISA, and that of guitarist Earl Klugh. Not long after the group had started to perform publicly, at KwaMashu's Nkanyisweni Hall, Doc was recalled to Botswana by his band HARARI (Kunene 1997). Meanwhile the band suffered a burglary, in which they lost all their instruments. For a while Madala ran a fruit and vegetable stall near KwaMashu station, saving enough money to found and sponsor a soccer team of township youngsters,

*'By founding the soccer team, I was hoping to distract the youngsters from a life of alcohol, hooliganism and criminal activity. A teenager who drank could not play for the team. I preferred that they rather smoke 'Zulu' tobacco (canabis). Those were allowed to play, because I could not detect anything unbecoming in their behaviour, except a willingness to play soccer. When the team disbanded in 1983, I obtained a guitar from Sani, Cilo's brother, which he sold to me for R100' (Kunene 1997).*

Another of Mthlana's groups, THWASA, which was being led by singer Busi Mhlongo, had meanwhile been rehearsing at Madala's house. It was in 1986 when THWASA landed their first gig at The Hotel California in Durban's Florida Road,

*'...I remember their first show. When they had played their last song, 'Doc' announced on stage that the audience should stay to listen to something else. He then came over to me and asked if I was ready. I said I was, because we had arranged this beforehand. I said I was ready and went on stage with my guitar. 'Doc' introduced me saying, "This is Madala from KwaMashu...he is going to play a few songs for you by himself". I then began to play. It was the first time for me to play on a stage like this, such as The Hotel California' (Kunene 1997).*

THWASA's appearance at the white-run Hotel Carlifornia led to an engagement at the Hermit Restaurant, a vegetarian establishment in Hermitage Lane, off Smith Street. It was for this gig that Madala Kunene thought of a name for his solo act, ISANUSI - an isiZulu term for 'diviner'. When Madala's show was extended from one week to a further two weeks, he decided to rope in Cilo on percussion,

*Madala: Cilo had never played percussion before - I was hoping that S'dumo (Elias Ngidi) would show him how to do it. So together, Cilo and I went to S'dumo's house to speak to him. S'dumo said that he had a flute and a tenor saxophone and was prepared to join us for the two-week long show. I then asked him to teach Cilo some percussion. S'dumo patiently explained, showing Cilo until the latter got it.*

*Sazi: Where did Cilo get hold of a percussion set?*

*Madala: I remember that Cilo owned these double-headed things... small... what are they called?*

*Sazi: The bongo...*

*Madala: Yes, the bongos. He had these paired things called 'bongos' which I think he had bought because he liked. So we went and did the show, and had to think of a name for our group. We could not call it by the singular term ISANUSI, so we called ourselves IZANUSI because there were now three of us.*

In the few days preceding the commencement of the gig at the Hermit Restaurant. Madala got to hear of Bruce's return from Europe, and went to invite him to come play drums for ZANUSI. Bruce was only able to join the band as a guest artist, on the very last day of the show. The gigs were successful, with the expanded group now including Khaya Dlamini on saxophones, 'Doc' Mthlana on guitar, a trumpeter, and Bernard Mndaweni on electric bass. This was an excellent neotraditional band which played original music composed by Madala, Bruce Sosibo and 'Doc' Mthlana,

*'It was very exciting working together like that, as well as having a white manageress, Narene Stevens. But the inevitable soon happened as disagreements arose amongst the group in the manner of all musicians. It was in 1987 when I decided to quit, even though my contribution had been significant. The rest of the members decided to come away with me. When all the members quit, my brother (Bruce) was left to continue by himself, and he recruited new members' (Kunene 1997).*

It was at this time that I came to join ZANUSI, around 1988,

*'...(Bruce) then recruited other players - music students from the (Natal) university - people like Sazi (Dlamini), Thami Mtshali, S'thembiso Ntuli, and who was that Mkhize boy by the way? Oh, Sibusiso Mkhize' (Kunene 1997).*

Madala was referring to the line-up which eventually recorded an album - 'Zanusi' - for Gallo Music Productions in 1990. This version of ZANUSI came to include, besides leader Bruce Sosibo on drums, percussion and vocals, S'thembiso Ntuli, tenor saxophone and vocals; Sazi Dlamini, lead guitar, percussion, reed flute, and vocals; Njeza Dlamini, rhythm guitar and vocals; Thami Mtshali, electric bass and vocals; Sibusiso Mkhize, percussion, flute and vocals.

Bruce Sosibo was a prolific instrumental composer and lyricist who sang in his native Nguni languages, Zulu and Xhosa as well as English. Among his many compositions could be detected foreign musical influences of rock, black American soul, jazz, West African popular idioms, jazz fusion and jazz-rock, reggae, American rhythm and blues; South African urban black music idioms of *jazz, African-jazz, kwela, marabi, mbaqanga*; the migrant-workers' performance genres of *gumboot* dancing, *isicathamiya* and *maskandi*; the music of the separatist African churches and that of indigenous religious cults of izangoma diviners as well as traditional performance genres of *izibongo* praise-singing, *ingoma* traditional dancing styles and the *amahubo* ceremonial songs.

Three of ZANUSI members- Thami Mtshali, S'thembiso Ntuli and myself - were music students at the University of Natal when we joined the band in 1988. Working with somebody like Bruce had seemed a natural progression from having been part of a township Afro-music outfit that had also embraced a sizeable repertoire of American jazz 'standards'. We were hoping to employ the improvisatory and ensemble skills gained from the formal study of jazz, in the performance, composition, and interpretation of black South African musical traditions. We had thus been inspired by Sosibo and Madala Kunene's interpretations of aspects of Nguni oral tradition and storytelling. Their musical arrangements of popular children's rhymes and folktales in songs such as "Ungcede" (the fan-tail warbler), "Vinqo" (sluggard), "Igwababa" (the crow) - among others - had sought to explore a contemporary and 'groovy' aspect of these age-old children's games. This had seemed to be culturally relevant in an atmosphere of resistance and revolution, where the performance arts had proved to be one of the few effective ways of articulating resistance and aspirations of an equitable future. It had also been momentous and appropriate to tap into a body of knowledge that was widely shared and known by the majority of the oppressed people of South Africa.

This chapter of ZANUSI became known nationally, where the band enjoyed some extended club engagements in Johannesburg's Jameson's of Commissioner Street, and Kippie's Jazz Club in the Market Theatre complex. Cape Town appearances included The Base Nightclub, the University of Western Cape and University of Cape Town campuses. In Durban, besides regular performances in venues such as The Moon Hotel in Clairwood, The Rainbow Restaurant in Pinetown, The Stable Theatre in West Street, The Hotel Belgica in St. Georges Street, Charlie's Restaurant and Behind The Moon in Point Road, ZANUSI was featured in the many COSATU and ANC rallies which took place between 1988 and 1991. A highlight of these high-profile cultural and political gatherings was ZANUSI's inclusion in the cultural programmes of both exiled ANC-president Oliver Tambo's first Durban visit in 1990, and President Nelson Mandela's similar maiden visit to the city after his release from Robben Island in 1990.

I have mentioned above the diversity of styles which Sosibo's compositions reflected in greater or lesser intensity. It would be a daunting task to attempt an analysis beyond a cold musicological dissection - that is, an analysis informed by the complex psychosocial, acculturative, de-culturative and ideological perspectives on contemporary township performance traditions, and as much as these engaged the political, economic, social and cultural developments marking the transitive period which heralded a 'new' South Africa. ZANUSI was of this era, marked by violent mass protest, black-on-black violence and unexplained massacre's of groups of people and whole families. The township itself was a terrain of contested political and cultural identities with individuals, families, and communities being victimised on account of belonging, or not belonging to a political faction such as the United Democratic Front or Inkatha. The strife had found solid roots in the merest of social categorisations, class distinctions and the myriad unsymmetrical relations that had fermented and had been abetted by the inequalities promoted by apartheid. Being the seat of such tensions, the township itself was a no-go area for neotraditional musical performance and the pursuit of such 'peaceful' occupations itself became subversive in the context of communities that were constantly mourning or burying their dead. This was an uncondusive situation for neotraditional performance expression, which had suddenly come under the spotlight because of local and foreign interest that had come to bear on the country as a whole. There were no live music venues or cultural spaces to perform. Furthermore, it was impossible for performance or its practitioners to articulate a neutral stance without risking categorisation as being subversively pro-government.

Township neotraditional performance, perhaps echoing similar tensions immediately after 1976, virtually went underground. Even the monopoly recording companies halted live concert promotions of their artists in the strife-torn townships. The only venues that could stage the now overtly politicized neotraditional township performance expression were the mass political and labour rallies in the centre of the city, as well as the progressive, even radical white-owned establishments which sought to accommodate and prepare for the now seemingly inevitable change in South African social and political landscape. One of the roles of neotraditional music and performance was reconciliation among the opposing black political factions, the facilitation of cross-cultural understanding and the articulation and legitimation of the black political resistance. More than this was the articulation of the veiled concerns and the popularisation of the cultural, economic and the

social aspects of the struggle. I have mentioned how such debates paralleling the broader resistance, the assertion of ethnic, political, and cultural identities, came to be embodied in neotraditional township performance as early as the middle 1970s.

Regarding the aim of the present exercise, which is an appraisal of style and performance, it would seem appropriate to look into the compositions of Bruce Sosibo which he addressed to this social and political environment. I will start by reviewing a ZANUSI programme which was performed at an open-air concert at the University of Natal in February, 1990. A number of bands and individual performers were featured on the evening, amongst whom were the popular Johannesburg band STIMELA, led by guitarist Ray Phiri. Phiri was subsequently featured prominently in Paul Simon's controversial "Graceland" album, which also included a number of black South African musicians, among them the popular *isicathamiya* choir, LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO. The February concert was special in that it featured guitarist Duze Mahlobo performing a duet set with Bruce Sosibo on drums, in what was probably their first Durban public appearance on the same stage since the days of MALOPOETS in the early 1980s.

The ZANUSI set commenced with a song entitled "Ukuthula" (Peace), a triple-meter composition by Bruce which was performed with an antiphonal, a cappella introduction by a leader and chorus (Excerpt 5.6):

*Leader: Ukuthula makube nesizwe*

*Ewu! ewu eya heya he!*

*E! Shay'ingoma*

*E! heya he!*

*Ukuthula makube nesizwe bo!*

*Chorus: Ewu eya heya he!*

*E! Shay'ingoma*

*E! heya he!*

*Translation: (Leader: Peace be with the nation)*

*Ewu! ewu eya heya he!*

*E! Sing/dance*

*E! heya he!*

*Peace be with the nation!*

◆ *(Chorus: Ewu eya heya he!)*

*E! Do the dance/song*

*E! heya he!*

The song appealed for an end to violence and at the same time urged the struggle (the song, the dance), to persist. The prominence of the marching and the martial *toyitoyi* song and dance performance had long symbolised the popular resistance struggle. The song was accompanied by an instrumental, a triple-meter 'groove' on an ostinato bass-figure loosely based on an A-open tonality - filled out and orchestrally textured by the two electric guitars, percussion, and drum-kit. The uptempo, driving rhythm allowed for free solo improvisation by S'thembiso Ntuli on tenor saxophone. Often, Bruce would come back with the voice, weaving in the text of the national anthem,

*Nkosi sikelela (Lord bless)*

*Baba thethelela (Father atone)*

*I-Afrika (Afrika)*

The song soon had the pride of place headlining ZANUSI's labour and political rally programmes. The juxtaposition of indigenous choral performance practices with contemporary, free improvistory jazz elements served the purpose of contextualizing and democratizing the band's reception. The tensions between youth and the conservative, vigilante elements of black township society was known to be the crux of violence, the source of which was also attributed to the staggered processing of basically foreign and indigenous cultural elements. By reconciling these extreme perceptions of culture at the outset, ZANUSI endeared themselves to the progressive elements of the mass political body, democratizing in the process the diverse social orientation that was easily construed and exploitable as fuel for violence in most of the turbulent township social enclaves.

In opening a concert in Pinetown's Rainbow Restaurant in March of 1990, an *a cappella* introduction had been preceded by a reed-flute solo, reminiscent of the pastoral sounds of the Nguni herdboys' three-holed *igemfe* and *umtshingo* flutes. Instead of singing the funereal and sombre "Ukuthula" in the *shebeen*-like and informal drinking atmosphere inside The Rainbow, Bruce had instead intoned the *ihubo* ceremonial greeting song of the rural Dlamini clans of Umzimkulu, where he had spent part of his childhood:

*Leader: Baba Dlamini (Father Dlamini)*  
*Sibalukhulu (Sibalukhulu)*  
*We Mdhlovu (Mdhlovu)*  
*Kuth'asikhuleke (We wish to greet)*  
*Ngovo lwethu bo (With feeling)*  
*We babo (Oh father)*  
*Chorus: Ngakuwena Dlamini (To you Dlamini)*  
*Kuth'asikhuleke (We want to salute)*

In its proper context, an *ihubo* ceremonial song would not be sung outside of the clan or district of its origin, but in the altered context of urban performance attempting to recreate a consciousness of tradition - all is forgiven. The largely proletarian and predominantly Nguni patrons certainly recognised the rhythm as probably that of an *ukuhayisa* song - a repertoire of songs sung traditionally to warm up for an indoor *ukusina* dancing performance, and therefore started to clap in the traditional dancing rhythm. The *a cappella* ceremonial song at the Rainbow concert was immediately followed by the instrumental "Malopo" (a Sotho term for 'ancestral spirits') - a spiritual link with Sosibo's old group MALOPOETS (Excerpt 5.7). This composition, attributed to Duze Mahlobo and Sosibo, commences as a call and response, led by the harmonised guitar and saxophone while the rest of the ensemble acts the part of a chorus. The open section of the song is based on an ostinato cyclic pattern maintained between electric bass and lead guitar, during which the tenor saxophone improvises a solo.

In order to highlight the diversity of the stylistic approaches to performance and composition by both Mahlobo and Sosibo, I am going to revisit their University of Natal duet, ironically introduced by Radio Zulu disc-jockey, V.V.O. Mkhize, whose programmes had never once featured the music of Duze and/or Bruce Sosibo's. The performance itself showcased the type of sensitivity which existed between the two neighbours - with Duze switching from one 'feel' to the next and Bruce having to delve

into his advanced polyrhythmic sense in order to maintain the 'groove' of this - the sparsest of most orchestrations. The set, played without a break from start to finish, became a medley of tunes in which, depending on one's familiarity with Mahlobo's largely instrumental repertoire, could be discerned some of his trademark turns and phrases, especially the variously disguised *marabi* cyclic chord progressions. One theme captures the neotraditional *maskandi* guitar styles, except for the fact that even this most characteristic of instrumental and harmonic approaches to Zulu traditional music has undergone a definite metamorphosis in its interpretation by jazz-influenced township guitarists. For example, the structural hallmark of a *maskandi* composition, the *izihlabo* introductory passage, inspired Duze Mahlobo in the introduction of one of his most recognizable progressions, typified by Transcription 5. The first four systems in the transcript introduce the key and the scale on which the following short tune is based. For a fuller appreciation of Duze's interpretation of the predominantly Zulu, rural-based *maskandi* style, one should listen to the short excerpt on the tape (Excerpt 5.13).

Both Sosibo and Madala Kunene interpret *maskandi*, albeit with a justified acknowledgement of the distance that has come to exist between the rural and urban contexts in the practice of some performance genres, ceremonies and rituals. That is why the two performers referred to their brand of music as *disco-maskandi*, to convey the urban and alienated aspect of their 'traditional' performances in front of the city and township audiences. I will be dealing with the salient aspects of the stylistic interpretation of tradition in the section dealing with oral tradition and its relationship to neotraditional township performance.

### **5.3 Oral tradition and township neotraditional music performance : Madala Kunene**

In this section I will attempt to bring to the fore some relationships perceived between the music of the subjects of this study and some aspects of the oral performance tradition. In this way I seek to discuss Madala Kunene's compositional and performance style under a topic which comes closer towards describing his relatively consistent approach. Kunene's style is characterised by an oral mode of transmission, largely due to the primarily non-literate origins of his performative and textual resource materials. As a result, Madala has substantially relied on memory and his own recollection and reconstruction of childhood music, games, stories and recitations. The idea of composing around widely understood issues, the retrieval of traditional 'folk' songs, recitations, and children's poetry has been consciously adopted by Madala, who has in turn tailored his instrumental approach and particular tunings to accommodate the melodic, harmonic, and metric elements of these performance materials. I was particularly interested in the way Madala Kunene categorised and thought about his musical style. Below is a response to my question regarding style and the origins of his musical approach:

*'I can say that the music that I do, when I look at this music I see it as "Madala-line". It is "Madala-line" because I am trying to convey a meaning that it comes from inside of me and does not originate from anywhere else, nor have I heard it from anywhere else. Let me just say that in my style of playing the guitar, I did not hear anybody anywhere playing and then decided that is how I wanted to play. You see, it just came to me to play like this...I do not know myself where it*

*came from. There are times when I try to listen to somebody else's style...and I have never heard any other person play the same way as I do, they always play something else that they like. I do not want this music to be labelled as this or that type, but I look at it as something that is African. It occurs to me that perhaps if I were to travel to a different country, I could come across somebody playing the same music as I do. Perhaps if I listened to cassettes I could come across a similar taste in playing... my problem is that I do not listen. I do not listen to records, or CD's, I do not listen to anything at all. I only listen to what I do. This seems to be my shortcoming in the field of music according to the way I have heard people talk, but I usually keep my mouth shut and this becomes my own private knowledge. But as a rule, I do not listen, there is not one person that I can say I listen to' (Kunene 1997).*

The originality with which non-literate township musicians engage with the broad body of categorised music styles is typified by Madala Kunene, who has 'labelled' his own style according to the primacy of the relationship between himself and the object of his creation. This was the essence of the 'tag' MALOMBO in relation to the music of Philip Tabane, as no such label or category of music had been specified before. The same analogy could be extended to all the other black South African urban musical innovations since *marabi*. The correlation between originality and style is keenly tied to the assimilation and influence of the popularity of these styles by the wider and younger generations of performance practitioners. For example, the early recordings of *marabi*, *tsaba-tsaba*, *kwela*, *mbaqanga* and *mgqashiyo* styles were titled as such. In practice they were referred to by their originators as *Number One*, *Number Two* etc. The point I am trying to make here is the exploitative and conceptually reductive nature of the hegemony of stylistic precedence as popularised by equally exploitative practices of mass production and domestication of performance 'products'. In a way it is proletarian performers such as Madala and perhaps Tabane himself who can escape the guilt of being labelled ignorant, by pointedly ignoring the mentoring influences of capital-controlled music disseminated through records, tapes, television, radio, books, and music scores.

The effects of marketing and advertising on the evolution of urban black music performance take on sinister dimensions if one pauses to think that at one time the very titles of commercially available songs were synonymous with 'style' in the minds of many. How so? A song entitled "Mbube" by Solomon Linda in 1939 came to define a 'whole' genre of performance! What about other compositions by Linda and many other unknown composers prior to and coeval with 'just this one' "Mbube"? Can these 'products' also be referred to as "*mbube*" with any justification to the primacy of 'each' product's origin and momentousness?

And so we read a biography of one,

*'BHENGU, ALPHEUS*

*ZULU guitarist, composer*

*Born: Umkomaas, South Coast, Natal, 1941.*

*Educated at Intshenkombu School, Umkomaas. Left after passing Std.IV.*

*Bhengu had been a popular entertainer at home. Came to Durban, 1955. First employed as household help. Started by playing PHATHA-PHATHA on guitar,*

*then concentrated on ROCK-'N-ROLL. Used radio as teacher. Joined SHEPHERDS Rock-'n-roll band, 1963. Compositions: Instrumental ROCK-'N-ROLL, light vocal' (Husksison 1969:5).*

We have heard of the dance called *phatha-phatha*, and at least two of the most famous black musicians of the late 1950s composed music in celebration of this township dance, namely Mirriam Makeba and Spokes Mashiane. The titles of both compositions were "Phatha-phatha" and one of the versions attained worldwide popularity and was recorded by no less a figure than guitarist Wes Montgomery. We have just read of a young guitarist, Alpheus Bhengu, who, in the late 1950s, learnt music from listening to the radio and by imitating a 'style' of music called *phatha-phatha*, as well as another 'style' called *rock-'n-roll*. Todd Matshikiza, pianist with the Harlem Swingsters has mentioned the same phenomenon, whereby a whole stylistic movement emanates from a tune, for example the *majuba* style of African jazz as a result of a tune called 'Majuba' (Todd Matshikiza in *Drum*, Aug. 1957).

I am attempting to free the notion of style from the commodification and categorisation that is necessitated by marketing, to view each piece of music, especially a music composed outside the grasp of these essentially controlling market processes of slotting and labelling, as a 'style' in its own right. Such a notion, more than closely approximating the original meaning of the term ('style' as a manner of doing), emphasizes the element of originality as an undisputed characteristic of value, and relegates any conformity to an already existing 'style' to mere imitation. I was intrigued by Madala's stance of 'not listening' and, wondering if there is any music or a performer that he personally likes, I asked:

*Sazi: Would you perhaps go to watch such a person perform?*

*Madala: Even if I came to watch and listen, on leaving I cannot know what they were playing. I only saw them in performance and I do not appropriate that and put it inside my head. Perhaps in other countries that I travel to, I will listen and store it in my mind. But here at home there is no one. A person to whom I listen when we are together, because I like what he does, is Duze (Mahlobo). Because of what he does, I listen to what he plays and I like it - but then I do not go away and practice it, or change it and play it in some other way, no...I do not have that in me.*

While such stylistic stringency would seem to inform Madala's technical innovations, in terms of the original tunings and voicings that he has developed, the materials that inform all of his texts derive from oral tradition, from a stock of repertoire whose authorship is difficult to trace. One may well be justified in questioning the authenticity of a performance that is so solidly based on such 'folk' material, in the light of Madala's, or anybody else's claim for that matter, that such compositions are 'theirs'. In acknowledgement of this dependence, Madala had this to say,

*'I rely heavily on material that has disappeared, things that we did as children but which today's youth know nothing about...as they only watch television' (Kunene 1997).*

The material which Madala refers to is the vast repertoire comprising the *imilolozelo* lullaby category of Zulu oral poetry. Cast in the form of speech-song, recitation, or song, these lullabies are used to comfort babies or to soothe them to sleep. However, the term also embraces a reference to children's songs, 'even those composed and performed by slightly older children during their games, or to nursery rhymes' (Canonici 1993). Comprising an important cornerstone of the early learning and socialization process of Nguni children, this genre of oral performance has been largely passed down through generations of Zulu-speaking Nguni people, by word of mouth. The genre is regarded by scholars to have been enhanced, developed and influenced by Christian religion and pre-primary education system since the colonial-missionary encounter (Dundes 1965; Ong 1982; cited in Fraser 1996). Fraser has confirmed the foreign, predominantly European and modern influences on the content of *imilolozelo*, as well as the resiliently indigenous features which the genre has retained in terms of 'language-specific compositional techniques and forms which facilitate the processes of retention and recall' (Fraser 1996:i).

Madala Kunene clearly recognises the educational and cultural potential of *imilolozelo*, their embodiment of indigenous performance aspects, and for him to employ these in the forging of an individual neotraditional performance style.

*'I do not do guitar studio sessions, just because I am a guitarist. The style that I play is my own. If one likes it, perhaps they might ask me to come in and add whatever I feel like adding. Then I would come and put in my own style something which I have never played in my own songs, which will be new and invented specially for that purpose' (Madala Kunene, Apr.1997).*

It is Madala Kunene's idea of individualism and originality as expressed in his stylistic approach that defines autonomy as well as imposes limitations and demarcates boundaries of collaboration with other performers. The individual style itself has been largely determined by Kunene's own interpretation of the resources of oral tradition, because in his conception of the organisation of sound based on these forms,

*'It would be impossible to just play anything...because now I am thinking if I tune the first string up from E...and then tune the second string to sound the same pitch as the first - the third and fourth strings are on different pitches - with the last two strings also tuned in unison. Now, if I hold down a chord-shape, a special sound comes out. Now that is the way I work. I thought about this and tried it...the way it comes out allows me to sing in a particular way. Say, if I hear the third string sounding "tring!", I can listen to that and then sing "Nans'inswempe" - you see' (M.Kunene, Apr.1997).*

"Nans'inswempe" comes from the first line of a song-type nursery-rhyme which, while it falls neatly under Kunene's category of 'material that has disappeared...things that we did as children', is probably only as old as the Western classical music-based choral traditions, a heritage of the colonial-missionary experience. This is probably true of "Nans'inswempe", a satirical game-song without bodily movement, which I personally encountered only when I went to school in 1967 - and a favourite song of the boy-scout groups as recently as the early 1970s. The song is in triple-meter and consists of a single stanza, made up of four lines of text:

*Nans'inswempe (There's a partridge)*

*Biz'izinja (Call the hounds)*

*Zayibamba (They've caught it)*

*Yaphunyula (It has slipped free)*

The performance was sung in unison. There was no harmonisation, nor were there the unmistakable prosodic elements of indigenous vocal performance such as antiphonal leader/chorus organisation or cyclical asymmetric voice entries present. The normal rendition was that of repeating each line of the stanza twice, extending it thus to eight lines which were then repeated ad infinitum. The melody itself is characteristically Western in its use of implied tonic-dominant root relations and the diatonic major scale. Bearing in mind Madala's perception of the social and educational role of oral performance and the disempowering role of canned television entertainment, I probed further,

*Sazi: This is what I want to ask bafu - while I do remember the rhymes, I have no idea of their origins... "We mfana ophatha ngojeke" - what on earth is that?*

I was referring to the first line of a version of a popular *umlolozelo*. In order to simplify the dynamics involved in recounting an experience of Madala performing an excerpt of oral poetry, during which he interviews both himself and me, as he constructs from the lines of text a visual, verbal and metaphoric meaning - linking the bold but disparate imagery of this rather obscure *umlolozelo* - I will have to first give a version of it, to which we were both generally referring to. A literal translation of the first line means "Hey boy, he who carries with a jug". I was intrigued by its reference to 'ujeke', an onomatopoeic term for 'jug' and certainly not an indigenous domestic storage vessel:

*We mfana ophatha ngojeke*

*• Ngojeke anik'uJonathan*

*UJonathan abafana bayashada*

*Bayashada bashada etafuleni*

*Etafuleni kukhona uNothibhoyi*

*UNothibhoyi bamdonsa ngomlenze*

*Ngomlenze ixhegu elidala*

*Elidala sigaxamabhande*

*Mabhande woza sihambe*

*Sihambe siyengqayiyane*

*Engqayiyani'izindaba zimnandi*

*Zimnandi'izindaba ezithethwayo*

*Ezithethwayo zigingqa ntoni na.*

It is widely accepted that many *imilolozelo* exist in varied forms due to the oral nature of their transmission. It is inevitable that a measure of elasticity is introduced with variations and alternative structuration of material being a common feature of oral literature (Schapera 1937; Okpewo 1992; Fraser 1996). For example the above poem, which I learnt in the first grade, sometimes appears in a shortened version which only commences with the third line. Sometimes an extra two lines are added after the sixth line, with only a short single line ending the poem immediately after the eleventh line in the above example (Muller and Mthethwa 1982).

In societies such as the Zulu, where the bulk of traditional norm and morals have been sublimated under many layers of cultural domination, oral poetry occupies a special place in that it becomes a repository of traditional belief, myth, taboo and a tool for engaging the hegemony of dominant ideas and the legitimacy of the ruling classes. Commenting on the general lack of everyday logic and sense in the content of most *imilolozelo*, most scholars agree that meaning is not of paramount importance, the focus rather lying in,

*'...the effect the word has on the ear, the compelling rhythm and the scope provided for bodily movement and gesture' (Fraser 1996:25).*

The inherent rhythm and the antiphonal forms of some of *imilolozelo* makes them accessible to musical interpretation - whilst others, already cast as complete musical structures embodying discrete melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and formal organisational principles, easily find their way into instrumental interpretations by neotraditional performers. A recognisable part of the repertoire from ZANUSI, Madala Kunene, and some of Bruce Sosibo's *maskandi* guitar compositions, is made up of *imilolozelo*. Such songs are "Ungcede", from the album "ZANUSI" (HUL40237); "Khon'othwele" and "Igwababa", from Madala Kunene's 1996 "KON'KO MAN" CD-album for B&W Records (BW058). ZANUSI's live performance signature tune, "Vinqo", was a Zulu children's song-poem, a version of which was recorded in a 1994 Disney-sponsored CD compilation of Zulu 'nursery rhymes and action songs' entitled "Gift Of The Tortoise". Among the participants in this project were the LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO, poet and actress Gcina Mhlophe and Johnny Clegg of JULUKA fame.

Madala Kunene's answer to my enquiry regarding the origins of these *imilolozelo*, betrayed an acute awareness of the influence of literacy on composition and transmission of this genre of Zulu oral poetry,

*'They (imilolozelo) come from our great-grandparents, our ancestors who could not write...people who would say when reckoning with time: "Oh, if the sun is over there, then it must be time to eat" or "If the sun is therabouts, I must prepare to go to sleep", you see - they lived like that. This poetry did not come with the whites because if you look at it closely, it is indigenous. Then the people who could write, like Mafukuzela (John L. Dube, president of the South African National Native Congress and founder of Ohlange Institute in 1901) and others, made up these things. They made these things up so that one could read them, perhaps from a book written by Mafukuzela in 1921, you see. When he was writing in 1921, he was taking it from his grandmother who may have lived in 1820 - his ancestor, you see. If you recited these things on stage to a hall full of whites, they would not recognize any of them:*

*"Yebuya hobhe!*

*(Hark there pigeon!)*  
*Uya uphetheni?*  
*(What do you have there)*  
*Ngiya ngipheth'inja*  
*(I am carrying a dog)*

*Sazi: Uyoyosel'aphi?*  
*(Where are you going to grill it)*

*Madala: Ngiyoyosel'endle*  
*(I am going to grill it in the veld)*  
*Ekhaya kunani?*  
*(Why not at home)*  
*Ngesaba obaba*

*(I am scared of the fathers)*  
*What will they do?...You see, all those things are ours - they are not theirs. I never cease to be amazed at these things...*

*Sazi: They are so old I cannot understand what they mean.*

*Madala: But bafo, they do speak! 'Yebuya Hobhe!' That is a greeting...*

*Sazi: An exclamation of surprise ...*

*Madala: Perhaps said to a woman. What is she carrying? She is carrying a dog. Where is she taking it to?...you see. This is the way I understand it. Similarly, I would sing,*

*"Uph'unyoko? Vinqo!*  
*(Where is your mother Vinqo*  
*Usal'ekhaya*

*(She's left behind at home)"...It is something that goes like that, which one cannot easily change and put any other way. So then bafo, when I saw other musicians trying different things, I sought out things that I was familiar with - things which I have grown up playing with. Like pretending to pick up a stone and putting on top of someone's head and then singing:*

*"Khon' othwele*  
*(Somebody is burdened)*  
*Thina singathwele"*

*(While we are not)...You see, I am only teasing you because I did not put anything on your head in the first place. But naturally you would start to brush your head to remove the 'nothing' and when you do not encounter anything, you will get mad. This is how I incorporate in my lyrics, things which a listener can recognise from their childhood. Today's young one's are growing up in ignorance of these things, and it is better to bring them back through music and sing like this to a person:*

*"Mata gota free*  
*Free dayimani*  
*Agoshin*  
*Phuthin*  
*No-ink*  
*Ujeqe"*

[“Mata Gota Fri” is one of Kunene's songs, derived from a children's casting game, much similar to reciting "Eeny Meeny Miny Mo". Listen to Excerpt 5.9 from the 1992 Splashy Fen Music Festival]

*'Things like those. Now if you bring them back and put them on the guitar... This is how I came to see it and I said to myself "Let me do it this way". But I cannot write it if I was asked to, I would not be able to do it' (M.Kunene, Apr. 1997).*

I would like to conclude this account by touching on a significant relationship between protest poetry - an aspect of oral tradition - especially that which characterised the black resistance struggle, and the music of Duze Mahlobo and Bruce Sosibo. This would seem appropriate with regards to the conceptual underpinnings of the two recorded groups with which the two musicians were significantly associated, namely MALOPOETS and ZANUSI.

Numerous interviews and articles concerning MALOPOETS were consistent in their explication of the conceptual element of the band's stylistic approach. While the most visible aspect of the band was aural and visual, there existed in their background a commitment to bring about a coalescence of a broad artistic and creative expressivity. A publicly-stated long-term goal of MALOPOETS was to bring about a community of performance and cultural activism that combined poetry, drama, creative writing, visual arts and performance. One of the few outlets for such a conceptualisation of culture was provided by the establishment of a literary magazine called "Staffrider" in 1978, a few months before the birth of MALOPOETS in July of the same year. In a preface to the publication, "Ten Years of Staffrider 1978-1988" (1988), the magazine's editors summarised the vision and the broad philosophy that had guided its progress since its inception. The following excerpts from this brief collaborative essay from A.W. Oliphant and Ivan Vladislavic attempt to convey some of the magazine's broader concerns.

The larger MALOPOETS' following comprised of regular authorship of articles, mainly poetry, published in the initial issues of Staffrider. The authors of articles that were published under the "Malopoets" column of the magazine were in reality performers, sponsors and managers of the group. Such people were Ellinor (Jooste) Hermann, law-student, poet and writer, Benjamin Langa; poet and lawyer Mafika Mbuli; and flautist, percussionist and poet, Eugene Skeef. The excerpts from Oliphant and Vladislavic's essay locate the magazine within the South African literary landscape, as 'perhaps one of the most successful cultural journals ever published in the country' (based on an unpublished assessment by Robert Fuller, cited in Ten Years of Staffrider 1988: preface),

*'This assessment is based....on the significance of the work Staffrider has published, the magazine's relationship to political and historical developments in South Africa, and its resilience and adaptability in an extremely hostile and repressive environment'.*

Regarding the scope and type of articles that the magazine selected for publication, *'Staffrider was able to become an outlet for young and often inexperienced writers and to feature the work of community-based projects (such as the broader MALOPOETS structure was), inscribed as it was with the imperative to resist officially sanctioned culture and its concomitant aims of domination'.*

Regarding the significance of the performance, literary, and visual artistic products of the MALOPOETS group,

*'The material thus provided a seed-bed for the conceptualisation of a democratic perspective on culture and its important relationship to the resurgence of the national democratic movement'. The magazine has interacted with all the significant political and historical developments of the past ten years. This interaction is reflected in a diverse range of artistic and literary modes: popular history, performance poetry, social realist fiction, popular music, committed art, documentary photography, and generic hybrids like 'proemdra' (prose-poetry-music-drama) of a scope, depth and radical orientation not to be found in any other cultural magazine in circulation during the same period'*

*(A.W.Oliphant and I.Vladislavic 1988:preface).*

I have hoped that the lengthy excerpt will serve to place the concept which characterised the activity of a group such as MALOPOETS, as well as its offspring concepts such as SAKHILE, ZANUSI, and even BAYETE within the social, political and cultural milieu which produced them.

Lastly, in Appendix 5 is included some of the sketches, poetry and writing from ex-MALOPOETS performers and members such as Eugene Skeef, Ben Langa, Mafika Mbuli, Ellinor (Jooste) Hermann as well as Bruce Sosibo's interpretations of the Zulu oral poetic tradition in his compositions for ZANUSI.

## Chapter 6

### **Some aspects of the reproduction of township neotraditional music on recorded, broadcast, print and live performance media: representation of the three musicians and their music**

The chapter surveys the historical relationship between urban black performance and the entrenched institutions of its reproduction. The reproduction of such performances and the representation of neotraditional musicians and their performance products through recording, broadcast, print and other media has been fraught with contradictions. The pervasive suspicions with which urban performers view the local recording industry for example, stems largely from the historically exploitative nature of the contract between the performers and the recording companies. These perceptions were further compounded by the collusion that had developed, especially with the advent of ethnic radio, between the political goals of state via its censorship structures, and the profit-making imperatives of these institutions. The appallingly low wages and royalties paid by the recording companies, and their scandalous copyright practices, have been amply documented in the stories of many black musicians whose music, despite being sold widely and earning substantial revenue for the recording companies and producers, never enriched its originators. The appearance of copyright and royalty conventions at the height of apartheid repression only legitimised the exploitation of performers, as these were drawn in favour of the recording companies:

*'Like African labourers, musicians could neither join white unions nor their own collective bargaining agencies and were thus at a serious disadvantage in dealing with the white entertainment industry. Record companies often refused to pay royalties, citing technicalities or alleged contract violations....'*  
(Coplan 1985:166).

This was the trend characterising the relationship between practitioners of the early, widely popular forms of township music such as *kwela*, *jazz-kwela* and *mbaqanga* (African jazz) and the recording industry since at least the 1950s. These are some of the bitter experiences shared by all popular bands and musicians of that era.

#### **6.1 A perspective on the character of the relationship between neotraditional performance and the recording industry**

The advent of the gramophone and the radio had facilitated the exploitation of African neotraditional performance by record companies and the retail music industry. By the late 1950s, record titles under Gallo's Troubadour label were being extensively stocked by Durban's music shops and regularly advertised in *Ilanga laseNatali*. Three of the city's record and musical shops, the Durban Music House at 133 Queen Street, Manhattan Music Salon at 25 Cross Street, and the Record House at 250 Grey Street, all advertised a similar list of songs. It would not be unreasonable to consider these titles as representing the tastes of a largely proletarian listenership in the throes of exploitation by a culturally insensitive merchandising machinery. Columnist and critic Walter Nhlapho summed up the attitude of the recording companies as follows:

*'(the recording companies) saw in the African a source of income...quality did not matter. Something to pat your foot to - anything with bounce or rhythm, original*

*or copied but it must sell. There are still musicians who play the pure, polished jazz of days gone by, musicians whose music does not appeal to, and stir the masses to promiscuous gyrations, musicians whose music does not sell, but all the same, the kind of jazz that savours of the pure and the best'*  
(Walter Nhlapho quoted in Andersson 1981:40).

Since the earliest days of phonographic recordings in South Africa, black music idioms have always had to compete with imported music. The pre-occupation of the recording industry with cornering the various class categories of black listenership, a naive idealization of static, unchanging African expressive styles, coupled with the middle-class society's moralistic disdain for working-class social performance behaviour, relegated some of the most original and vibrant syncretic innovations by black proletarian performers, such as *marabi*, to the trash-heap of memory,

*'For almost everyone not condemned to life in the ghetto, "marabi" and its subculture was evil: associated with illegality, police raids, sex, and a desperately impoverished working class, it was vilified as a corrupting menace. It is no surprise then, that not a single one of the many early "marabi" musicians was ever recorded'*  
(Ballantine 1993:6).

When neotraditional music did get recorded from about the late 1920s onwards, the motivation for the recording companies was profit, with the readily identifiable migrant market receiving priority. Coplan has mentioned some of the forces which collectively averted attention from the budgeoning styles of an urbanising proletariat,

*'...With local studios, the companies took advantage of the popularity of indigenous recordings among migrant workers'* (Coplan 1985:136).

When recording companies did venture to pay attention to other types of African performance beyond those that appealed to the migrant worker clientele, they focussed on middle-class mission-educated Africans. The first African music talent scouts were recruited from this category of black society, whose tastes were largely biased against proletarian social performance practice, and who as a result,

*'...ignored the "marabi" music of shebeen society, which they considered degraded and unworthy of preservation'* (Coplan 1985:137).

Music impresario, talent scout and critic Mark Radebe, who recorded for Columbia in the 1930s, as well as Reuben Caluza and Griffiths Motsieloa, whose groups had travelled to London in the early 1930s to do a series of recordings for the local market, were all products of a middle-class education and upbringing. Caluza himself had undertaken to record for HMV, more than 120 selections of music catering 'specially for the "raw" Native, for the partially civilised, and for the educated Native' (Coplan 1985:136). That these recordings were viewed as a sign of progress and African emancipation is evident from the reviews of these events in the leading black press of the day (Ilanga 2 Jun. 1933; Umteteli WaBantu 17 Dec. 1932; Bantu World 9 Apr. 1932 - cited in Ballantine 1993:45).

The most alienating of developments came about during the middle 1950s when Troubadour Records' producer and talent scout, Cuthbert Matumba, foreshadowed a breed of black producer that has since posed an intimidating and debilitating spectre in the path of commercial recording of township neotraditional music. In the second chapter, mention was made of the commercially available music that was crudely and ethnically categorised and extensively advertised in the country's leading black publications in the middle to late 1950s. Largely issued by Troubadour Records, these lists never bothered to mention the names of the bands or artists, except where such an artist was a recognisable and marketable personality. Singer Dorothy Masuka was such a personality (*Ilanga laseNatali*, July; August; October 1958), and so were some of her female contemporaries, among them Dolly Rathebe, Mirriam Makeba, Dottie Tiyo, Thandi Klaasen and Sophie Mgcina.

In 1958, Troubadour's AFC and ZZ record series largely maintained the classification system that had been established earlier in the decade. Recordings of local music styles were described in advertisements as *kwela, jive, African jazz, new flute, hot jazz, kwela jive, rhumba jive, Zulu/Sotho vocal, Zulu calypso, rock'n roll, choir, hot vocal etc.* There were also *sketches*, and satirical skits at the expense of slumyard and township stereotypes with titles like 'Sdakwa' (the drunkard), 'Inkosikazi' (the wife), or 'Ingulube' (the pig). Coplan has remarked on the exploitative practices of the likes of black producers and talent scouts such as Matumba and Rupert Bopape, who shuffled musicians around in different combinations in order to mass-produce the 1950s township jazz styles. During the 1960s and the 1970s, such interference by black producers employed by monopolistic and profit-driven recording companies, led Coplan to record that,

*'Rupert Bopape of Gallo-Mavuthela searched for talent in the mines and hostels, and his successor West Nkosi actively recruits performers in the rural areas... Even if singers, dancers and musicians present themselves at the studio as a unit, they are most often regrouped according to the producer's concept of sound, style, and presentation. New groups are given copies of recent 'mbaqanga' hits to imitate, and rehearse for a year before they can go on tour'*  
(Coplan 1985:185).

Relying on the inexperience of migrant musicians and bands such as those of John 'Phuzushukela' Bhengu and Simon 'Mahlathini' Nkabinde, such producers recruited a salaried stable of loyal studio musicians. These musicians were then used to sideline 'troublesome' band members and urban-bred jazz musicians who would likely insist on their rights in terms of contracting and royalty payments. This left no alternatives for skilled professional jazz players and singers, who were as a consequence forced to,

*'...leave the studios and the professional music world, adapt to the "mbaqanga" trend in popular music, or seek a wider multi-racial and international audience'*  
(Coplan 1985:167).

In the hands of a state-controlled broadcasting system, recording companies and naive proletarian musicians, an original and proud body of music, *mbaqanga*, slowly came to symbolise the degradation and exploitation which neotraditional musicians and African society in general, were experiencing in the social, political, and cultural realms of existence.

The tendency for production to put pressure on the musicians, or to manipulate the recorded sound to fit with the producer's own notions of style was a very real experience for black township and rural performers. The overriding ambition of South African, and predominantly white producers who also recorded black music in the 1970s and the 1980s, had been to mould such musics into an internationally selling commodity into order to 'to crack it overseas', or as one of them was quoted in Andersson (1981),

*'The township music is a force of its own, but when township music comes across, leans a "little" more towards "white music", for want of a better term, then we might have something not just dynamic, but exportable' (Producer Grahame Beggs quoted in Andersson 1981:63).*

In their relentless quest to find the right formula for an international chart-topping local production, commercial producers embarked on the most unethical of practices, ultimately causing disillusionment of musicians or the actual breaking up of many bands. Such was the deal with the first MALOPOETS recording contract with Gallo, which saw a producer 'stealing' the master tapes from the company's vaults and leaving the country and the disappearance of the bands' first commercially recorded musical performance. MALOPOETS' first, and unissued album, "Rebirth-Malopoets", largely represented an abstract, conceptual thrust of the band's compositional palette. The opportunity to record one's most fundamental expressive convictions was unheard of during the late 1970s. Except for one track in the album, all tunes recorded were first takes,

*'With the first record, the band could do what they wanted - it was so original. Nobody interfered, you know normally its always the producer who says "Now sing something in English, now do this, now do that" - because even the "Fire" album was interfered with...I think in the track called "The Sound Of The People" they were told "Do something in English", which was a pity' (Ellinor Hermann, Nov.1997).*

A conversation I had with Duze Mahlobo gave some idea to issues which might have brooked unwelcome intervention and censorship of the musicians' most incisive voices:

*Sazi: I would like to go back to the time when MALOPOETS were really happening - the kind of developments which accompanied the music. How did the band and the music stand in relation to the structures that governed reproduction, the performance and the recording of this music?*

*Duze: There were a lot of problems...what can I say...during those times, just playing that kind of music was in itself provocative.*

*Sazi: It was subversive...*

*Duze: ...because the government regarded us as politicians - as a threat to their most objectionable structures.*

*Sazi: What would you say were the reasons for this attitude?*

*Duze: The music had a message...and those times, everything was a crime. Telling your people to stand up and be proud of themselves...was a crime.*

*Sazi: Public assertions of black dignity were criminalised...*

*Duze: Yes. That is why so many bands, after the fall of MALOPOETS, were then trying to do what we had been doing for some time before. For instance,*

*SAKHILE came after us.*

*Sazi: I am sure that, to a large extent, they were inspired by things that you had done.*

Such a postulation is made finds support in the late poet and writer Ben Langa's reply to criticism that had arisen in the wake of Sefolosa's brief absence from MALOPOETS' in the early part of 1979. Khaya Mahlangu<sup>1</sup> had been one of the two saxophonists that had fronted the band in this most controversial of appearances:

*'Pat's leaving MALOPOETS did not create a new concept, it only created his absence. The derogation of our two saxophonists, Khaya (Mahlangu) on soprano and Mlungisi (Conjwa) on tenor, is unpardonable. The two saxophonists are students of music and have very few peers in the country. Added to their technical skill is a deeper cultural, social awareness which makes their interpretation even more profound' (Ben Langa writing in Dome No.4, Jul.1979).*

As members of ZANUSI, we had looked forward to recording the repertoire of songs that had brought us critical attention from the local press, township audiences, and club patrons in both Cape Town and Johannesburg. We were less than satisfied with the conditions of the contract from Gallo, however, making a record had been a logical step towards promoting our music and reaching a wider audience. What we had not foreseen was the extent to which we were to lose control over the reproductive process of the music, our independence and organisational integrity.

ZANUSI's woes were not singularly special within the body of experience characterising relations between township bands in general, and the South African recording industry monopoly. The extent to which township musicians are alienated from the processes of reproduction and marketing of their music has often, most ambiguously, necessitated the employment of middle-persons in the form of white management. The trend, since at least the middle 1970s, has been for white females to fill this void between predominantly white-owned venues, event promoters, hirers and recording studios on the one hand, and black bands and musicians on the other.

The 1970s popular Soweto band, HARARI, employed the services of Di Brukin, while MALOPOETS and BAYETE had Ellinor (Jooste) Hermann and Lorraine McCarter respectively. In ZANUSI we had Narene Stevens, who organised the bulk of the band's engagements, communications and transport. The relationship between a group of six black, township youth and a white South African, well-to-do suburban 'housewife', could not be more ambiguous than it was under apartheid conditions of the 1980s and early 1990s. As the group's manager, Stevens was nothing less than a representative and spokesperson for ZANUSI, a contradictory role indeed if one considers the resistance stance of the *Afro-jazz* genre of township neotraditional performance. The South African history of racial tensions and mistrust was a constant challenge to the organisational

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<sup>1</sup> *Khaya Mahlangu* - Soweto saxophonist and band-leader. Mahlangu, among his many other musical initiatives, co-founded the neotraditional jazz band, SAKHILE, together with bassist Siphon Gumedede, percussionist Mabhi Thobejane, pianist Themba Mkhize, guitarist Menyatso Mathole and drummer Madoda Mathunjwa.

integrity of such groups and a lot of energy went into ironing out problems and misunderstandings which arose out of this situation. Some of the tensions emanated from the cultural diversity and gender expectations defined by African, and primarily Zulu, versus white English liberal perceptions of these roles. Contentious issues in the social, cultural, and political debates characteristic of the South African environment, could not but be played out in the dynamics of the relationships between the band, their management, their hirers, contractors, audiences as well as the white-owned and run mass media. Among her social peers, class and family, Stevens had to justify her association with the black band. In the minutes of a meeting of the band on 17th September 1990, is recorded:

*'Narene (Stevens) appealed to the band members for more trust and co-operation as a team trying to accomplish things together. It was important to support each other as a family, because the nature of this work and the time involved tends to replace a lot of normal family life, especially leisure time. She pointed out that in the context of South African society, her working with ZANUSI flouts convention and automatically exposes her to public speculation. Therefore it is important for the band to realise that she needs their support. She said that if her husband and family were satisfied with the situation, that is all that counts' (Minutes of ZANUSI meeting, 17th Sept. 1990).*

It was an ambitious preoccupation with 'star making' between the producer of ZANUSI's debut album and Stevens that saw Bruce Sosibo being lured into signing a recording contract which would effectively deprive the members of ZANUSI any royalties emanating from the sale of the record. He had been promised a shot at a solo career by the producer, Richard Siluma, who was also handling the affairs of South African reggae exponent, Lucky Dube.

Shortly before the band's recording session in May 1990, both Narene Stevens and Bruce Sosibo signed a private contract with the recording company, agreeing that the rest of the band members be treated as session musicians. Only at the end of the session were the band members informed, by which time they could neither effectively challenge the deal nor withhold their participation. Furthermore, the rest of the band members were informed that Gallo only recognised Narene Stevens and Bruce Sosibo as ZANUSI, and that Stevens had been appointed by Gallo as their A&R person in Durban.

It was not easy to accept that we had wasted the best part of four years, hammering out arrangements for a recording only to be regarded session musicians just when we were hoping to reap some rewards for our efforts. We fought this decision, slamming this technicality, and made urgent appeals to the company's management to no avail. A promised audience with the managing director, C.P. Kuhn, was never honoured. When this meeting failed to materialize, we consulted a sympathetic lawyer friend who promised to pursue the affair on our behalf. While the lawyer agreed that there was certainly a case to be made against our management and the recording company, he was reluctant to take on a large monopoly such as Gallo. He was running a small, private practice and besides, we did not have a cent to pay him in legal fees. Soon after this the band disbanded, with Stevens' lawyers warning the band members against using the name ZANUSI, as it had already been copyrighted to her.

This was in 1990, but the kind of treatment we received in the hands of Gallo Music Productions was not very different from the legendary stories of exploitation of musicians in the 1950s, of which Ballantine has commented,

*'...music might be autonomously produced, but it tended quickly to become ensnared in structures of reproduction that were exploitative, geared towards profit, and not owned or controlled by those who created the music in the first place' (Ballantine 1993:45).*

Thus we were never part of the process of mixing the album, nor were we consulted about the dubbing of the horns and additional voice parts. Extra musicians, whom we had never met or rehearsed with, were brought in to dub solo's over those we had played originally. Such was the case in the tune "Nice To Be Free" from the Zanusi (1991) album, where my guitar solo was excised and replaced with that of an unnamed session guitarist from Johannesburg. In Bruce's composition entitled "Get Back To Your Culture", my guitar solo, which had initially been excised, was subsequently restored, albeit with the addition of an electronically distorted rock-guitar guitar riff. This 'mixing' decision could not have been more inappropriate than in this particular tune, introduced as it was with a "Zion" drum pattern by percussionist S'busiso Mkhize.

Swinging guitar solos, among other international improvisational influences were welcomed within the conceptual boundaries of ZANUSI's style, and besides, both saxophonist S'thembiso Ntuli and I were second year Jazz Performance Diploma students at the University of Natal in 1990. Bassist Thami Mtshali is one of the first graduates of the university's jazz programme, run by pianist Darius Brubeck since 1984.

The contentious lyrics of the song "Get Back To Your Culture", were reproduced at the back of the album. Bruce had been pressured by both band management and record production officials to append an explanation for the pan-Africanist sentiment in his composition, and so at the end of the actual song text are the following words,

*'A message from Zanusi for Africa. Remember your heritage, but that does not mean that we should be separate' (Bruce Sosibo, liner notes from the album Zanusi [1991]).*

Regarding the final presentation of the music, sleeve designing and the composition of liner notes, none of the band members had a say. The front cover was in the colours of the old South African flag emblazoned with Bruce's helmeted head. The unsympathetic sleeve-designer had chosen a photo of a *smiling* Bruce, and totally ignored the significance of the miner's helmet and its symbolism of the exploitative migrant labour system. These contradictions were echoed in the way the music itself had been manipulated to appeal to a cross-section of the record-buying public, especially the white consumer sector, who would readily identify with the appended rock sensibilities and the inclusion of white session soloists to a music of the black township experience. The liner notes on the album back cover were largely made up by Bruce and verified by Stevens, whom Bruce chose to hail, on behalf of the rest of alienated ZANUSI members,

*'Sithi phambili Mama wethu!' - our Mother!' (Bruce Sosibo on the back cover of Zanusi [1991]album).*

The Zulu well-wishing phrase, whose literal meaning is "We say: forward Our Mother!"

falsely gave an impression that the role of production and the band's management had enjoyed ZANUSI members' blessings. The album notes and credits on the LP sleeve contained further telling omissions. For example, Duze Mahlobo, who had stood in for Thami Mtshali on electric bass during the recording of the album while the latter was attending the ZABALAZA ARTS AND CULTURE FESTIVAL in the UK, was not mentioned, nor was he appropriately acknowledged anywhere in writing. This is how a milestone coalescence of literate jazz, township jazz, indigenous musical interpretation, traditional religious symbolism, oral poetry performance in township neotraditional music in the 1990s South Africa, was effectively retarded by dominating economic, social and political agendas of hegemonic institutions and their privileged class functionaries.

The unpalatable experiences suffered in the hands of recording monopoly functionaries is a recurring theme which most neotraditional township musicians, myself included, would prefer to forget. This fact was confirmed in one of my conversations with Duze Mahlobo:

*Sazi: What kind of venues did engage MALOPOETS then?*

*Duze: Oh, I can't remember...the first gigs were in Johannesburg, mostly universities, Wits, Natal Technikon, Cape Town...I can't remember other places...*

*Sazi: Did you play any clubs at all?*

*Duze: Yes. The most memorable club gig was at a place called 'Lacheim' in Johannesburg, a Jewish club in Hillbrow. That's the club that perhaps popularised our music...it helped us a lot. The name of the club's owner was David...David - I can't remember his surname - it's a funny name.*

*Sazi: I suppose this was before you had a recording contract.*

*Duze: Though it took a long time... I mean..*

(Duze starts to tune his guitar, which he has been holding on his lap all along. At this point our conversation becomes punctuated by tuning and short little phrases, spoken and played on the guitar. I was made to understand that Duze was not keen to be reminded of the experience in a Gallo studio in the late 1970s. The details had been pushed far back in his memory and could not be retrieved in any lucid manner - such unpalatable experiences are best forgotten)

*Sazi: I am sure the studios were not ready to record your music...*

*Duze: No...I mean, they would always tell us no, this is not the right kind of music...*

(Duze finishes off the sentence by playing a phrase on his guitar - which I have transcribed in Transcript 4. When he seemed satisfied with the tuning, which involved lowering the second string from a B of the standard tuning down a major second to an A, Duze launched into an introductory passage reminiscent of *izihlabo* played by the *maskandi* instrumentalists. The first four systems of Transcript 5 are of this introductory passage, followed by an abridged version of one of his untitled compositions to which, depending on the tempo at which he has commenced, he sometimes chants a single line saying "*Woza sambe mfana*" ("Come let us go away boy")

*Sazi: How much of that sound was attributed to your personal contribution?*

*Duze: I was the main composer and arranger. For instance tracks such as 'Fire - Umlilo' and 'Sound Of the People', I can't remember most of the tunes - but most of the information contained..the ideas...Because of the length of the passage of time that has passed, I can't really pinpoint individual tracks but most of the material contained therein, is mine, including the arrangements - shaping this and that form.*

*Sazi: Were there more than two albums recorded or was it just the "Fire" album only?*

*Duze: As MALOPOETS, the first album which we recorded with producer Ray Nkwe never came out. He swindled us and never produced the album.*

This was confirmed by Ellinor Hermann,

*'What broke us in is that finally we were approached to do a recording, that was after a festival at Curries' Fountain (Durban). There was a Jewish lady, I do not know her name, and she said she would do it, and then there was a black guy who also approached us. Well for my part I couldn't trust that white Jewish woman...what better way than to take a black producer. He took us to Gallo studios, and the MALOPOETS, for the first time they were in the studio, even the one who mixed it said he had never seen anything like that. Only one track which Duze insisted he wanted to redo the guitar track, otherwise it was all first take. The next day, just the morning only...was mixing. Nkosi... Charles Nkosi designed the record cover, and that was the last we have seen of that record. The papers were writing about it - "First record coming out"...and he (producer) disappeared to America... and the tapes...gone! (Ellinor Hermann, Nov.1997).*

## 6.2 The reproduction of neotraditional music in live performance

In combination with the repressive social and political environment at the close of the 1950s, the conditions which characterised the reproduction of black neotraditional performance drove most performers to early retirement, exile, and others to the early grave as a result of disillusionment, economic insecurity and resorting to hard drinking. This crisis situation also created a vacuum in terms of live performance, as a result of the retrenchment and exile of members of vaudeville and song-and-dance companies, who had existed symbiotically with big band jazz orchestras and thrived on the existence and accessibility of inner-city and shantytown performance venues and a stable African cosmopolitan audience. Focussing on some of the forces that had contributed to the crisis, Ballantine remarked as follows:

*'Most serious for the future of urban black music was the Group Areas Act of 1950, in consequence of which all remaining racially mixed neighbourhoods through the forced removal of entire black communities - often uprooted from from the centres of cities and relocated on the peripheries. The destruction of these vibrant communities was a major factor in bringing the era of the large dance orchestras to an end, by the late 1950s' (Ballantine 1993:7).*

The record companies soon stepped in to fill the vacuum left by the demise of independently organised urban black entertainment such as the "Concert And Dance" institution. The few remaining black city venues and township halls were hired by the

recording companies to showcase their most commercially successful recording artists - mostly *simanje-manje* acts whose songs had become the staple of ethnic radio broadcasting. Some of the reasons for the alienation of urban youth from *mbaqanga* traditions during the 1960s was attributed to this association of 1960s *mbaqanga* with the state-backed propaganda machinery of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, and the failure of the music itself to address the pertinent issues of social and political urban existence. Indeed, the studio-sponsored *mbaqanga* shows during the 1960s and 1970s, left a real impression that such exhibitions,

*'...were directed at migrants and partly urbanised industrial and domestic workers who retain ties to rural culture and take little interest in the American influenced soul, pop, and jazz music more popular among fully urbanised Sowetonians' (Coplan 1985:185).*

The situation of urban black performance in the sixties symbolised the collusion of the dominant and racist institutions of politics and industry, in subverting the aspirations of New Africanism as they had become embodied in urban black neotraditional performance. By recreating the *marabi* elements into the African urban performance expression in the early 1940s, black performers had succeeded in overcoming the cultural colonization and 'Americanisation' of South African urban black performance culture. The conscious incorporation of indigenous musical materials in the creation of *marabi-jazz*, *African-jazz*, *Majuba-jazz* and *pre-1960s mbaqanga*, was a strong expression of resistance, a forging of an autonomous, urban African consciousness and a reclaiming of a cultural past that was constantly undermined by the workings of an exploitative, repressive social, economic and political environment.

The seeds of the second wave of consciousness were already established in the very structures that were busy sealing the fate of the previous revolution. Among the performers that were being sidelined and rejected by the consolidating monopoly recording companies, lurked some of the most gifted musicians and exponents of urban African neotraditional performance. The most influential among these were Wilson Silgee, Zakes Nkosi, Ntemi Piliso, Chris McGregor, Hugh Masekela, Dollar Brand, Kippie Moeketsi, Jonas Gwangwa, Columbus Ngcukana, Pat Matshikiza, Chris Joseph, Claude Shange, Lele Shange, Bobby Mofokeng, Gideon Nxumalo, Barney Rachabane, Ellison Themba, Nikele Moyake, Early Mabuza, Eric Nomvete, Mongezi Feza, Dudu Phukwana, Johnny Dyani, Mackay Davashe, Victor Ndlazilwane, Dalton Khanyile, Ernest Mothle, Philip Tabane, Julian Bahula, Gideon Nxumalo, Agrippa Magwaza, Lionel Pillay, Dick Khoza, Winston 'Mankunku' Ngozi, Cyril Magubane, Theo Bophela, Elijah Nkonyane, Blythe Mbityana, Alan Kwela, Chooks Tshukudu, Churchill Jolobe, Makhaya Ntshoko and many others. The very few platforms that were sympathetic towards the main thrust of performance emanating from the above school of urban neotraditional musicians were mainly through a late 1950s SABC radio programme "This is Bantu Jazz", hosted by jazz-pianist and avant-garde township composer, Gideon Nxumalo.

The turn of the 1960s also saw the appearance of plays such as Harry Bloom's "King Kong", Union Artists' "Township Jazz" and "Sponono", Alan Paton's "Mkhumbane", Ben "Satch" Masinga's vernacular jazz musical, "Back In Your Own Backyard", and Gibson Kente's "Manana, The Jazz Prophet" in 1963. The significance of these productions for

urban neotraditional music performance lay in their incorporation of live music employing the talents of some of the shantytown and the townships top neotraditional performers. These developments, in an era when such musicians, artists, and their communities were bearing the brunt of social, economic and political upheavals, served to portray urban neotraditional performers in solidarity with the struggling urban African communities, whose plight these musical theatrical productions generally sought to communicate. More important though for the reproduction of urban neotraditional performance was the ideological common ground and the forging of alliances between different genres of performance, foreshadowing similar efforts in the autumn years of the black resistance struggle (Oliphant and Vladislavic 1988).

It was only a matter of time before the music itself came to assert the aspirations of township protest theatre as well as incorporate the symbolic and ritual elements of dramatic performance such as black-power chanting, incantations, incense burning, the donning of pan-African costumes and hairstyles, the reciting of black protest poetry. The factional split among the members of the original MALOMBO JAZZ MEN had come about as a result of a commitment by percussionist Julian Bahula and flautist Abie Cindi to the goals of the Black Consciousness Movement. Together with guitarist Lucky Ranku, the two formed MALOMBO JAZZ MAKERS, thereby expressing a closer identification with 'African cultural nationalism and the emerging political aims of the Black Consciousness Movement',

*'This group (MALOMBO JAZZ MAKERS) played for the rallies of the radical South African Students' Organisation (SASO) led by Steve Biko, and Julian and lucky eventually fled to London in the early 1970s. There they formed a large group called JABULA, officially linked to the exiled African National Congress' (Coplan 1985:196).*

During the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the group MALOPOETS came to be associated with the cultural aspect of the struggle and it was for this reason that some of their shows were targeted for mechanical and organisational sabotage,

*'We had lots of problems. At these festivals it happened as soon as MALOPOETS came on stage - suddenly the police were tampering with the PA-system. They would tune it down - all the other bands were loud and all of a sudden when my band came on stage there was no sound. Then I would charge to the PA people to say "What the hell is going on?" So they would just shrug and roll their eyes and say "Its the police" (Ellinor Hermann, Nov.1997).*

A Drum magazine coverage of MALOPOETS Reef tour observed that, notwithstanding the band's breakthrough with Johannesburg audiences over several seasons at the Market Theatre and Wits University,

*'Unfortunately the group's infectious good vibe does not affect everybody, as they recently discovered at Wits where they played to an audience of 3000 at a "Support the Detainees" concert recently. Relating the incident, which in retrospect he laughs at, Pat (Sefolosa) says there was a sabotage attempt by probable "right-wingers" who informed the media that the concert had been cancelled and fastidiously stamped "Cancelled" across all the MALOPOETS publicity posters' (Drum, Aug.1982).*

Similar platforms at the University of Natal campus had seen MALOPOETS perform alongside poetry recitals by some of the most radical writers at the beginning of the 1980s. Furthermore, leading Natal poets, writers and artists such as Eugene Skeef, Ben Langa and Charles Nkosi had at one time been at the core of the founding structures of the MALOPOETS' concept. It was often the case that such personalities took the cudgels of unsympathetic criticism which was occasionally levelled at the band (Dome No.4, July, 1979).

The flexible, ever-changing role and functions which neotraditional musicians have assigned to performance has often been incompatible with the expectations characteristic of the patrons and institutions effecting the reproduction and representation of their music. Some obvious reasons for this situation are the distance - physical, social and cultural - which neotraditional performers undertake to bridge between their marginalised communities and the empowered social classes who contribute to their livelihood by rewarding their performances.

In the late 1970s and the 1980s, politically-tinged black performances were performed largely for, and sought to engage with social debates within and around a still-idealised integrated South African society. The establishments that were willing to host such performances were also prepared, at least in theory, to service mixed audiences. Whether viewed as radical or progressive in terms of the pervasive attitudes and politics of South African society, such institutions - not least because they were situated in white-demarcated areas and owned by whites - represented perhaps the very core of cultural hegemony. The performances themselves were doing nothing less than - given the limited choices of suppressed societies - sustaining and reproducing this hegemony.

In support of this view, I have understood 'hegemony' to refer to,

*'...a situation in which a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert "total social authority" over other subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural' (Hall 1977, cited in Hebdige 1979:15).*

Nowhere else were these ambiguities expressed more acutely than in the actual live performance situations in the halls, clubs and restaurants where neotraditional township performance occasionally found a platform. Neotraditional musical performance, texts and lyrical materials, significantly couched as they were in the language of the underdog social classes, were almost entirely misunderstood by the majority of white patrons. Within ZANUSI, this tension resulted in pressure being put on the band by its white management, to translate their performances for the non-African audiences. While the suggestion defeated the basic assumptions of township neotraditional approaches of decolonising the minds of South Africans and empowering vernacular African expressions, including language, brave attempts were made to translate, both verbatim and connotative, the different interpretations of Nguni metaphor and oral lore.

Entrusted with this task by my fellow band members in ZANUSI, I privately justified my dubious role by invoking a dimly perceived idea of democracy, futilely hoping to convince

and convert through mere verbal comprehension. It was inevitable that a large part of the meaning of the texts and contexts was lost in the translation process. Perhaps deep down resides a suspicion, a mistrust of this historical cognitive asymmetry, and a conviction that the music itself was talking sufficiently eloquently. More serious though, was a genuine wish to be understood in one's own language, especially when mediating a deeply-felt plight of disadvantage.

A conviction that audiences wanted to see a certain image of ZANUSI manifested in the management's unceasing advice to the band's musicians on the issues of repertoire, visual presentation and lyrical content of the band's performances. Occasionally these concerns were a source of disagreement, with band members preferring to present a different image. For example Steven's repeated calls for the band to "smile" on stage, were never heeded. She had also tried to persuade the band members to practice choreographed movement simultaneously with singing and playing their musical instruments. The band never addressed her suggestion, electing to perform movement only in the part of the programme wherein Bruce played traditional *maskandi* guitar repertoire, while the rest of the group sang as a chorus. This was more in keeping with the forms of neotraditional *ngoma* performance within the contemporary *maskandi* tradition. Furthermore, the band was fronted by literate, jazz-educated music students who were immersed in the process of reconciling the hard-core, urban and 'cool' image of "jazz" with strong assertions of indigenous culture in the face of colonial subjugation and racial repression.

The practical and coldly calculating goals of popular performance success- among them recognition, fame, and attendant financial reward - opened up the band to suggestions and comparisons with entrenched models of Western cultural hegemony and commercialism. Thus Stevens, giving advice to the band on its stage appearance, had this to say:

*'ZANUSI as a band has a unique problem. The lead vocalist is a drummer and therefore we have a tremendous visual disadvantage on stage. Hence the EXTREME importance of NEVER EVER leaving out the stage entrance and acapella introduction, with Bruce in front at first. This is so important that no circumstances whatsoever should stop it from happening. It is the only time to win that audience and remember that you win or lose your audience in the first five minutes. Imagine Phil Collins never being seen by the audience? Watch his shows. Half the time he drums, half the time he is in front and uses another drummer...'* (Narene Stevens in a memo to ZANUSI for a meeting on the 26th Oct.1990).

I have transcribed below, an excerpt from a typical live performance by ZANUSI which took place in Cape Town at a venue called The Base, in March 1990:

*[My speaking voice is heard over Bruce Sosibo playing an acoustic guitar, tuning and introducing a song in the "maskandi" style by intoning the scale of a piece using the virtuosic phrases referred to as "izihlabo", at the beginning of a composition of his entitled "UShemeni"]:*

*My voice: This song talks about a young man's fear of the mines...and how he dreads, how he fears the darkness in the deep - ngiyesaba ukusabela, uShemeni!*

(Listen to Excerpt 6.1 in Appendix II). Clegg (1981) has associated *izihlabo* with the

body movements of *ukugiya*, which accompany a form of Zulu traditional praise-singing. Regarding the *maskandi* guitar performance, and particularly of the place of *izihlabo*, Clegg tells us further that,

*'You will begin with an introduction - the introduction you will play is what is known as "iihlabo", "izihlabo" which are just little melody lines which give the person listening an idea of (a) the scale that you are playing on, (b) where you are going to start to play, and that will give him a very rough indication of, (c) the kind of song you are going to play. It also shows off your technique, and "izihlabo" is in fact related to "ukugiya" (Clegg 1981:4).*

The leading melody in the song "Ushemeni" (Excerpt 6.1) is reminiscent of the vocal intonation and descending melodic contours typical of *maskandi* except for the chorus, which is harmonised in the Western SATB style. Also, except for Sosibo's finger-picking technique, which does not follow that of a typical *maskandi* guitarist, the voices heard in the tuning are exactly those of the intervallic relationships obtained by the *maskandi* when they lower the first string of a standard western guitar tuning from an E down to a D.

While this approach allows the *maskandi* to play open-string melodies in the first position, Sosibo obtains the same intervallic relationships by playing an undisturbed western-style tuning in the second position. This has come about as a result of growing up in the township (*maskandi* being a rural/migrant/hostel practice) and *assimilating* the sound from radio and recorded cassettes rather than learning directly within the tradition. In place of the *maskandi* technique of *ukupika* using the index finger and the thumb for an independent perpetual pulse motion in the bass voice, Bruce improvises a bass line that moves rhythmically parallel to the ostinato cycling figure outlined by the guitar's top voices. The arrangement goes further to incorporate an electric bass guitar, as well as pan-African and Latin percussion sounds. That Bruce felt bound to reproduce elements of the *maskandi* performance style is truly felt when he "praises" himself in the middle of the song. Such praises are the structural and formal elements of a *maskandi* composition.

It is such elements as above which identify a performer in the *maskandi* style who is still anchored enough in the rural political, social and cultural tradition to declare within his praises - *ukubonga*, his allegiance to these institutions by naming the chief, *inkosi* or headman, *induna*. It is also customary for performers to name the topographical landmarks of his district, normally a river, a hill or a mountain range. Clegg mentions this formal structural aspect of a *maskandi* performance,

*'To bonga is to praise yourself - to be able to praise yourself while you're playing, and not lose one beat of the thumb, and you bonga, you start off in a certain acceptable way. You'll say "Zibambe, mfokasibanibani"; which means grab it, take hold of it brother of so-and-so who comes from a certain and a certain mountain in KwaZulu or usually in Natal whose chief is so-and-so and who accomplished the following deeds, etc.'* (Clegg 1981:4).

Bruce's "praises" are improvised, as is shown in the transcription below, and are employed more as a source of nostalgic humour for the city-bred, educated African audience than as a meaningful text on their own:

*Bruce: (Whistles...) Awuzwe! Zibambe mfana  
Phansi phezulu...  
Ehe! Umful'engiwuphuzayo ul'eThekwini  
Awukho la!  
Eh ngiyibambe phansi eBase impela  
Ekebhithawini!  
(Whistles)....Hear that!*

'**Zibambe mfana**' - an expression to say "Hold'em tight, boy" or "Grab them, boy (the guitar-strings, the reins, etc. )" - a common exhortation to persevere in maintaining excellence, especially in performance or in carrying out an appreciated activity - often used by *maskandi* as a pick-up phrase to 'praise-singing'.

'**Phansi phezulu**' etc. - alludes to the locative, literally 'up and down'. A regular *maskandi* would be mentioning his ancestors and his home village.

'**Umful'engiwuphuzayo ul'eThekwini**' - the river from which I drink is in Durban.

'**Awukho la!**' - it's not here!

'**Ngiyibambe phansi eBase impela**' - I am "in total control" at The Base of course, in Cape Town!

In other circumstances, a performance such as above could easily be interpreted as caricature of a non-literate practice and cultural performance of a largely egalitarian and proletarian community by petit-bougeois performance, ridiculing its own cultural roots in the savage. In a context of resistance against swamping by performance practices of a dominant culture, the parody raises serious questions about subversion of indigenous social, cultural and political identity as well as the economic dispossession brought about as a result of colonisation, industrialisation and urbanisation. The complexities of this dialectic and the role of neotraditional performers in its articulation, are rendered even starker by an understanding of the thrust of the message contained in the text of Sosibo's composition (UShemeni):

*Leader: Nang'uShemeni uyangimemeza  
(Here is Shemeni calling to me)  
(Repeat)*

*Chorus: Awu ngiyesaba ukusabela  
(Oh, I fear to respond)  
Nang'uShemen'engibizel'  
(Here's Shemeni calling me)  
Emafin'amnyama  
(Towards the dark clouds)*

*Leader: Ubobhasobha wensizwa  
(Beware, young man)  
Lezontaba zaseLusuthu  
(Of those hills of Lesotho)*

*Chorus: Zizok'gingqela ngamatshe  
(Who roll boulders down at you)*

The text of the song 'Shemeni' alludes to the recruiting agents for the mines, a functionary of TEBA (The Employment Bureau of Africa), the notorious labour bureaucracy that

recruited Africans for the South African mining industry from all over southern Africa. It is common knowledge that the unthinkable circumstance for a Zulu migrant labourer was to be drafted to work underground, *ukungcwatshwa uphila*, (literally 'to be buried alive'). With this composition for ZANUSI, Bruce was revisiting some of the themes that had preoccupied MALOPOETS nearly a decade earlier, as is evident in the lyrics of the track "Siqhub'ingolovane" from their 1982 release "Fire" album:

*Siqhub'ingolovane ("We push the mine-trolley")*

*Leader: Down here under the ground*

*Where the cold wind blows*

*Chorus: Siqhub'ingolovane*

*Siqhub'ingolovane*

*Leader: We work for our children*

*Chorus: Siqhub'ingolovane*

*Leader: Down here under the ground*

*Where the sun doesn't shine*

*Chorus: Siqhub'ingolovane*

*Siqhub'ingolovane*

*Leader: There's no time for pardon*

*Chorus: Siqhub'ingolovane*

*Leader: Down here under the earth*

*Where the gold is dug*

*Chorus: Siqhub'ingolovane*

*Siqhub'ingolovane*

*Leader: Back home the children crying*

*(Voice): Mama, wher's daddy?*

*Leader: Mamawe silambile*

*(Mama we're hungry)*

*Chorus: Siqhub'ingolovane*

*Leader: And the women don't know what*

*To say to their children*

*'Cause they know*

*Their husbands are digging*

*For their lives*

*Deep down in the mines*

*Because they're trying*

*To survive*

*Chorus: Siqhub'ingolovane*

*Siqhub'ingolovane*

*(From the album "Fire":1982)*

Bruce Sosibo was highly sensitized to the subjugation and coercive practices suffered by the majority of the African labour force. When he was playing with MALOPOETS, Bruce had adopted for his stage costume a miner's aluminium helmet. Besides the hat's symbolic connotation of black enslavement by white-owned industrial and agricultural capital resources, Bruce also drummed on his helmet to augment the band's percussive sounds,

*'Bruce Madoda Sosibo - drums, vocals. His miner's hat isn't only there for the roots image, he plays it too!' (Caption to a photograph in Drum, Aug. 1982).*

This attunement with the most contentious issues characterising apartheid South Africa, as well as the articulation of an idealized alternative, was certainly at the core of neotraditional township composition, even more overtly so in the years after 1976.

### **6.3 The representation of neotraditional township music and musicians in the print and broadcast media**

The following discussion attempts to view the alliance between neotraditional music and other verbal performance practices such as resistance poetry and prose, as an alternative form of performance reproduction and representation. The concern with which a group such as MALOPOETS viewed the aspects of reproduction and representation of their performance, is borne out in the numerous press interviews during which the members took pains to articulate verbally the aesthetic, social, and conceptual underpinnings of the group's stylistic approach.

In response to a highly critical review of a MALOPOETS performance by the editorial of a University of Natal students' publication (DOME No.3, Jun. 1979), the late poet, writer, student political activist and erstwhile MALOPOETS' manager and prose dramatist, Ben Langa, set out to explain the group's aesthetic, social, political and cultural sensibilities. I will attempt to put in perspective Langa's response by referring to the correspondence and events that had provoked it in the first place. The early days of MALOPOETS were eclipsed by material poverty, hunger, lack of basic infrastructure, debt, lack of accomodation and rehearsal space for the band,

*'Most of our earnings went to transport costs and renting PA systems and other musical equipment. So, even if another gig comes along - the band members are not motivated...the enthusiasm to practice is dissipated because the investment of so much of their time and energy goes unrewarded. A lot was destructive to the humanly spirit, no matter how much he loves to do something. Some people end up saying they might just as well sit down at home' (D. Mahlobo 1997).*

It was the desperate material circumstance of the band which had necessitated their association with the German-born Ellinor Joosten, who subsequently became the MALOPOETS' manager,

*'Very soon after my initial encounter with the band I got a call from Bruce, Madoda Sosibo, who was the one who was more outgoing and could mix with the public. He phoned and he said he would like to see me. At that time I was married - I was living in MacDonald Road (Durban) and had a house there... and I said okay, come past. Then he said, "Do you know that we never can play again. Our instruments got repossessed and the management that we have" - one was the lawyer (Mafika) Mbuli, and the other was... the law student from the University of Natal. Well, he was writing poetry and I was also writing poetry and we both got published in STAFFRIDER magazine together...Ben Langa. Well, Bruce was complaining about management that somehow they never get money and now their instruments had been repossessed (Ellinor Hermann 1997).*

*'There were no engagements for the band. We would try to put up concerts in the*

*under-equipped township halls - a situation which, to this day, has not improved much. The most painful aspect of what we were trying to do was the lack of adequate financial resources. We used to have to borrow money in order to hire a PA-system to use in a concert - at the end of which nearly all of the earnings would have to go towards the payment for sound system alone - and we were left with nothing. This undermined the spirit among the players - the fact that we were toiling to pay for the hire of venues, PA-systems, and been repossessed... and I thought "Oh gosh! This band, I would do anything for them" - but then I didn't have the money to bail out the musical instruments' (Hermann 1997).*

Hermann was instrumental in securing a private sponsor and the band was able to pay for their repossessed equipment. From then onwards she was closely associated with MALOPOETS in a largely managerial capacity,

*'...In the '70s, you know, black people with nothing really going for them...and there was a big impression that actually white women started to manage black bands. First of all being white, so you could talk to the white people, and secondly women - somehow with the police and everything, it seemed to be easier' (Hermann 1997).*

A series of hardships marked the band's early progress, including harassment from the security police as a result of their overt criticism of the status quo and their articulation of black existence and aspirations under apartheid (MALOPOETS leader and percussionist Pat Sefolosha was quoted in a nationally read publication as saying "Our music is our guns" - Sunday Tribune, 16 Dec. 1979). The same article had singled out one of the band's songs entitled "Do You Remember When We Were Slaves?" - describing it as,

*' - a haunting , melancholy song which expresses the group's feeling that they have a role to play in the liberation of their people' (Daryl Balfour quoted in Sunday Tribune, 16 Dec. 1979).*

The band could not escape the tensions that were inherent in day to day experiences of living under apartheid, and it was such tensions which marked the bowing out of MALOPOETS black management. Hermann had this to say about her increasingly prominent role in the running of the band's affairs,

*'Of course Ben Langa and (Mafika) Mbuli were not very happy about it and immediately there was a big confrontation. Actually, funny enough Duze was the only one from the band who did not want to accept me. He was the least white-friendly person in the beginning...although we later became close friends' (Hermann 1979).*

It would not be off the mark to assume similar disillusionment behind Sefoloshe's brief sojourn in the U.S. with the cast of Welcome Msomi's play, "UMabatha", without the rest of MALOPOETS personnel. The separation did not last more than a couple of months, but long enough for one music critic to remark scathingly on the absence of the band's frontman and to predict their demise. In a heated column entitled "MALOPOETS - Dead or Alive?" a Dome reporter was both relishing and lamenting the band's passing, introducing her article by stating that,

*'The MALOPOETS originally saw themselves as a concept - the 'poets of the spirits' which they expressed through their music. However, all that is left is a vague form with little content...the group is backed by Eugene Skeef, a local self-styled poet who is known for his repeated recitations of the same limited selection of poems: endless dirges on the theme of Africa. Having been a background figure in (the band) AFRIKA and the early MALOPOETS, that he now plays a major role in the group is indicative of the demise of the group. They have been overcome by their own reputation and with the incestuous and self-centred support base from which they now draw their inspiration, the chances of them moving forward seem unlikely' (Dome No.3, Jun. 1979).*

The Dome reporter's outburst was addressed by Ben Langa in an article subsequently published by the student newspaper in a severely edited form. The excerpts I have chosen from Ben Langa's response highlight the concern with which Langa represented the band, musicians and their performance, to the mass media. Langa's views are significant in a number of issues that he has chosen to address, and as much as these issues pertain to reproduction and representation of township neotraditional performance. A law student, Ben Langa could not help but attempt 'to put the record straight', as the late poet and writer put it himself, except his article perhaps represented a radical turn in thinking about the relationship between artists and musicians as originators of artistic or performance products. The new township art was not seeking approval of opinion-makers and acceptance by the predominantly white consumers of the radical art of the oppressed. Nor was the performance itself conventionally bound to any preconceptions of acceptable organisational format or structure. A performance grounded on bitter reality could not be expected to cater for "kicks" or even to be enjoyable, as Langa introduced his reply to the Dome article,

*'Art is a translation of personal experiences and a reflection of a people's Soul - and this demands great care in writing or speaking 'criticism'. I am not sure here our critic took such pains' (Ben Langa, Dome No.4, Jul. 1979).*

The broader MALOPOETS personnel were consciously aware of their pursuit as an artistic endeavour, of their performance being expressive of the reality of their quotidian experience, reflecting their diverse responses to this experience. Beyond musical performance, MALOPOETS regarded itself as a community group accommodating diverse artistic interests of its individual members. Besides Sefolosa's sketches (he designed the calligraphy of the band's name as well as the logo), all of the band's management were published writers and poets, whose creative energies emanated directly from their experience of MALOPOETS music. The relationship between neotraditional township music and oral performance could not have been more aptly stated than by Ben Langa himself,

*'MALOPOETS is a concept far greater than the individual members of the group. With the evolution of this concept a new freshness was injected into our art. The language we speak through our poetry and music is an interpretation of the language of the Spirits - the silent god that moves us in our daily lives' (Ben Langa cited in Dome No.4, Jul. 1979).*

The association of ZANUSI with MALOPOETS was a feature of many review articles of the former's performances. Even as he became the leader of ZANUSI, Bruce was still a member of the exiled MALOPOETS, and this is largely how the band's management, and the press, sought to accommodate the band's style and impact. Below is reproduced the writing on a publicity flyer prepared by ZANUSI's Narene Stevens,

*'Remember the Malopoets? Then take a listen to the vibrant sound of ZANUSI. Described by one critic as "jazz with that isicathamiya feel", Zamusi tries to capture a real roots sound. It is a blend of indigenous rhythms from all over South Africa - walking rhythms, traditional clapping rhythms, ceremonial dance rhythms - but there is nothing old fashioned about Zamusi. Sax, electric guitars and western drums are combined with "mfece" (Nguni traditional ankle and wrist rattles), percussion and acapella vocal harmonies to give an exciting amalgamation of old and new. Zamusi is saying that despite the widespread modernisation of South Africa, there is a valuable African spiritual heritage to be remembered, so that the land can become fertile once more. Zamusi was founded in Durban a year ago by Bruce Madoda Sosibo, a founder member of the Malopoets. He has just returned from another tour of France to promote the latest Malopoets album. The enthusiasm for S.A. music over there makes Zamusi keener than ever for local audiences to hear their music. It is ours after all!' (1989 ZANUSI publicity flyer prepared by Narene Stevens).*

When MALOPOETS returned to Durban after the recording of their ill-fated debut album, several local newspapers gave the impression that the album was already out and commercially available,

*'The MALOPOETS recently released their debut album, "Rebirth - Malopoets", and the group's manager, Ellinor Joosten, now plans to promote the group in Europe, where their unique sound and electrifying stage appearance should gain a certain following' (Sunday Tribune, 16 Dec. 1979).*

In the showbiz column 'Ezisha Egagasini' of the Zulu bi-weekly newspaper, Ilanga LaseNatali, Fraser Mtshali wrote an enthusiastic piece in anticipation of the album,

*'This album was recorded in Johannesburg following their successful appearance in a Festival in Mamelodi, Pretoria. The album title is "Rebirth - Malopoets". The group's manager, Ms. Ellinor Joosten told 'Ezisha Egagasini' that the album was expected to be publicly available before Christmas' (Ilanga laseNatali, 26 Nov. 1979).*

In a similar vein a reporter for "Echo", the Pietermaritzburg publication and supplement to the "Natal Witness", was celebrating the imminent release of MALOPOETS debut album,

*'The good news is that the band has recorded their first album with the help of Ray Nkwe, producer extraordinaire. It is called "Rebirth - Malopoets", and is a stunner. All the songs are pure, original Malopoets with compelling, haunting harmonies and rhythms. And there is the tight guitar-work of Samson and Duze to recommend it, as well as the brilliance of Madoda's stickwork. Pat Sefolosa of course is the dynamo on stage. He plays everything from whistle to saxophone, rivalling the mercurial Philip Thabane in versatility' (Echo, 31 Jan. 1980).*

Beyond the sheer spontaneity of the recording session itself, the releasing of a pent-up energy and an explosive combination of a frustrated township neotraditional talent, the MALOPOETS' debut album sought to introduce and contextualize the band's concept. Furthermore, the album was aimed at initiating the public to the band's role of a spokesperson, even to seek legitimation, trust, and sanction to convincingly articulate the untenable franchise of African people in the land of their birth. An appraisal of the titles chosen for this release (which never took place) confirms this view, especially when read in conjunction with the explanatory notes which the band had decided should accompany and introduce each selection:

Side One

**1. Exikwembu (It's God)**

*(...tells of Genesis - God creating Heaven and Earth, Stars, Moon and the Sun, everything on earth and in heaven)*

**2. Call Of The Spirits (Birth)**

*(...birth is given and the Spirits are called down as the babe is born)*

**3. Bamakweru**

*(A Shangaan word for brothers and sisters...is played to announce the arrival of the newcomer. There is a big celebration where everybody is invited to join in welcoming the babe to this world)*

**4. Maboko**

*(A celebration song)*

Side Two

**1. Me M'Afrika**

*(...the babe has now grown to maturity; he's now a man and whenever he's happy or feels disturbed, drums are his only consolation. He calls himself "Me M'Afrika" - I the African)*

**2. Thabi (Happiness - Marriage)**

*(Inspired by a lady acquaintance - the piece serves as a marriage song as the babe has now become a man. He marries and becomes a family man, who has never experienced an easy life)*

**3. Regomotse**

*(Although plagued with problems, he never gave up and never opened his mouth to complain. Instead he sang to himself the song "Regomotse Gare Bolele" - We are silent, we are not speaking)*

**4. Meropa Badimo (Drums Of The Spirits)**

*(...forever he kept on playing his drums and communicating with the Spirits...)*

*(Cover notes from the 1979 unissued debut album "Rebirth -Malopoets").*

The corporate ethnic identity that was sought and realised by conglomerations such as MALOPOETS, the multi-ethnicity expressed in the diverse languages they employed to communicate to all South Africans, did not find favour with the South African Broadcasting Corporation. SABC's adherence to government policy of separate development precluded the broadcasting of issues or events that might have promoted co-operation or perceptions of a common destiny among the various African language groups,

*'In keeping with Broederbond policy, these services have a "develop along your own lines" attitude, which encourages cultural identification with the "homelands". In all there are seven black (broadcast) services - Zulu, Xhosa, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Tswana, Venda, and Tsonga - each broadcasting in the vernacular and until 1979 known collectively as Radio Bantu' (Andersson 1981:86).*

A Rand Daily Mail report published a statement, by the national president of the Black Sash, Joyce Harris, in response to the Prime Minister's cabinet reshuffle in 1979,

*'Even while the SABC remained in the more or less neutral portfolio of Posts and Telegraphs, it was guilty of operating as an extension of Government, as an information and propaganda service for government policy. Now it is to be placed under the control of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, thus quite covertly becoming a Government propaganda medium for both internal and external consumption. By and large what it dishes out for home consumption is hardly likely to appeal to the broad spectrum of external SABC watchers, while what the outside world would like to hear from South Africa is not likely to coincide with the Government's present policy which unashamedly plugs through the SABC' (Joyce Harris cited in a Rand Daily Mail report, quoted in Andersson 1981:87).*

The apartheid government's tight stranglehold on Radio Bantu's programmes translated into a blanket censorship of musicians creative expression and originality. Ultimately, only those groups and musicians who were prepared to compromise the integrity of their message, managed to have their compositions aired by the S.A.B.C. Andersson quotes the leader of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Joseph Shabalala's response to a question about the group's singularly religious and love song themes in their repertoire, to which Shabalala replied,

*'We keep the radio in mind when we compose. If something is contentious they don't play it, and then it wouldn't be known to the public anyway' (Joseph Shabalala quoted in Andersson 1981:87).*

Remarking on the efficiency of the government bureaucracy in controlling music broadcasting in particular, Andersson wrote,

*'There are two committees - one for Nguni-related and one for Sotho-related languages - which decide whether or not a record is to have airplay...Lyric sheets have to be submitted with every record handed in for possible airplay on the Sotho services' (Andersson 1981:87).*

The implications of this procedure for artists' self-censorship and the recording companies' vigilant stance regarding contentious material within the texts of songs they were recording is aptly stated in the observation that,

*'Because of what it costs the record companies to re-record should a record be rejected (by the SABC), the utmost care is taken with lyrics. Black groups too, make a conscious effort to write for the SABC' (Andersson 1981:87).*

Regarding the most 'radical' performances by township neotraditional musicians, it was a measure of the integrity of the artist's concept that their work was rejected by the apartheid performance reproducing structures. It was for this reason also, that I was hardly surprised on finding the only copy of the MALOPOETS "Fire" album kept at SABC's Radio Zulu headquarters in Durban, had the actual titles of songs on the album jacket marked "Zulu". These were the only tracks that could 'possibly' find airplay on the exclusively "Zulu" radio service. Besides the fact that hardly any of MALOPOETS compositions had ever been heard on Radio Zulu, the Zulu selections comprised less than half of the recorded material on the entire album. The lyrical contents of both the title song, "Fire-Umlilo" and "We Madoda", were presumably just too political, even though it would have been more than fitting to play them as they were largely composed by Durban and KwaMashu's own sons, Bruce Sosibo and Duze Mahlobo.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this thesis I have sought to locate interrelated approaches by three township musicians to composition and performance. I have focussed attention primarily on the musical aspects of an otherwise complexly organised and diversified urban black performance culture. The coalescence in expressive musical behaviour and the articulation of a shared consciousness by a generation of marginalised township musicians, is perhaps one of the sincerest and most eloquent expression of the black urban consciousness in South Africa. Awareness of the dual concerns has necessitated a discussion encompassing both the formal and contextual aspects of musical performance and composition. In this way I have attempted to bridge a gap between an academic study of neotraditional township music and a 'lived' musical performance experience.

The task of documenting and analysing musical performance practice within any single one of KwaZulu-Natal's black townships is a daunting undertaking. The implications of such an exercise towards an understanding of South African urban black musical performance could not be adequately catered for within the scope of my study. Besides the sheer diversity of such genres and styles comprising township performance practice, these also embody articulation, on many levels, of a significant degree of commonality in perception and processing of various modes of experience.

An important aspect of this thesis is the articulation of both individual and social experience in neotraditional music performance. Linked to this concern are the musical styles of Madala Kunene, Duze Mahlobo, and the late Bruce Sosibo. Born in Durban's Cato Manor Farm settlements in the mid 1950s, the three musicians have manifested in their stylistic development, layered construction and interpretation of the dominant processes impinging on the broad urban black consciousness. Township expressive performance, especially after the 1976 student uprising, has continually manifested with varying degrees of explicitness, protest, criticism, challenge and resistance to existing political, social, and economic conditions. It is such conditions and their repercussions which have moulded and often irreversibly determined the course of African existence in South Africa's peri-urban townships. I have highlighted aspects of Kunene, Mahlobo, and Sosibo's compositional and performance approaches, with a view to articulate these musicians' engagement with both individual and social experience of

their environment.

The construction of individually expressive styles from elements of a collective social consciousness - and the intertextuality characterising my own experiential relationship with the three subjects - has significantly influenced the theoretical and methodological assumptions of this study. The methodological approach has been largely determined by my privileged insider status within the ethnographic field. This approach seeks to level off the traditionally asymmetrical positions of the observer and the observed of empirical observation. Jackson (1989) has employed the term '*radical empiricism*' to describe this methodological approach and discursive style. The resonance of my own particular set of conditions with Jackson's strategies in dealing with the ambiguities and 'boundlessness' of experience led me to adopt a similar position. Such a position recognises the inadequacy of the normal cognitive processes and vocabulary in articulating and construing experiential reality.

In straddling the divide between a detached academic observation and a lived experience of township musical performance, I have mirrored a similar ambiguous and contradictory stance assumed by the subjects. I have attempted to articulate a shared experience of township musical performance production for its academic and discursive significance. The subjects in turn have sought to interpret and articulate a socially shared experience for comprehension by a broader moral and global consciousness. Intertwined experiences, reproduced in music performance and composition, bear a significant stamp of the individual processing of shared social experiences. Each of the families of the three subjects were caught up in the turbulence and uncertainty of the mid-twentieth century South African black urbanisation, with its attendant political, socio-cultural and economic upheavals. Their generation is marked by a conflict arising from their consciousness of an alienated alternative to their present of urban proletarianisation. The almost total subjugation of black South African citizens during the apartheid era fostered a homogeneous class orientation, and more so for the brutally processed and economically exploited township citizenry. Within the broader activity of urban black performance, different strands and layers in the articulative processes have highlighted this coalescence of experience. The inclusion of my own formative performance experience highlights an important construction of culture from the experience of individuals. Thus, while acknowledging the individual's primacy in the processing of lived experience, it is the overbearing processes in the environment which domesticates and homogenises our quotidian existence. In my consideration of the problematic exercise of transmitting experience in the totality of its ramifications, I have concurred with a view that lived experience 'overflows the boundaries of any one concept, any one person or any one society' (Jackson 1989).

I have sketched a brief history and social milieu from which the generation of musicians under discussion were spawned. In Durban, the social history of township neotraditional music performance straddles the city-shantytown-township continuum. The shaping forces within this continuum are seen to bear significantly on the 'historical processes of culture change' (Maylam and Edwards 1996). The position of the township as a social and political space, serves as a backdrop to the unfolding performative and compositional expressive consciousness of neotraditional township musicians. An attempt has been made

at outlining the tensions which preoccupied early township inhabitants. In some of the musical examples are discerned interpretations of such tensions as well the three composers' attempts at shaping the township society's appropriate responses to these.

In the absence of formal music tuition available to the three subjects, it was important to identify the mentoring and nurturing processes that influenced each of the subjects' cumulative skills. In a large part, such early learning experiences depended on the special circumstances of each musician's individual upbringing. Gradations in the level of urbanisation, educational background, missionisation, musical performance involvement of family members and relatives, more often than not determined the extent and quality of musical knowledge to which its members were exposed to. The informality of the music learning processes encompassed a wider area of resources and thus facilitated an early processing of influential factors. It is likely that such a diversity of influence is perhaps stifled by the institutional censorship of 'organised' tuition at an early age of musical development. Composition utilising the disparate elements of experience, musical sensibilities and also accommodating stylistic diversity, give an indication of the acute adaptive responses engendered by a heterogeneous musical learning experience.

Finally, the reproduction and representation of neotraditional township musicians and music in the various popular media highlights the juxtaposition of the social, political, and economic issues, all impinging forcefully on the process of musical composition and performance.

## APPENDIX I: GLOSSARY

- amahubo** Indigenous Zulu regimental or clan ceremonial hymn, the group performances of which are often accompanied by synchronised shield, stick, and body movements.
- Bhaca** (Zulu: 'to hide') Members of the Bhaca clans from the Umzimkhulu area of Eastern Pondoland, their language, customs and manner of doing.
- "groaner"** a male, neotraditional mbaqanga lead-vocalist, typified by Simon "Mahlathini" Nkabinde, who sings with a chorus of female "backing-singers", using a stylized gruff voice.
- ihlahla** Originally a Zulu term for a designated spot (generally a bush, though sometimes a river-side or open veld) where the bridal-party assemble to prepare themselves for the wedding dance. The name given to the mission-youth festive gatherings over the Christmas vacation, usually held in a church hall, where different choirs entertained the audiences with *umbholoho* and *imashi* style songs and dances, mission-style wedding songs, school-choral classical music, and vocal interpretations of popular urban musical styles.
- imifece** Cocoon of a certain caterpillar known as *unomangcikiva* found on mimosa trees, used as snuff-boxes, ankle ornaments, ankle rattles for dancing, and as a prepuce cover.
- induna** Traditional Zulu officer of state or army, appointed by the chief; captain, overseer; headman, councillor.
- inkosi** King or chief in the traditional, social, and political organisational system of the Zulu.
- intonga** Staff, stick for carrying, walking-stick, the Xhosa term for the traditional fighting-stick.
- isicathamiya** Also known as *ingomabusuku* - a neotraditional, Zulu male a cappella choral musical performance genre, popularised by Solomon Linda's 1939 recording entitled "Mbube". The group Ladysmith Black Mambazo are largely responsible for the resurgent global popularisation of this performance genre, considered among others as documenting a fusion of the early post-colonial missionary, post-industrial, African migrant-worker proletarian experience.
- isitolotolo** Jaw's harp.
- istep** Synchronised body movements performed to secular, a cappella choral music styles such as *umbholoho*, *imashi*, *wedding-songs*, *isicathamiya* etc.
- izihlabo** The instrumental, virtuosic, introductory phrasing/tuning manifest in the formal, structural compositional and performance elements of a *maskandi* performance.
- izingoma zomshado** Neotraditional wedding songs, a syncretic, secular a cappella choral style.
- kwaito** A contemporary, township music performance style developed out of local urban performance traditions and the influence of African-American *rap* and *hip-hop* styles.
- location** Obsolete official and colloquial designation for an authorised African residential area; peri-urban government-built housing schemes for rent by Africans; a township; a mission-owned or freehold African residential area.

- manyano** (Xhosa: 'unity') A general term for the pervasive women-only unions of the black Christian churches in South Africa.
- marabi** A pan-ethnic urban black proletarian music style developed in Johannesburg during the early part of this century; a term for the dance and drinking occasions where *marabi* was performed; a collective term describing the crystallization of urban and African indigenous musical performance styles, particularly those that gave birth to the black jazz vernacular in South Africa.
- maskandi** Traditional and neotraditional instrumental music played on Western instruments such as the guitar, concertina, violin, and harmonica. Contemporary, recording studio-influenced performances in this genre often include the drum-kit, electric bass guitar, and a chorus of singers and dancers performing synchronized/stylized *ingoma* dance movements.
- mbaqanga** (Zulu: 'traditional maize-bread') Popular commercial African jazz in the 1950s. After 1960, the term came to mean a neotraditional, proletarian, urban music performed on electric guitars, saxophones, drums, and incorporating 'groaner' type male lead singers backed by a female chorus.
- mbira** A Zimbabwean hand-piano with twenty-two metal "reeds".
- mbube** See *isicathamiya*.
- mgqashiyo** See *mbaqanga*.
- ndunduma** (Zulu: 'mine dump') An urban Zulu version of the *marabi* performance around the 1920s; Zulu proletarian concert-and-dance occasions where *ingomabusuku* and *ndunduma marabi* music were performed and used as an accompaniment for dancing.
- ngoma** In the hypothetical Bantu precursor language the term refers to the dance/song performed at festivals, particularly at the First-fruits ceremony of the Zulus; royal song or national anthem; the performance of this song/dance; the profession or state of a diviner. In contemporary usage the term means both song and dance, especially the traditional context of their performance.
- nikabheni** A name given to the earliest forms of urban outdoor musical performances around Durban.
- phatha-phatha** A 1950s urban African dance-style, later popularised by Miriam Makeba in a song with the same title.
- sax-jive** See *mbaqanga*, *mgqashiyo*, *simanje-manje*.
- shantytown** Also referred to by the term *slumyard* - an illegal urban African neighbourhood, often built using discarded industrial materials. *Shantytown* residents are referred to as "squatters" by officialdom, whose agents are often dispatched to demolish shantytowns using bulldozers.
- shebeen** (Gaelic: 'little shop') Privately-owned premises from which liquor is sold illegally.
- simanje-manje** See *mbaqanga*.
- stokvel** A rotating credit association of working-class urban African dwellers, whose activities include entertainment, group social and economic mobilization.
- thula ndivile** An urban African proletarian music style of the 1920s, for which Johannesburg's Western Native Township was famous.
- township** See *location*.
- tsaba-tsaba** An urban African dance style that was popular in the 1940s Johannesburg; a syncretic African urban music style blending elements of African indigenous

music, American swing, Latin American conga and rhumba, used to accompany the tsaba-tsaba dance.

**udodana** The male counterpart of the Wesleyan Methodist *manyano*.

**umakhweyana** A Zulu/Swazi single-stringed calabash-resonated musical bow of the type that is braced in the middle of the stave.

**ukubonga** To give thanks; to praise the self, one's ancestral spirits and the clan's guardians in the context of most traditional and *maskandi* performances.

**ukugiya** Praise-singing by Zulu males which is accompanied by energetic body movements, often carried out in full traditional or regimental costume.

**ukupika** A finger-style guitar 'picking' technique.

**ukusina** To dance in the indigenous Nguni tradition.

**ukuvamba** A strumming technique as applied to guitar playing, sometimes referred to as 'vamping'.

**uqwabe** See *umakhweyana*.

**Zionist** Membership of the separatist church movement, whose religion blends traditional African and Christian belief and ritual.

## APPENDIX II: MUSICAL EXCERPTS IN THE CASSETTE

### Side A

- Excerpt 1.1; track #1:** "Me M'Afrika" - composed by Pat Sefoloshia and performed live at the University of Zululand in 1980 by MALOPOETS.
- Excerpt 1.2; track #2:** "Ipasi" - composed by Bruce Sosibo and performed by ZANUSI in recording for Gallo Music Productions in 1990; issued on HUL 40237.
- Excerpt 1.3; track #3:** Duze Mahlobo performing his untitled composition, which he later arranged for the UK-based avant-jazz group THE LOOSE TUBES, while he was exiled in Europe during the 1980s.
- Excerpt 2.1; track #4:** "Qua qa" - a performance by William and Alfred Mseleku in the *vaudeville-jazz* style, recorded in Johannesburg on 2/11/1932; issued on HMV GU 107.
- Excerpt 2.2; track #5:** "Sbhinono" - recorded on in Johannesburg 4/11/1932; issued on HMV GU130 and JP 165, a *marabi-jazz* style performance by the William Mseleku-led AMANZIMTOTI PLAYERS.
- Excerpt 2.3; track #6:** "Ndunduma" - a *marabi*-inspired performance by THE BANTU GLEE SINGERS, a vaudeville troupe founded by Nimrod Makhanya, a 'disciple' of Reuben T. Caluza, recorded in Johannesburg on 16/11/1932; issued on HMV GU94.
- Excerpt 3.1; track #7:** "I want to be famous" - Bruce Sosibo's unrecorded composition, singing and accompanying himself on acoustic guitar.
- Excerpt 3.2; track #8:** "Stop apartheid" - Bruce Sosibo performing one of his original compositions for acoustic guitar and voice.
- Excerpt 3.3; track #9:** "Emily" - an orchestrated, studio performance of a song originally composed by Bruce Sosibo on guitar. The vocal parts, sung by Bruce and myself, were recorded on a later date during an overdub session.
- Excerpt 3.4; track #10:** "Thula Mntwana (Hush, child)" - a vocal composition with acoustic guitar accompaniment - Bruce Sosibo's interpretation of the classical guitar finger-picking style.
- Excerpt 4.1; track #11:** "Zingalile" - a composition by Bruce Sosibo, arranged for band. The performance is particularly maskandi in its formal structure.
- Excerpt 4.2; track #12:** "Disco-Maskandi" - a poignant, self-effacing joint composition by Sosibo and Madala Kunene.
- Excerpt 4.3; track #13:** "Engine Fire" - a recording by THE RADIO BANTU ORCHESTRA of a composition in the African-jazz style, accredited to E. Themba, R. Bopape, and M. Vilakazi; issued on HMV JP 647.
- Excerpt 4.4; track #14:** An interpretation of the *maskandi izihlabo* introductory phrasing by Madala Kunene.
- Excerpt 4.5; track #15:** "Transcription 1" - Duze Mahlobo demonstrating a single-line approach to guitar improvisation.
- Excerpt 4.6; track #16:** "Transcription 2" - a composition by Duze Mahlobo, employing a finger-style approach and standard tuning *E A D g b e*.
- Excerpt 4.7; track #17:** "Transcription 3" - one of Duze Mahlobo's tunes employing the standard Western tuning *E A D g b e*.

- Excerpt 4.8; track #18:** "Transcription 4" - a short phrase demonstrating the sound of one of Duze's tunings, *E A D g a e*.
- Excerpt 4.9; track #19:** "Transcription 5" - a composition by Duze utilizing the tuning *E A D g a e* - interpreting the *izihlabo* approach of the *maskandi* guitarists.
- Excerpt 4.10; track #20:** "Transcription 6" - another of Duze Mahlobo's special tunings, *C A D g c e* - followed by an original composition utilizing this tuning.
- Excerpt 4.11; track #21:** Duze's interpretation of the *maskandi* guitar style.
- Excerpt 4.12; track #22:** A guitar/drum duet by Duze Mahlobo and Bruce Sosibo, recorded from a live performance at the University of Natal, Durban, in February 1990.
- Excerpt 4.13; track #23 :** "Sikiza Matshikiza" - a 1976 recording with Pat Matshikiza, piano; Sandile Shange, guitar; Siphon Gumedede, bass; Gilbert Matthews, drums; Duke Makasi, tenor saxophone; Kippie Moeketsi, alto saxophone; George Tyefumani, trumpet.

## Side B

- Excerpt 5.1; track #1:** "The Dawn" - Duze Mahlobo's *marabi*- based composition.
- Excerpt 5.4; track #2:** The title track from MALOPOETS' *Fire* album.
- Excerpt 5.5; track #3:** "We Madoda" - Bruce Sosibo's composition which appears as Track #2 in the MALOPOETS' *Fire* album.
- Excerpt 5.6; track #4:** "Ukuthula" (Peace) - from a live performance by ZANUSI at The Rainbow Restaurant, Pinetown, on the 18th of March, 1990.
- Excerpt 5.7; track #5:** "Malopo" - a live performance by ZANUSI of a song originally composed and performed by MALOPOETS.
- Excerpt 5.8; track #6:** "Khon'othwele" - Madala Kunene's adaptation of a traditional children's game, as recorded in the album *Ko'nko man (1996)* for the London-based B&W Records.
- Excerpt 5.9; track #7:** "Mata Gota Fri" - an adaptation of a children's game, as it was performed by Madala Kunene with Siphon Gumedede's band at the 1992 Splashy Fen Music Festival.
- Excerpt 6.1; track #8:** "Shemeni" - a performance by ZANUSI and Bruce Sosibo of the latter's interpretation of the structural aspects of a *maskandi* performance.
- Excerpt 6.2; track #9:** "Siqhub'ingolovane" - from MALOPOETS *Fire (1982)* album.
- Excerpt 6.3; track #10:** The anonymous guitar solo in "Nice To Be Free" from the *Zanusi (1991)* album.
- Excerpt 6.4; track #11:** The "Zionist" drum-pattern introducing the song "Get Back To Your Culture", as well as a distorted rock-guitar that was overdubbed by the producers during the mixing sessions.

## APPENDIX III : TRANSCRIPTIONS

Transcription 1: Duze Mahlobo's 'single-voice' approach to guitar improvisation.

Three staves of musical notation for Transcription 1. The music is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the first four measures, the second staff contains the next four measures, and the third staff contains the final two measures, ending with a double bar line.

Transcription 1a: A harmonisation of Transcription 1 above

Three systems of musical notation for Transcription 1a, showing a piano harmonisation. Each system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) joined by a brace on the left. The music is in G major and 4/4 time. The first system covers the first four measures, the second system covers the next four measures, and the third system covers the final two measures, ending with a double bar line. A circled '3' is written above the bass staff in the final measure of the third system.

Transcription 2: Duze Mahlobo's composition utilizing standard tuning *E A D g a e*.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for guitar, organized into eight staves. The notation is in standard guitar tuning (E A D G A E). The score includes various musical symbols such as asterisks (\*), slurs, and triplets (indicated by the number 3). The first staff begins with a measure number '1'. The second staff starts with a measure number '4'. The third staff has a measure number '7' and a triplet of eighth notes. The fourth staff has a measure number '10'. The fifth staff has a measure number '13'. The sixth staff has a measure number '17'. The seventh staff has a measure number '21'. The eighth staff has a measure number '25' and features a triplet of eighth notes. The music is written in a single system, with each staff containing a series of notes and rests, often grouped with slurs or other performance markings.

Transcription 2 (from previous page)

29

33

37

41

44

47

50

53

56

This musical score consists of ten staves of music, numbered 29 through 56. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is written in a style that combines a melodic line in the upper voice with a complex, multi-voiced accompaniment in the lower voice. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and rests. The piece features a variety of rhythmic patterns and melodic motifs, with some measures containing complex chords or textures. The overall feel is that of a dense, intricate musical composition.

## Transcription 2 (from previous page)

Musical score for Transcription 2, measures 59-69. The score is written on four staves, each beginning with a treble clef. The music consists of a series of chords and melodic lines, primarily using eighth and sixteenth notes. Measure 59 starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 62 includes a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 66 features a key signature change to one flat (Bb). Measure 69 ends with the word "FINE" and a double bar line. The notation includes various articulations such as slurs, ties, and accents.

**Transcription 3:** Duze Mahlobo's elaborated version of a composition in the standard tuning (See Transcription 2 above).

The image displays five staves of handwritten musical notation. The notation is written on a five-line staff system. It features a variety of note values, including quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests. There are several sharp symbols (#) indicating specific notes. The music is organized into measures by vertical bar lines. Some notes are grouped together with slurs, and there are several circled numbers (3, 5, 3) which likely indicate triplets or other rhythmic groupings. The overall style is that of a handwritten musical score.

## Transcription 3 (from previous page)

pp

pp

pp

pp

pp

pp

## Transcription 4: Duze Mahlobo introduces the tuning E A D G a e.

TUNING

E A D G a e

**Transcription 5:** One of Duze's compositions, introduced with an *izihlabo* introductory passage, using the tuning *E A D g a e*.

INTRODUCTION

The musical score consists of eight staves of music. The first four staves are grouped under the label 'INTRODUCTION' on the left. The music is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a sharp sign. The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and triplets. The fifth staff starts with a common time signature 'C'. The piece concludes with a double bar line on the eighth staff. The overall texture is dense and rhythmic, characteristic of a guitar accompaniment.

Transcription 5 (from previous page)

Transcription 6: Duze Mahlobo's composition utilising the tuning *CADgce*.

## Transcription 6 (from previous page)

13

Musical notation for measures 13-15. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is in 7/8 time. Measure 13 features a complex chordal texture with eighth and sixteenth notes. Measure 14 continues with similar textures, and measure 15 shows a change in the upper staff's texture.

16

Musical notation for measures 16-18. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is in 7/8 time. Measure 16 features a complex chordal texture with eighth and sixteenth notes. Measure 17 continues with similar textures, and measure 18 shows a change in the upper staff's texture.

19

Musical notation for measures 19-21. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is in 7/8 time. Measure 19 features a complex chordal texture with eighth and sixteenth notes. Measure 20 continues with similar textures, and measure 21 shows a change in the upper staff's texture.

22

Musical notation for measures 22-24. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is in 7/8 time. Measure 22 features a complex chordal texture with eighth and sixteenth notes. Measure 23 continues with similar textures, and measure 24 shows a change in the upper staff's texture.

Transcription 6 (from previous page)

25

Musical notation for measures 25-27. The system consists of a treble and bass staff. Measure 25 features a sequence of eighth notes in the treble staff and a bass line. Measure 26 continues the eighth-note sequence. Measure 27 contains a whole note chord in the treble staff and a bass line. A '7' chord symbol is present above the treble staff in measure 27.

28

Musical notation for measures 28-30. The system consists of a treble and bass staff. Measure 28 features a whole note chord in the treble staff and a bass line. Measure 29 contains a whole note chord in the treble staff and a bass line. Measure 30 features a whole note chord in the treble staff and a bass line. A '7' chord symbol is present above the treble staff in measure 29, and a 'b' chord symbol is present above the treble staff in measure 30.

31

Musical notation for measures 31-33. The system consists of a treble and bass staff. Measure 31 features a whole note chord in the treble staff and a bass line. Measure 32 contains a whole note chord in the treble staff and a bass line. Measure 33 features a whole note chord in the treble staff and a bass line. A '7' chord symbol is present above the treble staff in measure 31, and a 'b' chord symbol is present above the treble staff in measure 33.

34

Musical notation for measure 34. The system consists of a treble and bass staff. Measure 34 features a whole note chord in the treble staff and a bass line.

**Transcription 7:** A composition by Duze Mahlobo which he arranged for the UK group called LOOSE TUBES.

The musical score is written on five systems of two staves each. The first system is in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). It features a melody in the upper staff with several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' above a bracket) and a bass line in the lower staff. The second system continues the melody and bass line. The third system also continues the melody and bass line, with more triplet markings. The fourth system shows a change in time signature to 3/4 and 4/4, with a more complex bass line. The fifth system continues the piece in 3/4 time, featuring a melody in the upper staff and a bass line with some rests.

Transcription 7 (from previous page)

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 7/4 time signature. It contains several chords and single notes, with some notes beamed together. The lower staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and contains a few notes, including a half note and a quarter note.

The second system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It features chords and eighth notes, with some notes beamed together. The lower staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature, containing notes and rests.

The third system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains eighth notes and chords, with some notes beamed together. The lower staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature, containing notes and rests.

The fourth system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It features eighth notes and chords, with a circled '3' above a note indicating a triplet. The lower staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature, containing notes and rests.

The fifth system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains eighth notes and chords, with some notes beamed together. The lower staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature, containing notes and rests.

Transcription 7 (from previous page)

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff features a melodic line with a four-measure phrase marked with a bracket and the number '4', followed by a two-measure phrase marked with a bracket and the number '2'. The lower staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

The second system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff begins with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a bracket and the number '3', followed by a four-measure phrase marked with a bracket and the number '4'. The lower staff continues the harmonic accompaniment.

The third system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff contains a melodic line with various note values and rests. The lower staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

The fourth system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff contains a melodic line with various note values and rests. The lower staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

Transcription 7 (from previous page)

Transcription 7 (from previous page) shows two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of two staves with various notes and rests. The second system is in 4/4 time, marked 'rit.', and includes a fermata over the final measure.

Transcription 8: A demonstration by Duze Mahlobo of the *ukuvamba* strumming technique.

Transcription 8: A demonstration by Duze Mahlobo of the *ukuvamba* strumming technique. The notation includes a rhythmic staff with stroke patterns, a melodic staff with triplets, and a bass staff with triplets. A legend defines the stroke patterns:

- ▮ = DOWNWARD STROKE
- ∨ = UPWARD STROKE

Transcription 9: "The Dawn" - a *marabi*-based composition by Duze Mahlobo.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "The Dawn" by Duze Mahlobo. The score is written on a grand staff with three systems of two staves each (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The notation includes various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several instances of the word "pizzicato" written vertically above the notes. The score is enclosed in a large bracket on the left side. At the top of the page, there are two empty staves with the handwritten text "FIN 1982" written across them.

Transcription 9 (continued from previous page)

The musical score is written in a system of six systems, each containing a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings such as 'p' and 'har.'.

- System 1:** Treble staff has a sequence of eighth and quarter notes, followed by chords. Bass staff has a simple bass line with quarter and eighth notes.
- System 2:** Treble staff continues with chords and eighth notes. Bass staff has a bass line with quarter notes.
- System 3:** Treble staff features chords and eighth notes. Bass staff has a bass line with quarter notes.
- System 4:** Treble staff has chords and eighth notes. Bass staff has a bass line with quarter notes.
- System 5:** Treble staff has chords and eighth notes. Bass staff has a bass line with quarter notes.
- System 6:** Treble staff has chords and eighth notes. Bass staff has a bass line with quarter notes.

Transcription 10: "Fire-Umlilo" by the MALOPOETS.

1) INTRODUCTION & FIRST SECTION

Na ngu umli lo e masi mi ni Bhasabh' U zo ku bhu bhi sa wa na

MELODY VOICE & ALTO SAX

PIANO & GUITARS

BASS

2) 2<sup>ND</sup> SECTION - ACAPELLA CLOSE-HARMONY

U ya vu tha um li lo Si za ni ma do da Kha li ma ni 'zi nko mo

VOICES

ma si mi ni zi ya bhu bhi zi hwa ne ritzi phe

3) ACCOMPANIED VOCAL SECTION BELOW IS PRECEDED BY HARMONISED SAX SECTION

zi pha li


nko mo zi ka ba ba zi phe lit

zi nko mo zi ka


ba ba zi nko mo ju ba - ba

→ ALTO SAX SOLO & HORN ENSEMBLE PASSAGE

Transcription 11: "We Madoda" - Bruce Sosibo's guitar-based composition.

GUITAR  
Drum: 

Moderate Slow



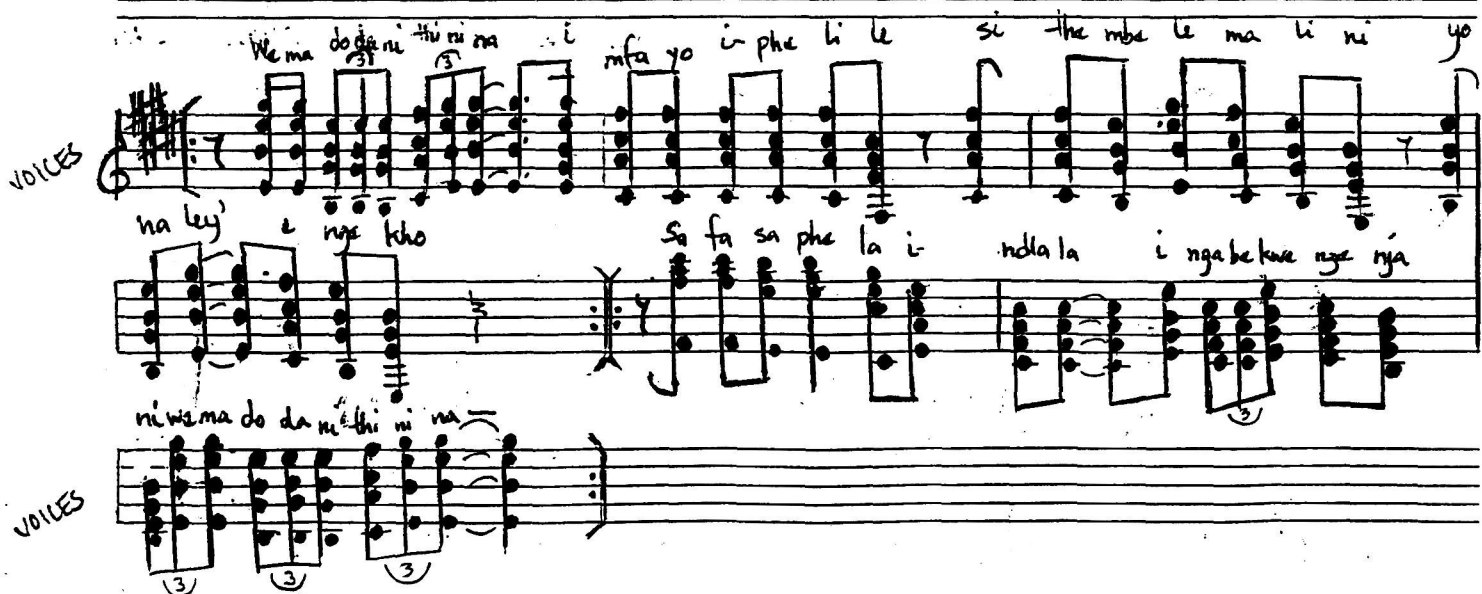
VOICES IN 'WE MADODA'

VOICES

We ma do da ni thi ni na i nfa yo in phe li le si the mba le ma li ni yo

na ley' i nye kho sa fa sa phe la i ndla la i ngabe kwe nye nya

ni wa ma do da ni thi ni na



Transcription 12: "Ipasi" - a composition by Bruce Sosibo as recorded by ZANUSI for Gallo in 1990.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for the piece "Ipasi". The score is organized into two systems of staves. The first system includes staves for Horns, Guitars 1 and 2, Bass, Drums, and Percussion. The second system features a Tanor sax melody and continues the instrumental parts. The music is written in 3/4 time and includes various rhythmic patterns, chordal textures, and melodic lines. The percussion section includes a shakara pattern and congas. The score is marked with a double bar line at the beginning of the second system.

**PERC.**

shakara

congas

Tanor sax melody

Transcription 12 (continued from previous page)

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a band, divided into two systems. Each system contains five staves: Horns, Guitar 1, Guitar 2, Bass, and Percussion. The notation is handwritten and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and rhythmic markings. The score is organized into measures by vertical bar lines. The first system covers measures 1 through 4, and the second system covers measures 5 through 8. The Horns part features melodic lines with some accidentals. The Guitar 1 and 2 parts show chordal textures and melodic fragments. The Bass part provides a steady accompaniment. The Percussion part uses 'x' marks to indicate drum hits, with some specific patterns like a snare drum on the second and fourth beats of each measure.

Transcription 12 (continued from previous page)

The musical score is organized into two systems. The first system (top) contains five staves: **GUITAR HORNS** (two staves), **GUITAR 2**, **BASS**, **PERCUSSIONS** (two staves), and **HORNS**. The second system (bottom) contains four staves: **GUITAR 1**, **GUITAR 2**, **BASS**, and **PERC. DRUMS**. The notation includes standard musical symbols such as notes, rests, and stems, as well as guitar-specific symbols like 'x' for muted notes and '7' for barre positions. The score is written in a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature.

Transcription 12 (continued from previous page)

Musical score for the first system, featuring Horns, Guitar 1, Guitar 2, Bass, Percussion, and Drums. The score is in 3/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

The first system of the score consists of six staves. From top to bottom, they are: HORN, GUITAR 1, GUITAR 2, BASS, PERC. DRUMS, and PERC. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb) and the time signature is 3/4. The Horn staff has a whole rest. The Guitar 1, 2, and Bass staves contain melodic lines with eighth and quarter notes. The Percussion and Drums staves use diamond-shaped symbols to represent drum hits.

Musical score for the second system, featuring Horns, Guitar 1, Guitar 2, Bass, Drums, and Percussion. This system includes a double bar line and the instruction 'D.S.' (Da Capo) repeated for each instrument part.

The second system of the score consists of six staves. From top to bottom, they are: HORN, GUITAR 1, GUITAR 2, BASS, DRUMS, and PERC. Each staff begins with a double bar line followed by the instruction 'D.S.' (Da Capo), indicating that the music should repeat from the beginning of the system. The notation continues with notes and rests for each instrument.

**Transcription 13:** Transcribed from memory, a Wesleyan Methodist hymn (Hymn no.65), "Wazithwal' izoon' uYesu", from Amaculo AmaWesile, as sung by my family at prayer in the 1960s and the 1970s.

S  
Wa zi thwal' i- zoo no Ya su Zi nge- zoc no za

A  
T  
B

li- hlawu- li tya- la Ya- su Li- nge- tya

la- la kho

Transcription 14: "Iyo yo ma" - remembered from a choir performance around 1966 - an *umbholoho* song of the *ihlahla* gatherings at Dududu Mission Station.

The score is written on six staves. The top staff is labeled 'LEADER' and contains the melody with lyrics 'I- YO YO YO YO MA' and 'I- YO YO YO YO MA'. The second and third staves are grouped under the label 'CHORUS' and contain the melody with lyrics 'NGA SHI YA BA ZA'. The fourth and fifth staves are also grouped under 'CHORUS' and contain the melody. The sixth staff is labeled 'FINGER SNAP PULSE' and shows a rhythmic pattern of 'x' marks. The seventh staff is labeled 'FOOT STEPPING MOVEMENT' and shows a rhythmic pattern of 'x' marks and circled letters 'R' and 'L' indicating right and left foot movements.

Transcription 14 (from previous page)

The musical score consists of several staves. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "I - YO YO YO YO MA". The second staff is a guitar accompaniment line with lyrics: "L' NGAYO GA NA" and "NGA LI WE". The bottom two staves are fretting diagrams for guitar, labeled "NGER-NAPS" and "EPPING OOT VEMENT". The diagrams show fret positions for the right hand (R) and left hand (L) across six strings.

Vocal Line:  
I - YO YO YO YO MA

Guitar Line:  
L' NGAYO GA NA  
NGA LI WE

NGER-NAPS  
EPPING OOT VEMENT

Transcription 14 (from previous page)

LEADER

NGA LI WE NGA LI WE MZIN A

CHORUS

NEER  
NAP  
ULFE

DOT  
REP  
KONT.

(R) (L) (R) (L)

Transcription 15: "I want to be famous" - a composition by Bruce Sosibo - illustrating a guitar approach blending *maskandi*, *marabi*, soul, and rhythm-and-blues styles.

(Guitar & voice)

The musical score is written on a grand staff with two systems of guitar and voice parts. The guitar part is in the upper system of each system, and the voice part is in the lower system. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The guitar part features several triplet markings (circled '3') and a section marked [A]. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "wanna be — famous - but when — I - wanna be — famous — but how —".

[A] (3)

wanna be — famous - but when —

I - wanna be — famous — but how —

Transcription 15 (continued from previous page)

While the de- vil -

inter- rupts my way - I'll

have to be - pe - lite - ETC.

He will ne- ver re - turn

when he's ge - one

Transcription 15 (from previous page)

He will never come back — once he's gone —

gone — He will never look back —

When he's gone — gone — a - way Once he's — go-

na - He'll be gone - a - way -

ETC.

Transcription 16: "Stop apartheid" - Bruce Sosibo's "Motown"-inspired composition, hinting at a black American soul influence.

Slow "Motown" feel throughout (guitar)

Free strumming :  $\square$  - DOWNSTROKE  
 $\nabla$  - UPWARD STROKE

[A] - A SHORT REPEATING PHRASE PLAYED IN SUPPORT OF

THE SONG TEXT. A BRIDGE-TYPE VARIATION

SUBSTITUTES THE PEDAL-CHORD OF THE FIRST

MEASURE WITH A B-FLAT MAJOR CHORD FOR

AT LEAST TWO CYCLES AT A TIME:

$B^b$  maj7

Transcription 17: "Zingalife" - a composition by Bruce Sosibo, performed by ZANUSI. The text (Excerpt 4.1) alludes to courting, one of the most pertinent compositional themes in *maskandi*.

The musical score is arranged in a system of ten staves. The top two staves are for guitar, with treble and bass clefs, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a common time signature (C). The next two staves are for voice, with lyrics written below the notes. The following two staves are for brass instruments, with a bass clef and the same key signature and time signature. The final four staves are for voice, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: LI — LI NTO-MBI — ZA — NGA KI — THI ZI — NGA- LI LE — ZO — NK' I NTO-MBI — ZA — NGA- ZI — THI ZI — NGA. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs.

#### APPENDIX IV: DISCOGRAPHY

1. Freedom Countdown, B&W Music (Promotional Compact Disc 1996)
2. Kon'ko Man, B&W Music BW058.
3. The King Of Zulu Music Volume 1, B&W Music.
4. "U-Mata Gota Fri 1 2 3", (Madala Kunene and backing band), 3rd Ear Music ZTEG 3308.
5. Zanusi, Gallo Music Productions HUL 40237.
6. Rebirth-Malopoets, Gallo-CCP Records AAM 1001.
7. Malopoets-Fire, CCP Record Co. MINC (L) 1031.
8. Ikonsathi eBantusport, Gallo GE 879.
9. Imbongi, (Ladysmith Black Mambazo), Motella LPBS 18.
10. "Ndunduma", (The Bantu Glee Singers), HMV GU 94.
11. "Qua qa", (William and Wilfred Mseleku), HMV GU 107.
12. "S'bhinono" (Amanzimtoti Players), HMV GU 130 and JP 165.
13. Mehegan, John: Jazz In Africa Volume 2, Teal Records TELCD 2314.
14. Daniel Marivate and Company, Gallo GB 1168.
15. Willie Gumede's Swing Band, Gallo GB 1289.
16. Piet Rangkopane and His Boys, Gallo GB 1147.
17. The Bantu Glee Singers, Gallo GB 1283.
18. Mseleku And His Merrymakers, HMV JP 15.
19. Willie's Madcap Band, HMV JP 109 and 110.
20. The Kilnerton Institution Choir, HMV JP 111 and 112.
21. The Bantu Glee Singers, HMV JP 89.
22. "Zulu Twist", (Victoria Mhlongo and The Durbanites), Gallo GB 3303.
23. The Flames: Burning Soul.
24. Metheny, Pat : 80/81. 1980 ECM Records.
25. "Engine Fire", (Radio Bantu Orchestra), HMV JP 647.
26. Matshikiza, Pat. 1976. Sikiza Matshikiza, EMI Tape L4SR(EO)786161.
27. Coltrane, John: The major works of John Coltrane. Impulse GRD 2 - 113.
28. Ballantine, C. 1993. Marabi nights: early South African jazz and vaudeville. Accompanying cassette, tracks 4, 5, and 11. Johannesburg: Ravan Press

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## MISCELLANEOUS

1. An advert published in Ilanga LaseNatali, October 1951, for a tonic called Phospherine
2. Logo and poster designed by Pat Sefolosha
3. (a) 'Birth Of Malopoets' - poem by Eugene Skeef  
 (b) 'Prayer for Steve Biko' - poem and graphic by Eugene Skeef  
 (c) 'The dividing line' - poem by Ben Langa  
 (d) 'Dement' - poem by Mafika Mbuli  
 (e) 'White Christmas' - poem by Ellinor Hermann
4. A receipt for the session fees paid to ZANUSI members
5. A flyer, issued by the Music Department of the University of Natal, publicising a free lunch-hour performance by the MALOPOETS on 26 February 1979.
6. Sleeve notes on the Zanusi (1991) long-playing record
7. Inner sleeve notes from the unreleased Rebirth-Malopoets long-playing record
8. Lyrics of the song "Get Back to Your Culture" rewritten by Bruce Sosibo on his deathbed in 1996
9. An ink-pen drawing by Charles Nkosi, on the front cover of the MALOPOETS' 1982 Fire-Umlilo album.

Once he was too ill to  
play his guitar—  
**NOW HE IS THE  
STAR IN A FILM**



Albert played the Guitar in a band. He was always so ill that his playing became very bad. He was tired and weak. Albert took Phosferine and very soon he was healthy and happy. Now he is the star in an African film.

You cannot be a big success if you are ill and weak. Phosferine will feed your nerves and make you strong and healthy. The chemist and the storekeeper sell Phosferine. Buy some now. Take a little every day.



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PHOS-44



# Malopoets

*(On the 17th of July 1967 John Coltrane passed from before our closed eyes with the heavy weight of song. On the 17th of July 1978 the souls of Malopoets were totally imbued with the energizing spirit of this bard of sound. For this timely birth we have the unity of life to humbly thank.) In the next issue, Malopoet Mafika P. Mbuli's poem, 'In Memoriam: Speak Like A Child' will appear.*

## BIRTH OF MALOPOETS

In the temporal margin  
of night and light  
In the spatial flight  
between birth and death  
we await our souls

Who am I

Who am I  
Standing amid  
the harmattan's disarray

Who am I  
the elephant-skinned drum  
echoing the dawn of creation

Who am I  
the memories in songs  
of supple maidens  
balancing embellished calabashes  
on their plaited heads

Who am I  
with ivory beads in my eyes  
straining under the kingly weight  
of the child of human time  
Yet in my bearing  
my mirth is echoed in universal thunder

Who am I  
whose tears of timeless wails  
have quenched the world's lustful thirst  
whose sweat anoints  
the stone and steel  
of her every tower

Who am I . . .

Strung taut between my zenith  
and the weaning earth-mother  
what plaintive melody  
I carve into the mysterious night

Attend warily my mahogany silence  
embracing the drum  
the oracular quivering  
to the dance of shades  
With my tempered blood-surge  
the dismembered horn  
must cry the cow to life

Hear my portentous timbre  
for I am the Gwababa  
perched on a wrinkled twig  
of the mortar tree  
singing dissonant sonnets  
above the raucous glee

I am the midnight sough  
the light of day  
is the unfolding of my song

My son is the sigh of Gods  
Listen high and low  
for my voice is far-reaching

Eugene Skeef

## THE DIVIDING LINE

Life of perpetual separation –  
Group Areas, Migrant Labour,  
Race Classification etc.,  
Keeps us apart all the time.  
And each time I crawl to my kraal,  
I feel, in the deep recesses of my soul,  
The agonies of happiness  
The sores eternally festering in the heat of my passion.

I long for the blanket of darkness  
To crawl out of my pained heart  
To reach out for the sourness of joy  
Yet knowing that the dark night is a refuge  
Protecting me from the pain of unfulfilled promises.

In the deep recesses of my heart,  
Countless hours of pain and hurt,  
Fill the cavities left by fleeting tenderness.

Across the dividing line  
Let me live earnestly, love painlessly  
Balm the scalds on my burnt body  
To live to love love,  
Painlessly.

Ben Langa



*Eugene Skeef/For Bantu Steve Biko*

**PRAYER FOR STEVE BIKO**

Fragments of people  
to string  
as blessed beads

You are the  
bead  
by which  
the mother's head  
is finally borne noble

**Eugene Skeef**

kill a river,  
I knew a man  
Who killed fire  
Will that fire die?  
Did that stone die?  
Who killed the river?  
When did the river die?  
Who killed that man?

#### DEMENT

Do not let me see light  
For I fear my sight  
Do not let me see the light  
For it shows me  
What I lack  
I fear the unknown  
I desire the unknown  
And yet I tremble  
To think of freedom –  
My desire  
Do not give me light  
For I do not know  
How to hold light.  
But for once I will be bold  
And blacken my sight

No more the blizzards  
That blow across the face,  
None of the heat  
Raining from the sky  
No giggle  
Of laughter from the  
Lips of taunting girls  
Shuttered within walls  
Waiting for the trudge of the boot  
Bringing the truncheon  
And insipid food  
As a palliative  
And the bludgeon at times . . .  
And I shutter my consciousness  
To keep out the knowledge  
That my life is drawing to a close  
Under the watchful eye  
Of my tormentors,  
I only know vaguely  
The conspiracy with fate  
That I will die  
Sooner or later  
Yet hoping faintly  
That it will not come  
I keep my soul shuttered  
And through its windows  
I see dull rain  
Draining from her eyes  
And I tell myself  
I shall die  
Before boys grow into men  
For just then,  
I feel the finger  
Placed against my neck,  
Draining away my life  
And so I have lifted  
My finger,

In anticipation of the moment,  
And scratched with the nail,  
Inside my heart  
My final message,  
To inscribe for the record  
The agent of fate:  
For like a sick dog  
I have stolen myself away  
To die in a secret place.

To be discovered,  
When worms start to eat my body  
For I like a mad dog  
Have snapped and barked  
At the wind  
All my life,  
For I,  
Like a chained dog,  
I have been led from  
My kennel  
and left to die  
To kill the menace inside me  
For conduct contrary to nature.  
Let my body be destroyed  
And the evil inside me  
Shall also die  
And yet I shall wander about the face of  
The earth  
Like a ghost,  
Haunting all the palaces  
And shake their peace  
Till we hear voices  
Of women in the palaces  
Shrieking and screeching in terror of my spirit.  
Demented, shattered and destroyed,  
The signal of my triumph.  
I have then lifted my  
Heart in my hand  
And waved with it  
Dripping with blood  
Weeping for the land  
And that you may learn.

#### VORTEX

Tell them Mapetla is dead  
Say he did not like to live  
For if you speak right  
You shall live  
If you should fear bulletins  
No bullets will find you.

Tell them there shall be rain  
When my body is retracted  
Into the womb of the earth  
Tell them fire will burn  
When I am forged with the earth  
Compounding the last sacrifice

To the land.

Mafika P. Mbuli

## **White Christmas**

*People like cowherds trample along the streets,  
Firmly digging their heels into the pavement.  
Black Santa Claus calls out a White Christmas,  
Sweat running down his white artificial beard,  
Black sweat on hot pavement amongst stamping feet.*

*Drive the white cattle into the hungry shops!  
Let them bleed to death,  
Yours are the bones to take home!*

*by E. Herrmann*



NARENE STEVENS

25 September 1990

Dear Narene,

Please find herewith session fee cheques for artists.

This amount being R2000.00 less the obligatory tax deduction of 25%.

Please sign receipt of these cheques below.

SAZI DLAMINI .....
SIBUSISO MKHIZE .....
DUZE MAHLOBE .....

S'THEMBISO NTULI .....
NJEZA MD DLAMINI .....

Regards,

[Handwritten signature]
Betty.

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# THE MALOPOETS

\*\*\*\*\*

## *a programme of African Jazz and Songs*

The great jazz musician John Coltrane died on 17 July, 1967; eleven years later, to the day, the group calling themselves the Malopoets were born. This link is significant to the group, inspired as they are, on the one hand, by the memory of Coltrane. On the other hand, they search in their playing for what they take to be an authentic, indigenous African sound. (In Sotho 'malopo' means spirit, and in this case the 'poets' are interpreters of the language of the ancestors - hence MALOPOETS.)

The Malopoets did not experience a smooth birth. Three members of the group were formerly with Abe Cindi in 'Afrika', and two were with a pop-soul group '3rd Generation'. When the two groups broke up, the coming together of the remaining members was a memorable event, which they think of as a spiritual birth and awakening. But the fusion of diverse talents took hours of painstaking endeavour and dedication, accompanied by months of hunger, anxiety and exalating debts. Only their tenacity kept the members of Malopoets together.

Today the group has taken the local scene by storm. Wherever they have played they have had enthusiastic reviews. The group is unusual in that their programme includes not only music, but frequently poetry as well. In time they hope to branch also into other fields of creativity.

---

**PATRICK SEFOLOSHA** - *African drums, alto sax, pennywhistle, drums. Played with the group 'Black Slade of Mamelodi' for three years until he joined the 'Peace Lovers' in 1975. A tour of Lesotho with Abe Cindi's 'Afrika' followed until he joined the Malopoets in 1978.*

**PATRICK MOKOKA** - *Originally a member of 'Black Slade', Patrick Mokoka joined 'Black Sound' in 1975. After experience with the 'Peace Lovers' and 'Peace Alive', as well as 'Afrika', he joined the Malopoets to star on bass, percussion, guitar, stolotolo and thumb piano.*

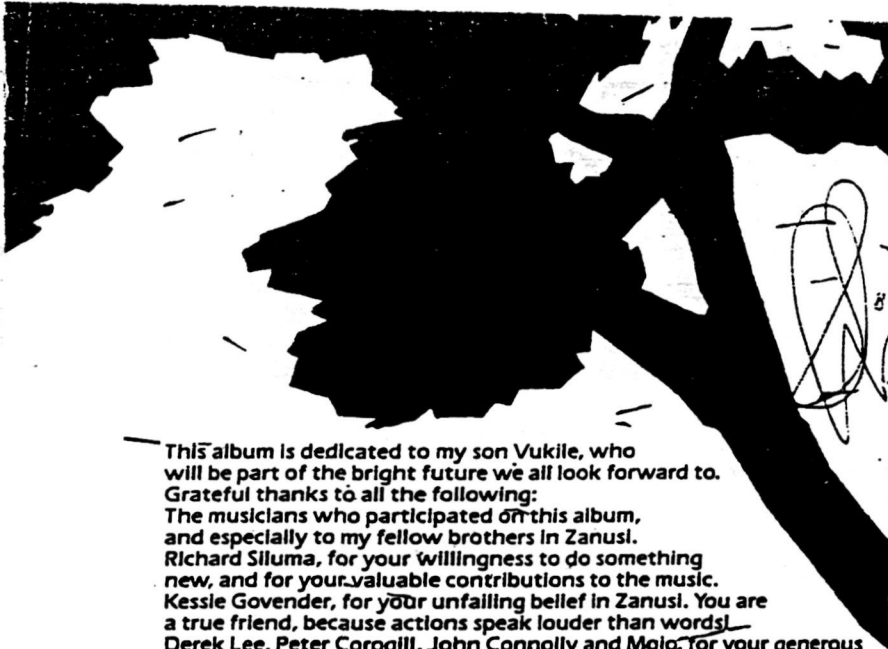
**SAMSON SHABALALA** - *His travels in music have seen him graduate from commercial pop-soul music to the present vein. Sam has played with 'Peace Lovers', 'Peace Alive' and 'Afrika'. Now with the Malopoets, he plays the guitar and the percussion.*

**DUZE MAHLOBO** - *Guitar, bass, keyboard. A former member of the '3rd Generation', Duze's style is reminiscent of George Benson and Eric Gale.*

**LAWRENCE MOLOISE** - *Guitar maestro. Discovered by Abe Cindi playing 'Foolish Fly' on a gallon-tin guitar. He has played for several pop-soul outfits including a group called 'Malombo Messengers'. His outlook towards art is based on Indian, Islamic and African influences but his roots are deep in the African tradition.*

**'BRUCE' MADODA SOSIBO** - *Started teaching himself to play by listening to the Shadows - hence his nickname 'Bruce'. Madoda has played with groups like 'Purple Haze' and '3rd Generation'; his versatility is evident from the number of instruments he plays.*

---



This album is dedicated to my son Vukile, who will be part of the bright future we all look forward to. Grateful thanks to all the following:

The musicians who participated on this album, and especially to my fellow brothers in Zanusi.

Richard Siluma, for your willingness to do something new, and for your valuable contributions to the music.

Kessie Govender, for your unfailing belief in Zanusi. You are a true friend, because actions speak louder than words!

Derek Lee, Peter Corogill, John Connolly and Mojo, for your generous help to us. Ellinor Herrmann, for your encouragement over the years.

A special thanks to Narene Stevens and family, for sharing the Zanusi dream with us, even through the worst storms.

"Sithi phambili Mama'wethul"

Produced by Richard Siluma. Engineered by Peter Pearson.

Recorded at RPM Studios.

Mixed at the Audiolab by John Lindemann.

Sleeve design by Kathy Woest.

Sunday,

Hushing clouds over Kwa-Mashu,

Children's cheerful play and laughter,

Intoxicating songs and evocative drums

Call to forget, pray and enjoy.

Sects waving their charismatic bodies

In spiritual rhythm.

Sunday,

Colourful, graceful activities

Pay their tribute to dignity.

Madoda sit around their grandfather's fire

It's still Sunday, Sunday night — a consoling blanket

Makes them forget the next day

And all the other days to come.

—BEKEZELA MADODA,

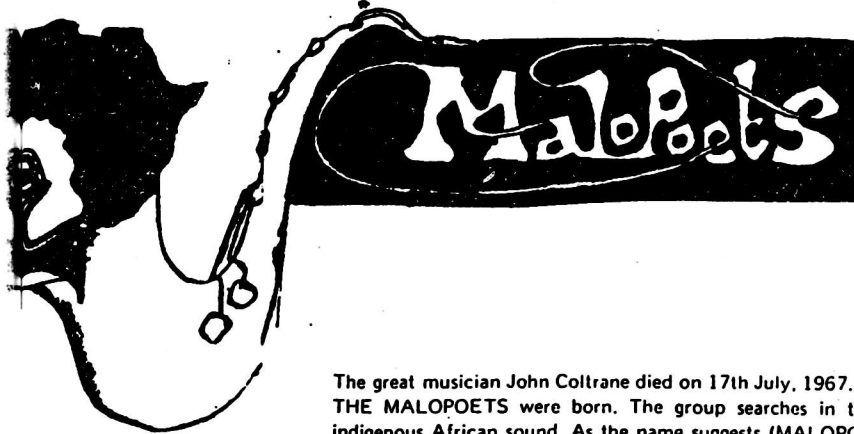
One day, there will be a never-ending SUNDAY...

Poem by Ellinor Herrmann

©/© 1991 Gallo Music Productions

**THANKS TO ALL THE WOMEN IN AFRICA WHO ARE EXPECTING.  
THROUGH THEM THE FUTURE LEADERS  
OF THIS DARK CONTINENT WILL BE BORN**

# THE BIRTH OF



**Side One**

- EXIKWEMBU (It's God)**  
Pat Sefolosha
- CALL TO THE SPIRITS (Birth)**  
Malopoets
- BAMAKWERU (Brothers & Sisters)**  
Sefolosha, Duze Mahlobo
- MABOKO (Celebration Song)**  
Laurance Maloisi

**Side Two**

- ME M'AFRIKA (I The African)**  
Sefolosha, Patrick Mokoka,  
Shabalala, Abbi Cindi
- THABI (Happiness, Marriage)**  
Pat Sefolosha
- REGOMOTSE (We're Not Speaking)**  
Malopoets
- MEROPA' BADIMO (Drums Of The Spirits)**  
Sefolosha, Duze Mahlobo

The great musician John Coltrane died on 17th July, 1967. Eleven years later, to the day, THE MALOPOETS were born. The group searches in their music for an authentic, indigenous African sound. As the name suggests (MALOPO - Sotho for Spirits, POETS - interpreters of the spiritual language), they pledged themselves to the enunciation of the wisdom of the Spirits that are hovering over us all the time and of which we are unconsciously aware. 'The Birth Of Malopoets' as we'll understand when we listen to the way they selected and arranged their songs, is not just a title for an album - it tells a story. Side one bursts forth with a Shangaan song 'EXIKWEMBU' (It's God). It tells of Genesis - God creating Heaven and Earth, Stars, Moon and the Sun, everything on Earth and in Heaven. The second track is 'CALL TO THE SPIRITS'. In this, birth is given and the Spirits are called down as the babe is born.

'BAMAKWERU', a Shangaan word for brothers and sisters, is played to announce the arrival of the newcomer. There is a big celebration where everybody is invited to join in welcoming the babe to this world - 'MABOKO' a song by one of MALOPOETS brothers Laurance Maloisi. On side two the babe has now grown to maturity; he's now a man and when ever he's happy or feels disturbed, drums are his only consolation. He calls himself 'ME M'AFRIKA' (I the African). 'THABI' is in fact a name of a lady, who inspired me in writing this song, hence it's called 'THABI' and in this case it serves as a marriage song as the babe has now become a man. He marries and becomes a family man, who has never experienced an easy life. An although plagued with problems, he never gave up and never opened his mouth to complain. Instead he sang to himself the song 'REGOMOTSE, GARE BOLELE' (We are silent, we are not speaking). But forever he kept on playing his drums and communicating with the Spirits in songs like 'MEROPA BADIMO' (Drums of the Spirits).

**PAT SEFOLOSHA**

Front Cover Art Work: Charles NKosi  
Rear Cover Photos: Tessa Colvin, Sarah Carlisle  
Rear Cover Notes: Pat Sefolosha, Ellinor Joosten  
Album designed and arranged: MALOPOETS



**PAT SEFOLOSHA** - African Drums, Percussion, Sax, Whistle, Harmonica, & Lead Vocals.



**BRUCE MADODA SOSIBO** - Drums, Percussion & Vocals.



**DUBE MAHLOBO** - Lead Guitar & Vocals.



**PATRICK MOKOKA** - Bass & Vocals.



# "IZANUSI"

So many things in life -  
- can tie you down  
Get back to your ~~culture~~  
~~culture~~ CULTURE  
So you can change

TURN your life to the  
- Mighty Lord  
Get ~~Get~~ back to your culture  
where you belong.

Bruce Sisti

MALLOPOETS

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