

# BEYOND MEMORY

RECORDING  
THE HISTORY, MOMENTS AND MEMORIES  
OF SOUTH AFRICAN MUSIC

From the diary of Max Mojapelo  
Edited by Sello Galane

**AFRICAN  
MINDS**

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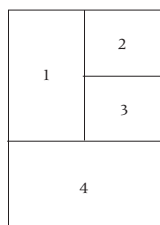
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Equal care has been taken to spell correctly the names of bands, their members and other people who appear in this book. However, should you note any incorrect spelling(s), please e-mail the publisher on [info@africanminds.co.za](mailto:info@africanminds.co.za) and we shall make the necessary corrections to future editions.

The first copy of *Beyond Memory* was presented to the first state president of the democratic, non-racial and non-sexist Republic of South Africa, Dr R.N. Mandela, on his 90th Birthday.

#### THANK YOU TATA

As a child I learned you were a Prisoner  
Your Rivonia Trial became a Protest  
Later History taught me you were a Prince.  
On the island you were Prominent  
To millions of Blacks you were a Prophet.  
On your release you wished us Prosperity  
Reconciliation is what you Preached.  
Through the struggle you became President  
Your inauguration was Prestigious.  
As author your pen is Prolific.  
You chose to be a Premier Pensioner  
You continue to be our Principal.  
A globe-trotter who champions Projects  
You make all South Africans Proud  
Not long ago you rushed to Paris  
To save humanity from Perish.  
Your 46664 campaign is a Platform  
To fight the HIV/AIDS Plague.  
Arrow, arrow shoot away Prostate  
Arrow, please shoot away Ulcer  
Arrow, kindly shoot away Cancer.  
Mother, Mother, Mother Nature  
Father, Father, Father Future  
Please give him more Coffee  
No, not yet a Coffin.  
100 is Mighty  
So is Ninety.

## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my friend, my uncle and my mentor, Matsetsebele Athanas Mojapelo, who was known to the music fraternity as “Bra Jimmy”. He was the most knowledgeable, straight-talking, professional and progressive person I had the privilege of knowing. His blindness opened my eyes.

# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vi
Acronyms & Abbreviations	vii
Editor's Note	ix
Preface	xi
Introduction	xiii

1.	Soweto Soul Music	1
2.	Alex Soul Menu and Beyond	38
3.	Quick Quick	50
4.	The Cape Connection	67
5.	Into the Vibrant 80s	72
6.	Ladies of Song	84
7.	In Twos and Threes	115
8.	When Two Cultures Kiss	122
9.	The Era of The Steam Train	136
10.	Ska Flowers	157
11.	New School	166
12.	Fine Male Voices	195
13.	Contemporary African Music	201
14.	Joy or Jazz	223
15.	Exile Blues	263
16.	Trading in Tradition	293
17.	Voice Power	303
18.	Welcome Madiba	308
19.	Praising and Praying	319

Bibliography	342
Internet Resources	342
Index	343

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### MAGAZINES

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## ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ABSA	–	Amalgamated Banks of South Africa
AC	–	African Connection
AFUBI	–	Afro Funk and Blues Investigation
AIDS	–	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
AIRCO	–	Association of Independent Record Companies
AJP	–	African Jazz Pioneers
aka	–	also known as
AMAHA	–	African Musicians Against HIV/Aids
AMPAS	–	Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences
APEU	–	Anti-Piracy Enforcement Unit
ASAMI	–	Association of the South African Music Industry
AUAA	–	Artists United Against Apartheid
AYB	–	African Youth Band
BMG	–	Bertelsman's Group
CASA	–	Composers' Association of South Africa
CCP	–	Clive Calder Productions
CD	–	compact disc
CISAC	–	International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers
COSATU	–	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSR	–	Creative Sound Recordings
CWUSA	–	Creative Workers' Union of South Africa
DOCC	–	Donaldson Orlando Community Centre
DPMC	–	Dave Penhale Music Company
DVD	–	digital video disc
EFP	–	Eric Frisch Productions
EMI	–	Electric and Musical Industries Limited
FIFA	–	Federation International Football Association
FNB	–	First National Bank
FUBA	–	Federated Union of Black Artists
GRC	–	Gramophone Record Company
HIV	–	human immunodeficiency virus
ICASA	–	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
IPCC	–	International Pentecostal Church Choir
KZN	–	KwaZulu-Natal
MAAPSA	–	Musicians and Artists Assistance Programme of South Africa
MACUFE	–	Mangaung African Cultural Festival
MFM	–	Mike Fuller Music
MIDEM	–	<i>marché international del'edition musicale</i>

MIDI	–	Music Industry Development Initiative
MITT	–	Music Industry Task Team
MMFSA	–	The Music Managers Forum of South Africa
M-Net	–	Electronic Media Network Limited
MOBO Awards	–	Music Of Black Origin
MU	–	Musicians Union
MTN	–	Mobile Telephone Networks South Africa
MUSA	–	Musicians Union of South Africa
NEPAD	–	New Patnership for Africa’s Development
NGO	–	non-governmental organisation
NPA	–	National Prosecuting Authority
NORM	–	National Organisation for Reproduction Rights in Music in Southern Africa Limited
PanSALB	–	Pan South African Language Board
PAWE	–	Performing Arts Workers’ Equity
POC	–	Prophets of the City
R&B	–	rhythm and blues
RISA	–	Recording Industry of South Africa
RPM	–	Records Producers and Manufacturers
RSFP Band	–	Reggae Strong For Peace Band
SA	–	South Africa
SAA	–	South African Airways
SABC	–	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SABMA	–	South African Blind Musicians Association
SADMA	–	South African Disabled Music Association
SAFACT	–	South African Federation Against Copyright Theft
SAMA	–	South African Music Awards
SAMPA	–	South African Music Promoters Association
SAMRO	–	Southern African Music Rights Organisation
SAMU	–	South African Musicians’ Union
SARA	–	South African Roadies Association
SARRAL	–	South African Recording Rights Association Limited
SATMA	–	South African Traditional Music Awards
SOS	–	save our souls
SOWETO	–	South Western Townships
SSQ	–	Soweto String Quartet
TKZee	–	Tokollo, Kabelo and Zwai
UCT	–	University of Cape Town
UK	–	United Kingdom
UNICEF	–	United Nations Children’s Fund
WEA	–	Warner Elektra Atlantic
WIN	–	Worldwide Independent Network
USA	–	United States of America
ZCC	–	Zion Christian Church



## EDITOR'S NOTE

*Beyond Memory* is a collection of Max Mojapelo's diaries, written in a very personalised style. Critical details lie in the deep meanders of the history, moments, and memories that Mojapelo has about the world of music in South Africa. Mojapelo's style blurs the lines across styles of many literary genres. It is personalised, conversational, reportorial, analytical and poetic – styles that assume a kind of an African, free authorial narrative.

*Beyond Memory* describes, engages in direct speech and makes reference to a myriad episodes of Mojapelo's memories, and still tells the same story that touches on the collective history, moments, and memory of the South African music industry. As former deejay, powerful festival compère, former station manager, writer of learning material for schools and a passionate music development leader, Mojapelo has captured the details about everybody and anybody that he has met and interviewed, as well as of those that he followed on the airwaves during and beyond his years as an active radio personality.

Mojapelo's keen eye on every turn of development in the South African music industry and on those whose contribution has impacted directly or indirectly on its development, shape and character, is commendable. It is both a longitudinal and transversal record of the development of South African music and its parallel links with the sounds of the diaspora. The biggest strength of *Beyond Memory*, is on the one hand, Mojapelo's sterling chronological classification of different epochs of the development of music in South Africa, and, on the other hand, the themes alongside the rudimentary historical time line. The book therefore, does not take the dry and trite historical nomenclature route of exegesis of historical data. Rather, history ensues from the memory of the stories told in time.

For Mojapelo, it is a daunting ask to go beyond memory. He believes that we often get trapped in shackles of 'tabloidisation', and never go beyond memory of unfortunate events in the lives of artists. In *Beyond Memory* Mojapelo evidences that it is critical to go beyond such memory to the human spirits that the artists essentially are. It is interesting to note that Mojapelo has chosen, throughout his encounter with these artists, to search for humanistic elements of their characters and careers, and move beyond a perception that views artists as mere media objects that spur on wanton ecstasy and adrenaline in the world of 'who is who'. Mojapelo takes the readers through meaningful small bites of histories, moments and memories in a manner that informs and avoids gossip. Mojapelo takes the reader to a moment in time, so that once we have taken stock of our

history as South Africans, we then meaningfully traverse new heights of the human spirit, and thereby go beyond mere memory.

The use of the African narrative style could be mistaken for inconsequential name dropping. These brief references to some artists in a story told about the other, is Mojapelo's conscious refrain from merely presenting curriculum vitae of different South African artists. Quite simply, those whom he has encountered more, receive more coverage. It should be kept in mind that this is not a study but a glimpse into Mojapelo's diaries kept over the years. The story of South African music life that he has experienced personally is up-to-date and covers information that can usually only be covered by daily publications and daily news bulletins. The tiny bits of information that Mojapelo's diaries offer, are therefore informative and invaluable.

In these diaries, Mojapelo records real names of musicians, dates of events that link with their achievements and, in some cases, their dates of birth. The information in his dairies has been so carefully captured and systematically recorded, so that they become a useful record that, when read with the other publications that are out there, adds in a meaningful way to the jigsaw-puzzle of the national quilt of the South African music landscape.

*Beyond Memory* is evidence not only of a life dedicated to keeping records but of a rare cadre and deejay. Mojapelo, is to the world of radio what Philip Tabane is to the world of music innovation. He is to the world of radio what Pele is to the world of soccer. Thank you for this wealth. Dear readers, let us drink from the well of memory which, from the time of its release to you, will begin to go beyond memory for every generation that is born.

Enjoy reading.

Sello Galane

## FOREWORD

South Africa possesses one of the richest popular music traditions in the world, surpassed in its variety and inventiveness perhaps only by the United States. From *marabi* to *mbaqanga*, from *boeremusiek* to bubblegum, from *kwela* to *kwaito*: as varied as are the many peoples of South Africa in origin, culture and pigmentation, so dizzy is the array of popular music styles and genres that one encounters here. Yet the risk that future generations of South Africans will not know their musical roots is very real. Of all the recordings made here since the 1930s, thousands have been lost for ever, for the powers-that-be never deemed them worthy of preservation. And if one peruses the books that exist on South African popular music, one still finds, despite their wealth of scholarship, that there are misspelt names and inaccurate dates, and that their authors have on occasion jumped to conclusions that were not as foregone as they had assumed. Yet the fault lies not with them, rather in the fact that there has been precious little documentation in South Africa of who played what, or who recorded what, with whom, and when. This is true of all music-making in this country, though it is most striking in the musics of the black communities. Part of the reason, at least, is obvious: apartheid-era Bantu Education was a means of mass subjugation intended not only to deny our black fellow citizens a future, but also, through withholding access to higher learning, to prevent them from recording their past. The goal, albeit unstated, was to ensure that the impossibility of a future and the absence of a past would resign the masses to an unquestioning acceptance of an immutable present of servitude. With few exceptions – such as the moving, but all-too-brief autobiography of the brilliant Todd Matshikiza (his *Chocolates for my Wife*, now almost fifty years old) – the little that was committed to paper about black music was done so by whites who, however liberal, well-meaning and empathetic, were by virtue of their colour on the privileged side of the great divide that apartheid was constantly endeavouring to render unbridgeable.

The present book is invaluable to all of us, in South Africa and beyond, because it offers a first-hand account of the South African music scene of the past decades from the pen of a man, Max Thamagana Mojaelo, who was situated in the very thick of things, thanks to his job as a deejay at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). This book is based on his diaries, on interviews he conducted and on numerous other sources, and we find in it not only the well-known names of recent South African music – from Hugh

Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa or Johnny Clegg to Brenda Fassie – but a countless host of others whose contribution must be recorded if we and future generations are to gain an accurate picture of South African music history of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The breadth of coverage here is astonishing, and this book also serves as eloquent testimony to the fact that music is a prime instrument of breaking down those artificial barriers that the previous regime had erected. For the musicians of whom we read here are black, white, coloured, Indian, classical, jazz, pop, crossover, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu – indeed, there could hardly be a better picture painted of the South Africa we would all like most to see, in which men and women are united for a common purpose, irrespective of what any politicians of the past (or present) might claim divides them. But music is not just a great leveller: above all, it uplifts. We, the readers, are left here above all with a sense of Mojaelo's joy in music and of his enthusiasm and deep empathy for his fellow human beings; and this, in turn, uplifts us too.

Chris Walton

Professor of Music at the University of Pretoria

August 2008

# INTRODUCTION

Thobela!

The story you are about to read is based on my experiences before, during and after my career as a deejay at the SABC. At the end of the book you will have gained insight into the music industry in South Africa and its connections beyond. You'll also have an idea of the role played by the media in supporting the industry. I hope to generate a lot of discussions, debates and arguments around the what, who, when, how and why amongst you wherever and whoever you are. I know there will be different opinions and versions of how certain events "actually" unfolded. Whatever comes out of those interactions will influence other individuals to write from different angles. You will notice as you read this book that it was also enriched by conversations amongst musicians, radio personalities, music industry executives and concert promoters.

In my career as a radio deejay/presenter there have been two statements that haunted me day and night – one from a foreigner and the other from a Premier.

Just after the 1990 release of Dr Nelson Mandela, I had the privilege of securing an appointment with one of the most gifted sons of our soil, Caiphus Semenya – he of the Quincy Jones school of excellence. Arrangements for the interview were facilitated by Condry Ziqubu, whose lead guitar Katse is in love with. Both grew up in Alexandra Township. Our venue was one of the modest lodges in Midrand. Caiphus had not yet relocated to South Africa. During the interview we touched on the subject of local music content in the media. He told me about the observations of his friend from Los Angeles, who had followed him to South Africa. When he asked him about his first impressions about this country he said, "On arrival I was very excited to see the blue skies and the wide open spaces. I turned on the radio to listen to the music of Africa. None. I fiddled with the tuner, but station after station rocked me with American music.

I am so disappointed, there's nothing new, there's nothing to learn." He then summed up his response with the phrase that still haunts me, "I have not left the States. I have not left."

When Simon Mahlathini Nkabinde was buried in Vosloorus on Saturday 7 August 1999, the SABC sent me to speak on its behalf. President Thabo Mbeki had been in office for less than four months. His wife, Zanele, Ministers Ben Ngubane and Penuel Maduna, Gauteng's Premier Mbazima Sam Shilowa as well as other dignitaries were amongst hundreds of mourners who packed the Vosloorus Community Hall to capacity. The MC's were two giants of our music industry – Moses Jabulani Dlamini and Stanley Nkosi; both have since followed Ndoda Mahlathini to the other world. May their souls rest in peace. In welcoming the President, Premier Shilowa said: 'I am told, Comrade President, that you once said that "Until lions have their own historians, their history and stories would always be told by hunters." I don't know if you did say it, but that's what I've been told. If you didn't say it, I think you should have said it.

The words from these two statements kept ringing in my head until I was convinced I had to do something about them. When I was appointed station manager for the SABC's Thobela FM radio station on 10 October 1997 I grabbed the opportunity with my two hands to address the first statement – "I have not left."

As coach of my radio team I sold my local content bias idea to my staff and instead of playing ICASA's prescribed 20% we went 90%. Regardless of the criticism we received from some of our own brothers and sisters, I am still proud of the dent we made in knocking self-pride into the heads of many of our countrymen and women.

In writing this book I am addressing the second statement – lions having their own historians. The story of the development of the South African music industry is a long, winding and sometimes twisted but fascinating one. The main challenge in telling the story is the unavailability of detailed information on some groups, artists and individuals, most of whom have already passed on. Some record companies' press releases laid more emphasis on the music released than on the individuals behind the product. However, some did a splendid job.

Most of the information in this book is from my notebook as a radio deejay/presenter. The material mostly consists of my interviews with the musicians themselves or their peers, sleeve covers and general media reports over the years. This is mostly the reflection of how the music influenced my career as a deejay, how together with other deejays we contributed to its growth, how I have remained addicted to it, as well as my impressions about the vibrant industry and its politics.

Every day of my life I live to thank God for blessing me with the talent as a teacher that has empowered the youth in the classroom for eight years, touched many people's lives from behind the microphone as a deejay for fifteen years,

transformed our society as a station manager for five years and finally re-written our history as a writer of academic books to support the government's National Curriculum Statement in the spirit of transformation.

Live and tell!

Max Mojapelo

Lebowakgomo

18 July 2008





## CHAPTER ONE

# SOWETO SOUL MUSIC

Whenever I hear Wilson Pickett's 1965 hit *In The Midnight Hour* or Blood, Sweat and Tears' 1969 chartbuster *And When I Die*, I remember the morning I heard an instrumental tune from the Kau homestead, a stone's throw away from my home in the village of Matome, Zebediela. I later found out the tune was *Soweto Soul Music*. It was back in the late sixties. That is how I was introduced to the music genre that was to become known as township soul. In those dark days of white rule the word 'township' meant the part of a town where only black people lived. So, township soul was soul music as South African blacks in the townships liked it. This music was dominated by the organ and drums. Later in life I realised the impact Memphis-born Booker T Jones's US band, Booker T and the MGs had on township soul. By the way, the name of that band in full was Booker T Jones and the Memphis Group. The main exponents of this black South African new brand of music were The Beaters in the south-western townships (Soweto) and The Anchors in Alexandra, north of the city of Johannesburg.

**THE BEATERS** was formed in Soweto by Orlando High School students in 1968 in the days of Dr Matseke's principalship. Bass guitarist "Om" Alec Khaoli, lead guitarist Selby Ntuli, Saitana aka Monty Ndimande who played the second guitar and Sipho Mabuse who was introduced to drumming by sangoma Ntate Manuel in his neighbourhood. The four of them called their group The Beaters. Selby Fikile Ntuli became the leader of the band. Their first album with Teal Records was *Soul-A-Go-Go* in 1969 produced by the late Ray Nkwe. It was followed by *Bacon And Eggs* in 1970 and *Mumsy Hips* in 1971 under the GRC label. In 1974 two more albums were released before they decided to change the band's name. The popularity of The Beaters saw them embarking on roadshows throughout

the length and breath of South Africa and beyond. Those were the days of monkey jive with their Soweto shows at venues like Uncle Tom's Hall. When they toured Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1976, they were well received by the people in the township of Harare. They performed at the Mutanga Night Club, where they played a song they had composed as a dedication to the people of the township titled *Harari* (spelled with an i) and received a standing ovation. Back home in South Africa the song became the title track of their first album titled *Harari* with Gallo Records. We should remember that Gallo Record Company as we know it now is a hybrid of two companies – Gallo Record Company, founded by Eric Gallo in 1926 and Gramophone Record Company, founded by Arnold Golemboski in 1939. Within no time the album went double gold in sales.

Following the success of the hit song as well as the three month tour, which was originally scheduled for three weeks, music fans started calling the group **HARARI**. In Zimbabwe, Harare means "one who is so busy he has no time for sleeping". Interestingly, after independence in Zimbabwe itself, Harare became the name of the capital city formerly known as Salisbury. This is the name that the group became known by as they released hit after hit and packed dance halls and stadiums alike across southern Africa. They had a cult following among the youth of the era as they sang, "Marabi is the music, Harari is the magic, sing a song..." The lowest point of their career occurred when four people died at a Tshwane jazz festival in a riot that was caused by impatient music lovers. These guys were very popular. They were to black South Africans what Rabbit was to our white compatriots. **RABBIT** was Ronnie Robot, Trevor Rabin, Neil Cloud and Duncan Faure. Some people called them the South African Beatles. Their predecessors, Four Jacks and a Jill of *Master Jack* fame and The Dream Merchants who had a big hit *The Rattler* put South African music on the international scene. Like The Beatles, showbiz pressures split Rabbit. Ronnie Robot later established his own record company, On Record, Trevor joined some members of Yes abroad in 1992 and had a hit *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* in 1984, whereas Duncan Faure became a member of the Edinburgh boys, Bay City Rollers.

In 1978 Hugh Masekela invited Harari to perform in America, but the tour failed because of the death of the leader of the band, Selby Ntuli. Sipho Mabuse took the baton and led the combo to greater heights. His business acumen later saw the band registered as a company. As such, some members were shareholders, while some were session musicians. The major shareholders were the two November men, Sipho and Alec. The friendship shared by these two men was similar to that of John Lennon and Paul McCartney. Proof of their talent and versatility was their participation in the recording of Pat Matshikiza and Kippie Moeketsi's album, *Tshona* which featured Basil "Mannenberg" Coetzee in 1975 produced by Rashid Vally on The Sun label. They were invited by producer Rashid Vally of Kohinoor music retailer fame to assist Pat and Kippie on bass and drums. Kippie was sceptical about involving young boys in

Jazz music, but once they started recording he was silenced by their brilliance and creativity. In music improvisation draws the line between boys and men. To play what you are not told to can enrich the ultimate product.

In South Africa the band shared the stage with visiting international superstars like Percy Sledge, Timmy Thomas, Wilson Pickett as well as Brook Benton who passed away in 1988, that greedy year that began by claiming the lives of our greats like newsman Percy Qoboza. Their manager, Dianne Brooklyn, worked very hard to promote their name and groom them into professionals. In 1981 A&M Records released their albums *Harari* and *Flying Out* on its label. Of the other albums that followed, the following did very well for them: *Kalaharari Rock*, *Heat Wave*, *Flying Out* and *Home Brew*. Some of their best singles ever were *Give and Party*, both achieving platinum status and the latter even entering the American Disco Hot 100. Their music can still be enjoyed afresh on compilations of their hits, *Greatest Hits Volume 1* (1991) and *Volume 2* (1998), by Gallo Records.

Showbiz, fame and fortune usually breed friction within groups as witnessed with worldwide popular supergroup The Beatles and others. It is not always easy to pinpoint the forces that destroy the team spirit and brotherhood, but it is mostly money, power and fame itself. Sometimes it is simply the need to grow. Harari could also not escape these forces. At the end of 1982 the original Harari disbanded. By the early eighties a number of musicians had joined and left the band. Most of these members pursued solo careers. Some only had a stint with the band while others played for the band until its demise. Amongst those who have been members of the Afro-Rock band are: “Om” Alec Khaoli, Siphso “Hotstix” Mabuse, Masike “Funky” Mohapi, Monty “Saitana” Ndimande, Banza Kgasoane, Khaya Mahlangu, Condry Ziqubu, Oupa Segoai, Charlie “Babas” Ndlovu, Barnson “Branny” Ledwaba, Lionel Peterson, Eddie Manda, Thelema “Ndo” Segona, Sello Twala, Robert Doc Mthalane, Louis Mhlanga, Danny Malewa, Mzwandile Kente and others. However, Siphso, whom Condry nicknamed “Hotstix” for his drum beating skills, remained the father of this band for many years. In 1986 Siphso Mabuse produced *Bad Boys*, an album of a Harari made up of younger members: Mzwandile Kente, Danny Malewa, Sello Montoedi, Joel Matsela and Richard Sekgobela. Later he also embarked on a solo career.

Born on 2 November 1951, **SIPHO MABUSE** loved beating drums from his days as a drum major in his school’s cadet band. Later on he taught himself to play various musical instruments like flute, piano, saxophone and synthesiser. He ultimately became producer, composer, arranger and coordinator for the band. Outside the Harari circle he also developed other new artists and groups like The Soweto Soul Orchestra, Botsotso, etc.

As a solo artist, to rise to the top Siphso’s debut maxi single was aptly titled *Rise*. It went double gold overnight featuring the talents of Ray Phiri on guitar and Lloyd Lelosa on keyboards, both members of Stimela. September 1984 saw

the release of his evergreen monster hit *Burnout*, a song that remains stubborn and unchallenged through the years. It was included in various compilations including Shonisani Muleya's 2002 comedy CD *Ashifa Shabba Live @ Club Arena* and covered by younger groups like Karamo on their 1991 album *Bra Music* as well as the SSQ on their CD *Old School Township Remixes* in 1998. I remember that during the festive season of its release year (1984) there was a huge "Burn Out Music Festival" on 16 December at the Mamelodi Stadium featuring: Harari, Stimela, Amampondo, Obed Ngobeni, Street Kids, Ebony, William And Young Five as well as Cecil Mitch. When I interviewed Sipho that very year at the Lebowakgomo Showgrounds, responding to my question about the hit song's inspiration, he simply smiled and replied, "Ke koša ya badimo", literally meaning "it is a song from the gods". But what he really meant was that it just hit him without any effort. At the time he and ex-wife Chichi Maponya had just been blessed with a daughter, Naledi.

The album *Burnout* became a world-wide phenomenon and sold over 500 000 units. A track from the album *Jive Soweto* became a huge international video hit on television screens. The album had four stand-alone tracks, two each side. It featured other two great musicians of our time, Steve Kekana (ad lib voice on *Burnout*) and West Nkosi (saxophone on *Jive Soweto*) as well as other musicians of star quality in their own right. If I had the liberty to choose a continental signature tune for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) sittings, it would be the powerful track, *Zanzibar*, from this album – so Pan African yet so universal. One thing is very clear: Sipho Mabuse is a respected musician. In 1986 he released the album *Afrodizia* featuring one of the most irresistible dance tracks *Let's Get It On*. Virgin Records released the track *Shikisha* internationally in 1987. As such, he spent most of his time abroad. It was during this time that his long-cherished dream came true – he arranged Miriam Makeba's 1989 album *Welela* and co-produced it with Roberto Melloll. *Afrodizia* was followed by *The Chant Of The Marching* in 1989, an album that also featured a moving track titled *Mama*, a duet with "Mama Africa", Miriam Makeba. In 1991 another album, *What About Tomorrow*, hit the market. "Sips" was still nostalgic and very much in love with the patriotic *Zanzibar* from his 1984 *Burnout* album. If you want to confirm his soft spot for the track, listen to his live performance CD recorded at the Newtown Music Hall in 2005 – stunning!

By 1995 Sipho was the Executive Director of Kippies International Club in Newtown, Johannesburg. After 21 years of existence, the club, which ranks amongst the top 100 jazz clubs in the world, was closed down in April 2005 by the powers that be as it was deemed unsafe for continued use. After a loud public outcry the Gauteng MEC for Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation, Barbara Creecy re-opened it on Thursday, 2 November 2006. It is now housed in a building called Mills at 66 Carr Street, Newtown. Maybe I should just say "at the old Songwriters Club". Kippies has been declared a heritage site.

The *Township Child* album followed in 1996, in a way promoting the spirit of the African Renaissance. It includes tracks like *Thaba Bosiu* and *Rumba Mama*, a track I used as a signature tune for an African music programme “Gowa Afrika!” in my days as a deejay at the SABC.

In 2005 his musical home, Peter Gallo’s Gallo Records released a live CD, which celebrates an illustrious career stretching across three decades. It was titled *Chant Of The Marching: Live In Johannesburg* and was recorded at the Newtown Music Hall. Tracks include Bob Marley’s classic, *Redemption Song*. Gallo has also released other compilation albums of his music through the years. Sipho continues with performances and helping develop the industry, especially as board member of the South African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO). Many young musicians regard him as a brother. Some of the NGOs he is committed to include: The Johannesburg Aids Council, the Soweto Cancer Association and the Soweto Home for the Aged. The South African Music Awards (SAMA) honoured him with a Lifetime Achievement award in the same year together with fellow legends, Dorothy Masuka, the late Margaret Singana and Brenda Fassie.

Bass guitarist **“OM” ALEC KHAOLI**, born 5 November 1953, is another Harari bombshell. When he went solo he took Donovan Knox to the USA to record his album *Brown Sugar* (under new name “Umoja”) in the A&M Los Angeles studios. He later shook the world of music with his maxi single, *U R The One*. It was also released in America by Emergency Records, in France through Polygram, in Italy through CDG Records, whereas Chrysalis Records released it in Europe and Australia. In 1984 he released his solo album *Use Me*. His newly-formed band, Umoja, released an album entitled *Rainbow*, which featured the sizzler, *Oneness*. Umoja is a Swahili word for unity. In fact throughout his compositions “Om” reflected his passion for the Swahili language. The new group’s line-up included “Om” Alec Khaoli, Donovan Knox, Don Laka, Godfrey Mgcina, Neo Maphaka and Sello Twala. Later some members of this group formed Image whose well-known line-up over time included Don Laka, Donovan Knox, Godfrey Mgcina, Sello Twala, Jimmy Mngwandi, Benjamin Dube as well as Solly Sithole. At a later stage some embarked on solo careers. However, the name of Umoja itself never died and new members continued with the sound. Alec’s album *Say You Love Me* followed in 1985. In the very same year the Afro-Funk group, Umoja released another album, *Party*. On this 1985 album as well as on the 1986 album, *All Night Party*, the lineup was consistently: “Om” Alec Khaoli, Philip Duiker, Stanley Deeu, Tony Dladla and Malachia Suhla. But later the lineup kept changing as new musicians joined and others left. Umoja’s biggest album was *707* (1991), which achieved double platinum status. There were also others like *Everybody Needs Somebody* (1991), *Kiss Kiss* (1996) and *Owe Owe* (1998). Among them four went gold. In 1986 Alec released a maxi, *Another Lover*, on which he played most instruments on his moog synthesiser backed by Star Mabaso, Thuli Cele and Felicia Marion. His 1989 album titled *Now* featured the hit *The Big One*.

Alec's music as a solo artist has been released in America and Europe. Besides his solo career and his band Umoja, Alec who does not consider himself a singer has produced and developed young artists like V-Mash, whose real name is Vinolia Mashego, daughter of well-known showbiz personality, Collins Mashego of Alexandra's Anchors fame. Another such artist was Andile Gaeleshewe. Both artists had their fair share of the limelight in the music world and as presenters in the electronic media. He also produced his Harari days brother, Masike Mohapi. Some of Alec's songs were recorded in his Fireworks Studios in Soweto and later he worked from his Oak Studios in Kew, Johannesburg. His other big hits include *Sekuru*, *O Nketsang* and *Born Free* which have been released by Gallo Record Company on a compilation CD titled *The Best Of "Om" Alec Khaoli & Umoja*.

Another Hararian, "**FUNKY**" **MASIKE MOHAPI**, guitar maestro in his own right also went solo releasing his own albums. From these albums the most memorable tracks are *Babe*, *Hamnana* and *Pimville People*. In 1984 he released a maxi single featuring *Standing On The Top* under the Raintree label. I remember that in 1984 he was in demand all over the country. During the festive season Drakensberg Promotions billed him in a series of festivals, which started on 2 December in Newcastle, went to Standerton, Atteridgeville, Vereeniging, Umlazi and ended up in Soweto at the Jabulani Amphitheatre. That is how sought-after he was. In 1985 he released a double-side maxi of *My Love is Yours* and *Ndoyenda*. Funky later suffered some setbacks in his solo career but Alec made it his business to keep him afloat. It remains to be seen if the guitarman can make a comeback.

**CONDY ZIQUBU** who joined Harari from Alexandra's Flaming Souls is another red-fingered lead guitarist. He was born on 28 July 1951. Some of his reminiscences include playing for Simon Twala's Flaming Souls at the age of fifteen. He says they were not paid in money, but "the new rolling brown chicken" and porridge; he was just happy because he was so young and enjoyed strumming the guitar. One day their manager bought each one of them a Blaupunkt radiogram. They were so excited, but their families were later shocked when a truck from the furnisher shop came to collect the music systems due to arrears on the monthly instalments. It was then that they learned only a deposit was paid and the families had to continue with payments. We both laughed this off as water under the bridge. He also left the university that Harari had become to do his own thing. His hit *ABC* recorded under the name Muntu placed him on the highway road to success.

In 1984 with his group Lumumba, named after the great Patrice Lumumba of Congo, he released his biggest hit ever *Skorokoro*, which also gave him the name "Mr Skorokoro". The song was inspired by old battered township cars. Another hit with the group was *Yellow Mieliemeal*, inspired by the introduction of yellow mealie meal by the government after a long drought that made it difficult to get the normal white maize meal. In fact, most of his compositions



are about issues of the time. In 1985 *Via Orlando* was released. The title was inspired by a very popular tavern in Orlando, Soweto, owned by Sis Irene. It was followed by *Gorillaman* in 1986, an album he released as Condry Ziqubu. On this album he was joined by another Hararian, Branny Ledwaba on percussion. It was during this year that he followed his popularity to America and toured with the legendary Harry Belafonte. Condry is a close associate of the world-wide famous couple, Caiphus Semenya and Letta Mbulu who spent most of their career lives exiled in America. In 1987 *Shut Your Mouth* was released and was followed by *Pick Six* (1988), an album he dedicated to his new-born baby, Phindile. On the album he once again featured a Hararian, Charlie Ndlovu. His 1989 album, *Magic Man*, includes an isiZulu version of Sam Mhangwani's *Maria Tebbo*. In 1991 this composer, producer, arranger and instrumentalist released another hot album, *No Money, No Love*, which he dedicated to his late mother, Masithole and his late brother, "Pro". On this album he once again featured his favourite hornman, Scorpion Madondo as he did on his other works like his 1987 *Shut Your Mouth* album. Scorpion is also known for his work with Johnny Clegg. *Jealousy* followed in 1993. In 1997 *Condry Ziqubu* and *Jay Vee Remixes* were released. These were remixes of his monster hits like *Skorokoro* and *No Woman No Party*. Whenever I spent time with Condry in the eighties he was always sure I would bring up the subject of him recording an instrumental album featuring his wizardry on the lead guitar. To my amusement, *Condry Ziqubu And Friends* was released in 2004. His years with The Anchors, Flaming Souls, Harari and Lumumba have sharpened him into a confident all-rounder and adventurous muso. In between the albums his musical home, CCP also released compilations. Besides EMI, most of his music was published by Smoko Music.

His other project is Condry Ziqubu Productions, which will assist him to develop more young talent. By 2005 Condry had discovered new gospel talent in young Galaletsang Mmutlawane. The 13-year-old Ga-Rankuwa-born girl's debut album was titled *Gali*. He also worked with trumpeter Banza Kgasoane's Alexander Brass Band, a band that performed at many special events in the country. The rhythm never ends for this respected Alex traditional healer. The band's first CD, *Diphala Vol. 1* produced by "Professor Rhythm", Thami Mdluli of Taboo fame has created a niche for them in the market. Following its success, other volumes were recorded. The band has also shot a DVD live at the Standard Bank Arena in 2004. Towards the end of 2005 Condry parted ways with Banza's band and formed the Condry Ziqubu Brass Band, which released a ten-track debut CD titled *Galaletsang*. By 2008 he had produced Faith Kekana's debut CD titled *A Re Yeng*.

By the way, trumpeter **BANZA KGASOANE** is the son of Alexandra's Harry Kgasoane who had a band known as Big Harry's Big Band which performed at weddings. After his father's death Banza who played in the band continued from where his father had left off, but started his new younger band called

Banza's Band. In the sixties he had a stint with Selby Ntuli's The Beaters. After that he played for Lumumba. After some time he joined "Big Voice" Jack Lerole to start Mango Groove in the eighties. He played with the band for almost a decade. After leaving the group he played instrumental gospel tunes backed by Lumumba in 1996. At the end of the nineties they started preparing for recordings of their music. In 2001 they recorded their debut album working with Condry.

Hot guitarist **ROBERT DOC MTHALANE** was born in 1953. When he grew up his brother, Enoch also played guitar and he followed suit and excelled. Enoch's guitar strings can be heard on his albums like *Uzombona*, Jonas Gwangwa's *Flowers Of The Nation* and Zacks Nkosi's *Our Kind Of Jazz*. Due to his hot fingers Doc played with a rock group, Naked Truth, but in 1978 joined the premier band of the time, Harari. The most remarkable project that Madoda Doc Mthalande embarked upon after leaving the "university" was his group Kabasa. Some of the most memorable hits by the group are *Feeling of The Sixties*, a marathon vibrant instrumental tune used by radio deejays countrywide either as a signature tune, bridge or background music. Another powerful composition on the album was *Mafeteng*, which was censored by the SABC for reasons known only to some. Other original members of the group included Tata 'TNT' Sibeko and Mabote Kelly Petlane. Mpilo Dlamini who also joined the band later, has recently released *Dilika*, an album co-produced with D-Rex. Kabasa disbanded after four albums. Mthalande's other group was Songamasu. He then left the country for London and worked with various groups, but his most stable relationship was with Busi Mhlongo's band, Twasa. In fact they formed the group together and he wrote songs for and played with the group. When Gabriel Thobejane and Madala Kunene joined him in 1996 his health was failing him, but they managed to record his last album, *Respect*, featuring the voices of Busi Mhlongo and Lungiswa Plaatjies on *Song For Doc*. On 15 May 1998 Mthalande died in Durban at the age of 45. Like Stevie Ray Vaughan he has left many of his fans with sounds of a blazing guitar in their heads.

**OUPA SEGOAI's** projects include Buya, which released *Inhlupheko*, an album he co-produced/wrote with Enos Lubisi on Dave Penhale's DPMC label. The album was dedicated to Miriam Makeba about whom the album sleeve says "kept alive the spirit and hope of South African musicians during her long exile". He later worked as a session musician and featured in some recordings like Yvonne Chaka Chaka's album, *Sangoma*, on which he played percussion.

**THELMA "NDO" SEGONA** who cut her keyboard teeth with Jimmy Mojapelo's The Minerals in Rockville left the "varsity" to become a member of a new group, Chess. In 1986 they released *Down By The River*, an album composed and produced by George van Dyk of Hotline. Other members of Chess were Jean Chellew, Irene Coetzee, Aston Jarrod of Cinema fame as well as Todd Twala, who later created Baobab, which developed into the internationally acclaimed



musical “Umoja” with Thembi Nyandeni, known for her role as King Shaka’s mother Nandi in the film *Shaka Zulu*. Born and bred in Mofolo-North, Soweto, Thembi befriended Todd at primary school and joined Ipi Tombi in 1976. The sound track of Umoja, *The Spirit Of Togetherness*, produced by Fernando Perdigao, was nominated in the Best Producer category of SAMA 8. In the very same year – 1976 – they released another album, *Make Your Move*, with Penny Rose replacing Aston Jarrod on drums. The success of Chess was shortlived and the untimely death of Thelma Segona robbed local music of a real gem.

**LIONEL PETERSEN** was born and bred in Alexandra Township. He used to front a very dynamic band called Thunderballs. Later he moved to Cape Town where he had a stint with The Rockets. He also worked with The Invaders. Some of his early hits were *Private Number*, *I Need A Little Love* and his cover version of Joe Tex’s *That’s The Way* (Plum Records, 1976), later also translated by Mpharanyana into Sesotho as *Ke Yona Tsela*. When he returned to Johannesburg he joined Harari to take the place of the lead vocalist Masike Mohapi. From Harari he moved back into his solo career. In 1986 he released *Feel Free*, an album produced by Selwyn Shandel and backed by The Winners on the CCP label. The title track and *Wedding Day*, which featured Imilonji Kantu Choral Society set the album on fire. Another hit by this star was *Iphelil’ipetrole*. One of his most successful projects was the recording of Kaiser Chiefs’ *We Are Number One* backed by his multi-racial band, The Winners. This Selwyn Shandel product was written by Russell Kramer of The Bushman fame. The CCP production team went to Ellis Park during a Chiefs vs Pirates match to record the electrifying atmosphere including the crowd eruption when Chiefs’ ace striker Samora Khulu hit the back of the net. By 1985 Lionel had become a born-again Christian and decided to use his talents to glorify the Lord.

**SOYAPHI LOUIS MHLANGA**, who hailed from Zimbabwe left the band to follow his dreams. Whilst a session musician, he mostly played in Joburg’s nightclubs. His other love is theatre and music scores for films. This hot-as-hell guitarist who has worked with various big names in the UK, Zimbabwe and West Africa is also a composer and arranger. In 1997 he released a solo CD, *Mukai*, in which he featured members of Musik Ye Afrika, James Indi Phiri and Jethro Shasha. In the same year as member of Musik Ye Afrika they released a self-titled CD. In 1991 together with Vusi Mahlasela they released a live CD entitled *Vusi Mahlasela & Louis Mhlanga: Live At The Bassline*. This master of improvisation followed up with other albums like *Shamwari*, *Tinganekwane*, *Song For Nomsa*, *Keeping The Dream* and *World Traveller*. His productions include Vusi Mahlasela’s CD *Miyela Africa* (BMG, 2000) which gained him a nomination as Best Producer in SAMA 7. He is a member of Sheer All Stars whose other artists include McCoy Mrubata, Frank Paco and Wessel van Rensburg. The late Sipho Gumede was also a founding member. The group won SAMA 9’s Best Contemporary Jazz Album for *Dance With Me*. Their other albums include *Indibano*.

**MONTY NDI MANDE** went solo using the name “Saitana”. In 1984 he released a mini album titled *Love Fever* on the Black Music label. He has already joined the bigger Orchestra Up Yonder.

**MZWANDILE KENTE**, son of “The Father Of Township Theatre”, the late great Mtutuzeli Gibson Kente, was born and bred in Rockville, Soweto and played in the musical *Mama And The Load*. He also played bass guitar for the G-Kays, which was a backing group for the stage play *Hard Road*. After a stint with Harari in 1983 he went solo in 1984. On the release of his 1991 debut album, *A Boy And A Dream* under the name “Tashif”, when I interviewed him he struck me as an extraordinarily creative and intelligent individual. The album was on Tusk’s Diamond label co-starring Marc Rantseli, McCoy Mrubata, Selwyn Shandel and Jorge Arrigone. He dedicated the album to his grandmother, Nonzophi Ellen Kente.

**CHARLIE NDLOVU** who also played for Black Hawks later joined “the best band in the land”, Stimela on the keyboards.

**KHAYA MAHLANGU** also had a stint with the band. His career is discussed in the next pages under the story of another powerful group of the 1980s, Sakhile.

**SELLO “CHICCO” TWALA** became one of South Africa’s finest producers. After a stint with Image the former student of Bopasenatla High School in Diepkloof went solo using the name that was popularised by a hit they recorded together as Image – Chico. This 1985 smash hit was co-written by Jimmy Mngwandi and L. Masitha, and produced by Sidwell Duda under the Transistor label. Most of us will remember Sidwell Duda as manager of the five-man band, Rufaro and trio Elegance. He also produced Dennis Monwabisi Yekani and the Movement’s 1985 maxi single, *Save Your Last Dance for Me*. Interestingly, the group Image later changed the spelling of their name to Ymage after their overseas tour as they discovered a group of the same name there. This could cause confusion on the international market. But one still finds such similarities in record libraries like the group Blondie known for their hit, *Heart of Glass* and our very own Blondie (Makhene). Though the former is a group and the latter an individual, this still creates some confusion in certain quarters. Some of Image’s hits include *Hiwiye*. Their albums *Time Changes* (1990) and *Human* (1991) were released under the new spelling – Ymage. Almost all the tracks were written by Don Laka, one of the most prolific musicians of our time about whom we’ll read later in this book.

For the better part of the first years as a solo artist Chicco’s musical home was Phil Hollis’ record company Dephon under the Roy B label. In true Dephon style most of his albums were preceded by maxi singles. Chicco became an instant hit with children because of tracks like *We Can Dance* and *Teacher We Love You*. Sello is one of those musicians who never turned a blind eye on the oppression of their people. As a prolific prophet he wrote controversial and somewhat ambiguous freedom songs that frustrated the merciless censorship machine of the state. This

was achieved through the album *We Miss You Manelow* at a time when the nation desperately missed its leader, Mandela. Another album, *Thina Sizwe Esimnyama*, is rich with political undertones. To pay tribute to the mother of the nation, he composed *I'm Winning (My Dear Love)* for Yvonne Chaka Chaka's *Thank You Mr DJ* album as well as the defiant *Motherland* on her album of the same name. He paid tribute to one of Africa's sons, President Samora Machel of Mozambique's Frelimo Movement in a song he co-wrote with the Secunda Boys titled *Some More My Cherry* on Chimora's album featuring Mohapi Mashego and Nomuntu Kappa. In 1990 he wrote *Black President* for Brenda Fassie's album of the same name, which he both produced and arranged. Millions of people felt that it was a positive and desired prophecy that the majority of South Africans had long been waiting for. One of his great hits, *Give Me Money* featured on the charts of almost every radio station across the country.

The great African he is, Chicco paid tribute to the Rain Queen with General MD Shirinda's rhythmic composition, *Modjadji*. Chicco is a crusader for peace as seen on his album *We Don't Need War*, which features the track *Tribute To Our Heroes*, a dedication to two fallen stars: boxing champion Arthur Mayisela and Shangaan disco king Paul Ndlovu. This was illustrated again by a plea to Mandela on his 1990 album *Papa Stop The War*, which featured the eloquence of "The People's Poet", Mzwakhe Mbuli. On its sleeve cover he revealed that he was disillusioned with the music scene as the unique sound he had created was being copied, and considered retiring, but after his many fans asked him to reconsider he released the track and promised to continue with music. Other peace tracks are ironically *War* and *Soldier*. Most of his lyrics were spiced with his mother tongue, xiTsonga or tshiVenda as noticed on the same album with tracks *Xarila* and *Bola Bopedza*.

Chicco is a bold musician with a mission. In the new social order ushered in by democracy and a human rights culture he released his 1996 album *Black Man, White Wife*, which was nominated for FNB SAMA 3's Best Township Dance category. He participated in many national campaigns including "Peace In Our Land" when the country was under siege due to political violence after the release of Dr Nelson Mandela. When the instability reached danger zone and almost triggered a civil war, church leaders and businessmen arranged a meeting of political organisations on Saturday, 14 September 1991 to commit to peace. They signed the historic National Peace Accord. It was against this background that influential musicians joined hands to record an album appealing for calm and sanity. Chicco composed the title track, *Peace In Our Land* and produced four of the eight tracks, including his testimonial hit, *Trouble In The Night Vigil* from his 1991 album, *Nomari*. A darling of the children, he conducted The Children's Choir Of Soweto. Some of the country's musicians who participated in the historic recording of the album were Hugh Masekela, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Brenda Fassie, Tsepo Tshola, Blondie Makhene, AYB, Vusi Shange, Nani

Ntengo, Poulus Gwala, Pure Gold, PJ Powers, Little Sister, Marcalex, Coyote, Godfrey Mthimkhulu, Mzwakhe Mbuli, Ricardo, The Rockets, No Friends Of Harry, Mercy Pakela and Mango Groove.

Bishop Stanley Mogoba and John Hall gave a nod to the effort with the words “Kuze kube nini?” (How long?). The result? The album broke all known previous record sales by a various artists project in the South African music industry. In a subsequent television interview Chicco said he was proud that the project raised more than R3 million for the “Victims of Violence Fund” of the National Peace Committee.

Chicco’s performances at festivals, some of which I had the honour to compère in the 1980s were fireworks. The crowds just loved him; his bass guitarist, Christopher Jaws Dlathe was just a marvel to watch in action. Twala composed for and produced countless artists and groups, among them Brenda Fassie, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Chimora, Nomuntu Kappa, Sabela, Mac And Monica, Winnie Khumalo, Mercy Pakela, Dorothy Masuka, New Age and Botswana’s Maxy. *Shonakhona*, an album by Coco was written, arranged and produced by him and engineered by Humphrey Mabote. Humphrey was one of the very first generation of black engineers in South Africa. He also co-produced the DJ Walker CD, *Shesa Mpama* (1999), featuring Senyaka Kekana, a project that continued to produce controversial lyrics. Some of his other solo works include the albums *MaMatilda* (1998) and *uMagubani* (1999), which amongst other tracks features one of the most emotional renditions of the freedom song *Ibambeni*, finally exposing the freedom fighter, giving away the soldier. By 2004 Chicco was a property developer and had shifted from Universal Records to release the CD *Jimama Ji* through EMI.

Chicco’s huge contribution towards gospel music will follow later in the chapter “Praying and Praising”. His music was also used in the tshiVenda television series, Muvhango. Sello Chicco Twala’s ear for talent saw him encourage his hair stylist friend Senyaka to join the music industry. His responsibility towards fellow musicians will always be remembered as he revived Brenda Nokuzola Fassie’s music career. He wrote and produced hit albums for her and “brothered” her ‘til death did them part. Chicco’s hairstyle was later sold in hair saloons as a brand dubbed “Chicco hair style”. The style became hot and hip with a lot of the youth. His interest in soccer put him on the managements of Moroka Swallows and Ria Stars respectively. Twala’s publishing house is Chicco Publishing. He subsequently produced Malaika’s CD, *Sekunjalo* (2007). Sello scooped many awards both locally and continentally in his music career, but his greatest honour was the SAMA 2004: Life Time Achievement Award.

**DANNY “KAMAZU” MALEWA**’s solo career was catapulted to the top by his monster hit *Korobela*, inspired by an African love potion alleged to help women keep their men and even control them to the point of puppetry. This also earned him another nickname, “Mr Korobela”. His producer for the better part

of his career was another young ace-producer, Thapelo Khomo. His album *The African Man* (1986) included a powerful hit, *African Man*, penned by blind superstar, Steve Kekana. Jika Majika featured the hit *Kamina Ka Wena* while *Indaba Kabani* (1991) featured the title track co-written with his producer. Kamazu did some projects with friend Senyaka Kekana, including his 1993 CD *Thetha (Korobela 2)*, which they co-produced with Mandla “Spikiri” Mofokeng of kwaito group, Trompies. His collaboration with friend Senyaka Kekana known as Hunger Boys has churned out a number of hits including the album *Sisebenza Ka Nzima* (2007).

Let me conclude the story of Harari by revisiting the impact of two bands that are the descendants of Harari – Umoja and Ymage (Image). To be precise, Harari gave birth to Umoja and Umoja gave birth to Image, later spelled Ymage. Besides Alec Khaoli himself, another man who played a vital role in these two bands was Don Laka. Today he is a household name in South Africa. Don is a self-made man who moved from one instrument to another, band to band, record company to record company, one book to another on a journey to self-discovery. On this journey he was always spurred on by a strong sense of destiny and ambition.

**DONALD MAHWETŠA LAKA**, the keyboard maestro from Mamelodi’s Tshwane has played for many bands including Umoja, Image and Stimela. The first in a family of five, Don was born in 1958. Being son of a preacher, he started singing in church. His first instrument was the guitar at the age of twelve. He later switched to bass guitar and then piano in 1979 after inspiration from an old music book. His first album was *I Wanna Be Myself* (Transistor Music, 1985). It was followed by *Stages Of Love* (1986), an album dedicated to his mother, Naomi, his two brothers Stanley and Abago as well as his two sisters Olga and Selomane. He composed, arranged and produced the music and was also responsible for all instrumentation and lead vocals. In 1976 he joined an Indian band, The Flood as a bass guitarist. In 1981 when the band Sakhile was formed, he was its first keyboardist. By the time he became a member of Umoja on acoustic piano, OBSX and vocoder in 1982 he was a Licentiate in Music from the Royal School Of Music in London, having covered Grade 1–8 on classical guitar. Laka is a fine musician, composer, producer and arranger. As a solo artist in the early years of his career he made a name for himself with hits like *Bana ba Sekolo* and *Tšhela Jwala Re Nwe*. Laka’s early productions include the album *The Hitman* (1988) featuring Brandy on the Sounds Of Soweto label where he teamed up with Kenny Mathaba. But it was later in Don’s music career when he turned to contemporary jazz that his true colours showed.

After the release of the CD *Destiny*, I interviewed him. I found Laka to be a self-confessed bookworm and very proud of his Laka roots. The music maestro later released the album *Supernova*, revealing his fascination with astronomy, one of the subjects he stumbled upon as he read every book he could lay his hands on



in search of knowledge. The album was nominated in the Best Contemporary Jazz Performance category of FNB SAMA 5. On 8 May 1996 the watershed “I Am An African” speech by the then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki inspired Don’s next album, *Pyramid* (2000), which won him SAMA 7’s Best Male Artist category. Thabo Mbeki spoke in Cape Town on behalf of the ANC on the occasion of the adoption by the Constitutional Assembly of the Republic of South Africa’s Constitution Bill, 1996. The speech gave the public a full picture of what future relationships between South Africa and the rest of the continent would be, and hopefully nobody was shocked by the establishment of the African Union during his presidency. The album included the track *Song For Mapungubwe* inspired by Laka’s father who used to sing the haunting melody for Don’s baby sister. I think it could as well be a dedication to the old man who sadly passed away in 1974. The album was followed by *Armageddon*, a battle between good and evil at the end of the world as we know it. Makes you think. The album was SAMA 9’s Best Packaged Album nominee pitted against the likes of 101’s *The Album*. Don Laka has earned the respect of his peers in the industry.

In 1999 the legendary Hugh Masekela requested him to produce his CD *Sixty*. The 13-track CD released on the Sony Jazz label also features the hit *Thanayi*, and Laka also arranged some tracks and played musical instruments as well. His other productions include: African Jazz Pioneers’ album, *76 – 3rd Avenue* (2004), Lungiswa’s *Unonkala* (2002), Herman’s *Tsakane Tsakane* (2002) as well as the SSQ’s CD, *Four* (BMG, 2001). Besides producing the CD, Laka wrote two songs and played various instruments. Laka’s hectic schedule did not prevent him from developing new talent, which is the future of the industry. In 1993 he produced *Labantu*, a CD featuring the raw talents of four young jazz musicians, Balobedu brothers Nathi and Moses Malatji, as well as Draphter Mashego and Nixon Mtiesantji collectively called Labantu. The group’s second CD recorded with new member Mondli Mavundla was titled *Ngobani Na Labantu?* Another foursome, Seboka, Letli, Kamogelo and Mmotsa of group Crowded Crew were produced by Laka on their CD *Inna De’ Placa* (1995). On Mercy Pakela’s album *Mama* (1999) he co-wrote two songs and produced five of the tracks.

In 2001 Don participated in the recording of the musical “Umoja” both as artist and producer working with Fernando Perdigao and Ian Von Memerty. His other jazz product was *Challenges*, an album by Ladies In Jazz Ensemble, a group consisting of Thandi Mahlangu, Lolo Chipane, Annikie Maswanganyi, Zodwa Mabena and Lesego Nkonyane. In May 2005 Laka celebrated 33 years in music by launching the album, *Rebirth Of Kwai-Jazz*, an event that was attended by hundreds of his fans at the South African State Theatre in Tshwane. His business acumen was realised in 1993 with the establishment of a company he co-owns with young musician Oscar Mdlongwa of Brothers Of Peace, called Kalawa Records, later adding Jazmee to the name when Trompies joined. He also owns a publishing house, Kabelo Songs, named after his son, as well as

recording studios called Lakdon, a combination of his name and surname. The success of young musicians like Boomshaka, BOP, Trompies, Alaska, Bongo Maffin, Thebe, Chakaroski, Copperhead and Mafikizolo is the flower of the tree that Laka helped plant. Who will ever forget the 1995 smash hit *Local is Lekker* CD he co-produced with Mduduzi “M’Du” Masilela for Hlengiwe Dlamini aka Sharon Dee? In 2005 he enrolled for a course in Advanced Sound Mixing and Marketing in Ohio, United States. Laka clinched a deal with a Canadian company to release his label, Bokone Music catalogue abroad. The catalogue includes musicians: Lungiswa, Herman Fox Manganyi, Ladies In Jazz Ensemble, Labantu Jazz Band, Loading Zone, Palesa and Tanzanian, Rayson. Pastor Abe Sibiya and Mmakgotso Seoketsa form part of the gospel music pages of the catalogue. In 2007 he invited his friends in music to record his follow-up CD aptly titled *Invitation*. One of Don Laka’s hobbies is photography, but he says music doesn’t leave him enough time for it.

It is interesting to note that the inspiration behind most of the musicians of the township soul era was a blind band – The All Rounders – led by their frontman, Babsy Mlangeni. In the context of the era, the saying “One-eyed amongst the blind is king” was re-written into “Two-eyed amongst the blind is a follower”. What inspired The All Rounders?

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Parallels have always been drawn between South African and American music. The Motown success story of Berry Gordy in Detroit gave impetus for new hope among local black musicians. They felt that Motown could also be achieved in South Africa. While the success of the Jackson family, William Smokey Robinson, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Diana Ross and the Supremes as well as Marvin Pretz Gaye Jr inspired black artists in general, it was Stevie Wonder who was to hoist a flag for the blind.

In South Africa, young black blind boys who attended school in Athlone, Cape Town, formed a band that became nationally known as **THE ALL ROUNDERS**. The original band members were Hendrick Sabata Lebona (composer/producer), Athanas Jimmy Mojapelo (guitarist), Bernard Babsy Mlangeni (vocalist), Munich Sibiya (drummer) and Archie Kgoadi (vocalist). Other members were Simon Falatsi (vocals/guitar/sax) and John Mothopeng (piano) who would later lead a blind musicians’ association, SABMA. The name of the band was derived from the fact that the members could play any musical instrument. The success story of these blind musos who surprised the sighted and made them take a second look at disabled people can best be told by listing their big hits. After the initial 75 rpm gramophone records like *Bantwana Hloniphani* and

*Sphokophoko*, they rocked the country with hit after hit: *Dimakatso*, *Have Faith in Me*, *Mama*, *Zwakala Mthekeeni*, *Monica*, *Jacaranda Music*, *Kiss and Make Up*, *Tshwara Jwalo Kgaetsedi*, *Mokete Wa Thabo*, *Naka Themba*, *Nomvula*, *Ayithethi Ntolonto*, *Sala Emma*, which was dedicated to Babsy's wife and many more.

Even after Babsy had gone solo The All Rounders remained his backing band for a long time, to an extent that sometimes it wasn't easy to differentiate the songs of the band from those of Babsy the solo artist. It was almost as difficult as it is to tell the difference between Sankomota and Tsepo Tshola's songs. The popularity of the band sent them touring the length and breadth of South Africa and beyond. Later, other band members included Miki Lebona and Peter Segwale, both of whom skipped the country in 1976 as the liberation struggle intensified, as well as Moss Tau. Simon Falatsi was later member of Marumo, a band produced by West Nkosi of Makgonatšohle Band fame. By 1983 the line-up of The All Rounders had so changed that it would be wrong to call it a band of the blind. They released an album, *Ekaba ke Mang Eo?*, under the name Thami and The All Rounders, produced by CCP's Tom Vuma. Their lead vocalist was Thami Sobekwa, one of the most powerful voices in the industry at that time. Yes, he's the voice in *Cause I Love You* on the group Stimela's live album. You may also like to know that one of the band members was Faith Shadi Kekana who would later be a member of female trio, Shadiiii.

**SABATA KOLOI LEBONA** was born on 2 August 1942 and grew up in Winburg in the Free State. He focused his attention on production and later embarked on a solo career becoming a life-long producer for Babsy Mlangeni. When I met him in the early seventies he was staying in Zone 1, Meadowlands. After the closure of his company Black Artist Management (BAM), this multi-strumentalist and song-writer launched his record label, Khaya Records, in 1984. The first acts included **AFUBI** (Afro Funk & Blues Investigation), a group formerly known as Reborn until 1983. AFUBI had a massive hit that very year, *Get Up And Party* co-written by **SIZWE ZAKO** and **LINDA OLIPHANT**. The band was fronted by Linda "Slim" Oliphant who was also a trumpeter and later on went solo releasing albums *Sweet Mbaqanga* (1985) and *I Won't Let You Go* (1986) on Ctv-Music Team's Mambo Music label under Tom "Bishop" Mkhise. Linda, son of legendary trumpeter Dennis Mpale later "skipped" to join his father in Amandla Cultural Ensemble. Sizwe Zako's future is another long story involving musicians like Lena Khama, Girlie Mafura, Tau Bokoda, Pure Magic and gospel queen, Rebecca Malope. In 1986 he had a self-written and self-produced solo project *All My Love* under the name Sizwe on RPM's Right Track label. Sizwe's other solo albums include *Shenxa*, *Good Times*, *Sizwe Zako* as well as a volume titled *Sizwe Zako And Friends*. The late drummer Pirate "Pi" Tshabalala was also a member of AFUBI.

Another band in the stable was **BAYETE**, a group that was later to be fronted by superstar Jabu Khanyile for many years. Their self-titled 1984 album included the hit, *Shosholoza*. It was co-produced by Greg Cutler and Koloi Lebona on



his Kaya label and engineered by Greg. The group's line-up at that time was: Johnny Chonco (guitar), Arthur Shabalala (Piano), Carlton Malete (drums), Pat Mayo (bass), Mfaniseni Thuse (trombone), Mduduzi Magwaza (alto Saxophone) and Raymond Molefe (trumpet). The late Jabu Khanyile joined the group immediately after the recording of the album.

Sabata Lebona also produced *Love Fever*, an album written and performed by former Hararian, Saitana aka Monty Ndimande. "Bra Kari" as Sabata was referred to by his *tsotsitaal*-eloquent blind friends, produced many other artists like a female duo Ecstasy made up of Edith and Amelia Mnwela, a project he shared with his late blind brother, Japie, and Monty Leo Bogatsu. Other young artists he produced include Caroline Fassie's debut album. Carol who also featured on various musicians' works as a backing vocalist later became a television personality.

Also produced by Sabata was former deejay, *SPECIAL CANE MAHLELEBE* from the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. The young man had earned the nickname "Special Cane" or "Speshu" from his flexibility in breakdancing, a craze that swept the country (originally from the slums of Bronx and Harlem in the States). Unfortunately, in 1986 a car accident on the way from Roma University cut short young Speshu's life at the age of 24 before he reaped the benefits of his first album cut in 1985.

Koloi co-wrote three isiZulu songs with Jimmy Mojaelo for the 1984 Margaret Singana's traditional music album, *Isiphiwo Sam* (My Gift). This multi-talented muso also produced Bakithi Khumalo's 1990 album *On Friendly Bases* as well as a number of jazz musicians including McCoy Mrubata, Ezra Ngcukana, Jonas Gwangwa, African Jazz Pioneers and Jonathan Butler. A true father figure to many artists, Sabata also had a hand in the grooming of one of the brightest stars South Africa has ever seen – Brenda Nokuzola Fassie.

In Langa, Cape Town, Brenda's brothers were part of Gibson Kente's cast and little Brenda also joined them and explored her talent in stage theatre acting. At the same time, Brenda was part of her mother Sarah's music group, The Tiny Tots. Mom Sarah played the piano for the group. It was at that time that a Cape Town musician, Al Etto, spotted the small dynamite and tipped Johannesburg producer Koloi Lebona about the jewel. Koloi arrived at the Fassie home on Christmas Day in 1979. He requested that Sarah release Brenda into his polishing hands and she agreed on condition the young girl would continue with her studies. In White City, Soweto, while grooming her for a bright musical career, he fulfilled his promise and registered her at Phefeni Secondary School. Here her teacher and mentor was a man who was also a soccer player with Moroka Swallows Football Club; a man who would one day be South Africa's Bafana Bafana head coach – Trott Moloto. This Mohlaloga (praise name) from Moletji in Polokwane coached Brenda, especially in the Queen's English. Linda Bernhart, manager of music group Joy requested "Bra Kari" to release Brenda to Joy for

a few weeks to replace Anneline Malebo who had to take maternity leave. Sabata agreed on condition the young girl continued with her studies. One should remember that even at the time, Joy was one of the most happening groups internationally because of their monster hit *Paradise Road*. After Joy, Brenda never looked back and Koloï's promise to Mama Sarah suffered a bitter-sweet blow. However, Hendrick Sabata Lebona's career is still highlighted by the many hit albums he produced and sometimes composed for his friend, Babsy Mlangeni. Lebona currently owns a new label, Get Ahead Records.

**ATHANAS JIMMY MOJAPELO**, born sighted on 14 April 1941 at Matome village, Zebediela in the then Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo province) lost his eyesight at a young age. He also went into band management, songwriting and production. An all-rounder like Sabata, the most known group he started from scratch was **THE MINERALS**, a band that featured a young female pianist, Thelma Segona. Their name meant that the music they played was as valuable as precious stones. Their first self-titled album featured a track, *Pretty Pinky* dedicated to Jimmy's wife. The leader of the band was Joe Mkhabela. Other band members were Thelma Segona, Lido Kunene, Monty Bogatsu, Ronnie Mkhonto and Pi Tshabalala, but like many bands the line-up changed here and there over time. One of their first hit singles was *Close Together*. Their debut album, *Sweet Soweto* (1976), featured a marathon track of the same name. Ironically, Soweto went sour in June that very same year. The band's live performances were popular in the former Protectorates – Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland. They mainly played the sound of Philadelphia (TSOP), which was dominated by groups like The Three Degrees (*When Will I See You Again?*), Harold Melvyn And The Blue Notes (*Wakeup Everybody*), Billy Paul (*Me And Mrs Jones*) as well as The Ebonys (*I Believe*). Jimmy's other compositions include *Monica* (Gallo, 1974), a song he wrote for an erstwhile star, Johnny Collini. He also co-wrote three isiZulu tracks for the late Margaret Singana with his friend, Sabata Koloï Lebona. His band The Minerals produced some of South Africa's well-known musicians who later became stars in their own right.

Some of the stars include **SUPA FRIKA** aka Henry Maitin from Eldorado Park who had cut his teeth in music with a group called Revolution. Maitin became a superstar after a studio concept by Tom Vuma and Selwyn Shandel at CCP Records, but unfortunately his career was cut short by a shooting incident that left him paralysed. He'll always be remembered for hits like *Let's Go Shopping*, *Saturday Nite*, *Love Satisfaction* and *Love Is On Our Side*.

Baberton-born songstress **NELCY SEDIBE** also joined this band and toured the country as vocalist with Kori Moraba. A former Mashadza High School student, Nelcy later joined her old band, Kakai and released albums like *Sengaliwe* (1984) and *Take A Chance* (1986) under West Nkosi at Gallo Records; both West and Nelcy have since left us. One of Nelcy's memorable hits remains *This Time He's Gone*.

**PETER MOKOENA** and **SISCO MOKOENA** also went through Jimmy's hands. Sisco

ended up being a reputable backing vocalist but also released his own music like the 1989 album, *Victory*, produced by Stimela's bass guitarist, Jabu Sibumbe. Peter also released his own work from which flowed a powerful ballad, *Pain In My Heart*. In 1994 Peter was the voice in the Star Point 5 studio concept that featured a powerful disco hit *Take Me To The Disco* written and arranged by Wilson Ndlovu and produced by Thokoza Memela on the Atlantic label. But most people took note of him as the lead vocalist of the dynamic group, Pure Magic, produced by "The Quiet Storm", Sizwe Zako of Zako Music. Their red-hot albums include *Bhay' Lam* (1989), *Umuzi Wam* (1990), *Hamba Naye* (1991) and *1988–2000: The Jazz Instrumentals*. In 2000 they were nominated in the SAMA 7 for *Sakhiwe*. Interestingly, when Peter left the group, another Mokoena took over as lead singer – Vuyo, from Duduza in Nigel, the former East Rand (now Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality). By the year 2006 Peter had shifted his focus to the gospel music genre as he released his eleventh album, *Masambeni*. He continues to assist and guide new musicians in their endeavour to record their material and spread the Gospel.

**ALI KATT** aka Ali Moroatshehla sang for The Minerals in 1979 before Godfrey Nzuzi of MFM launched his professional solo career, which will always be remembered for the hit *Let The Good Times Roll* from his album *Have Mercy* (MFM, 1987). Katt's next album, *Killer* (MFM, 1988), included a tribute to the unusual twins Mpho and Mphonyana. After a long break he made a come back in a duet called Ali Katt and Biggs with the album *Township Boy*.

Most of Jimmy Mojapelo's creative work was done under the RPM record label. Jimmy, who was also an author and comedian produced musicians like female saxophonist Lynette Leeuw, Corrine Morgan, Moss Tladi, Sandra Senne as well as gospel groups Rehauhetswe Choir and Hosanna Ea Pele. His showbiz as well as life experiences are narrated in his book *The Unknown Hero* published by Skotaville Books. But most of us will always remember him for his association with singing sensation **KORI MORABA** and the band **BLACK FIVE**, both having ruled the airwaves in the eighties. Kori had numerous hits composed by Jimmy like *O Tla Orata*, *Tseketseke*, *Ho Boulela*, *Tshepa Thapelo*, *Tswang Tswang Tswang*, *Mmamoratwa Waka and Keng Na?* The band Black Five from Sebokeng featured young Themba Lehlakola while other members included Cokes Mokhele and Daniel Tsietsi Motijoane, who'd later be known as Coyote. Their hits included *Batho Ba Tla Reng?*, *O Tshabe Lefase*, *Teboho Ke Mang*, *Tima Lebone* and Tsepo Tshola's evergreen composition, *Pula Ea Na*.

Upon my father's death on 28 June 1970, Jimmy who was my mother's younger brother became my mentor in the world of media and showbiz. During my school holidays I would go to Soweto where my routine included boarding the train to town at Merafe Station to buy new music, listen and write down the lyrics for the four o'clock band practice in a Rockville garage. I still remember going to town on here occasions hunting for Stevie Wonder's album,

*Innervision*, which featured tracks like *Living For The City* and *Mistra Know-It-All*. When I finally got it, we played it so frequently that I ended up knowing the lyrics by heart. Four was the time he'd have knocked off from his day job as a switchboard operator at the Tladi offices. The journey to the rehearsals would coincide with the coming down of a smoke blanket over the township. That is when thousands of chimneys would compete in exhaling the dark wool into the urban sky. It was at this Rockville house where, for the first time, I saw one of the people who wrote stories in the newspapers – journalist Martin Mahlaba. I admired him from a distance because I always had this dream of working for mass communication media. It was here that I learned to mix and mingle with socialites that I'd only read about in my small village of Matome, Zebediela. I loved the nightlife vibe at places like the Diepkloof Hall and Mofolo Hall where shows dubbed *Akulalwa* (All Night) were staged by promoters like Sam Khumalo. At the end of the month it was also my call to ride the train to town where I would pay monthly instalments for musical instruments at Recordia.

Uncle Jimmy's home was at 911 Tladi Location. His marriage was never blessed with a child and as such he somehow treated me like his adopted son. I was part of the team that read the daily newspaper to him; the team included my brother Thomo Phineas Mojapelo (Sisco). The responsibility was later carried forward by my cousins Ouma Rabaji (now Rasethaba), Moribula Kubu (now Makwetja) and Malope Mojapelo. I would also write poems with him and accompany him to places like Babsy Mlangeni's house in Dube. It was during this time that I fell in love with poets like Wally Serote, Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali and the late Siphso Sepamla and learned to appreciate good lyrics, rhyme and rhythm. It was here that I learned the importance of the radio to the blind. It reads news, entertains, educates and checks time for them. In fact, in those days my uncle would tell me that without a radio next to him, his world was even darker.

When I became a radio announcer my number one listener was a blind listener; I would imagine the students at Siloe School for the Blind sitting around the radio set listening to Max the Mixerboy (my name on air). By the way my presentation style as a radio presenter was influenced by jocks like Harold West (LM Radio), Ike Dagada (Radio Venda), David Gresham (Springbok Radio), Modisane Modise (Radio Bop) the late Kansas City aka Cyril Mchunu (Radio Zulu) and Cassey Cassem (American charts). A fast and fluent reader and typist, Uncle Jimmy skilled many young prospective typists during his spare time; most of them ended up being clerks. He was a very strict and straight talking band manager to a point of perfection. He disliked truancy and excuses. I learned later in my life that this could be infectious. We agreed on many issues except my wish to join the band. He was aware that I loved playing the lead guitar with my whole heart and studied the origin of the instrument whose journey started in Egypt, Spain and the US where the electric guitar market was dominated by the Gibson and Fender manufacturers. I followed guitarists like

Marks Mankwane very close, especially his *Marks Special* series. I also loved rock bands like The Edgar Winter Group, an Albino band that stayed on the US charts for 13 weeks in 1973 with their smash hit *Free Ride*; Lynyrd Skynyrd, a group known for their 1974 hit *Sweet Home Alabama* that stayed on the US charts for eight weeks; and The Allman Brothers Band. I still love the rock guitars of Eagle Eye Cherry, Eric “Slowhand” Clapton, The Hoodoo Gurus as well the master of the string, George Benson. The acoustic strings of the Congolese rumba guitars drive me crazy. Thanks to Uncle Jimmy, I continued with my education and can today use the little I’ve learned to share this story with you.

Jimmy’s mother, Mmahlogo Sebolaishi Mojapelo, passed away on 11 April 1989. A year later his wife, Aunt Pinky, passed away on 17 May 1990 and Jimmy followed her on 17 August 1990. They were all buried among their Bahlalerwa (praise name) ancestors at the foot of the Matome mountain. Rest in peace, multilingual wild dog...

*Robala ka khutšo Matsetsebale’a Lebosa,  
Malope’a Tilo mogatša Mmone wa ga Maruma’Mahlodi.  
Leina la gago ke tsela Malesela,  
Ke phaphathi re ka se le fetše.*  
(This verse was Jimmy’s praise poem.)

Thereafter, his long-term vocalist, Kori Moraba had several projects including his Sesotho version of Isaac Hayes’s love ballad *I Stand Accused* from the *Isaac Hayes Movement* album as well as his album titled *I Need Somebody* (Teal Sound, 1988) produced by Peter “Hitman” Moticoe. Ultimately, the former member of the TNT’s turned to God, joined the ZCC and sang gospel music.

By the way, my association with the All Rounders at an early age taught me a lot about the world of the unsighted. They support one another like a pride of lions. Their role models were musicians like Albany-born Ray Charles Robinson, Clarence Carter and Steveland Morris aka Stevie Wonder. Their passion for good lyrics also attracted them to the music of Robert Zimmerman aka Bob Dylan, as well as bands like Chicago Transit Authority.

**BERNARD BABSY MLANGENI**’s music career in South Africa is almost a wonder like that of Stevie Wonder in the States. Babsy was born on 24 February 1943 in Orlando East, Soweto. His solo career was boosted by the monster hit, *Buoa Nnete* (His Master’s Voice, 1972), a soulful ballad I used to sing with my student group, The Praise My Lord Quartet at Matladi High School. The crowds just loved it! After that hit he turned into an unstoppable hit machine. His partnership with Sabata Kolozi Lebona was as hot as that of Bernie Taupin and Elton John aka Reginald Dwight. Babsy Mlangeni’s music catalogue is a thick endless document. What was interesting about his music was that he could release one album in three languages, for example, *Babsy Mlangeni Sings Xhosa*, *Babsy Mlangeni Sings*



*Sotho* and *Babsy Mlangeni Sings Zulu*, a trend also later followed by Steve Tebogo Kekana. His 1980s dance hits included *Botsotso*, *Lonely Man* and *Umadlemhlabini*. He also sang in English as on albums like *Lonely Man* (BAM, 1981) and *Who's The Boss*, a 1988 album with an interesting note on the sleeve: "If you don't dig African music, you've got a hole in your soul."

One of the most beautiful English cover versions Babsy did was Lionel Ritchie's composition, *Going Back To Alabama*. His main rival was Mpharanyana aka Jacob Radebe who for instance released the song *Mary* immediately after Babsy's hit single *Sala Emma*. Some of the star's many albums include *Melaetsa Ya Babsy Mlangeni* and *Kopa O Tla Fiwa*. Most of his hits were released under the series *Babsy Mlangeni: Golden Hits* in isiZulu and Sesotho. Babsy has also been involved in developing young talent like Linda Matanzima on *Shebeleza* (1991). The lady ended up marrying his producer, Sabata Lebona. Other projects were Mbali's Ngiyamthanda Ujesu co-produced with Peter Mokoena as well as Osuka'Sambe's Kungcono Ngim'qome. Some of those projects involved youth choirs, as well as church groups. In 1999 Zenzele Music released two compilations of his best Sesotho and isiZulu compositions. The Sesotho CD was titled *Motho Ke Eo* and has ten tracks including *O Rapele*, *Thola Makoti*, *Ho Na Le Batho*, *Sala Emma*, *Nna Ke a Phela* and *Buoa Nnete*. The isiZulu title for the CD is *Mina Ngiyaphila* and features among other tracks *Guqa Uthandase*, *Musa Ukukhuthuza*, *Thula Sana*, *Thembisile*, *Hamba Tugela* and *Kwa Dabeka*. All the tracks were produced by Hendrick Koloi Lebona, assisted by Themba Mkhise on the re-recording of *Sala Emma*.

The CD, *Babsy 2001*, was co-produced by Koloi Lebona and Alexis Faku of reggae group Oyaba fame. The idea of roping in the younger Alexis was to inject some new schoolness into the CD. It featured well-known musicians like Hugh Masekela, George Lee, Louis Mhlanga, Khanyo Maphumulo and Caroline Fassie. The CD was nominated in the Best Producer category of SAMA 8. Like Kori Moraba and Lionel Petersen, Babsy is now using his talent to glorify the name of the Lord. But, make no mistake, Babsy's voice is still in that rare vocal class of musos like David Masekela, Steve Kekana, Blondie Makhene and the late Lucky Dube who had an excellent control of their tones. Proof of this was the recent launch of his new 16-track CD, *Umsebenzi Awukho*, still produced by Sabata Koloi Lebona.

During their era, musicians were not allowed to record songs in different languages on one single; A and B sides had to use the same language. The other strange feature was the tendency of record companies to indicate the publishing date in Roman numbers and figures. I always wondered whether any musician could have been permitted to title his song *She Was Waiting For Her Mother At The Station In Torino And You Know I Love You Baby But It's Getting Too Heavy To Laugh* like Shawn Phillips once did. These and other rigid rules were mostly based on the fact that musicians did not know their rights. In 1978 an attempt was made to unite black musicians under the banner of Black Artist Management. The

organisation played its role, but met with a lot of challenges. Eight years later in 1985 Koloi Lebona, Jimmy Mojapelo, Siphon Mabuse and Alec Khaoli convened a meeting of more than two hundred musicians at the DOCC hall to exchange ideas on how they could stop the ongoing exploitation of musos. The historical meeting was chaired by a former radio announcer, Stanley Nkosi who at that time was a director at one of the record companies. An interim committee was elected at the end of that meeting to draft a constitution and find ways and means of addressing musicians' challenges. The committee was made up of: Siphon Mabuse, Abigail Khubeka, Steve Kekana, Jonathan Clegg, Alec Khaoli, Khaya Mahlangu and Johnny Dimba.

A former journalist, Mr Derrick Thema founded the Musicians' Association of South Africa, which used to be called Musicians' Alliance. It did a lot of work, especially during the Cultural Boycott era. For instance, it was the one that would later give Paul Simon's *Born At The Right Time* tour thumbs up as it was satisfied with the procedures followed by its organisation.

Blind musicians on the other hand later also realised that there was a need for an association of their own that could take care of their specific needs. That is how SABMA was born. Yes, let me answer that one. It stands for the South African Blind Musicians Association. Led by John Mothopeng, Monty Bogatsu and Sam Noge, the association's record label was named Insight Music. In 2005 the name of the association was changed to SADMA, the South African Disabled Music Association in order to cater for all disabilities.

Later the Musicians Union Of South Africa (MUSA) was established. Under the chairmanship of Motsumi Makhene the Music Industry Development Trust (MIDI) was launched in order to train, assist and guide new producers, promoters, technicians as well as stage and road managers. By the way, Motsumi Makhene is a music teacher, composer, arranger, performer, poet and painter. When I met him in the mid-1990s at a music workshop in Johannesburg, he was at Funda Arts Centre in Soweto. It has since been transformed into a community college. There are also lawyers who specialise in the administration of the industry as well as other smaller associations that look after musicians' interests. The major problematic areas in this industry have always been recording contracts, publishing and concert deals and seemingly there is still a lot of work to be covered. There is light at the end of the tunnel as initiatives like Zakheni Music Trust are conducting workshops to cover musicians even in the outlying rural areas. In 2005 the Musicians Union of South Africa (MUSA) and the Performing Arts Workers' Equity (PAWE) merged to form the Creative Workers Union of South Africa (CWUSA). Its first president became Mabutho "Kid" Sithole and the Secretary General, Oupa Lebogo. CWUSA's objectives include redressing the old challenges like the recognition of artists as workers, medical aid, funeral insurances, contracts, banking issues as well as the support of the industry by the government.

There were other organisations that helped to facilitate the music business on behalf of the musicians. First came SAFCA, a British organisation seeking to represent musicians in the collection of royalties and some such matters. Some of the first members to affiliate were musicians like Strike David Vilakazi. In 1962 SAMRO took over the responsibility of collecting royalties from public performances including broadcasting. The organisation is a member of the International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers (CISAC); and as such is able to function even beyond the borders of South Africa on behalf of its members. In other words, it is affiliated to over 120 similar societies across the world, covering more than 150 countries and territories. It is the body at the forefront of the implementation of the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa's (ICASA) local content quota including the embarrassing South African Music Week. All broadcasters in the country have to regularly send copies of their music play lists to SAMRO to confirm that they are playing by the rules. It currently represents more than 1.4 million rights owners of all nationalities in southern Africa in respect of their performing rights. Its membership is based on direct membership by composers, authors, translators, arrangers and music publishers as well as members of its affiliated societies. The organisation also assists in the development of new talent through the SAMRO Overseas Bursary Competition. In 2007 the winners were two ladies from the University of Cape Town, Kimmy Skota (classical music category) and Monique Hellenberg (jazz category). On 1 July 2006 Nicholas Motsatse took over from Rob Hooijer as the institution's Chief Executive Officer. Nick also chaired the National Arts Council as well as the Moshito Conference and Exhibition.

The South African Recording Rights Association Limited (SARRAL) established in 1963 focuses on dealing with publishers and record companies on behalf of the composers, that is, the rights of composers' work wherever it's being recorded. Composers have to register their intellectual property with this institution to be able to benefit from their music. Graham Gilfillan is director of SARRAL.

The National Organisation of Reproduction Rights in Music in Southern Africa Limited (NORM) is responsible for mechanical copyrights. It assists in the collection and distribution of royalties on copyrights that arise when music is transferred from one format to another. An example of this could be music being transferred from master tape to CD. The organisation works hand in hand with broadcasters and other users like film makers. At the time of writing this book its chairperson was Robbie Kallenbach.

The contribution of these institutions has opened the eyes of many musicians to the importance of protecting their own intellectual property. There are a number of cases that demonstrate the vulnerability of musicians, especially composers. In the past some of the songs that became popular were included by unscrupulous foreign musicians in their albums as cover versions or adaptations without any credit to the original source. This later resulted in lawsuits and



disputes involving industry experts like Professor Andrew Tracey and music copyright consultant, Graeme Gilfillan. Some of those compositions included Solomon Linda's old composition *Mbube*, a song adapted by various groups as *Wimoweh* or *The Lion Sleeps Tonight*. In 2006 the battle for the recognition and credit to the composer was won. Most of these compositions date back to the Golden Age Of South African Jazz whose platforms were mainly Cape Town, Durban, Alexandra Township and Sophiatown, a cultural melting pot from which blacks were forcefully removed in 1955. In fact, Sophiatown in Johannesburg had much in common with District Six in Cape Town and Cato Manor in Durban.

The removals inspired songs like Strike Vilakazi's *Meadowlands*, Robbie Jansen's *District Six* as well as Steve Dyer's *Umkhumbane*. In 2005, for the 50th anniversary of the Sophiatown removals, the play *Sophiatown* directed by Malcolm Purkey was staged to remind us of the era and the error. Umkhumbane-born Alfred Nokwe also staged *Uvukile Umkhumbane* (Umkhumbane Has Risen), showcasing the cultural melting pot that was Cato Manor. The theatre and entertainment industry as a whole was saddened by the death of Alfred Duma Nokwe on 2 June 2008 at the age of 73. A seasoned film actor, Nokwe, who was born on 1 April 1935, managed theatre productions and music groups. In 1959 he started his own group, The Rockets. As manager he was in charge of the world-acclaimed play *Umabatha* as well as Grammy Award winners Ladysmith Black Mambazo on their first trip abroad to Germany in 1981. The Kwa-Mashu cultural icon, tutor and mentor was laid to rest on Saturday, 7 June 2008.

Due to the viability and profitability of music festivals in the eighties many individuals would just stage festivals without any consultation or co-ordination with other promoters, even ignoring the South African Black Promoters Association, which was established in 1985. This led to a situation where two to three festivals would run in the same area dividing the crowd that could have made one successful festival. At the end of the day, the real professional promoters suffered so many losses and closed shop while the chancers went back to their normal businesses. Committed professional promoters like Sam Mhangwani and Peter Tladi put their heads together to bring an end to the chaotic situation. In 1997 the South African Music Promoters' Association (SAMPA) was born. By 2005 its president was still Peter Tladi who is also director of Bula Music. By the way, some of the musicians who recorded at Bula Music were Lundi, S'fiso, Spokes H, Kholeka, Dumi Mkokstad Nzimande, S'Khathele Khoza, Malini, Bow and Arrow, and Shwi noMtekhala under Tshepo Nzimande.

I first met Peter Tladi while he was still at MFM – a music man at heart. We later did a number of projects together including the annual Standard Bank Jazz Festival, which made me realise the amount of experience he had amassed over the years. He was highly professional and connected. In 1989 he launched his own management company, T-Musicman, which subsequently managed big

names like Rebecca Malope, Mzwakhe Mbuli and Jonas Gwangwa. His vice president at SAMPA was China Mpololo of CSun Promotions. Some of the well-known music promoters of the past and present are: Sabinki Senabe, Peter Khowana, Sam “JizaJiza” Mthembu, Leonard Sithole, Sam Mhangwani, Morris Roda, Solly Nkutha, Prosper Mkwaiwa, Chilliboy Molewa, Ralph Zikalala and Bruce Kgapane. Let me pay tribute to the late Chilliboy Molewa who was also a successful businessman. He was laid to rest at Nina Park Cemetery, Pretoria North at the beginning of July 1966. May his soul rest in peace.

Annual music concerts include Rashid Lombard’s Cape Town International Jazz Festival, Arabi Mocheke’s Soweto Arts Festival, China Mpololo’s Cape Town Homecoming Music Festival, Drakensberg Promotions’ Tribute to SA Music Heroes Concert, Peter Tladi’s Standard Bank Joy Of Jazz, Grahamstown National Arts Festival, Mangaung Cultural Festival, Limpopo Arts Festival, MTN Durban Jazz Festival, Secunda Jazz and Cultural Festival, Oppie Koppie Music Festival, Taung Calabash, Awesome Africa Music Festival, Aardklop Festival and Khayelitsha Arts Festival. The most regular ones include Jazzman Mahlakgane’s Ekurhuleni Comes Alive.

Towards the end of the eighties these music festivals became so popular that a new trend of all-night concerts commonly known as 626 surfaced. This spirit subsided with the release of our political leaders and the unbanning of liberation movements as people rushed to political rallies to listen to the “messiahs”. The rallies were mostly accompanied by free concerts. Beyond the euphoria, the youth were drawn to street concerts dubbed “bashes”. But at the same time, a new festival culture emerged that would dominate the local music scene and bring back the Golden Age of South African Jazz. Jazz festivals grew beyond the promoter’s wildest dreams and drew both young and old to venues like Moretele Park, Chuene Resort, Lowveld Showgrounds, Mary Fitzgerald Square and others. This spirit brought together the old school musicians and the new generation to share the joy of jazz. It is this spirit that left a lasting impression on visiting US saxman David Murray at Wits music school in 2005 as he witnessed the magic of Barney Rachabane, Stompie Manana, Herbie Tsoaeli, Andile Yenana, Feya Faku, Marcus Wyatt, Bheki Khoza, Denzil Weale and Glen Mafoko doing their thing in a truly South African rainbow jam session.

For music festivals to run smoothly you need skilled and professional technicians. These are the men and women who construct the stage, connect cables and check the sound system, lighting as well as related matters. This department also experienced huge problems in the eighties as there were few skilled people. As promoters’ demands for quality concerts grew, the South African Roadies Association (SARA) was established. By 2005 its president was Freddy Nyathela. Among its priorities it had to facilitate the training of its members in technical and production skills (including sound, lighting, audio visuals and rigging).

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The success of The All Rounders and especially Babsy Mlangeni gave rise to a new young regiment of blind musicians. Amongst them the most known are Steve Tebogo Kekana, Lazarus Kgagudi, Ali Mapulana, Willie and Paul, Martin And Shimane, Cokes Mokhele and Theo Phala. Unlike the older generation of the blind, the younger generation attended schools within their provinces as several special schools had already been established by missions like the Roman Catholic Church.

One of the most successful musicians of the era was **STEVE TEBOGO KEKANA**. He was born sighted on 16 September 1958 at Bolahlakgomo, Zebediela near the town of Mokopane in Limpopo Province. He lost his eye-sight at the age of five due to illness. The nearest special school to his home was Siloe School for the Blind, some 40 kilometres South of the city of Polokwane. The school was built within a small village of Thokgwaneng near Chuenespoort under Kgoši Lesiba Mamokgalake Chuene. This is where Steve spent his early days. In the area the school was known for winning trophies in music competitions. It had its own set of musical instruments. It was in this environment that young Tebogo started playing the guitar. Most of his friends at school loved playing soccer and to be with them, he also chose the game until his teacher, Mr Chuene, discovered his immense talent in music and forced him into the school choir.

In 1976 Steve was the school's Chief Prefect. In protecting students' rights he clashed with the school management and he was expelled. He completed his Senior Certificate in 1977 as a part-time student at Matladi High School, Zebediela. In April 1977 he went to Itireleng Training Centre in GaRankuwa where he completed a switchboard operator course in three months. He accepted an invitation from Lazarus Kgagudi to join Abram Mojalefa's band called Hunters in August the same year. The band was based in Driekop and besides Lazarus Kgagudi another member was Ali Mapulana. Later the group faced some difficulties due to the poor health condition of Lazarus Kgagudi. A talent scout, Tom Vuma of CCP Records spotted Steve and recruited him to recording studios in Johannesburg. In 1978 he recorded his first commercial single, *Mamsy*, backed by The Pages on the 45 rpm disc. The release of the single was so dramatic in his village of birth, Bolahlakgomo, that it almost created a school holiday. One learner heard it played at the local shebeen known as "Ga-Spokes" and ran to Madibu Secondary School to break the good news to the other students. As it was during break, they followed the messenger and danced the afternoon away! What a village launch. Kekana's producer Tom Vuma, also acted as manager of the band until 1980 when well-known playwright, Sam Mhangwani became their manager. Tom and Steve's partnership was much like that of Babsy and Koloï.

By 2007 Vuma was managing among others, the king of xiTsonga traditional music, Hasani Thomas Chauke. In a period of four years Steve's success saw him receive 70 gold discs. Some of his other hits after *Mamsy* were *Peggy*, *Abuti Thabiso*, *O Le Orele*, *Mokgotse Wa Hao*, *Iphupho*, *Seponono*, *All I Need Is Here In Africa*, *Kgarebe*, *Keledi Tsaka*, *Banna Ka Dijase* and *Masabata*. The list is endless. Like his role model Babsy, Steve also released his music in Sesotho, isiZulu, xiTsonga and English. An example of this is the Sesotho hit, *Masabata*, which was also available in isiZulu as *Ntombifuthi*. There are many examples of this.

In 1983 he toured Sweden. Actually, he was one of the first musicians to take their bands with them on an overseas tour. I remember how devastated Alicia Lindiwe Fassie was when out of the six band members she was the only one to be refused a visa. She later joined a Cape town group, Bloodshed. But, she still thinks her two years with Steve Kekana were the most rewarding in her career. This tour of the Scandinavian countries boosted his popularity and his song *Raising My Family* became a remarkable success in Finland. In Sweden it climbed the charts up to the number one spot on their Top 10. Another all-time great is his duet with Penelope Jane Dunlop aka PJ Powers in *Feel So Strong*. Some of Steve Kekana's albums early in his singing career were *Ha Re Khumameng*, featuring one of his early gospel hits, which is also the title track; another gospel hit was *Thapelo*.

Then there was *Ifuqe Mntanami: Push*, an album he recorded with a band called Push, which would later become Stimela. Push was made up of Mac Mathunjwa (former Jaws leader), Eddie Mathiba and Ntokozo Zungu from The Pages, Ray Phiri, Lloyd Lelosa, Jabu Sibumbe and Jantshi Pat Mayo. It was only after this that Stimela was formally launched. That's why Mac Mathunjwa was playing keyboards when their first single *I Hate Telling A Lie* was recorded. Steve also released *Alone In The Desert* and *Amandla Amasha*. One of his classic hits was a 1984 composition inspired by the last of the first people – *The Bushman*.

Steve's long-term backing band was The Pages, a group made up of members like Charlie Rakgoale, Ntokozo Zungu and Eddie Mathiba. Their concerts were always vibrant, with the lively Charlie presenting the superstar with a dramatic introduction. At some stage showbiz pressures separated Steve from the band. After realising what a mistake it had been to go their separate ways, they resolved their differences and went back into the studio together. The result was a powerful isiZulu album, *Yihle Lento* (This Thing Is Beautiful), released in July 1984. The album featured the hit, *Izifa Mona*, which was about their beautiful relationship that needed to be nurtured and protected against infiltrators. They agreed that all songs would be credited to the three of them as composers and the producer would be Steve himself. This was a wise reconciliatory gesture as most fights in bands result from the fact that the composer is the only member to earn royalties. That arrangement was also noticeable with one of the oldest bands in the music industry – The Soul Brothers. The solution to this kind of

problem is payment of royalties on needle time.

Here are some of the albums that followed:

YEAR	ALBUM	PRODUCER/S
1984	<i>I Just Wanna Sing</i>	Steve Kekana and Lloyd Lelosa
1986	<i>Love Triangle</i>	Steve Kekana and Lloyd Lelosa
1986	<i>Ngiyadlisa</i>	Steve Kekana, Charlie Rakgoale and Eddie Mathiba
1987	<i>Isiphalaphala</i>	Tom Vuma
1988	<i>Isithombe Sami</i>	Tom Vuma
1988	<i>Makhombo</i>	Mally Watson
1988	<i>So Mean So Bad</i>	Mally Watson
1989	<i>Faith, Love And Respect</i>	Selwyn Shandel
1990	<i>Izifungo</i>	Tom Vuma
1991	<i>Ntate Boloka Sechaba</i>	Steve Kekana and Selwyn Shandel

Most of Steve Kekana's early work was released by Gallo Records, but later CCP Records took over. In the nineties he released gospel music CDs like *Tarashishi* (Cool Spot).

Some of Steve Kekana's career highlights included the FOYSA Award in 1984 (Four Outstanding Young South Africans) and the TOYP Award in 1985 (Ten Outstanding Young People Of The World). He was invited to receive the latter in Columbia.

The lowest point in his career was a disaster in which hundreds of his fans were injured and some died in Maseru, Lesotho in a packed stadium. Although some critics say this showed his popularity, for him it was a sad episode. Steve later dedicated a song to this calamity entitled *Koduo Ya Maseru* (The Maseru Disaster) the royalties of which went towards a disaster fund established immediately thereafter. Having said that, it is still important to emphasise his popularity among the Basotho people, "Ma-Aparakobo-A-Matle" as most of his songs were in Sesotho. On his 1986 *Love Triangle* album he dedicated a track to the football club that was the pride of the Basotho people at that time, *Phunya Selesele (bana ba ho shebile!)*. That is how soccer fans would sing as Bloemfontein Celtic's was systematically destroying enemy strategy on the soccer pitch. Those were the days when Ntate "Whitehead" Molemela could easily predict the outcome of a weekend soccer match. Another scar in Tebogo's career is his memories of the "Info Song", which divided South African musicians into two ideological camps. Beyond the year 2000 he joined forces with fellow musicians Nana "The Wild Dog" Motijoane and Joe Nina aka Henry Makhosini Xaba to form the Trio, a popular dance hall band that also went on to release an album.

Steve had already in the past worked with Coyote Dan Motijoane on the track *Take Your Love* from his album *Love Triangle* (1986). Interestingly, Steve wanted Nana for his forceful and gravel voice effect in the song just as Sipho Mabuse wanted Steve for his falsetto on his hit *Burnout*. This just goes to show the truth in the saying “I am because you are”. Joe Nina who also used the name King Rap early in his career had already shown keen interest in Steve’s music when he recorded a cover version of his hit song, *Iphupho*, and produced SK’s album *African Lady*.

Members of his old band, The Pages, did not register much success without him. Charlie Rakgoale’s solo career attempt in 1986 produced a three-track self-produced mini album, *Mabodongo*, under the name Charlies. Later in 1990 the group’s comeback attempt was made when The Pages released the album *Roba Re Bese* produced by Charlie.

Steve Kekana’s achievements include being the first black visually impaired radio talkshow host in October 1992 on Thobela FM, paving the way for the likes of Rhulani Baloyi of SAFM and “Shift” fame. The programme was broadcast from the station’s Tshwane studios and it was named “On The Pretoria Line/Mogaleng wa Tshwane.” His ability to handle controversial and sensitive topics with confidence won him the name “Pilot of the Airwaves”. When the Tshwane studios were closed down, he was willing to move to Polokwane with the programme, which was renamed “On The Pietersburg Line/Mogaleng Wa Polokwane”. Steve who saw opportunity in adversity took advantage of the move to register at the University of the North (now University of Limpopo) as a law student. This was his long-cherished dream inspired by the first known blind black law student in the North, Mr Joe Malatji. In the five years from 1994 to 1998 he completed two degrees, B.Uris and LLB, and was articled to a firm in Burgersfort, south east of Polokwane. In August 1999 Steve became Legal Adviser in the Provincial Government of Gauteng. He was admitted as an advocate of the High Court of South Africa in November 2004. The law degrees also empowered him to assist his fellow musicians, especially in workshops organised by the Zakheni Music Trust. These roadshows allowed him to enlighten young and new musicians on matters such as the protection of intellectual property. He is also author of a Northern Sotho poetry book, *Hlogwana’ Tšie* (Locust Head), published in 1996. Tebogo co-wrote a Northern Sotho radio serial drama, *Kanyakanya Moepong* (Trouble on the Mine), with Aletta Matshedišo Motimele.

In 1980 Steve, who stayed in Orlando East, had Lindi Fassie as one of his backing vocalists. When young Brenda Fassie left Gibson Kente and Kolo Lebona she joined her sister at Steve’s place. Together with the other girls she underwent an intensive vocal training. Steve realised the vocal prowess of this young girl and introduced her to producer Malcolm Watson. Among Steve’s production works is *Future Heroes*, an album by Leuba Rams aka Leuba Ramakgolo, a member



of Limpopo's band Healer Express. This is a band I had the honour to expose to promoters during my days as a compère. Leuba Ramakgolo later became Thobela FM's station manager. It may also interest you to know that, among other things, Steve ran for local elections as an independent candidate in 1995. Never-say-die Steve knows no limits. He once told me about his participation in a soccer game and how easy it is to ride a bicycle. At one stage he had such a taste for fast cars that when I asked him what car he owned he replied, "The arrow of course!" I later found out he was referring to his Skyline sedan. After he joined the Gauteng government I met him cruising in a big BMW machine. When I asked him why he bought such a big machine, he answered, "Ke kgalemela lenyatšo," which meant "I am shaming the prophets of doom." That's "The Bulldozer" for you!

Steve, like his role model Babsy Mlangeni, recorded at least one "African Connection" song. The artificial political boundaries imposed on this continent by its colonisers failed so dismally to affect its music. I love African music and initiatives like the Kora All Africa Music Awards give me a lot of hope. You see, my childhood village Matome is on the foot of a mountain, and my home was almost the last house towards the mountain. The radio reception was very clear and I could listen to almost any radio station I chose. I listened to "Seromamowa Sa Botswana" from Gaborone, Radio Freedom, Radio Mozambicana as well as Tshebeletso Ya Selozi targeted mostly at the Caprivi Strip and Zambia. I loved each radio station for its blend of music. Their music talked to me more than the local radio stations. They told me there were other people out there connected to me in a manner I did not yet comprehend, or perhaps in my previous life I listened to this music and enjoyed it. I loved the haunting yet melancholic freedom songs of Radio Freedom and Radio Mozambicana. I also enjoyed the cultural choirs of Botswana and the originality of the Lozi groups, especially when they brought drums into a Sunday school chorus. All these introduced me to what I was later told was "Se-Nyaza" or "Kwasa".

At that stage there was no clarity as to what part of the continent played what kind of music. I was not yet aware of music genres like the Sahel, Highlife and Rumba. Babsy Mlangeni's *O Rapele* and Steve Kekana's *Ceciliah* touched me the same way the music beyond our borders to the north did. I later learned that *Ciciliah* from Kekana's 1986 *Ngiyadlisa* album was a re-arrangement of Kinshasa-born Sam Mangwana's hit. Sam is the Rumba region's hot property and has earned himself the stardom name, "The Pigeon Voyager". I love his *Maria Tebbo*, which was locally covered by Condry Ziqubu in isiZulu as *Maria*. The Movers also did an AC song, *Soweto Inn*, fronted by Sophy Thapedi. The Soul Brothers have *Akabongi* whereas Stimela released a track with that touch, *Rubbing Sand In My Eyes*. Listening to the music of the band Harari, one realises that it was in the main influenced by Osibisa, a top band of the seventies originally founded by Ghanaian Teddy Osei in London. Africa is one!

Another household name from the era was a man who earned himself the name “The Silver Fox” – **LAZARUS KGAGUDI**. Unlike most of his peers he was not born blind, but his fate was the result of a bicycle accident at an early age. He was born within the royal circle of the Bapedi ba ga Sekhukhune in Mohlaletse. Lazarus received his education at Siloe School for the Blind. That is where he first met Steve Kekana. Some of the individuals who played part in the shaping of his music career were producers Roxy “Black Cat” Buthelezi, Banzi Kubheka, Phiri Motale and his executive producer, Emil Zoghby. His backing bands were mainly Black Cat Trio, The Neighbours, and Step Ahead, a band that at one stage backed Brenda Fassie at live shows. In 1988 Step Ahead was comprised of Phiri Motale, Buick Thwala, Toto Moloantsoa, Blackie Sibisi, Veli Ramauwane and Negro Mlotshwa. Roxy Buthelezi’s work with this star will always be remembered for hits like *Bobe bja Sekgotse*, *Heyi Nina Botsotsi*, *Mandla No Billy* and *Uyophelelaphi*. Banzi Kubheka produced his self-composed ten-track Sesotho album, *Morena A Re Thuse*, under the Muziwakithi record label, on which he dedicated one track, *A Nkeke Ke Mo Lebale*, to his true friend, Mr Ntwampe.

In 1986 Phiri Motale produced another self-composed album, *Don’t Hold Her Ruf*, a four-track mini album featuring the hit that is also the title track. His other hits include *I’m Hooked On Your Love*, *This Place Is Boring*, *Sekala* and *Gauteng* from yet another Phiri Motale production, *Lazarus Kgagudi 3* (1988), *Makarapa* and his 1990 *Careless Mistakes* from the album of the same name, which also featured *SJB*, an anti-child abuse song. In the late eighties radio listeners knew that almost every year “Ngwato’a Ngwato” (praise name) would release a Christmas bombshell. In 1993 he recorded *Love Is A Dangerous Game*, an album he co-produced with Emil Zoghby. Lazarus also helped develop young talent by producing the following artists: Izzy Boy Masedi’s *I’m Tired Of Making Love* (1986); Willie Mohlala’s *Nobody Else But You* (1988) with Phiri Motale; Max Masuluke’s *Mitshama Himina* (1989); Eric D’s *I Love You Tshidi* as well as Sigaman’s *Makopano* (1990). His band, Step Ahead, released *Sbarara* (Sounds Of Soweto, 1988), an album produced by Emil Zoghby. Disease cut short the life of this down-to-earth royal star. On 31 March 2007, Lazarus was posthumously honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award by Kazo Promotions at a festival dubbed Golden Oldies Music Festival in Polokwane. I read his profile and achievements to the crowd and his people from Mohlaletse received the award accompanied by their top traditional dance group, Mafološankwethabeng.

The duo, **WILLIE AND PAUL**, is another success story of the blind in the history of South African music. Originally from Mokopane in Limpopo, they took the local music scene by storm. By 1982 they were the talk of the town. Their hits included *Umakoti ka Themba*, *Ho Bohloko Joang*, *Ho Tseba Modimo Fela*, *Ke A Ho Rata*, *Khosi*, *Khutla Mantwa*, *Nyalanang*, *Moipone* and *We Love It*. The duo was also at one stage under Steve Kekana’s producer, Tom “Big T” Vuma. Without any shadow of doubt, Tom Vuma is one of the most dynamic producers in South



Africa whose other projects include KJS's instrumental album, *Extension 4* (Miracle, 1988), as well as Vumani's self-titled debut.

Another duo, **MARTIN AND SHIMANE**, was produced by Jimmy Mojapelo and their music was mainly recorded in Northern Sotho. Some of their songs include *Dingwetši Le Bommatswale*, *Disebo*, *Mmapelo*, *Ngwanaka* and *O Tshepileng*. Of the two, Martin Mabala later embarked on a solo career releasing albums like *Mahle Amabhungu Namatshitshi* (Smash Records, 1984) co-produced by Emil Zoghby and Taylor Phasha as well as *Uzosala Wedwa* (Midnight Beat) produced and arranged by Simon Ngwenya.

**MARKS MBUTHUMA** released his music in Zulu and Northern Sotho. I remember his 10-track 1980 album, *Mokgaetši*, which was produced by B. Mkhulwane for Annic Music Productions. **THEO PHALA**'s songs include *Heart Breaker*, *Lelala Phaephe*, *Molato Ke Mmago* and *Mmago Ngwanake*.

As the soul fever swept over the country other bands also sprung up in Soweto. Just as the pride of African Americans was the Jackson family, South Africa's answer was the Makhene family in Soweto. Papa Tebogo Peter Makhene and Mama Lilly Matsie Lekwete were both talented musicians and this was passed on to their children. This highly talented and hard-working family formed a family band the nucleus of which was Pappa, Blondie, Clifford, Pamela and Phyllis. The group's name was simply **THE FAMILY**. They mostly concentrated on live performances. This group also helped pave the way to stardom for Brenda Fassie, who at some stage was a member. Part of this band clinched a recording deal using the name, **SPANKK**. Its members were Pappa, Blondie, Phyllis and Mpho. Spankk registered some success with hits like *Mapula*, a traditional praise song about a beautiful African lady who spent most of her time washing her petite body. Later, the two brothers formed a hot duo, **PAPPA AND BLONDIE**. This hip and energy-oozing act packed dance halls and night clubs around the country. Their albums included *Tell It All Brothers* (1978) and *24 Hour Service* (1979).

The contrasting voices of the two brothers was magic. Blondie had a high-pitched penetrating voice, whereas his brother's baritone sent ladies screaming for more. By the way, a former member of the TNTs, Blondie's stardom name was inspired by the name of the leader of the Durban band The Flames. His biggest hit early in his career was *Hopeless Love* with The Movers. Later on, the brothers went their separate ways in search of solo success. **BLONDIE**, who was born Keoagile Gerald Makhene on 16 September 1955, released *Communicate* (Family, 1984), an album he co-produced with Mally Watson at CCP Records. **PAPPA** released a soulful ballad, *Still In Love With You*, which became a big hit. Blondie followed up with *Overtime* (1985), a co-production with Mally Watson. Pappa released the album *Satisfy You!* (1987), which also featured *Save the Children* (Do It Now), a powerful message to parents about their role in the upbringing of their children. He co-produced the album with Thapelo Khomo on the Teal Records label.

In the same year, Blondie also released another album, *Spreading Love*, which boasted a solid ballad, *Baby I'm Missing You*, dedicated to his wife, Agnes, who has sadly since left us. The album was produced by himself, John Galanakis and Steve MacNamara on the Hit City label. Blondie who was born in White City Jabavu and grew up in Dube and Tladi, both in Soweto, teamed up with John Galanakis of Banjo fame at Hit City Records and developed young talent. His productions included African Youth Band (AYB), a mainly instrumental music band he put together with the help of his brother, Moshemanegape Makhene. The band was later renamed Amaqabane in 1989. At this point his political activism had become an open secret. The band's debut album was *Nkosi Yami* (Leopard Records, 1987). Its line-up included Mofolo-born trumpeter/dancer, Ndumiso Nyovane who later joined Slaves and in 1998 released his debut solo album, *Mofolo Hall*. Though some of the tracks had very few lyrics, it had heavy political undertones.

AYB's other hits include *Ntate Modise*, a track that almost became the unofficial national anthem before *Nkosi Sikelel' i-Afrika*. This due to its prominence as a signature tune when the nation was waiting with bated breath on 11 February 1990 as the gates of Victor Verster Prison (now Drakenstein Prison) were thrown wide open for Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela to walk free. Another bold step Blondie took was to produce and arrange *Ditonkie*, a politically correct album by the band Amaqabane on the KGM Records label in 1991. The freedom songs challenged the status quo and agitated for a speedy transformation.

Vusi Shange's debut maxi single, *Lunch Boy* (Hit City, 1985), is yet another Blondie Makhene co-production with John Galanakis. It was introduced to radio by the company's PRO Zinzi Khulu. Later Orrack Chabangu became responsible for promoting Hit City products. Zinzi has since opened her own production house while Orrack became CCP's boss. In the same year, Vusi's debut album, *Room Service*, followed. It featured another Makhene, Mpho, who was a member of Spankk. This album Vusi dedicated to his mother, Dolly Shange. His dance routine on stage reminded us of "The Godfather Of Soul", African American James Brown who shot to stardom with the hit *Please, Please, Please* backed by his band, The Famous Flames. By the way, the Apollo Theatre superstar, Mr Brown, passed away at the age of 73 in December 2006. May his soul rest in peace. This dance earned Vusi the nickname "Mr Electricman".

In 1986 Blondie and John brought together most of the Hit City stars to feature on Vusi's album, *Teacher We Are The Future*, backed by Spankk and featuring Shamor, Phyllis and Mpho Makhene. Also featured were The Makhene Kids viz. Moshimanegape, Karabo, Pelonomi and Pauline. Zipp was represented by Ziggy Adolph and Paul Green. Other stars included Pappa Makhene, Cyril Nkosi (Mnculwane), Steve MacNamara, Venda Kids, Pure Gold and Marc Rantseli of MarcAlex. In 1988 Blondie co-produced Vusi's cover version of Jamaican Jimmy Cliff's *Remake The World* with Steve MacNamara. Some of Blondie's production

highlights include his co-production and arrangement of the great Hugh Masekela's CD, *Time* (2002), with former Sakhile hornman, Khaya Mahlangu. He produced Busi Mhlongo's 2003 CD, *Freedom*. Blondie also worked with Pure Gold whose gospel story will be told later in the relevant chapter. Their songs were composed by **FREDDIE GWALA** and Victor Bogopane. Both later embarked on solo careers, Freddie Gwala earning himself the nickname "Madamara" following his massive hit, *Amadamara*. His albums include *Amadamara* and *Shikisha Mahala* (*Amadamara* #2). One of his massive hits was *Tshidi Skhelekhele* (*O Dula Zola*), a song with some prison melodies. Freddie later discovered the group, Platform 1, which recorded wedding songs fronted by Nani Ntengo. He co-produced it with Quinton Madlala featuring Vukuzenzele Mbele on keyboards. Some of Platform 1's albums are: *Isencane*, *Ka Lenyalo*, *Ilobolo*, and *Woza Makoti Sikulandile*. Later this group moved to Cool Spot and released a ten-track album titled *Sizihlobo* under a new name, Platinum. By 2005 it had released the album *Ngiphenduke Kanjani?* under Bula Music fronted by Nelisiwe Jele. Victor Bogopane became a successful kwaito music artist known as Doc Shebeleza. He later led the kwaito Nation in a campaign against HIV/Aids. Quinton Madlala had his solo career and released, among others, *Heartbreaker* (1986).

Blondie's daughters Pauline, Letoya and Gontse started their own hot group, Skool Girlz. By 2008 Blondie had released the album, *Sthunyuwa Sam*, after a long break since the release of his album, *Buti Makoti*. The comrade had also become a traditional healer and an Aids ambassador. Ahoy!

Another Makhene brother, **CLIFFORD MAKHENE**, later formed the trio Fire and Flame and recorded a maxi single under DGR (David Gresham Records). The hit, *Whole Lot Of Love*, sold the maxi single like hot cakes on a Christmas morning. In the trio "Fire" was Cliff Makhene, "Flame" were two songbirds, Gladys Ramela and Diana Ncube. Cliff was a gifted song writer as he penned among other songs: *Touch Touch* (Brenda and The Big Dudes), *Baby I'm Torn In Two* (Pappa and Blondie/America's MC Cray Brothers) as well as most of the tracks on The Big Dudes' 1990 *Special Feeling* album, which featured Mandy. He co-wrote the songs with the group's lead guitarist, Sammy Klaas. They've both left us for the ambitious orchestra on the other side.

Back to other Soweto groups of the township soul era: **BLACK HAWKS** was another popular band owned by Stetson Mosia who also owned the Red Roof Tavern in Moletsane township. In those days the owner would normally be the provider of the musical instruments, transport and the rehearsal venue, which in most cases was a garage. Black Hawks was composed of Charlie "Babas" Ndlovu, David Tandzwane, Keith Ngcobo, Pirate "Pi" Tshabalala as well as Priscilla Jacobs. Kenneth Mathaba was also a member at one stage. Their biggest hits were *Love is Where Life Begins* and *Tell Me*. They were also very popular for their live performances. In the early 1970s, Pirate and Keith formed **THE YOUNG LOVERS** under the ownership of Frans Khunou. As already mentioned, Charlie

Ndlovu ended up playing for Stimela. Sadly, “Pi” who also played for AFUBI died mysteriously in 1984 at a relatively young age. Keith Ngcobo travelled the length and breadth of South Africa as musical director of the talent search campaign, “Shell Road To Fame.”

The **IN-LAWS** were Peter Morake, Ben Modise, Zakes Kgasapane and Philly Gaeleshewe. This band was produced by GRC’s Hamilton “Vala” Nzimande. Some of their biggest hits included *The Inner Feelings Of A Man* and *Modise’s Mood*. Hot drummer, Peter Morake, later joined the southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO), the South African institution representing music performing rights. At the time of writing this book he had left the organisation after his huge contribution to the music fraternity.

**VARIKWERU** was mainly a live performance band led by Vusi Khumalo. Its lead vocalist was Faith Shadi Kekana who at one stage also sang for The All Rounders. Vusi later led and played drums for Thetha, whose members included bassist Bakithi “BK” Khumalo, trumpeter Ndumiso Nyovane, vocalist Wings Segale and keyboardist Bushy Seatlholo who later joined Brenda Fassie’s backing band, The Big Dudes. More about Thetha in the next chapters.

**THE CROCODILES** was a concert band whose name was inspired by the surname of its owner, Amos Ngwenya. The first time I saw them perform was at the Diepkloof Hall. Amos’s younger brother, Moses, of The Soul Brothers fame started playing drums in this group. This was mainly a live performances band, though attempts were made to record with the assistance of Sparks Nyembe. On his solo works today Moses is known as Black Moses. One can easily trace his musical roots on *Crocodile’s Rock* from his *M* series solo albums. That particular album is titled *M2*. So far, the series is at *M9*, which tells us that he has nine solo albums featuring his keyboard magic mostly recorded in his Tripple Six Studio. He also produced promising musicians like Ronald Chauke, Whitey, Themba Ngwenya, Joseph Sambo, Teenagers, Shangaan Soul Sisters, Ntombinkulu, Johannes Manikela and Umthakathi. It is interesting to note that, like him, most of our music stars also started as drummers. Examples of this include Siphso Mabuse, David Masondo, Sox, Joe Nina and the late Jabu Khanyile locally as well as the likes of Phil Collins, Ringo Starr, Don Henley and Jim Capaldi on the international scene.

**ALMON SANDISA MEMELA**’s Almon Jazz Eight had a huge hit with their cover version of Liverpool-born Paul McCartney’s *Love Is Strange*. **THE MOON BROTHERS** released the township soul version of the hymn Mamelang (RPM, 1972) and it became a big hit. Soul band **THE VIPs** boasted the line-up of Vusi Twala, Mapipi, Oupa and Fats Mlangeni. Fats would later join The Big Dudes, Brenda Fassie’s backing band. **THE ADDITIONS** will always be remembered for producing one of this continent’s rooted sons, Jabu Khanyile. It was his brother’s band. It is no surprise that his brother loved music too because in his days their father Mathimula sang in iscathimiya groups.

**THE DRIVE** was another powerful group of the era. It was co-founded by Mike

Makhalemele and Henry Sithole. Other members of the band included Duke Makasi and another man who contributed to the success of the band “through the throbbing thuds of the drum”, Nelson Magwaza, who was a member of the group for ten years before joining the group Pace. The Drive’s albums include *Drive Live* and their very popular 1976 release *My Dreams*. Some of their biggest hits include Bheki Mseleku’s composition *I Have A Dream* and Windermere’s *To The End*. During the bump jive craze era they had a huge hit composed by Henry Sithole titled *Way Back Fifties*. A compilation album of their hits was released as part of the Evergreen Hits From The Past series produced by the late David Thekwane. It is subtitled *Volume Two: Featuring The Drive* (Teal Records, 1990). *Volume One* (Teal Records, 1989) in the series features Lulu Masilela’s horn on *Blessing* and *Cool Down*, his compositions with the late Thomas Phale.

Other groups included Orlando East-based The Heroes, Ramsy’s Young Ones, The Square Souls, The Eagles, The Sounds, Impact, Exit, The Daffodils, Rasmataz, Tortoise, Black Diamonds, Elations and others. Individual stars included Black Duke known for the hit *Didimalang Ke Ya Bua* (1987) as well as the late Billy Mashego who later moved into theatre.

Yes, those were the days when record companies rewarded loyalty so handsomely that a messenger could easily become a talent scout; qualifications did not weigh more than loyalty and experience. There are cases in which a driver was later appointed a company representative and a sweeper became a warehouse supervisor.

## CHAPTER TWO

# ALEX SOUL MENU AND BEYOND

**S**pread out north of the city of Johannesburg is one of the oldest and funkier townships in the country – Alexandra. History has it that an Afrikaner farmer, Mr S. Papenfus once bought a number of farms around the modern day township. One of the farms, Zandfontein, became Alexandra Township in 1912. This township characterised by streets from west to east and avenues from north to south became home to many black South Africans. I imagine every second black family in South Africa has or had a relative in Alex. It meant different things to different people and ended up with different names like Dark City, Township and Ga-Mampjane. Alexandra is also known for the “Azikhwelwa” bus defiance campaign during the dark and hard days of the 1950s. Its vibrant life was at some stage spoiled by The Spoilers and The Msomi Gang. Despite the murders, maiming, burglaries and robberies, it remained a melting pot of cultural diversity.

Alexandra produced some of South Africa’s music legends like Ntengi Piliso, Lemmy Mabaso, Zacks Nkosi, Caiphus Semenya, Condry Ziqubu, Bansa Kgaswane and many others. It was in this environment that the spirit of soul music brought five guys together in the late sixties to form a band called *THE ANCHORS*. The band was co-led by Collins Mashego and Esrom Kgomo. Other members were bassist Simon “Bra Jika” Twala, vocalists Pepsi Rapoo and Philip Malela. The band had one of the most gifted lead guitarists of the time, Herman Fox. Later on new members joined the group like little Condry Ziqubu, Given Sabela, Mbokoto Nkosi and Jabu Nkosi, son of legendary Jazz muso Isaac “Zacks” Nkosi. Two powerful vocalists from the Mbatha family, Dinah and brother Lucky



came to front the soul group. Some of their hits are *Tell Me* and *Collin Goes*.

In the early seventies the band split up. Simon Twala and Philip Malela formed a new band, **FLAMING SOULS**. Herman Fox joined them. Collins Mashego became a hot concert compère and later joined SABC television. He became one of the most passionate and creative producers of variety shows. He once invited me and two hot radio jocks to set tv screens on fire. We did. I represented Thobela FM, that smooth and eloquent sports tiger Aubrey Motloung represented Motswedding FM and Lesedi FM was represented by the morning star, Chomane Chomane. What a show! He later produced the historical funeral of Mahlathini Simon Nkabinde. Collins is V-Mash's father and is a highly positive person under any given situation; the kind of guy who says the glass is half-full, not half-empty. He is an excellent MC. Bassist Given Sabela was later to feature in the recording of Isaac "Zacks" Nkosi's *Our Kind Of Jazz* album on 30 July 1976. Keyboard wizard, Jabu Nkosi's and drummer cum vocalist Lucky Mbatha's duo known as Lucky and Jabu had a big hit titled *Skatana*. They later pursued solo careers with Jabu leaning towards jazz music in the footsteps of his father. By 1984 he was a member of Sipho Gumede's Afro Fusion band, Peace. Lucky continued with soul music releasing amongst his solo works, the album *Funky Situation* (Bullet, 1987) featuring the hit, *Caught In The Thrill Of Love*. His sister Dinah later joined another Alex band, The Movers. Interestingly, long after their days, the Flaming Souls released a CD titled *Revival* (2006).

As already mentioned, Flaming Souls was started in the early seventies. Its members included leader and bassist Simon "Jika" Twala, keyboardist Kenny Mosito, drummer Gerald Khoza, frontman Philip Malela and lead guitarist Herman Fox. The celebrated soulman Fox was tragically stabbed to death on Christmas Day. The Flaming Souls' producer was Teal Records' talent scout West Nkosi and they churned out hits like *She's Gone*, *Soul World* and *Cracking Guitar* composed by 15-year-old Condry Ziqubu who joined the band as lead guitarist after the death of Fox. Their song *Alex Soul Menu* seemed to have been inspired by African American King Curtis's *Memphis Soul Stew*. Priscilla Jacobs joined Flaming Souls from Soweto's Black Hawks to add a female voice to the band. As we already know, Condry later joined Soweto's Harari in 1980. Gerald Khoza formed a Khoza family band, **THE MONKS**.

Some of the popular concert venues in Alexandra were Entokozweni Hall on London Road in 12th Avenue, Kings Cinema in 2nd Avenue, as well as the yard of the Roman Catholic Church, where 1st meets 2nd Avenue. These are the centres where sons and daughters of the Jukskei River would dance styles like the twist, tatazela, bump and as well as the monkey jive. Some would even display their hula hoop skills to the rhythm of soul music.

David Thekwane later started a band that spread the Alex soul flavour like wild fire – **THE MOVERS**. Its members were Oupa Hlongwane, Norman Hlongwane, Sam Thabo and master keyboardist Sankie Chounyane who inspired a whole

generation of young fiery keyboardists. Later vocalist Dinah Mbatha fronted the band, as well as Soweto's young Blondie Makhene. The latter will always be remembered for their hit *Hopeless Love* and the former for *Black Is The Colour*, a subtle protest song with the line "There's hatred among the blacks".

Philip Malela of Flaming Souls fame also joined the group, which was later owned by Kenny Sephai. Malela could be regarded as Alex's "full circle" musician, as he performed with all the major bands of the time in the township. He'll always be remembered for hits like *She Loves You* and *Mama Liza*. The relationship between The Movers and its founder was later revived and the younger generation of the band included Jabu Khanyile from The Additions, Vusi Shange from The Eagles, Rammy MacKenzie who took over from Philip Malela as vocalist, as well as bassist Jabu Sibumbe and keyboardist Lloyd Lelosa who would later form Stimela with former Cannibals members, guitarist Ray Phiri and drummer Isaac Mtshali.

At the time the Movers were under the same management with Boyoyo Boys; that is why Jabu Khanyile's voice was used in the mega-hit *Pule*, which was later released internationally by Malcolm McLaren as *Double Dutch*. Drummer, Archibald Mohlala, also played in this band although Mbaqanga followers know him mostly for his work with Boyoyo Boys. The Movers' discography reads like a Home Affairs ID register. Some of their big hits were *Soweto Inn*, *Bump Jive*, *Special Job*, *Crying Guitar*, *Soul Crazy*, *Where To Find Her*, *Sleep Out*, *Sleep In* as well as their cover version of Johnny Nash's *Guava Jelly*. The track *Crying Guitar* featured the newly-introduced musical instrument known as the wah-wah paddle.

After the death of soul music star Jacob Radebe aka Mpharanyana, the band paid tribute to him by releasing *Mpharanyana O Re Hopole* fronted by Hope Jamani. Most of their music was later released on a series of compilation CDs by Polygram on the local Teal Records label titled *The Movers: Best Of The Best* and *Township Jive: The Movers – The Hits*. Sadly, one of South Africa's most brilliant keyboardists, Sankie Chounyane, died in the eighties. May his soul rest in peace. The band's founder and manager for ten years who stayed in Dube, Soweto died at the age of 48 due to flu-related complications after a business trip to Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. I still remember that this giant of Mbaqanga music was buried on a Saturday at the Avalon Cemetery leaving two boys, a girl and wife, Sarah. I remember this because on the Wednesday before the funeral musicians were asked to meet at Dorkay House to finalise funeral arrangements. By then Velile David Thekwane owned a record company, Tela Records and Tapes. Twenty-one years later, on 25 November 2005, the legend was posthumously honoured with two awards by the Department of Arts and Culture as it recognised the contribution of musical icons of the fifties. His wife received his awards for producer and for leader of The Movers. Interestingly, within a few hours' time his son Andile aka Wikid also won Metro FM Music Awards' Best Hip-Hop



category for his CD *Anger Management* also featuring his father's composition and Movers' hit *Bump Jive*.

When the Alexandra Township couple, Philip and Rhina Mdluli, were blessed with a bouncy baby boy they hardly knew he would be a superstar. Born in 17th Avenue, **THAMI MDLULI** grew up in 18th Avenue to where his family later moved. When Thami was twelve, the Mdlulis moved again, but this time to Tembisa where he grew up with his three sisters and three brothers. In Tembisa he started playing guitar at the age of thirteen. By the time he turned fifteen he was already a professional playing for Sam Mthembu's Tembisa Happy Queens. In 1979 when the group became the Hot Soul Singers it was so popular that they played side by side with visiting overseas groups like the O'Jays. This exposed Thami to many ideas and together with the other band members they decided to form Sound Busters. After initiating the formation of CJB, he later formed a duo, Taboo, with Buli Arosi.

Thami decided to do part-time productions at Eric Frisch Productions. Eric Frisch had worked with Phil Hollis, but later started his own record company. Some of the musicians Thami produced included Sox, Jimaro, Sensations, Nana Moloi, Malcolm X Makume and Alexandra Brass Band. On his productions Thami had a tendency of releasing dub mix versions of hit tracks. His fans pushed him to follow that trend seriously, and this resulted in his solo project under the name, "Professor Rhythm". His debut album was titled *First Time Around* (1989) featuring the hit *Sebeleletsa Hae*. The next album was *Second Time Around* (1990) followed by *Professor 3* (1991) featuring the hits *Uskamosothotsa* and *Raditaba* (Nozindaba) up to *Professor 5* (1993) on Tusk's Diamond Music label. Some of his other projects include *The Boss* featuring Stella, which released the album *Dance For My Song* (1991) engineered by David Moloele on the Diamond Music Label.

Thami retired from live performances in 1993 and focused on studio productions. Tusk Music tasked him with the production responsibility of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church Choir commonly known as IPCC after John Moriri's tenure. He never looked back and by the time I wrote this book he had produced 12 albums with them. Committed to the choir, I met him at Zuurbekom as we paid our last respect to "Ntate Moemedi", the late Comforter Frederick Samuel Modise, one of the great religious leaders South Africa has produced. Together with partner David Moloele, Thami owns a recording studio. His record label is DJ Music, a joint venture with CCP. The label boasts among other products, Chakalaka's 1999 album *Home*. Thami plays all musical instruments but his speciality and preference is the bass guitar.

One of the members of Thami's Sound Busters was **BENJAMIN BALL** who was from Durban. On arrival in Johannesburg Benjamin was accommodated by Thami Mdluli's uncle in Alexandra township. His solo career was launched by a hit they recorded together called *Flash A Flash Light*. After the success of the debut

the group encouraged him to go solo. Still under Thami Mdluli's production, he released the album *Kabadzeene* (RPM, 1988) co-written with Cyril Mnculwane. The next recording, *In The Jungle* (Tusk Music, 1990), a reggae album followed with all songs written by Elsie Joseph and engineered by Fab Grosso. His album *Take A Chance* (1991) co-produced by Cyril Mnculwane and Bheki Msani was engineered by Humphrey Mabote. It included a flash mix of *Flash A Flashlight*. At the Alexandra house, Ball was joined by another new member of the band, Johnny Mokhali about whom we'll read more later.

Around Tshwane some of the hot groups included Soul Fingers whose songs include *Leru Lela*, *Doing Our Thing*, *Boela Gae* and *Love Is Where Life Begins*. Les Vibros had a hit *Ba Ya Khala* and Grant Albert Kekana will be remembered for *Thokolokgolo*, *Re Tla Re Kolobile* and *Tshepang*.

In Springs, two brothers from Kwa-Thema, Mac and Madoda Mathunjwa played in a band called **THE PEDLARS**. They were used as a backing band for vocalists who performed at The Pelican Night Club in Orlando East, near the railway station. Some of their highlights include their work with Patience Africa on her album *Siyabonga* (1979) at which stage their line-up was as follows: Mac Mathunjwa (key boards), Themba Mokoena (lead guitar), Emmanuel E Khumalo (bass guitar), Godfrey Mgcina (drums) and Elijah Khumalo (rhythm guitar). We'll always remember the band for hits like *Mma Sello* and for their role as Mpharanyane's backing band.

The Mpumalanga city of coal, Witbank, was represented by Simon (vocals), Chom (keyboards), Bingo (drums) and Sonnyboy (guitar) collectively called **THE SOUL CRUSADERS**. This Chom-led combo's biggest hits were *Swazi Inn* and *Windy*, an excellent cover version of a chartbuster from abroad. We, the locals, had a way of creating our own lyrics to the music for our own convenience whenever it was difficult to grasp the real words. I remember this Soul Crusaders' *Windy* was known as "Ngwana o a lela, o llela paesekela" (A child is crying, he's crying for a bicycle). This also happened with international music like Michael Jackson's *Don't Stop Til You Get Enough*, which we preferred to sing as "Ke bao ka dibotsotso, tšhelete e fedile" (There they are in tight jeans, they are broke). My aunt Pinky was the master of this lyrical cloning. There was a big hit by the group Three Dog Night titled *Joy To The World* (1971) with the opening line "Jeremiah was a bullfrog". She liked her chorus version so much that even when her musician hubby, uncle Jimmy, told her what the real lyrics were, she continued singing "Joy to the Fischers and the Du Plessis". The actual chorus lyrics were "Joy to the fishers in the deep blue sea". She insisted on being left alone with her song.

Much as the Vaal area is known for being home to some of South Africa's political milestones, it is also home to some of South Africa's talented musicians. Down in Sebokeng, Vereniging, The Hurricanes were cooking up a storm with hits like *I Can Feel It* and their 1973 sizzler *Expressions Of Love* on the RPM label.

When I saw the name of Ishmael Hlatswayo for the first time it was on Pat Shange's album *Man Oh Man* on Dephon's Roy B label. He had written the title track and I liked him as a songwriter. One day in 1987 in the SABC record library amongst the received new releases I saw an album titled *Tamati So* by someone called **Spokes H**. It was on Gerhard "Mlungisi" van Niekerk's Black Talent Music label. This is the album that taught me a big lesson as a deejay – never to judge a book by the cover. I listened to this unknown newcomer once and put the album aside. As usual, I went to Dakota Record Bar in town for my routine consumer trend observations. Customer after customer was asking for Spokes H. One of the customers asked the seller to play the track for her and I was shocked when everybody in the store started dancing. I realised that the record in demand was the one I had pushed aside in the listening booth. The following week I put it in my charts and the fire just spread wider and wider – a star was born!

On realising the demand, I invited Ishmael for a live studio interview. He took a taxi to Polokwane and after the interview we drove together to Lebowakgomo township where I stay. It was in the days of the CCV television programme "Lapologa". On arrival I introduced him to Arthur Mafokate who had a group of youngsters called Fame Dance Club so they could share some dance manoeuvres. Even as a youngster Arthur has always been a disciplined and focused performer, so, their meeting became a cross-pollination with the club that went on to win awards in Lapologa dance contests.

Spokes H was a very determined musician who believed in rich lyrics and messages that tell it like it is, without fear or favour. This approach endeared him to many fans and sent culprits searching for cover with tails between their legs. I remember how he took serious offense when township music was labelled "Bubblegum". I agreed with him and time has put that record straight. Many people still enjoy that music even today while younger musicians either cover, sample or remix it.

Spokes H's self-written/produced/arranged album *Magosha* (Umkhonto Records, 1989) was engineered by Steven Cooks. It included the track *Katjibane* inspired by the old battered Toyota Hi-Ace combis used as taxis to ferry people on pot holed gravel roads from rural villages to townships and shopping centres. I remember a sticker on one of these taxis reading "O Ska Ntshla Katjibane" (Please combi, don't give up on me). His next album, *Under Control* (MGS, 1990), was sold by the title-track and was followed by *Finger Prints* (1991), also self-written/produced/arranged and engineered by Fab Grosso. Spokes also played drums and percussion on the album. Some of his other albums include *Wipe Her Tears Off* (1992), *On My Way Home* (1994), *Dirty Jozi* (1996) and his evergreen *Rafifi* (1997), which sold 87000 copies within a month. It was followed by others like *Nnete E A Baba* (1998), which sold more than 150000, *Izwi'Ngoma* (1999), *The Best Of Spokes H* (2000) as well as the controversial *Morero Wa Mangesemane*,

an album in which he attacked the local media industry for giving foreign music first preference and promotion while censoring local music for using indigenous languages with the same lyrics freely used by international musicians. Examples of this include Boys II Men's monster hit *I'll Make Love To You* from their self-titled 1994 Motown CD. The Babyface-written lyrics read as follows: "I'll make love to you, like you want me to; and I'll hold you tight, baby all through the night." Singing those lyrics in our indigenous languages on the radio would create a national hullabaloo. Do we have freedom of expression or what?

Spokes's CD *Beit Bridge* (2001) was followed by a compilation album *Greatest Hits Of Spokes H, Tsa Thoriso Le Maikutlo and Shwashwi* in 2002. In 2004 the man who will always be remembered for hits like *Rabaki* and *Mokanselara* left his stable, CCP, and joined Bula Music where he released the CD *Ka Mora Vene*. By 2007 he had moved back to EMI Records and released *My African Groove* as Letona Spokes H featuring hits like *Re Tlo shwa*. Ishmael's style seems to have inspired younger groups like Rhythmic Elements whose hit *2 By 2* spread into South African night clubs like wild fire. Some of his productions include Cy-Zaah's album *Life Is Short* (RPM, 1994), which he also arranged. But the artist that put Spokes H on the map as a dynamic writer, producer and arranger was Sea Bee aka Sibi Motloung. Sea Bee's debut album was *I Wanda Why?* (1994), which featured edutainment hits called *Thiba* and *Home Boy*. It carried the stamp of approval – "A Spokes H Production". Sea Bee followed up with *O Kae Molao* and *Qeto* (2000).

The Vaal also produced a young handsome star with a weird performance regalia called **THIZA**. Born Themba Nhlapo in Evaton, Thiza started his professional music career as a backing vocalist for Blondie Makhene in Soweto. However, in 1988 he went solo by joining Gerhard J van Niekerk's Black Talent Music label, which was also the musical home of his friend, Spokes H. Later in their careers the two joined CCP Records. Thiza released his debut album titled *Saka Dibom-Bom*. The title-track became an instant hit but was later banned by the SABC, which suspected it of encouraging activists to drop bombs. As a deejay I was so in love with the track that I resorted to playing the instrumental version that had managed to escape the hangman's noose. Despite the ban, it achieved platinum status. The System never learned that a ban was a blessing that sent record sales rocketing due to curiosity; or it did but just didn't care. By 1998 this songwriter/producer/arranger had a streamline of eight albums to his name including *Thiza Is My Name* (1991), *Haikona Lo Problem* and *Nomakanjani*. Some of his memorable hits are *Imini Iyeza* and *Chocolate*.

**JOHN MOKOENA** aka Poppa was a self-taught sound engineer, producer, music arranger and songwriter who owned a recording studio. Working with Spokes H, Thiza and Sea Bee sharpened his skills to produce *Die Poppe Sal Dans* for CO Connection. This finalist of the Hansa Pelsner Cool Sounds Song Writing Competition also produced other hits like *Siqhumane*.

When Jiyane Mbere took a kid off the streets he hardly knew that he was paving the way for a future star. The boy grew up to become the hair stylist, **SENYAKA** aka Thula Kekana. He befriended musician Sello Twala who wooed him to the music industry. Senyaka released his debut album *Fuquza* (1987), which became an overnight success. A humorist and comedian, Senyaka's career was decorated by controversial songs like *Shesa Mpama* from the 1999 DJ Walker project produced by Chicco Twala and Themba Dhladhla on the Universal label. Senyaka's albums include *Fuquza Dance* (1987), *Portuguese* (1988), *Sophiatown* (1989), *Willie's My Connection* (1990), *Ma-Gents* (1993), *Mampara* (1995), *Mabokodo* (1996), *Brenda Lovey* (1997), *Fong Kong* (1998), *Sathane O Maponapona* (1999), *O Shwa Jwang O Nkolota?* (2001), *Face To Face With My Lord* (2002), *The Very Best Of Senyaka* (2003), *Pay Back* (2003), *Dikuku Tsa Mumsy* (2004) and *Sawa* (2006). Some of his massive hits were *Romeo O A Nkolota* as well as *Mampara*, a track that was part of a professional public dialogue between him and Brenda Fassie. It was through Senyaka that most of us took note of Anthony Motaung of *Tsekeleke* fame and he has recently discovered some talented young dancers from the streets. Senyaka also appeared in a local television comedy *Ashifa Shabba* with DJ Fresh and Shonisani "Shabba" Muleya himself. In 2006 he launched a project that would motivate homeless children, distribute food parcels and contribute towards their education. His initiatives in the film industry include *Moruti wa Tsotsi*.

**TAU BOKODA** introduced himself to the music industry with the hit *Matsatsela*. His producer was Sizwe Zako. The success of the debut album was followed by *Wa Phopholetsa* (1989), which featured the hit *Shabalala*. On that album he used the name Tau Matsatsela. When he released *Imikhaba* (Magic, 1991) he had left MFM Records for CCP Records.

Another talented young musician was **PETER CHILLY TSHABALALA** aka Bite. Besides his involvement with various productions of the late eighties, he was leader of a trio called CO Connexion (Chilly/Oupa Connection). Some of the CDs they recorded include *Socialise* (RPM, 1994) and *C.O.Connexion* (RPM, 1995). Multi-talented Chilly later worked with producer Richard Siluma in gospel projects like Michael Mamatlaruma's album *Re Thaba Le Lena* (1998).

Down in Motse-Thabong, Welkom, Vaal Express took the music scene by storm with hits like *Bontate Ba Bang* produced by Lulu Masilela on the City Special label. Their *Golden Highway* (1979) was produced by the late David Thekwane. The group later released an album of wedding songs titled *Makoti* (Sounds of Soweto, 1991) co-produced by Sabata Kolozi Lebona and M'Du Masilela featuring favourites like *Seanamarena*.

**WILLIAM MTHETHWA**'s backing band, The Young Five, was formed in 1975. Members of Soul Lovers from Pietermaritzburg and Planets from Klerksdorp performed together in Maseru, Lesotho and decided to merge. They were Samuel Moatshe, Raletsebe Mathews Khaile, Johnny Wanyane, Selby Kometsi



and Woodthorpe Motlhaloga. When they later backed William Mthethwa they recorded music as William Mthethwa and Young Five. Their mega-hit was *Celebration* a song that celebrated the Christmas of 1983 and of many years thereafter. Their albums include *Wola Ma-Gents*. By 1984 the group's line-up was: William Mthethwa (from Klerksdorp), Isaac Motale (from Kroonstad), Patrick Lappie and Isaac Molantwa (from Potchefstroom). Later William embarked on a successful solo career, though he would still release some albums like *Our Love Is Over* (Awusuke) with his band. His self-written hot dance maxi single titled *Nightclubbing* (Jive Wire, 1985) was produced/arranged by Peter Moticoe and engineered by Fernando Perdigao.

In my opinion, William was quite ahead of his times with this single because even today it still sets the dance floor ablaze. His many hits include *Botsotsi* and *O Jola Le Clever*. One release that drew him into sharp spotlight was his controversial album *Setjwetla*, which was accompanied by dancing in the nude. It provoked so much debate in the national media to which he responded by saying the song was inspired by a Basotho cultural dance. The storm overshadowed good tracks on the album like *Haak Vrystaat*, *Mphe Borocho* and *Kgwedi E Fedile*. The issue of dancing in the nude did not just go away as it was sustained by another new line in many dance floor tracks, "Ha Ke Rata Nka Tjola, Ho Bontsha Lethabo," which literally translated means "I am free to take off my clothes as a sign of happiness."

William later earned himself the title "Mr Everything" for his versatility that saw him release albums in various genres. His reggae albums include *Don't Cry* and *We Cry For Peace In Afrika*. On the gospel front he had a big hit titled *Ema O Tsamaye*. He also released the gospel albums *Satane Tloha Ho Nna* (Midnight Beat, 1990) and *Hosanna*; the former dedicated to Aubrey Bano Moloi, a member of his band The Young Five, who had passed away on 1 January 1990. After the unbanning of the African National Congress, William, using the name Zabalaza, dedicated the album *Aluta* (1990) to ANC president Oliver Reginald Tambo for his "endurance, selfless and unqualified wisdom throughout your leadership of the struggle for a free non-racial and democratic South Africa".

A soccer fanatic who owned a club, William also produced two soccer supporters' albums, one for Kaiser Chiefs and another for Orlando Pirates both on Teal Records' Midnight Beat label. The 1991 Kaiser Chiefs album songs were composed by Alinah Maphoso, Dimakatso Moletsane and Zacharia Ndlovu and engineered by David Moloele. The Orlando Pirates album titled *The Ghost* (1992) engineered by Neville Fox was also written by Alinnah Maphoso. This trend would later lead to recordings like the national team's *Ndizani Bafana Ndizani* (1995) produced by Maplanka and Dr House, performed by The Fans and released by Music Team. William also recorded a tribute to the Mathibela Siamese twins, *Mpho Le Mphonyana*, the proceeds of which went into the trust fund he established for them. Besides all these projects he has developed and

produced a number of young musicians.

Some of the hot soul spots in the Free State were Motse-Thabong in Welkom and Maokeng in Kroonstad. I met **Sox** for the first time at Lebowakgomo Showgrounds where I had arranged for an appointment with William Mthethwa through Eric Frisch's PRO James Twala. After my interview with William, Sox complained bitterly about being left out and I told him he was welcome to introduce himself. Honestly at that stage I did not know who he was, but after the interview I was convinced Daniel Phakoe was a star in the making. In the interview he told me that he was from Maokeng in Kroonstad where he was mostly known as Sox, the footballer. His schoolmates gave him the nickname at school due to his tendency of pushing his socks down to his ankles. He left his soccer career after an injury that left his left leg crippled. Due to lack of funds, he quit school. Another soccer fanatic, William Mthethwa encouraged him to follow music as an alternative career. Sox joined a local band, Joyco and started playing drums. In 1979 he left Kroonstad for Tembisa on the East Rand where he played with Sam Mthembu's Hot Soul Singers for eight years.

In 1987 Sox decided to go solo and met another former member of Hot Soul Singers, Thami Mdluli who was a producer at Eric Frisch Productions. Thami produced his debut album *The Master*. Sox's other projects around that time included *Stay With Me*, a song he composed for another EFP project, *Public Affairs*. The volcano that catapulted him to stardom was his album *Come Back Home* (1988), which featured a monster hit titled *Lejapere* (Horse eater). Some critics accused him of copying Chicco's style of singing. The album *Soweto* featured a hit simply titled *Masokisi* (Socks). His other albums include *Shame Boksburg*, *Mama* and *Living In The Nineties* produced by Malcolm X Makume. Sox also had a hit *Tsokotla* inspired by a character from a local television drama.

To the South West of Johannesburg, Ikageng in Potchefstroom produced a hot soul band called **THE TEENAGE LOVERS**. Its hot property was **REX RABANYE**, the keyboard wizard who was Ikageng's response to Alexandra's Sankie Chounyane. He had learned to play the keyboards from his father, Samuel Rabanye at the age of fifteen. His bee-hive organ sound earned him millions of fans around the country. **LAWRANCE GOREOANG** became the guitar maestro of the band. The band's first big hit was *Botany 500* (RPM, 1974), which was a must-have for every radiogram and hi-fi system owner. Christmas was not complete without it. Other hits that followed included *Soul Goes To Church*, *Last Hope* and *Potchefstroom Road*, which was inspired by their long trips to Johannesburg studios for recordings and dance-hall performances. The band's musical home was Gallo Records' subsidiary, RPM.

Later the two musos went solo, Rex Rabanye hitting the country with dynamites like *O Nketsang* and *Moya Moya* while Lawrance Goreoang declared his love for the township with the hit *I Love Ikageng*. One should not forget that it was Lawrance Goreoang who earlier shook the music industry with his

beautiful tune *Hey Mr Moonlight* performed with The Question Marks who also boasted hits like *Julia*. Some of the multi-talented Rex's paintings can be seen on the walls of the African Methodist Church in Ikageng. By the late eighties the lawman who holds a B.Uris degree had moved from his place of birth to Mmabatho near Mafikeng from where he relaunched his musical career. His other albums include *Somlandela*, *Campus Mood* and *Stop Nonsons*. It is just so sad that such a gifted individual could be failed by his health to a point of losing his hearing. I was almost moved to tears the evening SAMA 12 honoured him with a Lifetime Achievement Award. There he was on a wheelchair receiving the award he so much deserved after inspiring a whole generation of keyboardists. That reminded me of the night Curtis Mayfield was honoured in the same manner at the Grammy Awards. Touching moments! I stood up in front of my television set and applauded. "Long live soulman! Go soulman go!" I screamed. Luckily I was alone in the house and did not have to explain myself to anyone.

To the East of Johannesburg in Katlehong, Germiston The Wavelets backed one of the most powerful voices in township soul – Jacob Radebe aka **MPHARANYANA**. Some of the members of this band were Lloyd Lelosa who would later be a diligent producer and Stimela's keyboardist. Their hits included *Se Di Tsebise Mary* and *So Dull Without Her*. In fact, Mpharanyana's career was mainly associated with three bands: The Peddlars of Springs, the Wavelets of Katlehong and The Cannibals, whose members included Raymond Chikapa Phiri and Isaac "Mnca" Mtshali from Nelspruit. It is not clear how Isaac got his nickname, but in those days clever people were referred to as "Mnca", whereas in greetings it meant "fine" or "ok". Any way you look at it, he is a fine and clever drummer.

Most of Mpharanyana's hits were in Sesotho. His hitlist is longer than that praise singer Kgomedi Shika Lekgothwane's dedication to Prince George titled *Tša Morena Wa Magaga Mašwana*, the longest praise poem I ever had to memorise at school. Some of the biggest hits of "Abuti Mphari", as he was affectionately known were *Hlotse*, *Dihwapa*, *Mawela*, *Puleng*, *Sathane (Ba Mo Tshwere)*, *Se Sa Feleng Se Ya Hlola*, *Wa Lla Mokoko* and *Lengolo*. His English tracks *Freak Out With Botsotso* and *Disco* were both Teaspoon Ndelu's compositions. He also did Sesotho cover versions of Percy Sledge's *Take Time To Know Her* titled *Nka Nako Ho Mo Tseba* as well as Joe Tex's *That's The Way as Ke Yona Tsela*.

Jacob Radebe's producer was Mpumalanga's hornman, the late West Nkosi and the two co-wrote many of his hits. One of the songs composed for him by Baberton's Ray Chikapa Phiri was the hit, *Be A Man*. Due to demand in 2001 this soul brother's music was again released by Universal Music on the CDs *Mpharanyana – The Best Of Mpharanyana – Original Soundtrack Recording From The TV Series Mpharanyana* as well as *Best Of Mpharanyana*. Maybe I should explain the "coughing" that decorated his songs. One of the musicians who used to attend his recording sessions told me that what I always thought was "style" was actually a coughing problem. The tape would be stopped so many times during



recording sessions for him to cough, until one day his producer West decided that he should just cough within the songs. To most people it became his trade mark. Funny how creativity can turn obstacles into something positive. This reminds me of bass player, Bill Johnson whose bow is said to have broken in the middle of a performance in Louisiana in 1911. It is said without the bow he continued playing by plucking the strings of his big guitar; that became a new trend, which is still the standard today. Mpharanyana's life and career always reminds me of Brenda Fassie – a star that shines very bright in a short space of time and leaves us craving for more.

Another male soul singer whose powerful magnetic voice was a breed between Mpharanyana and Phillip Malela of The Movers was **WALTER DLAMINI** who was backed by The Beggars. The Beggars were Michael Nyembe (lead guitar), Mzwandile David (bass guitar), Thami Xongwana (organ) and Michael Stoffel (drums). Some of their hits were *Mr Postman* and *Everybody Say Yeah!* Walter also became part of a male trio called **WATAJA**. The name represented the names of members Walter (lead vocals), Thapelo (keyboards) and Jack (guitar). The group's producer was the late guitar king, Marks Mankwane.

## CHAPTER THREE

# QUICK QUICK

Towards the late 1950s a new music genre that fused various township music styles emerged – mbaqanga. This genre was preceded by marabi, tshabatshaba and kwela. The kwela era had notably been dominated by hornmen like Spokes Mashiane and Lemmy Mabaso. Mbaqanga is a coinage resulting from a quick rich meal made of various ingredients. According to veteran producer, arranger and composer Sebatana Rupert Bopape, the songs were composed and recorded on the spot just as one prepares “mbaqanga”. It was a quick-quick meal.

In Alexandra township, Aaron Lerole’s *ALEXANDRA BLACK MAMBAZO* performed penny-whistle music that mixed various earlier township styles mostly composed by Zeph Nkabinde. Zeph also had his own songs under the name Zee Zee Nkabinde and His Sax. The band that was also known as Alexandra Shamba Band was formed by brothers Elias Shamba Lerole of *Toma Hawk* fame and Aaron Jack Lerole, a man I met for the first time performing at Johannesburg’s Rooftop Market. Other members included David Ramosa and Peter Khumalo.

This group reigned on the Alex music scene at the time and introduced a new trend in the music industry. They would open a song with introductory lyrics mostly in Tsotsitaal, which was a street lingo mixing various languages dominated by Afrikaans, isiZulu and Sesotho. Sometimes they would pause in the middle of an instrumental tune and break into song, only to return to the instrumental later. In that era most groups had a female lead singer backed by male voices.

At EMI a visionary from the former Northern Transvaal (Limpopo Province), *RUPERT BOPAPE*, sought to change that by creating a female group fronted by a

male singer. The arrangement saw the formation of the Dark City Sisters fronted by the late Big Voice Jack Lerole in 1959. The group's name was influenced by Alexandra's nickname "Dark City", earned through its lack of electric lights at night. Their backing band became Alexandra Black Mambazo (Alexandra's Black Axes). *THE DARK CITY SISTERS* were Joyce Mogatusi, Francis Mngomezulu, Hilda Mogapi and Esther Khoza. The music style produced by the combination of the band and the girls became known as "mgqashiyo". The popularity of the group took them to various parts of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia as well as other African states. Zeph Nkabinde's younger brother, Simon was inspired by Aaron Lerole's big voice and also joined the group. Though he later became world-famous for his performances with the Mahotella Queens, the man who became affectionately known as Mahlathini started his singing career at EMI with the Dark City Sisters. Among the songs he belted out with them was their hit titled *Eleventh Year Anniversary*. Some of the ladies who joined and left the Dark City Sisters in that era included Susan Gabashane, Dorothy Sosibo, Bessie Tshabalala and Emma Sineka.

From the original line-up it was Joyce Mogatusi and Esther Khoza who sustained the group's name through the years. In the 1960s new members joined the group in the names of Grace Msika and Audrey Zwane. In 1971 this group that became known for hits like *Tamati Yoyo*, *Vukani Kusile* and *Mphatlalatsane* dissolved. Later in the 1990s when I talked to group leader Joyce Mogatusi in Rustenburg she was married and blessed with a daughter Mmatladi and a son Medupi.

In the early 1960s Rupert Bopape left EMI for Gallo Records. He worked with various bands, but it was a male band originally called Pretoria Tower Boys formed in Tshwane between 1958 and 1959 that caught his attention. Due to the diversity of the band, in 1965 it was named *MAKGONATŠOHLE BAND*, a 'master-of-all' kind of band. The mbaqanga group's members were Marks Mankwane (lead guitar), Joseph Makwela (bass guitar), Vivienne Ngubane (rhythm guitar) and Lucky Monama (drums). Leading the band on penny whistle and saxophone was West Nkosi, originally from Nelspruit in the former Eastern Transvaal (Mpumalanga Province). This legendary band whose hits included *Jive Mjikisa No. 7*, *Tsatsawane*, *Mahamba Yedwa* and *Madula Shokeng Special* also used the name Makhona Zonke Band. In 1989 the band lost its rhythm guitarist Vivienne Ngubane and he was replaced by Sipho Madondo, a former member of another mbaqanga male group, Amaswazi Emvelo.

In order to rival EMI's Dark City Sisters, Bopape formed another female group and named it the Mahotella Queens. The name was inspired by the endless roadshows that saw them stay at various hotels across South Africa. Though ladies like Windy Mkhise were the first to record under the name, the first well-known faces of the Queens were Ethel Mngomezulu, Nunu Maseko and Hildah Tloubatla. Simon "Mahlathini" Nkabinde was recruited to join the group

as its “groaner” and it was aptly named **MAHLATHINI AND MAHOTELLA QUEENS**, backed by the Makgonatšohle Band in 1964.

The group’s first hit was Nunu Maseko’s composition, *Thoko (O jola nobani?)*. The Queens were later joined by Nobesuthu Shawe Mbadu and Mildred Mangxola. It is important to note that besides the many albums they released under their name, Mahotella Queens members also recorded music under various names like Soweto Stars, Marula Boom Stars, Mthunzini Girls, etc. They sang mainly in Northern Sotho and isiZulu. Towards the end of the 1970s the group members took a four-year break due to personal commitments such as marriage, maternity leave and raising children. But the show had to go on. In the 1980s the interim membership was Emily Zwane, Thandi Nkosi, Maggie Khumalo, Hazel Zwane, Caroline Kapentar and Sheba Malgas. They released albums like *Thatha Izimpahla Zakho* and *Khwatha O Mone* which were produced by lead guitarist Marks Mankwane. One of the original group members, Nunu Maseko, later formed her own group called Izintombi Zesi Manje Manje (Girls of the Modern Times). The group released albums like *Zenda Zangishiya* (1983) and *Sematsatsa Sane* (1984) produced by Hamilton Nzimande at Gramophone Record Company (GRC). Like the Mahotella Queens they sang in Northern Sotho and isiZulu.

In the meantime, Mahlathini and some members of the Mahotella Queens left Gallo Records to form Mahlathini and the Queens. The period saw the mushrooming of new formations like Mahlathini Nezintombi Zomgqashiyo as well as Peggy and Mahotella Queens produced by Marks Mankwane. Besides composer Peggy Mokhomo, Marks also produced Joyce Thabe’s album, *Modiegi*. Other names of the time included Manzini Girls, Jabavu Queens, Dima Sisters, Lesotho Sisters, Amakhosa, Durban City Queens, Smodern Girls, Mthembu Queens, Flying Jazz Queens, Izintombi Zentuthuko and Izintombi Zomoya. Mahlathini’s rivals included a groaner called Mshengu Shabalala.

Another man who helped shape the group was composer and saxophonist Shadrack Piliso, brother to Edmund Ntemi Piliso of the African Jazz Pioneers fame. Later Shadrack passed away and the father of Mbaqanga and mgqashiyo, Sebatana Rupert Bopape retired to his home in the green valleys of Limpopo Province. When I was still with the SABC, I had the privilege of facilitating a Lifetime Achievement Award for him as part of Peter Tladi’s Standard Bank Jazz vision. By 2005, when I paid him a visit, he had lost his eye-sight but could still vividly remember and narrate the interesting story of his life. He lives peacefully with his daughter Margaret at his retirement home in Mohapene village near Tzaneen.

In 1983 Mahotella Queens released the Northern Sotho hit album *Tša Lebowa* backed by The Beggars, a band known for backing Walter Dlamini as Walter and The Beggars. At that time the Queens’ line-up was Emily Zwane, Maggie Khumalo, Beatrice Ngcobo, Hazel Zwane and Caroline Kapentar. As a group,

Mahotella Queens released a chain of albums featuring memorable hits like *Hamba Phepha Lami*, *Guga Mzimba*, *Ngiyakhala Ngiyabaleka*, *Mahlare*, *Pitšeng Tše Kgolo*, *Tate Ntshwarele*, *Jive Makgona*, *Mogologolo*, *Monna Le Mosadi*, *Thonthodi* and many others.

In 1986 West Nkosi re-united Makgonatšohle and Mahlathini and Mahotella Queens for the music of Harry Belafonte's album *Paradise In Gazankulu*. While busy with the recordings they caught the attention of two Frenchmen who invited Mahlathini and the band to perform in France. The French were so impressed with their performance that they were requested to return to that country with Mahotella Queens: Hildah Tloubatla, Mildred Mangxola and Nobesuthu Mbadu. But before leaving for France the group recorded the album *Thokozile* (1986). On 25 July 1987 they left for Paris to perform in a concert dubbed the "Black Night Festival". In 1988 they participated in The Nelson Mandela Birthday Concert at Wembley Stadium in the UK. The televised concert was transmitted to more than 60 countries worldwide. Subsequently they toured Europe, England, North America, Japan and Australia. When I asked Marks about the language barrier, he said people in those countries just loved the music and cared very little about the language. To illustrate this he said in Japan they were requested to play *Inyoni Yathi* several times. It was mind-boggling.

In 1990 Shanachie Records released the Queens' international album *Marriage Is A Problem* (Nyalo E A Tshwenya) produced by Marks Mankwane. It was during this international peak that they released CDs like *Rhythm And Art* produced by West Nkosi who was then the manager of the group. In 1994 they released their last CD with Mahlathini, *Stoki Stoki*, which was produced by the group leader Marks Mankwane marking the 30th anniversary of the group. The backing band line-up was Marks Mankwane (lead guitar), Sam Jagome (rhythm guitar), Joseph Makwela (bass guitar), Joey Mabe (keyboards), Philemon Hamole (drums) and Teaspoon Ndelu (saxophone). The recipients of the Womex 2000 Award for World Music Artist Of The Year, the Mahotella Queens will always be loved by the international community for hits like *Kazet*, *Stokvel Jive No.1*, *I'm In Love With A Rastaman* and *God Is On Your Side*. Their collaboration with The Art Of Noise as well as their deal with the big French company, Celluloid Records, will remain some of their international scoops. In 2000 the group released the CD *Sebaibai* as a tribute to the late West Nkosi, Marks Mankwane and Simon Mahlathini Nkabinde (1937–1999). During the era of uncertainty when their fan base was invaded by the disco fever, the band members went into production projects for survival.

Warmbaths-born **MARKS MANKWANE**'s most known project will always be his *Marks Special* series that featured his lead guitar wizardry as well as his hit composition *Khupamarama*. Besides producing the already mentioned female groups, the lead guitarist from the era of the Pretoria Tower Boys also produced

a successful male group called Abafana Base Qhudeni. But as already seen in other chapters, Mankwane also got involved in other music genres as a producer. His legacy in Sesotho traditional music includes the group Soil, Water and Sun. He also became leader of Mahlathini and Mahotella Queens. Of the Makgonatšohle band members, Marks was the closest to me. He would call from wherever they would be touring around the world to update me on both broadcast and music trends in other parts of the globe. The world respected him as a mbaqanga guitar expert. Testimony to this was his feature on Washington D.C.'s National Public Radio programme "Afro-pop" with master guitarists Dr Nico, Sekou "Diamond Fingers" Diabate of Guinea's Bembeya Jazz and Matima of the Democratic Republic of Congo's Zaiko Langa Langa. For instance, it was through him that I came to know about MIDEM. This is an international trade show for professionals of all music genres that provides business and a networking market in Cannes, France. The acronym stands for the French name, *Marché International Del'édition Musicale*. When he died on 17 October 1998 after a long illness, my "international search-light" went out and I felt so lost! The guitar giant was quietly laid to rest at Swart Dam (Mmotong) in the Makapanstad area, north of Tshwane.

The former member of Nelspruit's Mhlongo All Stars, alto saxophonist **WEST Nkosi's** solo career dated back to the 1950s during the kwela music era. He was born near Nelspruit where he grew up a herdboys. He once told me in an interview that he was given the name West by his mother's white boss because for the nine months his mother carried him, she always entered her place of work through the western gate of the household. West was inspired by Spokes Mashiane's *Kwela Spokes* in 1956 and when he stayed with his grand father in Atteridgeville, Tshwane he worked in Arcadia to buy himself a penny whistle.

Interestingly, he worked for the late J.G. Strydom without knowing that he was a Prime Minister. He said he was surprised by some boys in their band who said to him "Your boss is making life difficult for us with his endless laws". He'd always defend him by saying his boss knows nothing about laws, he's a fine man who allows them to sell "mbamba" in their backrooms. He only realised the position of his boss when he passed away and there were many soldiers and officials around the house. West joined the Bon Accord Brothers with whom they had hits like *Tshwara Mabaka Baby*. When the kwela craze faded away in 1959, he switched over to the saxophone.

West joined Zonk Records through son of Stutterheim and talent scout Gibson Kente. He started playing with the likes of Ntemi Piliso, Boy Masaka, Spokes Mashiane, Kid Moncho and Reggy Msomi. He later joined Reggy Msomi's Hollywood Jazz Band with which he travelled to Zambia in 1964 to raise funds for President Kenneth Kaunda's United Independence Party (Unip). Later backed by Makgonatšohle Band he had many hits including his 1966 composition, *Duba Duba*, as well as the Rupert Bopape/Shadrack Piliso composition, *2 By 2* (1968).

Most of these were re-released on a compilation CD titled *Original Sax Jive Hits* (1991) under Gallo Music's African Classics series. All the hits were originally produced by Rupert Bopape. West's other albums include the CD *Village Bump* (Gallo Music, 1994).

In 1970 West was appointed producer and talent scout at Gallo Records and formed Abafana Base Qhudení. He was also behind the success stories of groups like Flaming Souls, Mpharanyana, Patience Africa, Amaswazi Emvelo, Philemon Mchunu, Abafana Bomoya, Nelcy Sedibe, Volcano and O'yaba. Besides his various productions, West Nkosi's music career will always be associated with Mahlathini and Mahotella Queens, as well as Grammy Award winners Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Those were the two groups that took him all over the world following their fame as their producer and manager. The company talent scout, who initiated the rebuilding of the Zimbabwe Gallo factory back in 1973, was later appointed as Gallo's company director. In 1997 he was honoured with the SAMA 3's Outstanding Contribution Award. West Nkosi died on Wednesday, 7 October 1998 aged 56 after sustaining injuries in a car crash. Mr Duba Duba was laid to rest at the KaNyamazane cemetery near Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province.

Drummer **LUCKY MONAMA** also went into production working mostly with traditional music groups like Bana Ba Kgwale and Johannes Mohlala. He also worked with successful pop music artists like the tshiVenda female singer, Irene Mawela whose hits included *Ha O Nkarabe* (1983). When I met him in 2007 he was responsible for the promotion of traditional music at Gallo Records.

The first electric bass guitar player in South Africa, **JOSEPH MAKWELA**, had hit compositions like *X14*. He also had some projects as a producer with groups like The Holy Spirits.

The story and music of the Makgonatšohle Band was showcased in a television series titled *Mathaka*. The sound-track of the shows was also released on a series of albums of the same name produced by the late West Nkosi.

By 2007 the name of the Mahotella Queens was still popular and kept alive by Hilda Tloubatla (lead) aged 66, Nobesuthu Tshawe (alto) aged 62 and Mildred Mangxola (tenor) aged 63. They released a gospel album titled *Siyadumisa* and followed their fame to Australia.

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By the 1940s marabi music whose roots stretch back to the 1920s was popularised by jazz performers. Some of the early groups included The Merry Black Birds, The Jazz Maniacs and the Jazz Revellers. Later on, the marabi-swing style gave birth to mbaqanga whose stars also included Strike Vilakazi,



Reggy Msomi, Zacks Nkosi as well as **WILSON SILGEE**. A former member of the Merry Black Birds and the Jazz Maniacs, Wilson became very popular at army camps entertaining the Second World War recruits with his band, The Rhythm Shots. The soldiers affectionately named them “King Force and His Forces”. Silgee who was born in Fietas in 1918 rounded off his career in 1983 playing with giants like Dollar Brand, Jonas Gwangwa and Hugh Masekela in Botswana in the Cultural Resistance Festival. He died in early 1985 after a long illness and his peers staged his farewell gig at Uncle Tom’s Hall in Orlando West, Soweto.

The kwela music of the 1950s was actually tin-whistle or penny-whistle music. As various blowers used the whistle to collect pennies from passers-by in the street, the horn became known as the penny-whistle. Kwela earned its name from the isiZulu word “kwela”, which means to climb up. As the police arrested the noise makers they would be screaming “Kwela! Kwela!” which ironically also became the nickname of their police vans. The music was inspired by the tshiVenda “tshikona” and the Bapedi “dinaka” pipes as well as the Scottish military band pipes. Its Mecca was Johannesburg Zoolake where various groups would battle it out. Some of the icons of the genre were Skip Phahlane, Willard Cele and Josh Sithole. An attempt to revive the music was later launched by the late jazzman Dudu Pukwana and his band Spears from the UK with the release of the album *Flute Music*. Locally it was one of the well-known kwela music families in South Africa, the Lerole’s. Big Voice Jack Lerole’s album *Colours And Moods* was released by Gallo Music in 1999. Shamba’s son, Tebogo Lerole released his debut with Universal Music. In 2000 he released *6 Faces Of Dr Kwela* (Gallo Records) under the group name **KWELA TEBZA** playing the penny whistle with Shamba, Mpho and Tshepo Lerole while Thembi Lerole took care of the vocals. With the support of his parents in 2007 Tebza released King Kwela (CCP) sporting new regalia inspired by an annual horse racing event. No wonder the 8th Metro FM Music Awards crowned them Best Styled Artists. The album went on to win MTN SAMA 14’s Best Adult Contemporary Album: African category.

Penny-whistle ran out of steam following Spokes Mashiane’s switch to the alto saxophone. Most penny-whistlers had to follow suit during the Township Jive era of the sixties and seventies. In paying tribute to the hornmen I’ll single out some of the big names of my time.

Besides the world-famous king of kwela music Spokes Mashiane and Lemmy Special Mabaso about whom so much has already been written, there were also musicians like **BOY MASAKA** whose real name was Barney Robert Masena, according to industry insiders. This Gallo Records star also used aliases Elim Valenti, Valenti Elim and Mr Joe. The musician who also became known as “Boy Masaka of Brits” following his introductory lyrics to one of his big hits, died in 1978.

Another hit machine of the time was Lazarus Moncho aka **KID MARGO** who

became famous for his *Rock Pata* series of tunes. He performed with the likes of West Nkosi, Albert Ralulimi and even recorded with them as a trio that producer Strike Vilakazi named “Three Blind Mice”. Besides his solo sax jive hits he is known for the music recorded to welcome Lemmy Mabaso from the UK.

Alexandra’s **LEMMY MABASO** became popularly known as Lemmy Special following his hit of the same name. *See You Later* was another hit he recorded as Little Lemmy Special and Big Joe. He played the penny-whistle while Big Joe (Dan Hill) played alto sax. He travelled with the King Kong cast to London in January 1961 as its youngest member. While there he had the honour of performing in front of Princess Margaret. This musician who was with GRC as Lemmy Special for many years produced other monster hits like *KE Special*.

**JOHANNES SPONONO SPOKES MASHIANE** was discovered blowing his penny-whistle lying on his back under a tree near Zoolake while visiting his aunt from rural Northern Transvaal (Limpopo province). He was first recorded by Strike Vilakazi of Trutone Records. Spokes was to be popular for hits like *Kwela Spokes*, *Mamlambo* and *DOCC*. According to industry insiders he was a reserved person who disliked gossip and lies. Spokes played his part in fighting the injustices of Apartheid as he flew from Johannesburg to Cape Town to raise funds for the Treason Trial Defence Fund. He had his fair share of prison lock-ups as blowing the penny-whistle in the street corners was regarded a public disturbance by the police. From 1964 he became a loner and his popularity waned. When the star (whose totem is an elephant) died, it was the end of an era. Robala Tlou! (R.I.P!)

It was during the time when Spokes left Trutone for Gallo Records that Strike Vilakazi asked Albert Ralulimi to substitute him. Albert’s career started in 1956 and he became known as a member of The Basement Boys. His aliases included Albert Strike, Cassius The Great, Jazz Maninginingi and Kid Mawrong-Wrong. The last name he earned in 1965 after he had to stand in for a horn blower who could not turn up for rehearsals due to an arrest resulting from a crime known as “mawrong-wrong”, walking across the railway lines. Albert was used to counter Kid Margo by also releasing tunes like *Rock Pata 500*. As Jazz Maninginingi, he had a massive hit titled *Meropa Ka Morago*.

**SAMMYBOY BHENGU**’s saxophone was just as unique as Hugh Masekela’s trumpet; you could not mistake it for Kid Margo’s or Bra Sello’s. His backing band was known as Gunguluza Men and some of their hits were *Boekenhout* and *Phelindaba*, which revealed and reflected their love for Tshwane.

Another man who dominated the sax jive scene was **BRA SELLO** aka Sello Mmotong from Daveyton, Benoni. With the production skills of Hamilton Nzimande he churned out massive Christmas-time hits like *Tycoon* and *12-0-12*. He joined Gallo Records from RCA in 1966. His backing band was known as the Abafana Bentuthuko or the Ntuthuko Brothers led by Hansford Mthembu who also had a massive hit with *Vala Nzimande*. Some of their other hits were tracks like *Sika Bopha*.

The town of Benoni in the former East Rand (now Ekurhuleni), which was another boiling pot of mbaqanga music also produced a star named **THOMAS PHALE**. He started playing penny-whistle at the age of 17. Affectionately called “Spangane” in Daveyton, he was inspired by the music of Kid Margo, Sammy Boy and Boy Masaka. Later Bra Sello convinced him to switch from penny-whistle to saxophone. In 1968 he joined Mabhoko Sisters and formed a band called The Gold Diggers before joining RPM in 1969 under Mandla Sibiya. After scoring a major hit with a track titled *Boyoyo*, the group became known as Boyoyo Boys. Between 1969 and 1980 he recorded more than 20 albums either with the band or as a solo artist. His alto sax was well known in most shebeens of the time around Johannesburg. He was with the Boys for the better part of his music career. When other groups crowded the Sax Jive music and fame dwindled, he became a session musician and even had a day job. During the Bump Jive craze, Phale recorded a track of the same name with The Movers at Teal Records under David Thekwane. Thomas also did some projects with Lulu Masilela. He later joined The Soul Brothers and toured the world with them. At these shows that took them to almost 30 venues in cities like London, Amsterdam, Sydney, Frankfurt, Melbourne and Hamburg he was always requested to open the second half of the session with his solo performance. After ten years of no solo album release, keyboardist Moses Ngwenya urged him to record *Phale Special* in 1991. At the time of his death he was still blowing his horn as part of The Soul Brothers.

Township Jive included other styles like Accordion Jive, Organ Jive and Vocal Jive, which were recorded mostly on the 45 rpm singles. Some of the leaders in Accordion Jive were Ndabane Ndimma and **LULU MASILELA** who had a big hit with *6 Mabone*. Lulu played with groups like The Members, The Movers and Boyoyo Boys. Some of his known hits are: *Gumboots*, *Small Time*, as well as his instrumental version of The Beatles’ *Hey Jude*. A producer in his own right, Lulu produced artists like Alson Hadebe. In 2006 he formed the Musicians Organisation of Gauteng for veteran musicians to support each other and share ideas. Its members included John Moriri, Dark City Sisters, Manzini Girls and Izintombi Zesimanjemanje.

Other Accordion Jive hits of the time included *Umtata*, *White House*, *Amanzi Amancane* and *Manjomane Jive*. Later on in 1992 the country was taken by storm as that Mandeni troubadour, Vusi Ximba wielded his accordion on the airwaves. Today the instrument can still be heard dominating the Sotho traditional music of groups like Manka le Phallang.

Among the best-selling male voices of the time was a group whose name was inspired by Gallo Records’ logo – **ABAFANA BASEQHUDENI**. The record company has a cock as its logo. This group was founded in 1974 in Johannesburg and although its membership changed with time some of the known names were Robert Mbazo Mkhise who at one stage substituted Mahlathini as groaner

for the Mahotella Queens, Joseph Mthimkhulu who sang with the Space Queens, Potatoes Zuma, Ray Mkhise and Daniel Nhlapo. They were backed by Makgonatsohle and their first hit was *Sadlula Thina*, followed by *Nkomo Sika Baba*. As already indicated, their producer was Marks Mankwane. Their debut album was *Umshado Ucwele Amasaka* (1975). Another huge album of theirs was *Poo Ke Nna*, which created so much demand that it was followed up by its isiZulu version release *Inkunzi Yimi* (Igagasi, 1980). When Potatoes Zuma, Joseph Mthimkhulu and Daniel Nhlapo left the group, the remaining original members Robert and Ray Mkhise invited Harry Sgegede Nhlapo and Jotham Maqhude Nkosi (former Amagugu members) as well as Alson Majosi to join them. Other members who also joined the group were Zenzele Koko, Velaphi Radebe and Paulus Mgodlagodla Mabunda.

In 1978 Joseph Mthimkhulu, Potatoes Zuma and Daniel Nhlapo formed a new group called **ABAFANA BESISHINGISHANE** (The Whirlwind Boys). The line-up was Joseph Mthimkhulu, Velaphi Mthimkhulu, Potatoes Zuma, Eddie Zuma and Daniel Nhlapo. The group's debut album *Umshado Ka Nomakhosi* (Chocolate City, 1979) produced by T. Tiba was released through WEA Records. In 1980 they released *Hayi Bo Bantu Bakithi* on the same label followed by *Izagila Zesi Shingishane* (1981), *Fill Up The Table* (1981) and *Re Ya Totoba* (1982). When the group dissolved, Potatoes Zuma went solo under the name "Mazambane" and later answered to the call of the ancestors to become a sangoma.

Joseph Mthimkhulu and Daniel Nhlapo formed **ABAFANA BAMAGODUKA**, which released albums like *Sengehlulwe* (Third World Music, 1984) produced by Lulu Masilela.

Other male groups of the time were **ABATHAKATHI** whose albums included *Umunt Omdala* (Kilimanjaro, 1983) produced by Hamilton Nzimande of Isibaya Productions. Hamilton also had a group named after him called **NZIMANDE ALL STARS**.

Another multi-gold selling group was **AMASWAZI EMVELO**, a name indicating their Swazi cultural background. Originally known as The Californian Kids, some of their albums were produced by Marks Mankwane. Some of their early titles included *Sarafina* (Substitute) and *Umngani Wami* (1978) on the Disco Soul label. Their debut single as Amaswazi Emvelo was *Okomuntu Nwayi Nwayi* (1978), which became a monster hit. The group membership was Albert Motha (lead vocalist), Philip Motha, John Motha and Meshack Mkhwanazi. They were brought together by Gallo director West Nkosi who later also became their producer under the Mavuthela Music Production. Their albums include *Mama Ka Nomvula* (Ezom Dabu, 1979), *Siphuma Eswazini* (1979), *Jabulani* (1980), *Thul'ulalele* (1981), *Umkhovu Wendawo* (1981), *E-Soweto* (1982), *Ezintabeni* (1982), *Izulu Elimnyama* (1984), *Itshwala Begazati* (1985) and *Indodemnyama* (1987), which featured Mahlathini Nkabinde. Besides the gold awards they collected, they also won the Sarie Award in 1982 as the Best Vocal Group for

their second gold disc album *Umkhovu Wendawo* as well as in 1983 for the album *Ezintabeni* featuring the hit *Ngiyamesaba Umalume*.

The band **ABAFANA BOMOYA** was originally formed in 1966 by George Bhengu and Mboniseni Mkhise in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. They came from Emakhabeleni near Kranskop and lived in the compound of the University Of Natal where they worked. In 1976 they named themselves Abafana Bomoya. In 1982 they participated in an international folk-music festival with Ladysmith Black Mambazo in Germany. They were later joined by Jeff Thomas, “Madabule” Mkhise and “Washesha” Ngcobo. Their albums include *Emakhabeleni* (Ezomdabu, 1984).

One male voice group that became internationally known for attracting the attention of Paul Simon was the **Boyoyo Boys**. Their first major hit was Boyoyo and it also became their name. Their follow-up hits were *Zola No. 4* and *Boyoyo No. 4*, both produced by David Thekwane at Teal Records. The group achieved more than 20 gold records in a glorious career that lasted 15 years until the drummer Archie Mohlala met his tragic death in 1984. The Boys’ biggest hit was *Pule*, which gave birth to Malcolm McLaren’s international hit, *Double Dutch*. Thereafter the group’s name was sustained by Vusi Xhosa, Vusi Nkosi, Lucas Pelo, Philippe Mziza as well as the late hornman, Thomas Phale. Through Rea Music they released the album *TJ Today* (Boots, 1988). The title was inspired by the then Johannesburg plate number. In those days T stood for the province of Transvaal, followed by the first letter of the town. However, there were some exceptions and to this day I never knew what they stood for. You’d easily recognise TP for Pretoria, TG for Germiston, TS for Springs, but how Pietersburg became TAL, Potgietersrus TAN, Groblersdaal TCA or Brakpan TO, I never understood and never tried to find out. Some of the group’s hits included on the Rea Music collection series titled *Homeland* were *Alex Jive*, *Daveyton Special*, *Mthwalo*, *Alex Corner* and *Eloff Street*.

Other memorable tunes of the era included *Submarine*, *Skhumbuzo*, *Maokeng Special*, *Jive Sasol B3*, *Mzilikazi*, *Mazambane*, *Bayeza*, *Madiepetsane*, *Isinkwa No Banana*, *Mark Special No. 2*, *Scoop Kwela Jive* and *Impalampala*, which inspired Thomas Phale’s *Platform 14*. Other hot musicians were Patla Pat Lekganyane, Ananias Mokoena and General Duze.

One interesting aspect of the music was how tracks got their titles. If a track was a huge hit, it would become a series, for example *Rock Pata*, *Jackpot*, *Taxi Jive*, *Percy Jive*, *Jive Smodern Jive*, *Lekope Special*, *Mabone*, etc. Other tracks were named after places or roads like *Marabastad*, *Dube*, *Soweto*, *Durban Road*, *Platform 1*, *Mamelodi*, *Maokeng*, etc. Events also got their share as in *Apollo 11*. Some instrumental hits gave birth to their vocal versions as in the vocal version of *12-0-12*, which was titled *Ingwe Idla Ngamabala*. But the most interesting part was that there could be a track titled *Taxi Jive No. 1* followed by *Taxi Jive 500* without having numbers 2 or 20.

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Within this genre emerged a mbaqanga sound enriched by township soul. This style became so popular and would be responsible for exposing both mbaqanga and township soul to the world.

In KwaZulu-Natal two young guys had big dreams and decided to hit the big time in Johannesburg. There were no studios in Durban at the time. The two were guitarist Tusa Mthethwa from Camperdown and drummer/vocalist David “Mdavu” Masondo from Hammersdale. In 1973 the group arrived at the EMI Recording studios in Johannesburg to record their music. Later they were joined by bass guitarist Zenzele “Zakes” Mchunu from Camperdown. They hardly knew that the road ahead would be paved with gold discs, platinum discs, fatal car crashes, international tours and many many awards. They did not know that their musical homes would change from EMI, GRC, Priority Records, Soul Brothers, Tusk Records to Gallo Records!

Placed under the management of the late Titus Masikana, not much was achieved by the mbaqanga band, The Young Brothers. Things changed when In 1974 a GRC representative Moses Jabu Dlamini recruited them to his stable. The mbaqanga they played was fused with township soul and their name changed to **THE SOUL BROTHERS**. The drummer, David Masondo became their lead vocalist and their producer became Hamilton ‘Vala’ Nzimande. Nzimande later became known for his Isibaya Esikhulu Productions as well as for being producer of the late mbaqanga king, Bra Sello Mmotong (Mr Tycoon). This is the year in which they released their first seven single as The Soul Brothers, *Umshoza Wami* (My Girlfriend), which went gold.

In 1975 as the organ effect was needed for the soul sound, Soweto keyboardist, Solly Rameetse was introduced to the group and the line-up looked like this:

Lead vocals:	David ‘Mdavu’ Masondo
Lead guitar:	Tuza Mthethwa
Bass guitar:	Zenzele ‘Zakes’ Mnchunu
Drums:	Philemon Hamole
Electric organ:	Solly Rameetse
Saxophones:	Hosia Moshupye
	Lawrance Mothoa
	Mpompi Sosibo

In 1976 Moses Jabu Dlamini became manager/producer, a position he held for 13 years. That very year Solly Rameetse had to travel abroad. Showbiz personality, Jerry Mhlanga tipped off Moses Dlamini about an eighteen-year-old talented keyboardist who was a member of a soul group The Crocodiles in Soweto. His



name was Moses Ngwenya who cut his teeth in music as a drummer. “Black Moses” joined the Soul Brothers. Philemon Hamole was replaced by Bongani Nxele, while Hosia Moshupye was substituted by Johannes “Boy” Mpungose.

On 8 January 1979 disaster struck. Tuza Mthethwa and Mpompi Sosibo were burned to death in a car crash near Villiers, on their way to Johannesburg from Natal. According to their manager, their bodies were only identifiable by their belts and neck-chains. This traumatic experience was reflected in their song *Asisaphelele* (We are no longer complete). Following this blow, the band had to replace the fallen stars. Maxwell Mngadi from Umlazi, Durban replaced Tuza Mthethwa on lead guitar. Mpompi Sosibo’s place was filled by Alexandra Township’s Lemmy “Special” Mabaso on saxophone. Another vocalist was roped in to assist David Masondo in the name of American Zulu from Evander, near Nigel.

In 1979 Sipho Yeni joined the band to help Moses Ngwenya on keyboards. Unfortunately Sipho was later shot dead after their concert in Estcourt as he was loading musical instruments onto their truck. In 1982 after the departure of American Zulu the remaining members released an album titled *Isiphiwo* (talent). The track’s lyrics lament the killing of talented people due to jealousy. They remind enemies that even if you kill a gifted person, you can’t take his talent, he’ll leave with it to his grave. Actually, most of their songs are based on their real life experiences.

In 1984 the band’s bass guitarist, Zakes Mchunu died in a car accident. This was just after their successful trip to London for the recording of their second album *Isithembiso* (The Promise) with Priority Records. In that very year they won the SOHO Award, which was received by well-known record company director, the late Stanley Nkosi, on their behalf. The Soul Brothers’ first on the label, *Isicelo* (A Request), had sold over 200 000 units in three months! In 1985 the band made a powerful comeback with a lineup of 13 musicians, including popular mbaqanga saxman Thomas Phale. In 1988 American Zulu who had already left the group died in his hometown of Evander.

Other members who shared the glory of the band and passed away include Thomas Phale, Japan Motoyi as well as the band’s longtime manager, Moses Jabulani Dlamini. The remaining nucleus of The Soul Brothers is David Masondo and Moses Ngwenya. Another longest serving member is lead guitarist, Maxwell Mngadi. They are true survivors as one of their hits *Usathane Simehlulile* (We’ve conquered the devil) composed by David says it all. Their international tours took them to Germany and Britain where their shows were sold out. In Australia they continued to jam-pack venues including the respected Sydney Opera House. When Dr Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela and Frederick Willem de Klerk jointly received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994 for transforming the Republic of South Africa into a democratic state, the Soul Brothers celebrated the achievement in Oslo and the Norwegians danced to the soul-mbaqanga sounds of South Africa! In response to the international call to write the translation of their



isiZulu lyrics into English, in 1992 they released the album *Uxolo/Peace* on Tusk Music's Kariba Records label with all songs written and sung by David Masondo and translated into English by Dumisane Zondi. Although most of their compositions are in isiZulu, some are in Sesotho including their hit *Diketso Tsa Hao* (Your Actions). David's favourite musicians include Mahlathini and Mahotella Queens as well as Joseph Shabalala's Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Moses's keyboard playing was locally inspired by champions like Rex Rabanye of The Teenage Lovers in Ikageng and Sankie Chounyane of The Movers in Alexandra. On the international front it was the incredible Jimmy Smith as well as Booker T Jones of the band Booker T and the MGs.

In 2005 they released their first DVD, which was recorded live at the Newtown Music Hall in Johannesburg showcasing their magnificent unbeatable stage choreography. I was humbled by their gesture to feature me in the DVD. They followed up with the release of their album *Igobondela*. The Soul Brothers are the living legends of South African music; no wonder they've won trophies in the annual SAMAs, including *Isigebengu* (1995), *Indaba* (1996), *Umshado* (1997), *Idlozi* (1998), *Amanikiniki* (1999), *Isigqebhezana* (2000), *Intombi Yami* (2001), *Induk'Enhle* (2002), *Isithothobala* (2003) and so on. Their 2007 album, *Amacala*, was nominated in the Best Mgxobanyawo Album category, a section that was won by Thokozani Langa for *Phuma Kimi*.

The Soul Brothers' awards are just too many to mention. The following are some of their more than thirty albums:

1974	<i>Mshoza Wami</i>	1987	<i>Xola</i>
1977	<i>Dumela</i>	1988	<i>Usibali</i>
1977	<i>I Feel So Lonely Without You</i>	1989	<i>Impimpi</i>
1977	<i>A Ke Niyeke Botsotsi</i>	1992	<i>Uxolo/Peace</i>
1978	<i>Mantombazane</i>	1994	<i>Isigebengu</i>
1978	<i>Deliwe</i>	1995	<i>Indaba</i>
1979	<i>Kulukhuni</i>	1996	<i>Umshado</i>
1980	<i>Nilinden</i>	1996	<i>Umdlola</i>
1980	<i>Ukhalelani</i>	1998	<i>Idlozi</i>
1981	<i>Usathane Simehlulile</i>	1999	<i>Amanikiniki</i>
1981	<i>Ke Kopa Tshwarelo</i>	2000	<i>Isigqebhezana</i>
1982	<i>Isiphiwo</i>	2001	<i>Intombi Yami</i>
1982	<i>Ogandaganda</i>	2002	<i>Induk'enhle</i>
1983	<i>Isicelo</i>	2003	<i>Isithothobala</i>
1984	<i>Hluphekile</i>	2005	<i>Ugruva Nobani</i>

1984 *Isithembiso*  
 1985 *Isilingo*  
 1986 *Uthando*

2005 *Igobondela*  
 2006 *Into Yamahala*  
 2007 *Amacala*

Other albums include *Ke Nna Monna*, *Kuze Kuse*, *Vala Umlomo*, *Xolisa Umoya* and *Ezinkulu*.

We should remember that the above albums exclude their many compilation like *Ezikhulu*, *Ezidlubhedu* and *The Best Of* volumes. It should be remembered that besides their band commitment each of them have other projects on the side. Some of the musicians groomed by the Soul Brothers are Thisha, Imitshotshovu, Ithashi Elimphlophe, Themba Ngwenya, Paula Mahlaba as well as Dennis Gumede and the Teenagers. The group's lead guitarist Maxwell Mngadi also produced groups like Amazulu Amnyama. Hugh Masekela invited them to work with him on his Botswana project. They featured on Harry Belafonte's album *Paradise In Gazankulu* performing the track *Sisiwani*, an adaptation of their *Inhlawulo*. The vibrating voice on Deborah Fraser's 2005 album *Ngikuxolele* title track is that of David Masondo. The sharp-as-a-razor organ on Mbongeni Ngema's *S'timela Sase – Zola* is manipulated by Moses Ngwenya. Hectic? Passion! The Soul Brothers were finally honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the SAMA 13.

The Soul Brothers' rivals were mainly groups like **ABANGANI**, a trio whose albums include *Yiba Nathi* (Music Team, 1986) and *Sivikele* (Music Team, 1987) led by Sibusiso Mbatha. In 2006 Sibusiso was the lead vocalist of Oflende, a mbaqanga group which won a South African Traditional Music Award with their album, *Uyashada*. Oflende consisted of Sibusiso Mbatha, Phathizwe Mbatha and Bheki Hlatswayo. In October of the same year their record company, Thuthuka Records presented them with an award for their performance. At the same occasion another group in the stable, Ali Mgube's Amasap received a gold disc for the sales of their album *Ungezi*.

**ABAKHWENYANA** was a four-man group made of Dominic Zuma (leader), M. Mlangeni (keyboards), T. Dlamini (lead guitar) and R Bhengu (bass guitar) produced by Simon Ngwenya. Most of their songs were composed by B Mvubu while B. Dlamini was the percussionist. Their albums include *20/20* (Daylight Beat, 1988) and *4000* (Daylight Beat, 1989), which were released through CCP Records.

**THE SPECIAL 5** included Bongani Ngubane (lead vocal/percussion), Jabu Ngubane (lead guitar), Mandla Exchange Mkhwanazi (keyboards), Lindani Mbatha (drums) and Mxolisi Ngobeni (backing vocals). Their albums include *Once Bitten*, *Twice Shy* (Umkhonto Records, 1989) and *Thath' Ukiss* (Umkhonto Records, 1991) produced by Bongani Ngubane.

**RICHARD SILUMA's** mbaqanga background has its roots in his group, The Love

Brothers, which consisted of Vusi Mlambo (lead guitar), Mdu Mlangeni (organ), Mathambesobho Kunene (bassist) and John Siluma (drums). One of their major hits was *Nthabiseng*. After meeting producer Velile David Thekwane while working as a storeman, Richard developed a passion for production. In 1978 he was promoted to a Sales Assistant, a position that sent him travelling around the country. These trips allowed him to meet a lot of undiscovered talent.

Meanwhile, with his group The Love Brothers recording with David Gresham Productions he produced 13 top records before the band split up. In 1982 Richard was promoted to the position of Producer. His first product was Ukhamba Lo Mvaleliso, a traditional isiZulu music group from Jeppe Hostel. That very same year the group collected two double gold disc awards. He produced Lucky Dube's isiZulu vocal album *Kukuwe* (1984, Teal Sound), which was engineered by Peter Thwaites. The musicians on this album were Lucky Dube (lead vocals and organ), Richard Siluma (bass and lead guitars), Isaac Mtshali (drums) and Lloyd Lelosa (synthesiser). Later Richard produced Lucky Dube's very first reggae attempt, *Rastas Never Die* (Plum Records, 1985) engineered by David Segal. It featured the hit *Fresh Air* co-written by Lucky Dube and Dave Segal. In the meantime, *Ukhamba Lo Mvaleliso* achieved two gold disc awards.

Richard was joined by Lucky Dube and the following year he scored three gold discs, two for *Ukhamba* and one for *Lucky*. From here whatever producer Richarda Siluma touched sold big. Lucky's group from New Castle, Super Soul, joined them but was later recruited by another producer. This forced Richard to perfect his guitar playing skills as Lucky was already a keyboardist and singer. The two of them formed a backing band that led to Richard's solo career under the name Richie S. In 1984 he released his debut maxi single, *Change/AfricanDance* (Gresham Records) produced by Julian Laxton and engineered by John Culverwell with various dubbed instruments played by him and Lucky. It was a huge success. They never looked back and Lucky's career will be discussed under the Reggae music chapter, Ska Flowers.

Richie S followed up with *African Dance No. 2* (American Mix) and *Love Me Baby*. The popularity of *African Dance* prompted other groups to cover it as on Modaji's *Kwasa-Kwasa* (Mob Music, 1998) album produced by General Muzka and engineered by Lucas Mokoena. This version added a Shangaan flavour to the tune. Richard's other release was a love songs album titled *I Was Born In Africa*. Besides his solo career his other productions include Asiza, Zanusi, Albert Botsotso Ngobeni, Tu Nokwe, Thoko Mdallose, Ruben Beewa, Zasha, Slaves and Sinakho Dance Band; but his production prowess will always be associated with the successful career of the late reggae superstar, Lucky Dube. Richard continued to develop new talent in both reggae and gospel music. In 2007 he was part of the Golden Oldies Music Festival staged at the Polokwane Showgrounds, which I had the honour of compèring all-night with my former colleague, Brains Mantjiu (Nketsenksetse).

In Harrismith on 2 April 1957 John and Topsy Makaza were blessed with their eleventh child, George Sibulayi Makaza. They sent him to Rainbokspruit School in the Swinburne area of the Free State Province. His studies suffered due to his pre-occupation with the music of the Soul Brothers. He dreamt of singing like them on the radio. He left school only to meet a man who would turn his dreams into reality – Richard Siluma. He joined Siluma's band, The Love Brothers as a backing vocalist. Soon he started recording and performing with them. His immense talent soon showed and during one of the band's rehearsals, producer Thomas Masingi urged him to consider a solo career. He obliged and Richard Siluma gave him the green light. A new star was created in the name of **SIPHO KHESWA**. His albums include *Owami Lona* (DGR).

Another musician who started out as an isiZulu mbaqanga star is **PAT SHANGE**. I was introduced to him by the late Cyril Mnchunu's hit parade on the former Radio Zulu (Ukhozi FM). For as long as I knew him he's been at Dephon. Some of his many isiZulu albums include *Ngicela Uxolo* and *Iseluleko Zomphakathi*. In 1984 he releases hot tracks like *Ukoniwe Umlomo* and *Yondla Abalazi*. His relatively recent isiZulu self-written and self-arranged hit *Ubuhamba Nobani Izolo*, which he also produced on Dephon's Sounds Disco label.

With changing trends he crossed into the Mbaqanga-Soul market, which was popularised by The Soul Brothers. Amongst his successful albums are *Man Oh Man*, *Undecided Divorce Case*, *I Love Africa*, *Accused*, *Tonite You Gonna Give* and *Sweet Mama*. When we met he laughed so much when I told him that I presented his song *Undecided Divorce Case* on air as "UDC". His unforgettable hits include *Casanova* and *Just A Friend Of My Daddy*. Most of his albums were either self-produced or co-produced with either Phil Hollis or Rick Wolff. Pat moves with the changing times. In 1997 he employed the services of one of the new generation of producers South Africa has produced, Godfrey Pilane aka Guffy (pronounced Goofy). They went into the CSR Studios and came out triumphantly with an album titled *I Miss You* which was released by Teal Records. His 2004 release *Kuyini Ukuphila* was nominated for MTN SAMA's Best Mbaqanga Album category. As a producer he has helped many new musicians including the reggae outfit, Black People's Choice.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE CAPE CONNECTION

**D**own in Cape Town **RICHARD JON SMITH** cooked a storm with his monster hits *Candle Light* and *That's Why I Love You*. The latter was produced by Robert J Lange and the former by Clive Calder, owner of Zomba Productions. His career flourished to a point where he had to follow his fame abroad. But his legacy lingered on and gave rise to a new generation of musicians.

Robin Levetan's Bright Blue is another band that dominated the music scene with a uniquely South African sound in the eighties. More about them later under the chapter on crossover music.

**ROBIN AULD** who was backed by the band Z-Astaire around 1984 is another fine musician from the Mother City. His hits like *Fine Day* endeared him to thousands of music lovers across the country.

**SWEET CHOCOLATE** had a massive hit, *This Ain't America*, fronted by soulman Al Etto who later launched his own solo career. One of his hits, *She's Hot*, was produced by Attie van Wyk and engineered by Richard "Mr Magic" Mitchell on Dephon's Roy B label during the time of promoter Peter Khowana.

After Cape Flats son, **NEVILLE NASH**, and his band The Miracles parted ways he went solo. By 1985 he had a big hit, *One Of Those Nights*, which was later included in the *Concert In The Park* double album. *What's Your Name, What's Your Number?* was produced by Tom Mkhise on the CTV label, Solid. In 1986 he followed up with the album *Why?*, which featured the hit *Feel It* produced by Tom Mkhise, Solly Letwaba and Neville himself. He also co-wrote the music of *African Image* with Tom Mkhise on CTV-Music Team's Spinna label.

Another success story from Cape Town is that of **THE ROCKETS**, a band fronted by Bones and Ronnie Joyce who'd later go solo. Their stable was MFM. This

band had a number of hits like *Surrender*, *Situations*, *Ooh La La La* and *Gimme A Break* (Dance). They were produced by the great Greg Cutler, assisted by Hotliners Alistair Coakley and Bones Brettell (ex-Clout). Later they released *We Are All African People*, an album produced by Rick Wolff, Molly Barron and Al Etto on Dephon's Roy B label. Ronnie Joyce embarked on a solo career and released hits like *What Went Wrong With Us?* as well as *I'm Crying*. He also teamed up with Jonathan Butler on two Peter Vee productions *Star On The TV Show* and *It Takes Two*. He released *Merry Christmas Dear Mother* as Little Ronnie Joyce. Most of us will always remember Ronnie as the guy who sang *It All Adds Up* with the late Brenda Fassie back in 1984.

Another son of the Mother City, Byron later changed his name to Jean-Michel and fronted the US supergroup Toto.

At the age of 13 **RICARDO** recorded his first song. He was born Ricardo David Groenewald on 23 July 1972 in Humansdorp. He is from a musically talented family. His father, William Groenewald, was a singer and played saxophone, guitar and piano. His aunt was Sylvia Green who had a solo career with Priority Records. Ricardo started singing at the age of four. Things started to happen when he appeared in a television programme called *1930 Breakdown* with the likes of Lionel Petersen. He impressed the producers of the show and received a standing ovation for his rendition of two spiritual songs, *Amazing Grace* and *Do Lord*. After his aunt Sylvia told Al Etto about him, he was led into the recording studio. Ricardo's first recorded song was *Maxi Miles*. In 1985 he released the album *Ricardo* backed by seasoned musicians like Khaya Mahlangu (soprano sax), Al Etto (guitars) and Danny Lalouette (bass guitar). The album featured *Catch The Jive* as well as his duet with Jani de Lenta titled *Your Love, My Love*. His other albums include *Is There Any Justice?* produced and arranged by Attie van Wyk, as well as *Children Of The World* performed with two friends, Duran Paulsen and Keith van der Poel. Also produced by Attie, it won the Second National Song contest. His biggest hit ever was the Father's Day classic, *I Love You Daddy*.

**JONATHAN BUTLER** was born and bred in Athlone, Cape Town. His early music years were greatly influenced by The Golden City Dixies who toured South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Malawi and Zambia. Jonathan's solo career was launched at the age of twelve in 1974. His memorable hits early in his career were *She Kept On Walking* and *Please Stay*, which reached the double gold status. In the seventies Jonathan became a Christian and went into gospel music. Talking about the period, he said he went into semi-retirement to find himself. He was not happy singing like other overseas musicians; he wanted to find his African self. At the end of the introspection window he moved into fusion, exploiting his guitar playing skills to the maximum. Sabata Lebona produced his *7th Avenue* and *Crossroads* singles. In 1985 he emigrated to London where he released his duet with Ruby Turner, *If You'Re Ready (Come Go With Me)*, a 1974 hit



of The Staple Singers from their album *Be What You Are* (Stax). His debut album was *Introducing Jonathan Butler* (1986). In 1987 he released a double-album that showed his true colours to the international music industry. Today he is all smiles as his catalogue boasts Grammy-nominated hits like *Lies* and *Going Home*. His gold album *More Than Friends* had a beautiful ballad, *Sarah, Sarah*, which was produced by Barry Eastmond as well as his duet with Vanessa Bell Armstrong, *True Love Never Fails*. In 1994, after a four year break, he came back on the Mercury Records label with the album *Head To Head* featuring the hit *I'm On My Knees*. He said the album represented a fresh start in his career because for the very first time he had the creative freedom as he co-produced it with Gerry E Brown. One track, *Jodie*, features some of the world's best jazz musicians like Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Grady Tate and Michael Brecker. Other albums include *Do You Love Me* (1997), *The Source* (2000), *Surrender* (2002), *The Ultimate Butler* (2003), *The Worship Project* (2004), *Story Of Life* and *Jonathan Butler* (2005). The influence of his music style is evident in that of the young generation of jazz guitarists like Durban's Ernie Smith.

The frontiers of South African hip-hop music were almost pushed to the limit by **PROPHETS OF THE CITY** (POC). Its members were Ready D, Shaheen, Ishmael, Junior and Caramel. Theirs was a musical revolution defying the norms with performances dominated by rap and breakdance paces. In 1995 their album *Phunk Phlow* won the first FNB SAMA's Best Rap Album category. Their other albums include *Our World*, *Jabulani*, *Age Of Truth*, *Boomstyle* and *Kickin' Nonstop*. Ishmael left the outfit to join Skeem and later embarked on a solo career. POC won SAMA 9's Sountrack category for *Steps*. Ready D, born in District Six and forced to move to Mitchell's Plain at a tender age became a professional deejay and won the South African DJ Championships four times with his mixing and scratching skills. In 2005 he released his debut solo album titled *Not For The Faint Hearted Vol. 1*, which features international hip-hop underground artists as well as unreleased tracks of Skwatta Kamp, Ancient Men, Tebs, Tumi, Amu and his group POC. His other projects include BVK (Brasse Vannie Kaap) where he worked with the late Mr Fat and Hamma who calls him Boeta D to record their 2000 album, *Yskoud*. Ready D produced the 13-track CD and released it through Ghetto Ruff. It was nominated for FNB SAMA 7 in the Best Producer category. Also nominated in the category was his "Bra" Shaheen Ariefdien for D'Louw's *Cosmic Child*. Sadly, Mr Fat aka Ashley Titus passed away at Groote Schuur Hospital in December 2007.

A seven piece band, Louis and the Jive, had a big hit in 1986 with *Feels Like Friday* (RPM) co-written by Louis Ribeiro and J. Doveton-Helps featuring musicians like McCoy Mrubata, before he moved with Sipho Mabuse to Johannesburg. It was produced by Mac Mathunjwa and engineered by Philip Nel on RPM'S Right Track label.

**MELVYN MATTHEWS** is the hitman who wrote Brenda Fassie's *Weekend Special*

in 1983. He also wrote his own songs like *Don't Give My Love Away* (1994) on Priority Records' Reaction label, produced by Al Etto.

Songstress **VICKY SAMPSON** was born in Cape Town in 1969. Having won a local talent search, she left Cape Town in 1983 and appeared in a television talent search show *Follow That Star*. From there she worked with stars like Khaya Mahlangu, Siphso Gumede, Al Jarreau and Shakatak. Her success story will always be associated with Tusk's director of marketing, Benjy Mudie. Her debut album was so well received in Europe that she planned to focus on the international market. Her 1992 album, *Shine*, was produced and arranged by Alan Lazar on Tusk's One World Entertainment label. It featured the hit *Love Will Shine On You*. While performing in Singapore in 1994 she caught the attention of British producers SGO who invited her to spend six weeks in Britain getting the feel of international music trends. In 1995 she went back to the UK and spent two and half months fine-tuning the sound of her next album, *Zai*. Upon its release, the track *African Dream* became such a massive hit featuring on almost every radio station's charts in South Africa. It was also used to market and promote the first national lottery in South Africa. It won her many awards including FNB SAMA 2's Best Vocal Performance: Female category, Best Pop Album and Best Video. In the same 1995 she participated in the historic "Women Of The World Unite Against Drugs And War" concert sharing the stage with PJ Powers, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Lesley Rae Dowling, Jennifer Jones, Aviva Pelham and Jennifer Ferguson at Sun City. On Thursday, 11 October 2007, Vicky represented South Africa at the 12th Special Olympics in Shanghai, China and gave a solo rendition of the Alan Lazar's composition *One Tribe Under Heaven*. At the end of that month she also released her CD titled *License To Sing*.

**JENNIFER JONES** is another songstress with a dynamic voice. She has backed some of this industry's best musos. In 1997 she recorded *Slow Down* with Sony Music Entertainment (SA). Selwyn Shandel produced almost the whole album with the exception of two tracks. The CD features the hit *Walk With Me* co-written with Selwyn Shandel as a tribute to Dee Kay. Her biggest contribution to South Africa's democracy remains her song for the new constitution, *One Law For One Nation*.

There was also the group The Outlet with *Working On a Good Thing*. Who can forget Peter Vee's *Love Is All I Have*? Both hits were produced by Clive Calder.

The great **DAVID KRAMER** who is one of the earliest leaders of the Alternative Afrikaans music trend had hits like *Die Royal Hotel* and *A Matchbox Full Of Diamonds*. He inspired a whole new generation of Afrikaner musicians like Koos Kombuis and the late Johannes Kerkorrel. They were supported by bands like the Gereformeerde Blues Band and Kommissie Van Ondersoek. This movement agitated for changes in South Africa, using the Afrikaans language as a medium. Johannes Kerkorrel aka Rolf Rabie won the first FNB SAMA's Best Rock

Album category with his 1995 album *Cyanide In The Beefcake*. Unfortunately the progressive Johannes died a mysterious tragic death, which was followed by a television documentary *Who Killed Johannes Kerkorrel?* Cape Town is mainly known for its jazz connection, a genre to be discussed later in other sections of this work. This is partly due to tradition and UCT's College of Music, which presented South Africa with most of today's young lions of jazz. It is interesting to note that the winners of the 1994 Southern Comfort Jazz Scholarship were both drummers from UCT in the names of Frank Paco and Clement Benny. The scholarship was worth R17 000 for a full year study at an institution that offers jazz music as a full-time course. Frank later joined Sakhile and also travelled this continent as Miriam Makeba's drummer.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# INTO THE VIBRANT EIGHTIES

**T**he eighties were without doubt the most vibrant years of my life in the South African music and media industry. That was when I joined the SABC and was privileged to interact with the who's who of the music industry, from managers to promoters, from talent scouts to reps, from producers and composers, to the stars and superstars. Those were the days when every record company worth its salt would release the music of their stars twice a year, for Easter and Christmas.

My mentor once told me that to musicians the eighties was the decade of uncertainty. He said the cultural boycott, which was intended to isolate apartheid South Africa also took its toll on the international exposure of the musicians. The British actors' Equity and Musicians Union (MU) supported the boycott by not allowing their members to perform in South Africa, and they would also prevent South Africans from performing abroad. An example of this was when *MALOPOETS* planned shows in London in 1985. The MU banned the shows. Malopoets included Pat Sefolosha, Bruce Sosibo, Sam Shabalala, Kenny Mathaba, Pat Mokoka, Moss Manaka and Mervyn Africa. That same year they released their self-titled album recorded in Paris and co-produced with Martin Meissonnier. A collector's item! For some time the group was based in Switzerland. The heat was on and as we all know, in a war situation you may be caught in crossfire whether you are for or against. On his return to the country, Madoda Bruce Sosibo put a group together called Zanusi and in 1991 released a self-titled and self-written album produced by Richard Siluma and engineered by Peter Pearlson on Gallo's GMP label.

Paul Simon's *Graceland* project was also caught up in this storm. Simon, of the sixties duo Simon and Garfunkel, had gone solo after a glorious career that churned out hits like *Sounds Of Silence* (1965), *The Boxer* (1969) and *Bridge Over Troubled Water* (1970). Back in 1972 he had successfully engaged Jamaican artists to bring the reggae effect into his hit *Mother And Child Re-union* from his self-titled album. In 1985 he engaged South African musos like Ray Phiri, Isaac Mtshali, Bakithi Khumalo and Ladysmith Black Mambazo in the recording of the *Graceland* album in New York. The album produced a monster hit *You Can Call Me Al*, which charted both in the US and UK. It was followed by the "Born At The Right Time" world tour, which also included the album's rhythm section, Ray Phiri, Bakithi Khumalo, Mnca Mtshali, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba. While he allegedly thought he was exposing South African musicians to the outside world and marrying different cultures on one album, the unions saw this as a blatant sabotage of the boycott. They charged him with arrogance and he pleaded ignorance. A statement from his camp said the misunderstanding arose due to the fact that the cultural boycott did not clarify the difference between performances and recordings in South Africa.

It was in 1985 when Stevie Wonder demonstrated outside the South African Embassy in Washington and got arrested. When he won an Academy Award he caused a stir by receiving it in the name of former Robben Islander, Nelson Mandela. That year he released an album titled *In Square Circle*. One protest track titled *It's Wrong* (apartheid) featured exiled South African musicians Tshepo Mokone, Thandeka Ngono, Linda Tshabalala, Lorraine Mahlangu and Fana Kekana as backing vocalists. Stevie would sing, "Hold On Tight, Freedom Is Coming" and the chorus would add, "Qinisela, Inkululeko Iyeza". That was the album that also included the world-wide hit *Part-time Lover*.

By 1986 Artists United Against Apartheid (AUAA) had recorded the *Sun City* album. Interestingly, in my language Northern Sotho "Auaa" means "No!", spelt "Aowa" – Aowa To Apartheid. They all worked free of charge and the royalties went to The Africa Fund, a UN trust that helped political prisoners, exiles and anti-Apartheid groups in the US. Participants included Afrika Bambaataa, Bono, Jimmy Cliff, George Clinton, Miles Davis, Bob Dylan, Peter Gabriel, Bob Geldof, Herbie Hancock, Nona Hendryx, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Stanley Jordan, Malopoets, Bruce Springsteen, Ringo Starr, Via Afrika, Bobby Womack and many more. There were two versions of the Sun City Song, *I Ain't Gonna Play Sun City*. One track titled *Revolutionary Situation* featured the voices of Tata Nelson Mandela, wife Winnie and daughter Zinzi as well as Rev. Allan Boesak. It also featured the voices of the defenders of apartheid. In fact, there were many other anti-apartheid songs in the eighties: *Let My People Go* – The Wotans, *Free Nelson Mandela* – Special AKA, *Winds Of Change* – Robert Wyatt & The Swapo Singers, *South African Sunshine* – Abdullah Ibrahim, *Johannesburg* – Gil Scott-

Heron, *South Africa* – Frankie Paul, *Nelson Mandela* – Youssou N'Dour, *Music From The Townships* – Dudu Pukwana & Spear, *Biko* – Peter Gabriel, *Africa Must Be Free* (by 1983) – Hugh Mundell as well as the more direct, *We Hate You, South African Bastards* – Microdisney. These songs were never released in South Africa for obvious reasons, but *Free Nelson Mandela* was available on an import 12-inch single.

In 1988 Harry Belafonte recorded *Paradise In Gazankulu* with South African musicians like The Soul Brothers, Brenda Fassie and Obed Ngobeni whose debut album in 1983 had exposed his talent and *Kuhluvukile Ka Zete* placed his group, Obed Ngobeni & The Kurhula Sisters, in the big league. Beyond apartheid, the UN Goodwill Ambassador and civil rights activist Belafonte received the order of Companions of OR Tambo. It was presented to him in 2008 at South Africa's Union Buildings by President Thabo Mbeki in recognition of his support for the struggle against Apartheid. During his visit the SABC staged a gala event to thank him for supporting South African musicians in exile over the years. In his address, Harry urged the public broadcaster to give more support to local productions.

A trend had already been set in the early seventies by Reverend Jesse Jackson when he mobilised African American musicians for the "Save The Children" fund-raising concert. Proceeds from the event would help the poor black kids in the slums of the USA. The event was followed by a double album featuring participating artists as well as a film titled *Brothers And Sisters In Concert*. In South Africa, by December 1983, a music concert at Fun Valley was planned for the Orlando Children's Home.

In 1984, popular frontman of a UK band, Bob Geldof, organised a similar event and named it the "Band Aid Project". Geldof's band, the Boomtown Rats had already achieved international stardom with massive hits like the 1979 *I Don't Like Mondays*, which stayed on the US charts for 73 weeks and only one week in the UK. Together with Midge Ure aka James Ure of Ultravox, he wrote a song for the project titled *Do They Know It's Christmas?* This led to the Live Aid concert in 1985. Proceeds from the event as well as record sales went to the alleviation of starvation in Ethiopia. For his big heart and promotion of the brotherhood of man he was knighted to become Sir Bob Geldof. Twenty years later in 2005 the concert resurfaced in many countries under the theme "Make Poverty History". In order to drive the message home effectively, it coincided with preparations for the annual G8 Summit at Gleneagles in Edinburgh, Scotland, which started on Thursday, 7 July 2005. Important industrial decisions were to be taken including issues like Africa's debt to western countries, aid and trade. It was boosted by slogans like "Live 8 vs G8 – the largest political mandate in history". Unknown to many at the time, London's transportation system was bombed during the G8 summit. In South Africa the campaign was staged at the Mary Fitzgerald Square in Johannesburg on Saturday, 2 July where Dr Nelson Mandela also urged the G8 leaders to heed the call. The performers included



Jabu Khanyile and Bayete, Lucky Dube, Peace Ensemble, Mahotella Queens, Malaika, Orchestra Baobab, Salif Keita and Zola. Locally it also coincided with the 31st annual Grahamstown National Arts Festival (30 June–9 July) in the Eastern Cape. Other host countries in Africa were Ghana and Kenya, and the co-ordinator was Wole Olaleye. Outside Africa other venues were Mukahari near Tokyo in Japan, Berlin, Moscow, Paris, Barrie in Canada, Cornwall in England, Philadelphia in the US with the biggest attendance, as well as Rome where Pope Benedict XVI also added his voice to the campaign. It was dubbed “The Biggest Music Show On Earth”. The highlight of the campaign was the reunion of Pink Floyd, whose members had last been on stage together 25 years before. Incidentally, that was also the weekend on which one of the greatest African American R&B superstars, Luther Vandross, died. He passed away on the Friday at the JFK Medical Center in Edison, New Jersey at the age of 54. His last recording, *Dance With My Father*, had won him four Grammy Awards. What a superstar!

After the initial Sir Bob Geldof’s Live Aid concert, Harry Belafonte gathered a group of music celebrities jointly called “USA For Africa” in July 1985. Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie composed a song for the project titled *We Are The World* produced by Quincy Jones. Forty-five music stars participated in the fund-raising campaign for the hungry in Africa. In keeping with this spirit of generosity, in South Africa Athena responded with a maxi single titled *I Stand For Love* (Ream, 1985) in duet with Lolly Peterson “dedicated to all those fabulous big-hearted artists, composers, arrangers, producers, etc., etc. who have sung or worked to raise funds for Africa”. The song was co-written by R. Clark and A. Lowry. It was co-produced with and engineered by Costa Anadiotis. In South Africa itself another spectacular charity event, “Concert In The Park”, was staged in January 1985. It showcased the cultural diversity in our music as top bands performed in a packed Ellis Park Stadium, Johannesburg for Operation Hunger. A live double album of the event was recorded featuring 23 tracks of the participating musicians. All profits from the album were donated to Operation Hunger. Some of the tracks included *Raising My Family* – Steve Kekana, *Hey Boy* – Via Afrika, *Scatterlings Of Africa* – Juluka, *I’m Mobile* – Street Kids, and *Inside Out* – Blondie. Twenty-two local bands jointly recorded a track *Hungry Child* led by Steve Kekana, Heather Mac, Johnny Clegg and Ronnie Joyce. The double album was accompanied by a video of the event produced by Trillion Video. That was the giving spirit of the eighties, despite whatever!

But tension was created amongst musicians as the Department of Information financed a campaign in which musicians would sing a positive song about South Africa. This department was responsible for counter strategies and general propaganda in the campaign to justify the apartheid policies of the National Party. Some musicians saw the “Infosong” as another opportunity to showcase the unity of the musicians within South Africa as it happened with the Ellis

Park Concert; some differed. To the latter the mere fact that it was financed by this department meant that participation was selling out on the struggle for the liberation of the masses of South Africa. It was very tense and finally turned ugly when some of those who participated had their houses petrol-bombed.

On the dance scene things were also happening in a big way. The disco dance fever of the late 1980s was spread by the Robert Stigwood production, *Saturday Night Fever* starring the young John Travolta as Tony Manero, a troubled youth from Brooklyn who found glory on the disco dance floor. The local dance floors were still celebrating the victory of Godfrey Raseroka in the International Disco Dance Championships in London at the age of 18 in December 1979. His picture appeared on almost every paper bag in the land. Godfrey, who lives in Ga-Rankuwa near Tshwane inspired a film called *Don't Stop The Music*. Breakdancing, a street craze that started in the New York slums of Bronx and Harlem in the United States took the South African youth by storm in 1984, especially in the urban areas. Internationally known groups of this dance included Ollie and Jerry (Ollie Brown and Jerry Knight) who featured on the Polydor album *Breakdance* as well as Break Machine who had a hot album, *Break Dance Party*, produced by Jacques Morali and Henri Belolo. Styles in this dance included the head spin, moonwalking, electric boogie, spider, glide, windmill and puppet. As a matter of fact, locally it was this energetic dance that sent the Ghetto Slickers to the finals in the Shell Road To Fame talent search.

The eighties saw the mushrooming of "Mapantsula" dance groups both in urban and rural areas. In 1987 almost every group was dancing to J.M. Silk's album *Hold On To Your Dream*, which featured hits like *I Can't Turn Around*, *Jack Your Body* and *Let The Music Take Control*. Colonel Abrahams also hit the dance floor with *Trapped*. Local record companies responded to this with groups like The Hard Workers, Ayoba Yo Band and Makwerhu. The Hard Workers' album *Ayoba-Yo* featured the hit *Take Away* composed by Mphix on Music Team's Red Label. The success of the album saw the formation of the group Ayobayo Band, which released albums like *Hey Ta Da* engineered and produced by Danny Bridgens on the same Music Team label. Makwerhu was a Resmusic artist produced by Enoch Nondala. His 1988 album, *Mapansula*, engineered by J. Smit featured the title track and *Bhasobha*. Robert Bell's Kool and the Gang was in full flight and Timmy Thomas was asking the burning question: *Why Can't We Live Together* and show some *Rainbow Power*. The "People's Band" Stimela was worried about those of us who did not speak out their minds but chose to *Whisper In The Deep*.

In theatre, Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa's *Woza Albert* broke into the international market in 1983, whilst the local scene was dominated by *The Eye* starring Darlington Michaels, Mackintosh Kgoaelo and Boitumelo Dijoe. Barney Simon and Mannie Manim were busy with the establishment of the Market Theatre.

The Black Consciousness movement of the seventies promoted locally by activists like Steve Bantu Biko as well as African American slogans like “I’m black and I’m proud” promoted by musicians like James Brown, saw individuals and organisations contribute towards building the self-esteem of the oppressed masses of South Africa. Products like Herman Mashaba’s “Black Like Me” boosted self-pride especially among young black South Africans. They were not only proud of his hair products, but also his entrepreneurship, which confirmed the “black man, you are on your own” philosophy. Herman started this lucrative hair and beauty business from humble beginnings in Garankuwa, Tshwane in 1985.

J&J Promotions organised The Black Glamour Exhibition ‘85, which showcased progressive young blacks. It opened on 24 May 1985 at the Jabavu Community Centre and ended on 2 June. Amongst the musicians who participated in this massive show of self-pride were Ebony, Stimela, Street Kids, Pappa and Blondie, as well as Lumumba. The compère for the Mr & Miss Glamour ‘85 was the multi-talented jock, Cocky “Two Bull” Tlhohlalemaje.

The Consumer Boycott Committee declared a Black Christmas in 1985 and that year’s Miss Black South Africa was suspended. It was held only on 7 March 1986 at Eyethu Cinema. Promoter of the pageant, Leonard Sithole’s Drakensberg Promotions also organised the Orlando Stadium Woodstock ‘86 Music Festival featuring 15 of the best in local music over the Easter weekend.

It has been quite a long journey of 75 rpms on gramophones, 45 rpms on space grams, 33 rpms on hi-fi systems and audio cassettes. It has been a long journey since Eric Gallo sent Griffiths Motsieloa and his wife to London for the first ever recording by a black South African at Decca in 1930. By the way, it was Columbia Records and its rival Victor Records that introduced single-sided discs in 1902 and followed with two-sided discs in 1904. It was only in 1948 that Columbia Records introduced the 33 rpm.

After the official launch of television in South Africa on 5 January 1976 the video became another music marketing tool. This in turn created opportunities for dancers, from the streetwise master tapper Mad Joe Sennakgomo and the pantsulas to the schooled movements of Nomsa Manaka, as well as the younger generation of Tebogo Kgobokoe, Kabonina Qubeka, Portia Mashego, Constance Kau, Gregory Maqoma, Musa Hlatswayo, Dada Masilo, Gladys Agulhas, and Somizi Mhlongo who later released his own CDs *Voom* (2006) and *Tha Divo* (2007). In years to come CDs were to replace wax and cassettes to some extent depending on consumer affordability. Digitalisation saw DVDs replace video cassettes also depending on what side of the digital divide you were.

The Internet has made music readily available on websites from which users can download. The most poisonous virus in the industry has always been and still is piracy or home taping if you like. The Association of the South African Music Industry (ASAMI) fought a relentless war on this front, but globalisation

has worsened the situation. Its successor, the Recording Industry of South Africa is still continuing with that struggle even today. In 2004 it established the Anti-Piracy Enforcement Unit (APEU) to effectively combat and eradicate music piracy in South Africa. But there is much hope after the South African Federation Against Copyright Theft (SAFACT) in 2005 engaged the services of the NPA to get to the root of the problem and bring perpetrators to book. In 2006 under the leadership of musicians like Mzwakhe Mbuli, Operation Dudula was launched to get to the root of piracy. The operation, implemented in phases, was also supported by the Association of Independent Record Companies (AIRC), the SABC and the media in general. One of the successes of the operation was reported by the *Sowetan* on 4 April 2007. At 26 Lionel Street, Cyrildene, Johannesburg-East the Metro police uncovered a “music mine” and confiscated CDs, DVDs and machinery to the value of R7 million. The bust was led by musicians like Mzwakhe Mbuli, Ringo Madlingozi and Deborah Fraser. Government supports this fight through the Copyright Act and the Counterfeit Goods Act.

On the other hand, the media industry and the private sector launched some initiatives to incentivise musicians. Some of the endeavours included the Sarie Awards and the OKTV Awards (pronounced ‘octave’). In 1986 the SABC launched The National Song Festival with each of its 15 radio stations represented by an artist. To illustrate this, I list the following:

#### THE FIRST NATIONAL SONG FESTIVAL, 1986

RADIO STATION	RECORD COMPANY	TITLE	PERFORMER	COMPOSER
Radio Zulu (Ukhozi FM)	RPM	<i>Let's Sing A Song</i>	Joy White, Ebony & The Angels	Vulindlela Yeni
Radio Tsonga (Munghana Lonene FM)	Orange 338	<i>Afrika Tsonga Hi Tshama Hi Ku Tsaka</i>	Jozino And The Lilies	Samson Mthombeni
Radio Sesotho (Lesedi FM)	WEA	<i>Lehae Laka</i>	Michael Mpholofolo And Group	Michael Mpholofolo
Radio Ndebele (Ikwekwezi FM)	Dephon	<i>Iphasi Lekhethu</i>	Yvonne Chaka Chaka & Midnight Express	Emelina Mkhwebane
Radio Jacaranda (Jacaranda 94.2)	Priority	<i>South Africa I Love You</i>	Ralph Martin & Group	Ralph Martin

Radio Setswana (Motswedding FM)	David Gresham Productions	<i>Tshwara Jalo</i>	Johnny Mokhali & Tselane Rameala	Johny Mokhali
Radio Oranje (O FM)	Transistor Music	<i>There's Someone Who Loves You</i>	Friends (Geoff & Eugene)	Fred Muller/ Cathy Cilliers
Radio Venda (Phalaphala FM)	CTV/Music Team	<i>Afrika Xipembe</i>	Sofire & Venda's Choice	Colbert Mukwevho
Radio Xhosa (Umhlobo Wenene FM)	GRC/Gallo	<i>Together We'll Make It</i>	Lucky Dube & Lorraine Staple	Sisa Jaqashe & Nomthunzi Siyongwana
Radio Swazi (Gwalagwala FM)	Soul Brothers Music	<i>Oh My fellow Swazi</i>	Lukhetho Buthelezi	Patrick Mahlalela
Radio Highveld (94.7 Highveld Stereo)	REA	<i>Over Getting Over You</i>	Chrissy Jackson	Dennis East & Chrissy Jackson
Radio Algoa (Radio Algoa)	EMI	<i>Sunday Girl</i>	Pierre de Charmoy	Michael Eric Laden
Radio Good Hope (Good Hope FM)	Principal Records	<i>The Love We Feel</i>	Marlo Scott- Wilson & Lolly Petersen	Lance Field
Radio Port Natal (East Coast Radio)	Teal/Trutone	<i>Sanbonani</i>	PJ Powers	Don Clarke
Radio Lebowa (Thobela FM)	CCP	<i>Afrika Borwa Golela Godimo</i>	Hilda Tloubatla	Hilda Tloubatla

The radio broadcast industry, which had earlier seen the end of the SABC's monopoly with the launch of Radio SR on 28 August 1977 with black deejays broadcasting in English, was more diversified when radio stations like Radio Bop, Capital Radio and Channel 702 went on air. When SR introduced South Africans to smooth talking jocks like Cocky "Two Bull" Tlhotlhamajoe, Meshack Mapetla, Danisile Lavisa, Treasure Tshabalala, Willie Moloisi and Lucky Ntuli, many young black boys and girls started gearing themselves to a wider and freer broadcasting industry. The radio landscape would never be the same.

Mmabatho's Radio Bop single-handedly supplied South Africa with dynamic radio deejays, followed by the likes of Radio Thohoyandou (Venda) and Ciskei's Radio CKi (now tru FM).

Petroleum giant, Shell South Africa, made its own contribution with the talent search, The Shell Road To Fame. I still remember the 1985 talent search very well. Some of the adjudicators were master musicians like Johnny Meko of the Jazz Masters fame and Abigail Khubeka. The overall winner of that year was the then Polokwane-based Desire Latoya Baird aka Kenya, who was later contracted to RPM and released *Look At Me Now*, an album produced and arranged by Alistair Coakley and dedicated to the memory of Jean Madubane, Ashley Subel and Peter Kunene who died in a car crash on Stimela's Unfinished Story Tour. Some of the finalists were Grace Mahlaba who later made it in acting (The Line, Backstage, etc.), The Ghetto Slickers, a high energy breakdance trio from the house of popular singer, dancer, actor, comedian, compère and disc jockey, Cocky "Two-Bull" Tlhohlalema, and Soshanguve Black Tycoons, a youthful mbube group formed in 1980 by David Ndaba, which obtained second position in the talent search. Subsequently the Black Tycoons signed a recording deal with Ronnie Robot's On Record label and released their debut album *Vuka Afrika* in 1988. The album was produced by Charles Sejeng, Keith Ngcobo and Alie Lerefolo. Two of Two Bull's boys, Cassius and Nini later toured Europe for a duration of three years. This is the talent search that exposed Lekazi singing sensation Rebecca Malope who signed a contract with MFM and later became the biggest selling gospel artist in South Africa at her new musical home, CCP.

Another product of the talent search is **SHARON DEE** (born Hlengiwe Carol Dlamini) from Umlazi who won the regional finals in Durban in 1989, aged 15, and later took the local music scene by storm with her 1995 hit *Local Is Lekker* from the CD of the same name co-produced by Don Laka and M'Du Masilela on Tusk's Kariba Records label. It included one of the most powerful soul ballads, *Ngeke Ngikhohlwe*. It won the FNB SAMA 2 Best Township Pop Album category. Her other CDs include *Back On The Block* (1998) written and produced by Godfrey "Guffy" Pilane, Sharon Dee (2000 SAMA nominee), *The Gospel According To Sharon Dee* (2002) working with musicians like Robbie Malinga and Abe Sibiya, as well as *Ekhaya* (2008). She also featured in that dynamic gospel concept, *Joyous Celebration* under Lindelani Mkhize, Mthunzi Namba and Jabu Hlongwane.

Another contestant of the talent search, Princess Mthembu, also went on to release her own albums like *Let's Do It* (Sounds Of Soweto, 1989) written and produced by Bushy Seatlholo of The Big Dudes fame.

Ringo Madlingozi who worked with Peto and Gecko Moon before becoming one of the biggest stars in South Africa is also a product of this talent search. More about this star later.



Between 1989 and 1990, Sylvia, who started doing session work for Billy Lethoba's New Generation, won the "Top Act" prize with her song *Mama Come Back* and with the help of Chilly Tshabalala ended up releasing her debut album *Serious* at the age of 20 with CCP in 1993.

The Shell Road To Fame continued with its noble course even beyond the eighties. A group led by Manqoba Bonginkosi Ntombela, Woza Africa won in 1993 and released their CD *Istokvel* (Teal Records, 1994). The CD won FNB SAMA 1's Best Choral Performance category. The 1997 winners were: U-Turn – pop category, Wagon Of Fire – gospel, Juventics – dance, Thamela Maskandi – traditional. This talent search was driven by live shows, print and electronic media.

The South African Breweries sponsored a Taso Stephanou concept, The Lion Lager Road Show, which promoted live show attendance and developed new talent. The concerts were staged in various parts of the country and I had the privilege of compering some of these shows. They were so professionally conducted, I even had a stage manager – a gentle giant called Peter – assisting me with the line-up. Juluka, Hotline, Supafrika, Brenda, Rebecca, Yvonne, Ebony, Mercy Pakela, Stimela, Splash, CJB, Thetha and many other bands of the eighties were always ready for the biggest gig of them all. Groups created specifically for the show included South of Sahara, Spike and Steel and Lion Fire.

Although individuals like Mtutuzeli Gibson Kente played an important role in developing black music and theatre in South Africa, institutions such as Funda Community College in Immink Drive, Diepkloof, Soweto did a lot to produce professional practitioners in the Arts. Its Arts Centre, which incorporated the African Institute of Art, Madimba Institute Of African Music and Soyikwa Institute Of African Theatre was strengthened by tutors like Motsumi Makhene and the late Matsemela Manaka. FUBA School Of Dramatic And Visual Arts at 1 President Street, Newtown in the city of Johannesburg also did a sterling job with tutors like Magalane Phoshoko and Geoff Mapaya. There were initiatives of people like artist and teacher Bill Ainslee who worked with Louis Maqhubela. Bill also established the Alexandra Art Centre. When he died in 1989 his crusade was carried on by artist David Koloane. In Durban, pianist Darius Brubeck initiated Jazz Studies at the University of Natal, Cape Town produced many of today's young jazz musicians at UCT's College of Music, the University Of Venda introduced a Music department, and Wits University boasted the Wits School Of Arts (WSOA). Besides the technikons, the Mmabana Cultural Centre in Mafikeng also contributed immensely to the development of the arts. The latest additions to these institutions include the Moses Taiwa Molelekwa Arts Foundation in Tembisa, the Ray Phiri Arts Institute in Nelspruit, the sixties Music School in Vosloorus, and the Music Academy Of Gauteng in Daveyton, Benoni led by jazz legend, Johnnny Meko.

All these initiatives brought back pride and confidence into our local music. Contrary to what many people would like us to believe, South Africans prefer

their own music to foreign imports because it “talks our language” in terms of experiences and medium. In a 2005 weekend television interview, music copyright consultant Graeme Gilfillan confirmed that the bias is 15:1 in favour of our own local music.

Arnold Mabunda of Moshito Conference and Exhibition confirmed this in a *Morning Live* television interview with Vuyo Mbuli on 23 August 2007. He said according to the latest IFPI statistics the bias was very clear. IFPI represents the recording industry worldwide. Arnold was interviewed on the eve of the fourth Moshito Conference and Exhibition. The annual conference was launched in 2004 as a platform for stakeholders in the music industry to exchange ideas and strategies for the betterment of South African music as a global player; hence, the slogan “The Business of Music”. Members of Moshito are the following key stakeholder organisations:

- Association of Independent Record Companies (AIRCO)
- Composers’ Association of South Africa (CASA)
- Creative Workers’ Union of South Africa (CWUSA)
- National Organisation for Reproduction Rights in Music in southern Africa Limited (NORM)
- South African Music Promoters Association (SAMPA)
- southern African Music Rights Organisation, Limited (SAMRO)
- The Music Managers Forum of South Africa (MMFSA)

Reports in the media on the 2007 conference said that Arts and Culture Minister Pallo Jordan proposed that the department establish a new recording label staffed by industry professionals who will record, distribute and promote music. It was also reported that it was still difficult to quantify the value of the industry as estimates on the number of individuals employed by the industry differed from 12 000 to 20 500. The conference coincided with the 10th anniversary of promoter Peter Tladi’s Joy of Jazz. The Standard Bank sponsored concert was staged in Newtown, Johannesburg from 23–25 August 2007 featuring the cream of SA jazz and internationals like Freddie Jackson, Clarke Duke Project, trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis and the 17 times Grammy winners, The Count Basie Orchestra led by Bill Hughes.

According to the Recording Industry of South Africa (RISA), local music industry turnover increased by 2.4 per cent from R996 million in 1996 to R1 020 million in 2007. Perhaps the truth about music appreciation lies in what “Shaluza” Max Mntambo said in a *Morning Live* interview with Vuyo Mbuli on 12 December 2007. Responding to Vuyo’s question about why he is appreciated so much in Europe where his concerts are popular while here at home he is not that huge, Max said: “The answer lies in airplay. What is frequently played to you, ends up being your choice. If my music could be

played as frequent as that of Michael Jackson in South Africa, I'd be just as big." Mntambo was interviewed on the eve of his concert with Kinshasa's Koffi Olomide at Johannesburg's Standard Bank Arena.

## CHAPTER SIX

# LADIES OF SONG

As a motherland, Africa has a number of female singers named after her in the South African music industry – Mama Africa, Lady Africa, Princess Of Africa and so on. At the end of this chapter we will know more about them. The “First Lady Of Song”, Dolly Rathebe inspired so many young ladies to enter the entertainment industry traditionally regarded as a male domain. In an interview Dorothy Masuka said she met the film star in the streets of Pimville while she was still a young schoolgirl, and just one word of appreciation from Dolly motivated her into stardom. In a way, she was a pioneer. Miriam Zenzi Makeba aka Mama Africa has set a high performance standard for musicians of her time both as a singer/composer and ambassador of her country to the outside world. She is a perfectionist. Her music career will come under the spotlight when we look at musos in exile. One of the most glorious moments in the history of our music industry occurred in 1999 when the senior ladies of song were honoured with lifetime achievement awards: Thandi Klaasen, Abigail Khubeka, Dorothy Masuka, Sophie Mgcina and Margaret Singana. More about the awards later when we look at the individual careers of these queens of song.

It was an honour for me to meet the “First Lady Of Song”, the late **DOLLY RATHEBE** in the early nineties. She was driven all the way from Gauteng for an interview on my programme. The appointment was prompted by the release of the 1993 album *A Call For Peace* with her backing band Elite Swingsters. Even at her age it was clear to me that in her days she was a beauty queen. No wonder she inspired the tsotsitaal response, “Double Dolly!”, which means “I’m very fine thanks!” I addressed her as “Sis Dolly” throughout the interview and she was very relaxed and peaceful. At the time she stayed at 289D Mabopane in

Tshwane, where she told me she was involved with “Women’s RDP”. She was blessed with three children. Dolly Rathebe was born in 1930 and grew up in Randfontein. At the age of 19 the lady of many firsts was already making waves on the local scene. In 1949 she was featured as a night club singer in the film, *Jim Comes To Joburg*, making her the first known African film star. The film’s soundtrack was Alan Silinga’s composition, *Intliziyo Zibuhlungu*. Following the success of the film she also featured in *The Magic Garden*, *Sarafina*, *Mapantsula* as well as various television films like *Malunde*. Dolly was such a stunner she also made history by being the first black lady to grace a magazine cover. That magazine was *Drum!* She was a founder member of African Jazz Revue And Variety Show when Alf Herbert launched it in 1954. In the early fifties she married composer, musician and economist Welkom Duru of New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape. Duru composed great songs for his lovely wife including *Unothalili* and the golden oldie *Mbombela*. Some of the other bands she fronted as singer were the Harlem Swingsters and the Manhattan Stars. Dolly also performed with the music group, African Inkspots. The group was formed in 1946 inspired by the American Inkspots. The singers caught the public’s attention when they were featured in the film *Jimmy Comes To Joburg*, featuring the late great Dolly Rathebe. According to group spokesperson Showman Mogotsi, who was interviewed on SABC 2’s *Morning Live* on Saturday, 17 November 2007, the group also featured in *Song of Africa*.

In 1964 Dolly joined an Afro-Jazz band that would become a big part of her life – Elite Swingsters. The band was discovered by Lesotho-born Lebenya Matlotlo who arrived in Johannesburg in the 1940s. Between 1955 and 1963 he was a record company talent scout and recording assistant. His first hit composition was the Elite Swingsters’ *Phalafala*. The group was formed by Johannes “Chooks” Tshukudu in the late fifties. The original members of the Soweto band were Johannes “Chooks” Tshukudu (bass), Paul Rametsi (tenor sax) and Philip Thami Madi (alto sax). They were later joined by composer and saxman Peter Mokontela who would become the band’s leader and main composer. Dimpny Shabalala also joined the band later. This group became very popular both nationally and internationally as they released other hits like *Funky Mama* and *Cool Mood*. As Dolly’s backing band they travelled the length and breadth of this land and even went beyond its borders. Their other hits that followed were *Now or Never* and *Blessing*. After a lull created by the popularity of soul music in the late seventies and disco in the eighties, they bounced back with the album *Woza* (1991) featuring Dolly. Then followed *A Call For Peace* (Gallo Records, 1993) adding their voice to a national call for calm in the midst of the pre-election violence. The line-up on the recording consisted of the three original members plus Paul Ntleru (bass), Daniel Ngema (piano/accordion/guitar/sax), Philip Mbele (keyboards/guitar/bass) and of course the lead vocalist, Dolly. It was produced by Hamilton Nzimande and West Nkosi and engineered by

Richard Austen. The title track presents Dolly Rathebe, the preacher, at her best. The CD also included her wedding hit *Mamoshimane*, Chooks' composition *Elite Blues* as well as Lebenya Matlotlo's *Phalafala*. Siya Gida/We Dance was released in 1997. In 1998 Sony Music Entertainment released their compilation CD *I Love Soweto/Hotstuff* (Sony Music, 1998). To celebrate the band's many fruitful years in the industry as well as its leader's 60th birthday, Ama Elite – Di Elite (Universal Music, 2001) was co-produced by the late Peter Mokontela and Fernando Perdigao who also engineered it at Downtown Studios. It includes *Bra Gwigwi*, a tribute to a hot saxman of the Golden Age of South African Jazz, Gwigwi Mrwebi. The line-up on the recording was: Peter Mokontela (alto saxophone and penny whistle), Bennette Rahlao (alto saxophone and penny whistle), Conrad Zulu (tenor saxophone and penny whistle), George Manxola (guitars), Paul Ntleru (bass) and Jack Mogale (drums).

Like musicians of her era she faced two main challenges in her career – gangsters and policemen. She related to me how she was once arrested for being found near the mine dumps with a photographer of *Drum!* magazine for a photo shoot. The charge? Being in the company of a white man (Immorality Act). Later as the gangsters got to know her well they requested what the police used to ask her to do for them – sing! Just as Alexandra Township had its reign of terror by the Spoilers and Msomi Gang, Sophiatown was ruled by gangs like The Americans. In the new order she blessed many important events both as musician and celebrity. The greatest honour South Africa bestowed on her was when the SAMA presented her with a Lifetime Achievement Award, an accolade reserved for a few champions of the industry like Joseph Shabalala of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, that mbube group that rocketed to international stardom with their golden voices and brought home the coveted Grammy Award. A stroke took the 74-year-old Sis Dolly away from us on 16 September 2004. She was buried on 26 September 2004 at Roodepoort Cemetery. May her soul rest in peace.

Nine months later a stroke claimed her lifetime composer and leader, Peter Mokontela, on 27 May 2005. Peter who received his education at Orlando High School in the late fifties, was inspired by the likes of Kippie "Morolong" Moeketsi and Mackay Davashe. This former leader of the Jazz Preachers ranked among the cream of South Africa's saxophone players. He was laid to rest at Kliptown cemetery on Saturday, 4 June 2005.

Songbird **THANDI KLAASEN** grew up in Sophiatown. Her father was a shoemaker and her mother a domestic worker. Her interest in music started showing when she sang in various churches of her neighbourhood. Later she joined groups like Gaieties, Harlem Swingsters and Jazz Dazzlers. She rose to stardom when she started sharing stages with female stars of the time like Dolly Rathebe, Miriam Makeba, Dorothy Masuka and Sophie Mgcina. The cultural nerve centre of Sophiatown was the Odin Cinema. In a recent television interview she said she



could still remember dancing there with a fabulous dancer called Duba Duba. She said one lady who inspired her tremendously was Emily Kwenane. Klaasen who was born Thandi Mpambani later married Lucas Klaasen. She was in the Todd Mtshikisa musical *King Kong* when Jack Hylton took it to the UK, but when some of the cast members decided to settle, she opted to return home. Like her peers she can easily switch from one music genre to another. In 1976 she received the Count Pushkin Award for Best Female Vocalist. Besides the various local musicians she performed with, she shared the stage with international stars like Patti Labelle. She worked with the German Kai Horsthemke in *Psychedelic Cowboy And Sister Nun* which also featured Thembi Mtshali and Larry Amos. She also starred in Des and Dawn Lindberg's *Black Mikado* with artists like Ben "Satch" Masinga, Barrie Shah, Patrick Ndlovu, Leslie Mongezi, Duke Makasi, Sammy Brown, Felicia Marion and Sipho Gumede. As a respected public figure and role model she graced important events like the "Sophiatown – Heart And Soul Day" held in Sophiatown as part of the Cultural and Heritage Renaissance. Thandi also participated in and performed during the 2004 National Film, Video And Sound Archives Birthday Bash. Dolly Rathebe and Joe Mafela were also part of the celebration. Like Margaret Singana, she had a life changing experience; no, she wasn't paralysed but her face was burned. Despite the disaster she continued with her public life and helped other individuals in the same position but less privileged. Testimony to this was a fundraising concert for "Children Of Fire", which assisted victims like the young Piet Majola. In 1999 she was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award by PSG, Anchor Life and SABC 2 for her contribution to jazz in South Africa. In 2005 she was featured in Melodi International Jazz Festival with Sibongile Khumalo, Dorothy Masuka, Abigail Khubeka, Gloria Bosman and Sylvia Mdunyelwa at Sun City, North West Province. In the same year SAMA 12 honoured her with that coveted Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2006 President Thabo Mbeki honoured her with the Order of Ikhamanga.

The late **MARGARET SINGANA** who was known to her music fans as "Lady Africa", was born Margaret Nomvula Mcingana in Queenstown, Eastern Cape. Her mother, Agnes Mcingana kindled the flame of song in Margie's heart at a young age. One of her biggest hits was a song simply named *My Name Is Margaret*. Two of the most significant role players in her career have been Gibson Kente and Mike Fuller. She appeared in Alan Paton's musical *Sponono*, Gibson Kente's *Sikhalo* as well as the 1974 evergreen Bertha Egnos and Gail Lakier musical, *The Warrior*. The band of the musical *Ipi Tombi* featured her rendering hits like *The Warrior*, *Ipi Tombi* and *Mama Tembu's Wedding*. After enriching the Arts in South Africa, Bertha Egnos who was born in 1913 passed away in Johannesburg at the age of 90 in 2003. Some of Singana's other hits include *I Never Loved A Man*, *Orang Outang* and *Johannesburg*. She has won many gold discs, mostly with her hits written by Patrick van Blerk. Her participation in the "Concert In The Park"

put her hit *Hamba Bekile* among the 23 tracks that generated funds for Operation Hunger. A stroke in 1978 interrupted her career but in 1986 she bounced back with the theme song *We Are Growing* from Bill Faure's television series *Shaka Zulu*, which starred soccer goalkeeper "The Black Cat" Henry Cele as the mighty king. Sadly, Henry passed away at St Augustine Hospital at the beginning of November 2007 aged 58. He was buried in Durban. In the eighties Margaret was so much in demand. I remember her appearing with her MFM stable mates, Hotline, in a TV1 Special doing the hit song *Music For Africa*. In 1984 she released a 'back to roots' kind of album entitled *Isiphiwo Sam* (My Gift) backed by one of the best African traditional music bands in the country, Bayete. In short, her albums included *Isiphiwo Sam*, *Margaret Nomvula Singana*, *Ipi Tombi*, *Lady Africa Meets Shaka Zulu*, *Love Is The Power*, *Tribal Fence*, *City Soul*, *Hamba Bekile*, *Where's The Love*, *Singana Gold* and *Lady Africa*. Although she spent her last days bound to a wheelchair, her contribution to the music of South Africa including rock with bands like Rabbit and Hawk has left an indelible mark in our "spiritual hall of fame". Her dedication was finally recognised in 1999 when she received a Lifetime Achievement Award from PSG, Anchor Life and SABC 2 for her contribution to jazz in South Africa. She was posthumously presented with the same award for her contribution to music by SAMA 11 in 2005.

**PATIENCE AFRICA** was another tigress of South African music in the late 1970s and the 1980s. The second-born in a family of six (two sisters and three brothers), she started singing at the age of 11. After showing her talent as a student, she joined a Durban group known as Jazz Sledge. When she went to Johannesburg she joined the Hollywood Jazz Band. Upon her marriage in 1965 she took a break from music and became a housewife. When she later contacted West Nkosi of Mavuthela Music Company for a come-back, the result was the recording of one of her best sellers *Bhula Sangoma*, became huge even in neighbouring states like Zimbabwe. She was mostly popular for her love songs, which included *Sakatuku* and *Basadi Mamelang*. Her albums include *Ilanga Malishona* (1977), *Siyabonga* (Thank You) 1979, *Let's Groove Tonight* (1980), *Ebang Le Mohau* (1982), *Mabewana A Duduza* (SABC Transcription) 1983, *Batho Ba Lesotho* (1984), *Sesi We... Life Is What You Make It* (1986) and *Wozani La* (1987).

**SOPHIE THOKO MGCINA** first showed her interest in singing by participating in a church choir and winning first prize in a talent contest in 1957 in Germiston at the age of 19. After joining a group called the Casino Brothers, she sang for various other bands. A star of the historic *King Kong*, some of her peers with whom she shared the stage were singers like Margaret Singana, Thandi Klaasen, Abigail Khubeka, Dolly Rathebe, Dorothy Masuka, Ribbon Dlamini, Mary Rabotapi and Jeanette Tsagane. She loved listening to good music in order to improve her own singing and was mainly influenced by Billie Holiday. Most people still remember her cabaret act *Sound Of The Township* as well as her singing of *Madam Please* in the 1972 musical, *Phiri*. She also produced and wrote

the music score for the musical, *Poppi Nongena*. The lady many loved to call “Sunshine” was a graduate of the Federated Union Of Black Artists Academy (FUBA). Sophie believed in hard work to enhance her talent, as such she even registered with the Guildhall School Of Music in England for a course in Music and Drama. Some of the films she participated in include *Dingaka* (1965), *Cry Freedom* (1987), *A Dry White Season* (1989), *A Good Man In Africa* (1994), the documentary *Amandla! A Documentary In Four Part Harmony* (2002) as well as *Zulu Love Letter*. Thoko was a linguist who by 1966 was translating song lyrics from English to indigenous languages at the SABC. This composer and performer won the FNB Vita Award, the US Obie Award and in 1984 was nominated for the Sir Lawrence Olivier Award. A multilingual singer, her hits include *Mmangwane*, *Morena* and *Stationeng*. Like some of her peers she was versatile and could switch between jazz, cabaret and pop. In her days she toured widely in South Africa, the former protectorates, Zimbabwe, US, UK and Down Under. South Africa honoured her with a Lifetime Achievement Award sponsored by PSG, Anchor Life and SABC 2 in 1999. On 26 September 2005 she received the Order Of Ikhamanga from President Thabo Mbeki. The Arts And Culture Trust presented her with a Lifetime Achievement Award during the Night Of The fifties on 25 November 2005. On Friday, 2 December 2005 she bowed out of a career that lasted 45 years, and left us at the age of 68. On Saturday, 10 December 2005 after a funeral service at Katlehong’s DH Williams Hall, Sophie Thoko Mgcina-Davids was laid to rest at the South Park Cemetery in Boksburg.

**ABIGAIL KHUBEKA** is a multi-talented musician who is comfortable with a variety of music genres like jazz, cabaret, soul and pop. This songstress was born in 1939 in Orlando East, Soweto to a family of five. She was singing in the St Peter’s College students group, The Father Huddleston Band, aka St Peter’s College Jazz Band when she caught the attention of Sam Leballo. Sam was the man behind the success story of The Skylarks (formerly Sunbeams). He sent Miriam Makeba to Kilnerton Training Institute to recruit her to take the place of Helen van Rensburg who had left the band in 1957. Abigail whose father was a soccer administrator had a rich tenor voice at the tender age of 16. Other members of The Skylarks, which was started in 1956 were Miriam Makeba, Mary Rabotapi and Mummy Girl Nketle. Additional members were Sam Ngakane and Nomonde Shawu. Some of their hits included Gibson Kente’s 1958 composition *Live Humble* as well as *Hush* and another Gibson Kente release, *Inkomo Zodwa*, in 1959. In 1960 Abigail left for England with the *King Kong* cast. She later returned to South Africa with Mary Rabotapi and tried to keep the name of The Skylarks alive with the likes of the young Letta Mbulu but its era was gone. In their early days The Skylarks released albums like *Miriam Makeba And The Skylarks* (Teal Polygram).

Abigail’s first solo venture was *Let’s Stay Together* (1972). In 1983 she recorded her debut solo album *Songs Of My People* produced by that master bassist, arranger

and composer, Victor Mhleli Ntoni and featuring the hit *Sebakanyana*. She also released a self-titled album. A professional actor, she appeared in sitcoms like *Going Up* with Joe Mafela, a comedian who like Eddie Murphy has recorded his own solo music albums. In 1999 she received a Lifetime Achievement Award from PSG, Anchor Life and SABC 2 for her contribution to jazz in South Africa. The event was held at SABC Broadcast Centre in Auckland Park, Johannesburg. In 2006 President Thabo Mbeki honoured her with the Order of Ikhamanga. Her words of wisdom still ring in my head: "The pages of my life are with the people whose lives I have touched." She said this in an interview on SABC 3's programme *The Power Within*, one year before her 80th birthday.

**MARA TEBOHO LOUW** was born in July 1952 in Mzimhlophe, Soweto. Like many of our powerful voices she started singing in a church choir. Some of her first awards was for best alto soloist while in Wilbur Baqwa's Wilbur Music Group. Versatile Mara also acted in Gibson Kente's *Sikhalo* and in 1970 she joined the musical *Meropa* which toured Japan, Hong Kong, Britain and the Philippines. While in London with the musical, she had the honour to perform for the Queen. She went solo in 1976 and performed in countries like former South West Africa (Namibia) in cabaret. She also had a lead role in the musical *African Odyssey*. When American Joe Walker revived *King Kong* in 1979, she played the leading role. She also toured the former protectorates in cabaret and played the role of Tituba in *The Crucible*. Other musicals she featured in include *Ekhaya*, *Nkosi The Healing Song*, *My Name Is Alice*, *Baby Come Duze*, *Fame* and *Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*. Mara enthralled crowds at the "Concert In The Park" with the hit *Motlalepula*, which was later included in the album of the event. In 1984 Radio Zulu (Ukhozi FM) and Radio Sesotho (Lesedi FM) nominated her for the Best Singer category in their music awards. Her 1986 mini-album *50 50 Makes 100%* featured the title track and *Love Train* produced by Mally Watson on CCP's Flame label. Amongst the many albums she featured on as backing vocalist is Hugh Masekela's *Waiting For The Rain* (Vuka Afrika, 1985). In 1985 she married Bill, but later they went their separate ways. By 1988 she was leading the South African Musicians Alliance (SAMA). In 1992 she won an Artes Award for Best Recording. Among her career highlights she counts performing for the Queen of Denmark. Some of Mara Teboho Louw's hits include *Take Me To The River*, *Good Love* and *Iphi 'Ndlela*. Mara, who is a bombshell on stage also featured in one of my favourite movies, *Taxi To Soweto* which starred Patrick Shai. In 1995 she was nominated in the SABC's Artes Awards for her album *Mara*. The all-rounder artist she is, she played a leading role in the first tshiVenda tv drama series, *Muvhango*, on SABC 2 as Catherine Mukwevho. She also became a judge on M-Net television's reality talent contest, *Idols*. In 2007 she hosted her own television show *Mara Louw and Friends* on SABC 2 and later joined Richard Loring's musical *Hairspray*.

Another multi-talented lady is **THEMBI HEAVYGALE MTSHALI**. Most people

know her as an actor of repute both on stage and screen. She has a powerful voice too! It is interesting to note that at age 21 she nearly joined the nursing profession in 1971, but was stopped by baby Phumzile who was on her way. As an actor, the Kwa-Mashu-born and Mahlabathini raised star cut her teeth performing with the Nokwe family at the YMCA in Durban. In 1972 she met playwright Welcome Msomi who auditioned her for a role in *Umabatha* which later toured England. In 1974 she was part of the Louis Burke and Joan Brickhill production, *Meropa*. Thereafter she featured in many theatre and television productions like *Backstage*, *Journey Through Imagination*, *Up'n Atom*, *Generations*, *The Black and White Follies*, *New Day*, *Daughter of Nebo*, etc. Her movie credits include *Country of My Skull*, *The Wooden Camera* and *Mapantsula*, which saw her nominated as Best Actress for the FNB Vita Awards. Later she toured the world with the magnetic *Ipi Tombi*, which took her to cities like Lagos, New York and Las Vegas where it ran for years. Thembi's early music career took her to many parts of the world including the USA and the Caribbean Islands with stars like Hugh Masekela, Eric Gale and Grover Washington between 1977 and 1979. She was a member of the Freedom Singers raising funds for the struggle. She also worked with Miriam Makeba and toured with Abdullah Ibrahim for the musical *Kalahari*. She was one of the backing vocalists on Mbongeni Ngema's debut recording, *Stimela Sase Zola*. In 1984 she fronted a Siphso Gumede-led five-member group, Peace. Thembi's 1986 solo album *Love Is A Flower* (Lufana Nembali) was produced and arranged by Tony Rudner and Vusi Khumalo on Soltone Records' Quavers label. After her role in the successful SABC comedy *Sgudi'Snaysi* she released an album of the same title in 1987 featuring the blowing skills of hornmen Scorpion Madondo and the late Mandla Masuku. By 1990 she was at Tusk Music Company where she released her star-studded album *Today Tomorrow* on the Tusk label featuring amongst others Jabu Nkosi, Qunta Mbele, Moses Ngwenya, Bakithi Khumalo, Makhaya Mahlangu, Themba Mkhize, Tata Sibeko, Condry Ziqubu, Vusi Khumalo, Scorpion Madondo, Selwyn Shandel, Mfaniseni Thusi, Fab Grosso and the late Teaspoon Ndelu. Her backing vocalists were Faith Kekana, Deborah Fraser, Princess Mthembu, Thoko Ndlozi, Lorraine Staples, Zamo Mbutho, Siphso Mbele and the late Wings Segale. I list all these stars to illustrate how sometimes record companies would go out of their way to support a project if they really believed in it or wanted to build a name in the stable. From 1995 to 1996 she toured the UK and the US with the musical *Marabi*. In 1999 she won the Best Actress award for her performance in *A Woman In Waiting* at the Carthage Festival in Tunisia. By 2005 she was featuring in e-tv's *Madam and Eve* and later SABC's *Stokvel*. At the time of writing this work she was living in Cape Town with husband Emrys Jones running Spirit Sister Productions together with three other female partners. In 2006 she featured in SABC's *Heartlines* value series as well as the play *Truth and Translation*.

The 1980s female modern pop era in South Africa was led by one Nokuzola



from Langa in Cape Town. Her impact on South Africa's commercial music could be compared to that of the 'material girl' Madonna Louise Ciccone in the United States. By the way, these are the queens of pop whose music introduced the electronic music era. At the time my uncle Jimmy would tell me about musical instruments like the synthesiser, sampler, sequencer and drum machine. **BRENDA FASSIE**'s music career will always be mainly associated with three bands – The Big Dudes, Loading Zone and Step Ahead. Born Brenda Nokuzola Fassie on 3 November 1964 to Mathews Mangaliso Fassie and Sarah Fassie, she started singing at the age of three. When she was two years old her father, who was an actor, comedian, magician, singer and sportsman, passed away. At the age of 11 she was singing with Cosmos, a band in which her brother Keith played the piano. Born into a family of musicians, she also sang in her mother's group, Tiny Tots. In a radio interview she told me that she was from a family of nine, all singing and playing piano except the last born who excels only in singing – Brenda.

She went to Johannesburg with Gibson Kente where she acted and sang in his shows like *Hungry Spoons*. She went back to Langa, but Sabata Lebona brought her back to Gauteng in 1979. After performing with the famous trio, Joy, she joined Pappa and Blondie who were backed by The Family. When The Family became The Big Dudes she fronted them and shook and shocked the local music industry with their first hit together, *Weekend Special*, composed by Melvin Mathews and Desmond Malotana in 1983. The former Simasa Primary pupil never looked back. The Big Dudes were Sammy Klaas, Dumisane Ngubeni, Fats Mlangeni, Desmond Malotane and David Mabaso. One should remember that while South Africans were jamming to Brenda's *Weekend Special*, on the international dance platform Madonna's *Holiday* was stirring up a storm. I guess that is why even world renowned *Time* magazine in its 17 December 2001 showcasing of Brenda after her American tour in a three page spread called her "the Madonna of the townships".

From here the group became known as Brenda and The Big Dudes. In 1984 their smash album *Weekend Special* on CCP's Family label delivered a Platinum Disc. The surprise visit at that gala event was her mother, Sarah Fassie. The occasion was also the launch of her new album, *Cool Spot*, which featured the hit *It's Nice To Be With People*. The record company PRO, Enoch Ndlela, called me to rave about the album even before I could lay my hands on it. Interestingly, Ken Haycock who was the MD of CCP at that time would in years to come establish his own record company and give it the name *Cool Spot*. The success of *Weekend Special* overseas was boosted by its remixing in New York by Van Gibbs. It even climbed the billboard charts in 1986 and stayed on that world-respected platform for eight weeks! In the UK it was re-mixed by Ian Levine and released in the UK and Australia by EMI. She followed this success with tours of the USA, UK, Brazil, Europe and Australia. In 1984 they released *Let's Stick Together*,



an album featuring the title track co-written by Brenda and Dumisane who became her lover. It also featured my personal favourite, *Can't Stop This Feeling*, composed by Desmond and engineered by Philip Nel. Hot on its heels was the maxi single *Someone To Love* also from Desmond's pen. In the same year Brenda did a duet with Ronnie Joyce titled *It All Adds Up/Living Together* penned by Russell Kramer. Hits like *Ag, Shame Lovey* endeared her to children all over the land. I once invited her to my children's programme "Tumi Le Tumelo" at Radio Lebowa (Thobela FM) and the phones never stopped ringing. I still remember that it was on a national "VAT Stay-away" and to ensure her comrades that she was not defying the protest, she would now and then say "Hai ngo VAT" (Away with VAT). The interview was facilitated by CCP's Philip Vundla. Easy to talk to, but tricky to manage in an interview, she smiled every time I called her "Ma-Brrr". As if to pep herself up, whenever I asked her to sing one of her songs she'd say to herself: "Thatha Ma-B!" At that time she was the most popular artist with kids; during their music request time every second call would ask for *Too Late For Mama* or *Ag, Shame Lovey* whilst on the international front their top favourite was Karyn White's *Superwoman*.

Sometimes after the Six-To-Six music festivals of the 1980s Brenda would bring her crew to my house in Lebowakgomo to freshen up and have a little braai. Young girls in my street would gather in my yard to catch a glimpse of their heroine and in turn she would start working on their hair one by one. She just loved kids! That was also confirmed by her pride in her son, Bongani. His name would now and then crop up in every conversation we had.

The group's musical home was CCP Records and their producer was Mally Watson. Brenda's live performances were so hot she was in demand all over the country. During Easter and festive seasons she would do more than one show a day, sometimes using flights in cases where venues were very far apart from each other. One of the highlights of her performances at festivals was her presentation of the hit *Higher and Higher*. In the middle of the song the band would suddenly freeze and she would pause; all of a sudden she would sing in a semi-baritone voice: "Brenda Fassie's gonna take you higher, higher, higher!" And the band would have joined her just as she sang the first "higher". The crowd would go wild, very wild.

Brenda inspired so many young singers, but the one I'll never forget is a young guy called Mlamli who sang exactly like her. Recently I was also pleasantly surprised by a young Gospel singer called Cairo doing her "Brenda" thing. The beginning of 1986 saw Brenda receive a Gold Disc Award for the album *Higher And Higher*, which succeeded in selling 20 000 units within the first week of its release. Besides the title track it featured *Promises*, another Desmond hit composition. She also received a Platinum Disc for her previous album, *Touch Somebody*, engineered by Philip Nel, which included a song co-written by Brenda and Dumisani to celebrate the arrival of son, Bongani on 26 August 1984. The

US re-mix of *Bongani* was also released in the UK, Europe and Australia. By 1987 she had parted ways with her band, The Big Dudes, and released her music as Brenda on a new CCP label, Brenda. Her long-term manager was Peter Snyman. Her backing band at festivals became Lazarus Kgagudi's band, Step Ahead. They worked very hard to get into the shoes of that mighty band. They succeeded and impressed the crowds. Her 1987 album simply titled *Brenda* still produced by Mally Watson and engineered by Richard Mitchell featured her best ballad, *Nobody Loves You Like I Do*, as well as the dance-floor hit *Izolabud*. The latter hit was inspired by some township taxis named after a female South African athlete, Zola Budd (Pieterse). One of her earlier gospel songs was *The Lord Is My Shepherd*, but it was her duet with Chicco in *Soon And Very Soon* that stole many a Christian's heart. In 1988 she released *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu* (I am because you are) and dedicated the track *Eloyi Lamasabathani* to her mother whose favourite tune it was.

When things looked gloomy for Ma-Brrr, Sello Chicco Twala wrote and produced the album *Black President*, which predicted the release of Dr Nelson Mandela and wishing South Africa a better future. The engineer was once again Richard Mitchell. Another CCP man who'll always be associated with Brenda's career is Peter Mbolekwa. In 1989 she released *Too Late For Mama* accompanied by a powerful video. Her hit *Bhala Mabhalane* was included on the CCP compilation album *Superfly Volume 5* (1989). In 1990 Loading Zone became her backing band. As the pressures of showbiz and her personal life mounted, negative media publicity followed her and portrayed her as a bad girl. In response, in 1991 she released *I Am Not A Bad Girl* produced by Selwyn Shandel featuring the title track as well as *Ngiyakusaba*. In 1994 she flew out to London with talented young musician Joe Nina to record her CD *Abantu Bayakhuluma* which featured the hit *Kuyoze Kuyovalwa* (Until Closing).

Brenda's marriage to Nhlanhla Mbambo was like a royal wedding. It received so much attention one could be excused for thinking that a president was being inaugurated. She celebrated it with the track *Don't Follow Me* (I'm Married) It did not last long. Her mother passed away in 1993. Her lover, Poppie Sihlahla died in 1995. All these misfortunes depressed her and in 1995 she was booked into a rehabilitation centre. Stories of how she managed or dealt with her problems have been published many times, but I guess everybody has their way of dealing with their life challenges – some acceptable to many, some acceptable to a few or you.

As a tribute to her mother she released the album *Mama* on 4 November 1997. The death of Princess Diana inspired the title of her 1997 album *Paparazzi* produced by Godfrey Pilane. On that album she did a duet with one of South Africa's popular contemporary African musicians, the late Jabu Khanyile, just as she did on her previous 1996 album *Now Is The Time* with the DRC's rumba star Papa Wemba. In 1998 her monster comeback album *Memeza* was released featuring the

hit *Vulindlela*. She was back in town – Brenda kai one! The hit song was crowned by SAMA 10 as Song of the Decade. Then followed *Nomakanjani* in 1999. Chicco had succeeded in resuscitating her career and placing her back on the highway to Hitland. In the same year she was awarded a Kora award as Best Female Artist. When IT technicians were making a killing out of the millennium bug threat and smiling all the way to the bank, she welcomed the millennium by dedicating a CD to her ancestors, *Amadlozi* (2000), which featured the title-track as well as *Shoot Them Before They Grow*. She also received SAMA awards for her Best Selling albums *Memeza* (1998), *Nomakanjani* (1999), *Amadlozi* (2000), and *Mina Nawe* (2001). The latter CD featured the hit *Ngohlala Nginje* and was produced by Chicco who also co-wrote the music with her. For that, Chicco was nominated as Best Producer in the SAMA 8. Her other big hits included: *No No No Senor*, *i-Straight Lendaba*, *Too Late For Mama*, *Sumbulala*, *If I Hurt You Little Boy* and *Amalahle*.

When kwaito music captured the imaginations of the youth in South Africa, she asked one of the most powerful stars and producers of the genre, Arthur Mafokate, to produce her music. Out of that partnership a hit, *Ngeke Umconfirm* from the album of the same name was born. Another interesting feature in Brenda's music career was her musical relationship with Senyaka Kekana. They used to exchange words in a musical dialogue. An example of this is Brenda's *Amagents* and Senyaka's *Mampara*. In the pre-election violence of the early nineties the residents of Boipatong were attacked and massacred. In duet with The Village Pope (Tsepo Tshola), she recorded a track titled *Boipatong* to register her condolences with the bereaved families and the affected community. Brenda was one of those few individuals who was not afraid to speak her mind. For this, some hated her while some secretly adored her for speaking on their behalf. When singing poet Mzwakhe Mbuli was arrested for allegedly taking part in a bank robbery, she led protests during his court appearances. After serving his sentence, Mbuli's tenacious spirit saw him resume his crusade recording more music and fighting piracy.

In July 2001 Brenda's record company released a compilation CD of her hits titled *Brenda: Greatest Hits...* In the same year she received a Special Judges Award from the Kora All Africa Music Awards. On 26 April 2004 the superstar whose other works included *Myekeleni* and *Mali* complained of shortage of breath due to an asthma attack at her home in Buccleuch. Her brother, Themba Fassie, rushed her to Sunninghill Hospital. The whole nation held its breath for almost a week as her health kept deteriorating. Back home in Makana Square, Langa Township, family, friends and fans crossed their fingers as they conducted prayer meetings for "the Queen of South African Pop" to recover. Even State President Thabo Mbeki paid her a visit at the hospital. She finally bowed out at the age of 40 to join the bigger Orchestra. I attended her memorial service at Grace Bible Church in Soweto and it was like a royal gathering. The MC was that creative award-winning writer, producer, promoter and orator, Duma Ka Ndlovu. Her

funeral in Langa was just as big as her wedding. Her departure was the end of an era in the South African music industry, which she dominated for 21 years. She seems to continue dominating the music industry from beyond the grave as witnessed with CDs *Malibongwe*, *Gimme Some Volume*, *Angiphum' Endlini* as well as the compilation CD titled *Love Songs*. Nokuzola was posthumously honoured by SAMA with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

According to media reports, the vacuum left by Brenda at EMI/CCP would be filled by a young television actor, Khanyi Mbau. By July 2007 reports indicated the readiness of her album for release. The nation was impatiently waiting for the launch, which was delayed by boardroom politics. The self-titled Afro-soul dance album was ultimately released towards the end of November 2007. Not long thereafter, Khanyi joined Arthur Mafokate's 999 Music.

After parting ways with Brenda, her band **THE BIG DUDES** kept the name alive and continued releasing albums. Dumisane Ngubeni later passed away. In 1986 Sammy Klaas and David Mabaso released The Big Dudes' debut album, *Leave Her Alone*, with guest keyboardist Bushy Seatlholo featuring the hit *Hamba Uzo Buya* as if cherishing the hope that someday Brenda would be back with them. It was followed by *Pulling Very Hard* with Bushy having joined Sammy featuring the hit *Do It*. Their 1988 album was *No Share For The Boys*. All three of their albums had been produced by their old producer, Mally Watson, but their 1989 *S'Good S'Nice* was produced by Fab Grosso. In 1990 they released *Special Feeling* featuring young female singer, Mandy. The album was produced by Sammy Klaas. Unfortunately Sammy's untimely death meant the dying of the flame.

In 1989 Desmond Malotana's Pisces released *Life Is What You Make It* on Priority Records' Style label. He worked with lead guitarist Ralph Martin who also engineered the album. In producing and mixing it, Desmond was assisted by Danny Bridgens.

As for Brenda's son **BONGANI FASSIE**, 2005 was one of his eventful years: at the age of 20 he obeyed the traditional passage to manhood and went to a circumcision school in Langa and also released his own jazz CD *Makana Square* on his Fassie Records label. By 2006 he was member of Jozi, a jazz funk hip-hop outfit whose other members were Ishmael, Crazy Lu and Da-les. They released their CD *Motherland Crunk*, which Bongz co-produced. Jozi's creativity on the hit *What's With Da Attitude?* is a perfect sampling of Vusi Ximba's *Wayethin 'Uname?*. I love it. Bongz works closely with Ghetto Ruff, the stable that contributed the music for the soundtrack of that award-winning movie *Tsotsi* that made many South Africans smile, look themselves in the mirror and say: "I am proudly South African!" The movie gave international exposure to the music of Zola, Pitch Black Afro, Brickz, Mapaputsi, Tuks, Drencko, Skomplazi, Ishmael featuring Bongz and others.

Another musician who worked with Brenda in the nineties and became

intimate with her was Ludwe Maki. Four years after her departure Ludwe released a CD titled *Hamba Nezindaba* (2007).

Dephon's response to CCP's Brenda Fassie was **YVONNE CHAKA CHAKA**. Born Yvonne Moloko Machaka in 1965 she grew up in Dobsonville in a family of three girls. Of her two sisters Doreen and Refiloe, it was the latter who encouraged her to sing. Her late father Habakuk Machaka who passed away when she was twelve years old used to sing gospel music, but her favourite musical instrument is the piano. She went into music by default. Her mother's wish was for her to become a lawyer. Upon completing her Senior Certificate her mother, Sophie Nomakula Machaka, a domestic servant, could not afford the university fees. She had a child to support and somehow she had to earn money. When musician Pat Shange visited her home, she requested that he introduce her to music producers. One thing led to another and before long she was led to Dephon Records where she was introduced to the owner Phil Hollis in February 1985. Phil took her to the studio and handed her over to Attie van Wyk who would be to Yvonne what Malcolm Watson was to Brenda – a long-term producer.

Attie was an experienced musician himself who earlier belonged to a powerful group, Ballyhoo. He would in future be the managing director of the dynamic Big Concerts, which created a festive storm in 2005 when it brought Robbie Williams to South Africa. Yvonne's first hit was *I'm In Love With A DJ*. It appealed so much to us as deejays and it was almost irresistible in our music compilations. She was a fine young lady who sang her heart out. We secretly fell in love with her though at that stage very few of us had met her. That was Phil's marketing psychology. But the real deejay behind the voice was that of Leeroy Stone, a character portrayed by Danny Bridgens. Danny later recorded his own music as The Stone or with Taxi.

When I met Yvonne for the first time I liked her, but like all musicians our relationship became that of brother and sister. The Friday I met her at a hotel in Polokwane she was with her concert promoter, Mr Peter Khowana. He later left her in my hands as he had to meet the area's "relevant structures" to clear some issues about a planned music festival. In those days you could ignorantly walk into trouble by staging a festival sponsored by a company blacklisted or targeted by the unions for labour-related or political reasons. That evening I conducted one of the longest and challenging interviews of my career. Yvonne is a Machaka, which makes her a Motlokwa of the Machaka clan in the former Northern Transvaal. She grew up in Dobsonville and did isiZulu at school. She was to talk to her own people on Radio Lebowa. Our dilemma was to make my listeners believe her when she said she's a Machaka. We would labour over a question until we were convinced we were ready for recording. Our efforts paid off because that was one of the extracts in the montage that won me an Astera Award in 1986, and that was the interview that endeared her to her fans in the north.



Yvonne's album *Thank You Mr DJ* went double gold in five weeks. It was the very same strategy; deejays felt appreciated. When Dephon's long-term PRO, Master Sechele handed copies of the album to us it was like the handing over of certificates of appreciation with a picture of a smiling Yvonne looking straight into your eyes. Dephon had realised with her first record that she only appealed to black South Africans and changed the strategy on this album. Besides the Chicco-composed *I'm Winnie Mandela*, I mean *Winning My Dear Love*, it included two tracks targeted at the white market, *From Me To You* and *I'm Suffering*. For this purpose, Ralph Martin was brought in for the guitar.

Yvonne's next album *I'm Burning Up*, was really on fire with sirens screaming for help. It was a four-track album and all the tracks were independently powerful. Her *Sangoma* album also featured one of my all-time party dance favourites, *I'm Gonna Stop Loving You*. The siren effect was brought back into her other album *I Cry For Freedom* with the track *Caught Breaking The Law*. My understanding of the strategy behind the concept was that the producers, Attie and Phil, were playing on the tense and hair-raising effect of the siren, which to most people spelled danger – the police, the ambulance or the fire brigade. It immediately captured our attention. It also won the sympathy of the listener who knew what normally happened to people who were dragged into the cold and dark cells for breaking the law. Her album *Be Proud To Be African* featured another massive hit, *Umqombothi*.

In a short space of time Yvonne Chaka Chaka was South Africa's most popular musician on the continent. She was a hit in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Gabon, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire) and many other countries. It was on her 1990 successful Uganda tour that she earned the name "Princess Of Africa". To express her appreciation for the overwhelming support she received on the motherland, she released the album *Motherland* as Yvonne Chaka Chaka: Princess Of Africa, engineered by Fernando Perdigao except for the title track that was Richard Mitchell's product. Multi-talented Fernando also plays guitar and keyboards. Themba Dlamini's guitar as well as Mike Faure's saxophone on *Africa Cries* made the album a must for music collectors.

Some of the music practitioners who became part of her music journey besides Sello Twala were engineer Richard Mitchell and songwriter Herbert Xulu. Her 1991 album *The Rhythm Of Life* on the Teal Trutone "Yvonne Chaka Chaka" label featured the hit *Who's Got The Power* as well as one of her beautiful ballads, *Second Hand Love*. One of the unforgettable performances of her career was her participation in the 1994 "Rhythms Of Africa" show at the Sun City Superbowl where she shared the stage with Rebecca Malope, Sibongile Khumalo and Abdullah Ibrahim, backed by Pure Magic, accompanied by Intsholo (a marimba band) and the National Symphony Orchestra under baton of Richard Cock. Yvonne went back to Sun City the following year for the "Women Of The World Unite Against Drugs And War" gala with some of our powerful female stars. In



1996 she released her clearly patriotic album *The Power Of Africa*.

Her marriage to Dr Mandlalele Tiny Mhinga gave her the support she needed in this hectic business. He was always by her side, even on her tours of the continent. The last time I met her the family lived in Bryanston, Sandton with their sons Ningi, Themba, Mfumo and Mandla. Yvonne is one of the simplest stars I was privileged to know; after a hectic festival performance she'd spend the night at my place in Lebowakgomo but insist that she slept on the hard floor as that would give her a good rest.

In 1997 she came up with an album that paid tribute to her in-laws, *Bombani* (Tiko Rahina). Her other remarkable album is *Yvonne And Friends* (2000). One of the tracks featuring rap artist Tuup is the reggae beat *Slow Down* inspired by a television documentary on the civil war in Sierra Leone. At the 1997 Kora All Africa Music Awards she stole the show in a collaboration with Ringo Madlingozi performing the song *Kana Uchema*. She later won the awards' Best Arrangement section in 2003. After the passing away of one of Africa's visionary leaders, former Tanzanian president, "Mwalimu" Julius Nyerere, she paid tribute to him with the track *Mwalimu* in duet with Tsepo Tshola.

Besides her music career she developed an interest in business as well as community development projects. She has also been appointed by UNICEF to be its southern Africa's regional spokeswoman for malaria. The United Nations Children's Fund has its African offices in Nairobi, Kenya. She welcomed the appointment, especially as she had just lost backing vocalist Phumzile Ntuli through cerebral malaria after touring Gabon in 2004. She was also appointed a colonel in the South African Air Force. Yvonne is an ambassador for Dr Nelson Mandela's 46664, a global HIV-Aids awareness and fund-raising campaign named after his prison number. Launched in 2002, its first foreign leg was staged in Tromsø, Norway, while the 2007 concert at Ellis Park stadium in Johannesburg also featured The Goo Goo Dolls whose hit *Iris* is my all-time favourite. She also co-presented a programme on talkshow radio station 702 and starred in the popular television series *Ifa Lika Mthethwa*. People close to her will tell you she's another Mother Theresa, having helped many orphans and needy youngsters especially in funding their education. She is involved with a number of NGOs (non-governmental organisations). In her quest to uplift the underprivileged she enrolled for a Unisa diploma in Adult Education and ended up teaching Management and Administration to adults at Weller School.

Her 2001 CD *Kwenzenjani?* on the Universal Music label was produced by young Gabi "Ibomvu" le Roux who had propelled Mandoza's music career to greater heights and produced Trybe's *Shelela* album. Gabi also co-wrote five of the eight tracks on the album. The challenges facing this continent that she loves so dearly inspired the track *Will Africa Change?* In 2005 she was nominated for the Music Of Black Origin Awards in the Best African Act category. Another South African group nominated with her in the MOBO Awards was Ladysmith

Black Mambazo. To celebrate forty years of her life including 20 in the music industry and 17 in marriage, in 2005 she released her 17th album, which was also her first gospel CD, *Celebrate Life*, featuring the tracks *Se Hopole*, *Makholwa* and *Madimone*. She also marked 27 years of the culmination of a prophecy by the late Comforter Frederick Samuel Modise of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church who identified her at the age of 13 as one who would one day travel the world and serenade kings and queens. Throughout her career her image has been that of an African lady and her role models include Miriam Makeba. There is a biography about her titled *Princess of Africa*. Yvonne's 2007 release was titled *18/28*. Sadly, her mother passed away in 2007 aged 73 and was buried on 4th May at the Roodepoort Cemetery.

Just as Brenda had a long-term backing band The Big Dudes, Yvonne had *MIDNIGHT EXPRESS*. She also featured on their records like the maxi single *Squeeze Me Baby* as well as their mini album *Everyday Everynight* with three of the four tracks written by Herbert Xulu and engineered by Pikes Cronje. Another stable band that did shows with her was The Groovy Boys whose members included a fine guy called Moreno.

Later Dephon resuscitated Danny Bridgens's Taxi concept with *THE NEW TAXI*, a band made up of Thabo Aaron (drums); David August (bass synthesiser); Kenneth Mbovane (piano); Winston Dlamini (keyboards) and Victor Khojane (Dr Victor) on lead guitar and lead vocals. Al Etto was their producer.

MFM responded to the fierce competition with two young ladies – Rebecca Malope and Mercy Pakela. The latter to cater for the Pantsula music, the former to service the disco market. Of the two we'll start with the one who had a short stint with the company, joined CCP and became the best selling artist in gospel music – Rebecca.

**REBECCA MALOPE** was born Lovederia Batsogile Malope on 30 June 1968 in Lekazi near Nelspruit in Mpumalanga. Her Swazi mother's name was Pauline Busisiwe (nee Twala) and her Northern Sotho father was John Malope. She started her education at Masihambisane Primary School. At the age of twelve she was already a lead vocalist in a local Mbaqanga group, Luvelo Lemaswati, which was so powerful it won competitions organised by the local radio station. In those competitions one of the participating groups was led by Dan Nkosi from Ermelo. Dan requested her elder sister Cynthia to bring the talented Rebecca to join his band, but by the time the two girls went to Ermelo the band had split. The band's former lead guitarist who was from Evaton convinced Cynthia and her 15-year-old sister to travel there with him as he knew a man who owned musical instruments. On arrival the man indeed provided them with the instruments and a shack as accommodation for the eleven-member group. In 1985, Sizwe Zako, a member of the band AFUBI, originally from Port Elizabeth, was one of the judges in The Shell Road To Fame talent search. Among the contestants was the young Batsogile Malope backed by her band, Safika. Though

Batsogile did not win the competition, Sizwe realised the immense potential in the young girl. After the contest he travelled to Evaton and brought the two sisters to Orlando in Soweto. Here they lived in a church mission house where Sizwe also stayed. While at this mission house in 1986 the young Batsogile joined the Congregational Church Choir as lead vocalist. They recorded an album, *Ithemba Lam*, but did not release it in order to allow the young vocalist to qualify for the 1987 talent search. The result? She won in the Best Female Vocalist category! Some of the “midwives” who saw her through the competition were Tu Nokwe and Mara Louw who dressed her for the show. The song she performed was *Shine On* composed for her by Sizwe. At this point it had become necessary for her to adapt to the politics of the industry. Her two names did not impress her first record company in 1988 and she had to supply them with an “acceptable” name. She gave them Rebecca, the name of a character she loved from the Bible and the name by which the world would know her for the rest of her life. Lovederia’s first album was *Rebecca*. It included *Shine On* as well as the dance-floor hit *Cheated*. Her live performances were just magic, pure magic as fans danced with “Twinky Twinky”. Concert promoters knew that a festival was incomplete without the magic of Rebecca, Brenda, Yvonne, Mercy Pakela and Ebony. Each one of them had a huge following. Rebecca, Sizwe and music agent Peter Tladi formed a partnership that lasted for many years and yielded results beyond their wildest dreams.

In 1989 she released *Woza Lovey*, an album co-produced by Sizwe Zako and Bones Brettell on the MFM label. Sizwe composed all the tracks using his pseudonym, Qocwa. Most of them were dance floor tunes like the title track as well as *O Nketsang Moratuwa* and the hit *Ma “G” Men*. But the track that somehow gave an indication of things to come was *Sithembele Kuwe*, a gospel ballad sung straight from the heart. The song had been written by Sizwe not necessarily knowing who would sing it; he later insisted that it should be included on Rebecca’s album. Her backing vocalists were her sister Cynthia Malope, Mbulelo Phahlane and fellow Shell Road To Fame product, Princess Mthembu. The public response to the gospel track was so huge that a deliberate decision was taken to include gospel songs in her following albums. Her 1989 album *Thank You Very Much* was still in line with the previous one with dance tracks led by the hit *Holiday Vibe*. There was still one track that pointed the way forward – *Izono Zam*. Sizwe was still the producer as well as the composer. Backing vocalists were new except for one, her sister Cynthia. As the title speaks for itself, it was meant to thank all those who contributed towards the attainment of her goal – to sing and record music. But there was one big surprise – her record label. She had left MFM for CCP on the Family label, a label also used by Brenda Fassie for a long time. It was on her album *Buyani* (1990) where the real Rebecca Malope started to show her true colours – more relaxed, more matured and more than one gospel track; a gospel star was emerging. The album was dedicated to our

brothers and sisters who had been in exile for so many years and it was time to come back home to the new democratic South Africa. Her backing band was the group that would be with her for many years to come, Pure Magic, a group started by Sizwe Zako at MFM where they had hits like *Taximan* (1984). In 1991 she had a big disco hit *Saturday Nite* from the album of the same name, but what was even more telling was that it had more gospel songs than any other previous album. On it was a track appealing for peace in the midst of the political violence that followed the release of Dr Nelson Mandela. Those who clung to the past wished him away and those who wanted change thought the take over was too slow. Rebecca's unprecedented impact on gospel music in South Africa is further explored in the chapter "Praying And Praising".

The following are her winning albums before she went 100% gospel:

1988	<i>Rebecca</i>
1989	<i>Woza Lovey</i>
1989	<i>Thank You Very Much</i>
1990	<i>Buyani</i>
1991	<i>Saturday Nite</i>

There is one female singer who dominated the Pantsula dance scene both on records and live shows. She ultimately earned the title "Queen of the Pantsulas". Daughter of a priest, **NOMSA MERCY PAKELA** arrived in Johannesburg in 1982 from New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape searching for stardom and she got just that. She had started singing back home at the age of sixteen. After a stint with Lena Khama and Girlie Mafura as Ebony, she signed a contract with MFM. In 1986 she released *Ndizo Kulinda* and followed up with sizzlers like *I Will Hold On* and *Respect*. There are three men who'll always be associated with the success of her musical career – Bones Brettell, Bernie Millar and Godfrey Nzuza. They were her production team. These producers were complimented by Sipho Mshazi's song writing talent. Her 1987 album *I'm Yours* contained six tracks that could each stand on their own as hits. The track titles on the A side were also translated into her home language, isiXhosa. It was at live concerts that the impact of her music on her fans was immense as "Tunkie Tunkie" danced as if her life depended on it. Her 1988 album *Run Baby Run* featured one of the hottest hits of her career, *Ayashis 'Amateki* (This is not my size). This was the track that earned her the title "Queen of the Pantsulas". The album also featured a gospel dance track *Thank You Jesus* in duet with stable mate Ali Katt. Her marketing and promotions team of Peter Tladi and Elias Moloi travelled far and wide to see to the success of this album. In the same year she released *Mafia*, an album featuring two hits *Careless Doctor* and *It Hurts So Bad*. Festival groovers went crazy when she performed the former as in the middle of the song she

would start singing and gesticulating “Ichoo! Mamma we...selo sa ntlhaba!”. On this album Ishmael Mgaese replaced Godfrey Nzuza on the production team and also wrote some tracks including the two hits as well as the title track. In 1989 Godfrey was back with the production team in the recording studio cooking Mercy’s next album, *Young And Beautiful* featuring the hit *Taximan* as well as the title track. One of the tracks celebrated the building of the biggest stadium in the country, Soccer City. My personal favourite is her *Queen Of The Disco*.

By 1990 she had moved from her known stable and her album *Mama Ndiyalila* was produced and arranged by Sello Chicco Twala on Dephon’s Roy B label. Almost all the tracks were written by Chicco. Included was Chicco’s re-mix of Mercy’s old mega-hit, *I Will Hold On*. From here Mercy’s music career suffered some setbacks and her personal life experienced endless blows. Her mother died tragically. In the process she turned to the Hare Krishna movement after reading *The Science Of Self Realization*, a book written by the founder of the movement, AC Baktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, for spiritual support. In 1994 she emerged with another album, *Ngithol’ New Love* which was mostly featuring ballads. In 1997 she released *Khotso*, an album initiated by Zinzi Soul Music. For some time her fans waited for her next album until Primedia released her new 14-track CD, *Mama*, in 1999. This CD was a concerted effort to resuscitate her fading career. It was produced by four credible musicians: Don Laka, Johnny Clegg, Jimmy Bangura and Gong Master. The compositions ranged from Caiphus Semanya’s to Joe Mogotsi’s. In 2005 she announced her signing with Creative Kingdom Records for Afro-Pop projects. By 2007 she was in demand for live shows. I still remember that on 31 March that year she was billed for the Golden Oldies Music Festival at Polokwane Showgrounds. On 7 April she performed at the Thaba Nchu Easter Music Festival. She also went into the 999 recording studios with Chomee for a collaboration project. In 2007 through the help of Bonsai Entertainment she released *Ndibuyile* (I’m Back).

In 1984 when I heard the track *Stop Fooling Around* I hardly suspected that the voice leading the song would one day be so loved that fans would scream at the top of their voices asking for more at **LENA KHAMA**’s live concerts. At that stage she was with the group Lena and Sunshine and the song was written and produced by Enoch Nondala on the Sunrise label.

Lindruelta Khama was born in 1964 in Nkowankowa near Tzaneen in Limpopo Province. She started singing at a young age as she joined a Phalaborwa group, The Big Cats whose members included the late Paul Ndlovu. In 1980 on New Year’s Eve the Mthembu Queens were performing in the area and she joined them. Upon arriving in Johannesburg she met other musicians who appealed to her style of singing. In 1982 Bheki Ngcobo asked her to marry him. Bheki, a popular maskandi musician cum praise singer known as Ihashi Elimhlophe (White Horse) is an energetic fabulous dancer. After a stint with Kori Moraba of The Minerals, Lena joined Dudu Mazibuko of Dudu And The Big Time



Boys. She also worked with Abangani. Girlie Mafura who was from Orlando East also did backing vocals for Dudu And The Big Time Boys. She introduced Lena to a song writer who played for the Afro Funk And Blues Investigation (AFUBI), Sizwe Zako. They met at 2 Dorkay House, Eloff Street where Sizwe was experimenting on some songs he had written. The two lasses sang to his music and he was impressed. That was in 1985. He paid a visit to RPM with the demo tapes of his music featuring the fresh young voices of Lindruelta and Girlie. RPM thought there was potential and Sizwe, together with Street Kids producer Raymond Phiri, took the girls into the studio. The result was a maxi single *I Need Somebody*. On another track, *You and Me Together*, Ray Chikapa Phiri joined them on vocals to create a dialogue. The duo was named Ebony – two beautiful black girls. The disband of Joy in May 1983 created an opportunity for prospective female groups. Ebony filled the vacuum. Peter Tladi who was Promotions Manager at RPM Records at that time marketed the debut maxi aggressively and serious attention was given to also market it internationally as the potential was obvious. They shared backing band Stimela with the Street Kids at live concerts. By the way, Street Kids were Paul Ndlovu and Oupa Poho. Later Mercy Pakela had a stint with Ebony to make it a trio. Rebecca Malope also worked with the group, which was managed by Peter Tladi. Lena would ultimately be known as Ebony. Another maxi single was released with two hot tracks co-written by Sizwe Zako and Godfrey Nzuza. They were *Tell Me Why* and *Do You Remember?* produced by Ray Phiri and engineered by “Mr Magic” Richard Mitchell. A four-track mini album, *Ice Cream Man*, written and produced by Ray Phiri and engineered by Philip Nel followed in the same year. It featured the hit *I’m A Winner*, and indeed she was. One of Ebony’s powerful tracks is a Jabu Sibumbe/Peter Pearlson composition, *Who’s Wrong, Who’s Right* from *Feeling Good* (1987), an album they co-produced with Thapelo Khomo and Peter Moticoe. *Ooh La La Hop* also had remarkable success. Her 1992 album *Keep This Love* was produced and arranged by Thapelo Khomo who also wrote most of the tracks. The engineer was Tom Fox. She had a vernacular dance hit, *Andina Ku Lawulwa Nguwe*. One of her hottest albums, *Tshunela*, was produced by her homeboy, the late Peta Teanet. It was so popular that they released *Tshunela Volume 2*, which included the hit *Khoma Khoma* in 1992 on RPM’s Tiger label. In the 1980s there was no female dancer for Ebony. I remember her combination with Vinolia Mashego at festivals – magic beyond words!

Taking after their parents, Lena and Bheki’s four children have their own music group **AMAPONI**. The group is made up of the two boys and the two girls: Nathi, Jabu, Ntombi and Vusiwe. It is always interesting to me to notice the dual meaning of the group’s name. Amaponi is isiZulu for small horses (ponies), which means they are the offspring of the White Horse (Ihashi Elimhlophe). But again, in pronunciation Amaponi could as well be the children of (E)Bony. In February 1994 Gallo Record Company released a compilation CD of Lena’s hits



called *The Best Of Ebony*. By 2005 she was managing the family music business, but expressed her intention to go back to her first love – music performances.

**GIRLIE MAFURA** also went solo. This girl from Orlando East started singing in 1983 doing backing vocals for Dudu Mazibuko of Dudu And The Big Time Boys. Their albums include *What Is A Woman*. One of the group's hits was *Umpefumlo Wam*. Her musical career is almost like that of Lena Khama. She started with Sizwe Zako and later in her career was produced by Limpopo musicman, the late Peta Teanet. Girlie released *I'm Still Waiting* (1987) written and produced by Sizwe and engineered by Humphrey Mabote on RPM's Right Track label. It was followed by Udlala Ngami (1988) as well as Girlie (1989) written and produced by Lefty Rhikoto and Peter Ngobese on RPM's Tiger label. Her Other albums were *Gimme Your Love* (1991) produced by Peta Teanet, *Ku Cheza Na Wewe* (1992), *Thuso* (1993) and *Masela* (1995). She'll always be remembered for her monster hit, *Mshengu Ville*.

**PATRICIA MAJALISA** also took the music industry by storm backed by Dan Tshanda's band, Splash. She was born in the South African boxing capital township of Mdantsane in East London. When she arrived in Johannesburg in the eighties she joined Splash as a backing vocalist on their album *Peacock* (1986) produced by Hamilton "Vala" Nzimande and engineered by Dave Segal on the Gallo label. Hamilton realised that she was too talented to remain a backing vocalist and recommended that she should embark on a solo career backed by the same band. He produced her album *Cool Down*, which sold over 25 000 copies and as they say, the rest is history. From this album one of the tracks *Mshoza* became her other name. The name is the feminine gender of "Pantsula" in township lingo. Later her producer became the band producer, Daniel Tshanda. The success of her career is a partnership with Dan "Dalom" Tshanda and Dave Segal. Her subsequent albums sold at the minimum of 50 000 units each.

The next album *Poverty* was written and produced by Dan, backed by the stable's young trio Dalom Kids on vocals and the band Splash. Hotline's lead guitarist, Alistair Coakley was roped in for his rock guitar effect on tracks *I Better Go Home* and *Great Pain*. Her other albums include *Dzhengenzhe*, *Witchdoctor*, *Gimba*, *Cowards*, *Umona*, *Impumelelo*, *My Music* and *Ithemba Lami*. She was popular with fans at festivals where she performed as part of the Dan Tshanada package of Splash, Patricia Majalisa and Dalom Kids. Once they took the stage, they would perform in turns until the whole package was done. One of her best performances at live shows was her rendition of *Uwee* from the 1990 album *Dzhengenzhe*. The fans just loved it! So easy to sing and dance to. By 1990 she was in love with Dan Tshanda, but the relationship could not stand the test of time. In 1994 she announced that she was leaving "The Package". According to reports, Dan Tshanda had given Patricia and Matshikos (an off-shoot of Splash) his blessings to work on their own. Her "independent" album was the product

of herself and Pennuel Kunene of Matshikos. In August 2005 she announced her return to Dalom Kids Productions where she released the CD *Batšha* (GRC) working with her old producer, Dan Tshanda.

**NTOMBI NDABA** was another female star of note in the eighties. Her career will always be associated with her manager and producer “Rubber” AT Khoza as well as her backing band, Survival. In 1985 she released two self-written maxi singles *I Can’t Let Him Go* and *Think More About Me* produced by Clive Risko and engineered by Jan Smit on Reamusic’s Ream label. The year 1987 found her at CCP Records releasing a Rubber Khoza produced and arranged album *What Is It With Me* (Yini Ngami) with all the tracks self-written and engineered by Fab Grosso on CCP’s Hi-Trax label. Another big hit of hers was *Sweet Love* from the self-written album of the same name recorded at Blue Tree Studios and released on the CCP label. In 1989 her backing band released its own album *The Big Mechanics* under the name The Survivals on the Anneko label. This stable was also home to Sinah Dombolo and The Derricans who in 1989 released their album *Mahlalela* under the management of Derrick Phuluwa.

In the late eighties when SABC radio was involved in raising funds for welfare organisations during the festive season, I had the honour of engaging musicians in the live performances that accompanied the campaign. One of the musicians was **NANA MOLOI**, deejay Pabi Moloi’s mother. She released two albums with EFP, from which she featured tracks like *Sekoloto* and many others. Nana was not only a musician, but a talented showbiz personality who co-hosted a television music programme and won a Star Tonight Award for her excellence in presentation. Her debut movie was Bertha Egnos’s *Ipi Tombi* for which she was nominated Best Leading Actress in the M-Net Awards. As if that was not enough, Edgars Club Members nominated this model of note as the Best Female Personality. An ex-partner of CJB’s Neo Maphaka, I guess what remains in many people’s minds is her face as SABC 2’s continuity presenter.

Elizabeth Mkhwanazi was introduced to Hit City Records by her Mpumalanga homeboy, Dan Nkosi. As a professional singer she used the name **ZIZI KONGO**. The biggest hit of her career was *Come Duze* from the album of the same name on Hit City’s Leopard Records label. Her other albums with Hit City Records included *Emarabini* and *Isilingo* co-produced by John Galanakis and Hebert Xulu. By 1995 she was at Ken Haycock’s Cool Spot where she released *Ibhandishi* co-produced by Quinton Madlala and Vusi Shange. On 24 September 2006 Zizi was one of the musicians who participated in the Kungwini Cultural Festival in Bronkhorstpruit.

**LORRAINE STAPLE**’s solo career was Lloyd Lelosa’s dream. Her real name was Lorraine Sibisi. In 1984 Lloyd and producer Richard Siluma released her debut maxi single *On The Road Again* backed by Isaac Mtshali on drums. It was engineered by Richard Mitchell on Teal Records’ Plum Records label. Its flipside was another hot track, *Let The Music Move Me*. Her 1985 album *You Belong To*

*Me* was a joint effort of many experts: Richard Siluma, Lloyd Lelosa, Ray Phiri, Isaac Mtshali, Bakithi “BK” Khumalo, Nelcy Sedibe and Nana Motijoane. It was engineered by Richard Mitchell, Sam Wingate and David Segal. The album included tracks from her debut maxi single. In 1986 the album *Here I Come* (Sizolala La) was produced by Richard Siluma and engineered by David Segal who also co-arranged it and released it on the Gallo label. Her music was the alternative of the time to Disco music. She had a mellow voice and her style of singing reminded one of Mavis Staples of The Staple Singers.

**BULELWA AROSI** has been a member of groups like CJB and Taboo. The two groups shall be discussed in other sections of this book. She used the name Buli or Buli Arosi as a solo artist. One man who has worked extensively with her is Thami Mdluli. Her solo albums include *Oh Boy!*, which was co-produced by Richard Makhubele (Volcano) and S. Higgins who also engineered it. It was released on Eric Frisch Productions’ FG label.

Buli’s sister, **SUTHUKASI AROSI** was a member of Madoda Malotana’s duo, Ashante and later she followed Busi Mhlongo (formerly Vicky) abroad. She also performed as a session vocalist and backed other musicians like Caiphus Semenya. In fact she is very prominent in Caiphus’s 1994 video, *Woman’s Got A Right To Be* with Condry Ziqubu strumming the big guitar.

Born in Cala, Transkei in the Eastern Cape, Suthu’s interest in music was kindled at a very young age. To reinforce her skills she studied ballet and modern jazz in Cape Town. When she went to Johannesburg her other talent became very handy as she joined Gibson Kente’s cast to play roles in his stage productions. Some of the productions she took part in were *Laduma*, which was part of the World Indigenous Music Festivals as well as *The Game*. She recorded with groups like Cheek To Cheek, Kora Best Traditional Group, Mahube and Kora 97 winning group, Sabela. She became a member of a duet called Oshakati in the late eighties. In 1990 she released *Umzi Watsha*, an album she co-wrote and produced with Dougmore Madoda Malotana of Cheek To Cheek on CCP’s Bullet label. On the album she uses the name Suthu and thanks her mother Yolisa, sister Buli and daughter Lolo, as well as her own son Lifa for always being there for her. In 2001 she released a 10-track CD, *U-Buntu*, on the Sheer Sound label produced by herself with the help of Andile Yenana and Herbie Tsoaeli. It was engineered by Peter Pearlson. She also released *Ayeza* and *The Journey*, which was produced by D-Rex. Suthukazi’s awards as an individual musician, part of a group or actor include:

- Best Leading Actress in the 1997 FNB Vita Awards for *The Game*.
- Best Female Artist: southern Africa in the Kora All Africa Music Awards.
- Best African Pop Album nomination in FNB SAMA 5 for Mahube.
- Best Female Artist nomination in the 2004 MTN SAMA.

I recently saw **WINNIE KHUMALO** perform as a backing vocalist for Ringo Madlingozi in the East Comes Alive Concert at Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg. My mind went back to the year 1988 when the small girl released her self-titled debut album featuring the hit *Hey Lightie* written by Anthony Mthembu, recorded and produced by Mally Watson on CCP's Family label. By 1991 her producer was Sello "Chicco" Twala on her *Tshinatshina* album engineered by Marvin Moses and released on CCP's Flame label. One of her best songs is her cover version of the old smash hit *Dlamini*.

**VINOLIA MASHEGO** who became known as V-Mash will always be remembered as the tigress of SABC television's youth programme, *Jam Alley*. But when "Om" Alec Khaoli met her he saw a music performer with massive potential. Her debut album *The Hunger* (GRC, 1988) was co-written and co-produced by Alec Khaoli and Colin Smith featuring the hits *Set Me Free* and *It's In The Liquor Bottle*. Her album *Cheena* (1991) produced hits like *Suna Papa* and *Cheena*. A fabulous dancer, she was popular with music fans at festivals. She would thrill them by dancing energetically and all of a sudden start trembling from head to toe. As the crowd went wild she would sing "Nna nka jaiva o hlanye" (I can drive you crazy with my dancing act). As already alluded to, she also became an award winning television presenter in her *Jam Alley* days. This was a weekend vibrant youth music variety programme. After a lot of negative publicity regarding her private life, she was replaced by Zanele Nestum Nyakale of 999 group, Abashante who later also left the show only to join Lesedi FM's Chomane Chomane on his morning show, "Ha Reye" (Let's Go) in 2006. Some of the hot presenters of the vibrant television show included Nimrod Nkosi, Pushie Dunn and Twasa Seoke of Lesedi FM who was a musician in her own right.

From the same production house of Alec Khaoli emerged **ANDILE GAELESHWE** from Meadowlands, Soweto. She was catapulted to overnight stardom by her hit *Abuti Yo*. Her 2000 album *Andile* also produced by "Om" Alec Khaoli was inspired by issues close to her heart – child abuse and HIV/AIDS awareness. She also hosted a radio programme on the youth radio station YFM where she was able to engage the youth on the above-mentioned issues. At the station she met Udo Carelse from Cape Town whom she later married. In 2001 she established the Open Disclosure Foundation encouraging abused youth to speak out. In 2005 she announced the October release of her album *It's Me Now* on her own record label. Andile's awards include the Clinton Democracy Fellowship (youth leadership) as well as the Ashoka Fellowship (social entrepreneurship). By 2006 the gender activist who personally survived childhood abuse was co-hosting a Pan-African youth talk show with Sizwe Dhlomo on MTVBase titled *MTV-Base Uncensored*. At the end of November of the same year she became host of a tv reality show titled *Khumbul'Ekhaya* on SABC 1. In 2008 she was nominated for the Woman of The Year Award.

Born Khanyisile Maphumulo, **KHANYO** has paid her dues as a backing vocalist

in South Africa helping other musicians achieve gold and platinum sales. Like Mandisa Dlanga, Stella Khumalo, Star Mabaso, Beulah Hashe, Deborah Fraser, Thandi Seoka and the late Phumzile Ntuli her name appears on many albums of substance including those of Jabu Khanyile and Kutu. She entered the world of showbiz at a tender age and travelled the world with Mbongeni Ngema's *Sarafina* cast. In fact, she was groomed by Mbongeni. When I first met her in 1997 she was a member of a duo called Tiny And Khanyo, singing with Ermelo-born Tiny Siluma who was by no means tiny. The duo's hit single was *Emotions*. Her debut solo album *I'll Be There* was produced by Mandla Mofokeng, Mthunzi Namba, Alexis Faku and Ezbee. It featured the hit *Isiphithiphithi* as well as a cover version of Two Tons Of Fun's *Just Us*. It was followed in 1999 by *Iyangibiza*, which was produced by Joe Nina. In 2005 she walked into that monumental beehive, Downtown Studios, and came out with another album, *Let My Heart Sing* (Catwalk Records).

Sadly, Tiny Siluma was gunned down on the sixth floor of his Wanderers Street, Joubert Park, Johannesburg flat corridor on 9 June 2008. The nation received the bad news on the morning of the Million Man March Against Crime in Tshwane. Just before the start of the march four suspects were apprehended by the police in connection with the killing. How sad to lose our prophets to bullets and guns! Producer Richard Siluma's cousin, Tiny whose 1998 debut album was titled *Caroline* was buried on Saturday, 14 June 2008 at Lenasia Cemetery. Many South Africans will remember Motha Obed Tiny Siluma as the big man in the Chicken Licken television commercial with comedian Joe Mafela.

**PAMELA NKUTHA** had a number of albums at On Record including her 1988 *Umntanami* (Kidnapped) produced by Steve Cooks and engineered by David Moloele. Some of her hits included *Manano* (1990).

**DEBORAH FRASER** worked with various musicians as a backing vocalist. In 1990 she she recorded her debut solo album *Doctor's Prescription: Make Love 3 Times A Day* using the name Debs Fraser. The album was produced and arranged by the late Dumisani Ngubeni and engineered by Ian Osrin. On that album one track *Abanye Bayombona* was an indication of her gospel music inclination. Later she became a celebrated gospel superstar. Her gospel music career will come under the spotlight in the last chapter of this book.

**NTOKOZO MASINGA** released her music with Sony Music South Africa under the name Ntokozo. In one interview she told me that there was a time when she could not decide whether to model or sing. She arrived on the music scene when the industry was under siege from kwaito music. Some of her hits include *Cruisin'*, *Never Gonna Give You Up*, *Flavour Of The Old School*, *The World To Me*, *You're Losing* as well as *All I Need* from her album *Do It*. These hits were composed by Lindelani Mkhize and Gabi le Roux and produced with the help of Tim White. Her hits were remixed in 1998 on one CD titled *Ntokozo: '98 Remixes*. During the



2000 festive season she released *Keep It Real*, which had tracks like *Welele Mama* and *Umcimbi*.

**TSAKANI MHINGA** aka TK was one powerful songstress with a bright future ahead of her. Her album *TKO* (Township Records) was SAMA 7's Best R&B Album. The self-titled Tsakani (Universal Records, 2001), which was produced by Pete Martin is testimony of her star qualities. The album was nominated in the Best Producer category of the Standard Bank SAMA 8 and won the R&B section. Other albums include *Black Butterfly* (Electro Mode, 2003). Her six-album deal with a major international record company spoke volumes about her credibility as a musician. Sadly, TK was found dead in a Bryanston hotel room on Monday, 27 February 2006 just before she could cross that boundary of 27. She was laid to rest at the Fourways Cemetery, leaving behind her son, Oratile. On Friday, 29 September 2006, her record label Electromode and SABC 2 launched her album *Best of TK* at The Venue, Melrose Arch in Johannesburg. Amongst those who graced the event were musicians Mandoza, Danny K, Wandile, Ed Jordan as well as her mother, Tebogo Mhinga. Public opinion suggested that the gap she left in the local R&B genre would be taken care of by the likes of former 999 music singing sensation, Lira.

Born **LERATO MOLAPO** in Daveyton, Benoni, Lira's debut R&B CD was *All My Love* (2000). After parting ways with her first stable, 999 Records in 2006 she joined Sony BMG. She released a hot CD titled *Feel Good*, which won Lara Hollis SAMA 13's Best Music Video category, a feat repeated in 2007 for the video track *Ixesha*. Sounds good – Lira and Lara. It also won the SAMA 14's Top Selling Download category. No wonder the album had already won the 8th Metro FM Music Awards' Best Jazz Album category. Her inclusion in the March 2007 line-up of The Cape Town International Jazz Festival was confirmation that her star was on the rise.

One of the new generation of stars is **KB** aka Keabetswe Motsilenyane. Born on 8 April 1979, she grew up in Saulspoort, North West province and studied music and theatre at Mmabana Cultural Centre in Mafikeng. She later enrolled with the University Of Pretoria for the same courses. The talented KB was in *African Footprint* until 2001, when she got a role in *Ali*, a movie starring Will Smith. Most people took note of her in e-tv's *Backstage*. Her debut album *Beautiful Vibrations* (2002) featured the hit, *O a Lla*. It scooped several awards including Metro FM's Best R&B Singer and Best Newcomer as well as SAMA 9's Best R&B Album. She followed up with *Rock Lefatshe* (Universal Music, 2003), which won Metro FM Music Awards' Best R&B Singer and Best Female Vocalist. As if that was not enough, it was nominated in the Kora All Africa Music Awards for Best Female Singer: southern Africa. In 2005 she released another hot album titled *El Musica* through New York's Yoruba Records featuring her mother Vera on the track *Roots*. A track from the album, *How Come I'm Not Feeling You*, was nominated for the 2005 Metro FM Music Awards' R&B category, a section also contested



by Lee Ann as well as Khalil, whose *Wantempta* remains one of my favourites. Keabetswe won the Best Female Artist category, while Lee Ann walked away with the R&B section. In 2005 KB was also nominated for the Best Female Artist: southern Africa category of the tenth Kora All Africa Music Awards. It was while shooting the SABC 1 drama *Mthunzini* that her fans learned she was expecting her first child with her long-term boyfriend and manager, producer Terry Pinana. In 2006 after giving birth to Phala, the multi-talented KB returned to the stage featuring in theatre production *Aladdin* at the Civic Theatre. In July 2007 she featured in e-tv's *Rhythm City* and went on to release her next album *My Rhythm*. How's that for a lady who also co-owned a company called "Mathemo"? Maybe that's what she meant when she sang "Rock Lefatshe".

**LINDA 'BABE' MAJIKA's** musical history goes back to the early days of Tembisa's Hot Soul Singers. As a solo artist her debut album was *Don't Treat Me So Bad* (Umkhonto Records, 1988) produced by Ace Mbuyisa. It was followed by *It's So Hard* (Kuyakhuphukela) in 1989. Her backing vocalists on that album included one of her former Hot Soul Singers mates, Ntombifuthi Mabaso as well as Lizzy Mngomezulu of Zia fame. Albums of the lady born Linda Ndlovu include *Themba Lami* (RPM Records).

**NEO SAKA** aka Neo Seakamela released her debut album with RPM Records titled *Time Will Tell*. It was followed by *Majapane* (Gallo Records) and *Bopedi* (2003). She also became a popular radio presenter at Thobela FM especially for her co-presentation of "The Neo-Joe Show" with Joe Mabotja, a former actor in Mbongeni Ngema's *Sarafina*.

Another lady deejay, **UNATHI NKAYI** known for her days with youth station YFM started with collaborations and features like Zola's track *Sana Lwami* and DJ Vetkuk vs Mahoota's compilation CD. Unathi who grew up in places like Namibia and London did drama and journalism at Rhodes University. After presenting the *Castle Loud Show* on television she joined YFM and co-presented the youth station's "Kamikaze Heat Show" with Mvulane "Rudeboy" Paul Mnisi. She later became a respected compère, singer, deejay and presenter who's an ambassador for Dr Nelson Mandela's 46664 campaign. In 2005 the lass from Grahamstown released her debut album *My First Time* featuring the hit, *Buti*. At the end of 2006 she left Getto Ruff to join Kalawa Jazmee where she recorded her second CD. Her former co-presenter, Mnisi from Katlehong had also presented a television show called *Ecovision*, joined community radio station Voice Of Soweto and joined YFM at the age of 18 in 1997. He is also into music production and poetry. By 2007 Unathi had joined Metro FM where she co-presented the station's afternoon show with Glen Lewis, while her former colleague Thomas "Badboy T" Msingana also joined the urban radio station to do the morning show.

Ashante aka **LINDIWE MPOBOLE** was born on 13 February 1963 in East London. She joined Gibson Kente's Theatrical Company and learned the basics of singing,

theatre, dance and stage. In 1985 she arrived in Johannesburg where she joined CJB as a backing vocalist and dancer. She later joined Harari and Sipho Mabuse as a supporting act. Her debut album *Chains Of Love* was produced by Peter Moticoe, Tsietsi Mafabatho as well as Joseph Dumako on Umkhonto Records. Later in her career she was produced by the late Peta Teanet.

**ESTA M** is a former teacher from Chiawelo, Soweto whose 1994 debut album was *Sakamela*. With Shangaan music producer Joe Shirimane she released 8 albums. At the end of 2005 she released *Norho* (A Dream) with the help of producers Frans Africa and Muzilikazi Wa Afrika.

Maybe I should also pay tribute to young ladies who recorded and released songs but due to a variety of reasons were not able to sustain the momentum, as well as those whose careers were just budding when I wrote this book.

Julia Mabika who had a massive hit *Be My Wife*, produced by Dane Stevenson on the Blue Tree label. Nomuntu Kappa released *Come And Satisfy Me* in 1990 produced and arranged by Thapelo Khomo who wrote almost all the songs. The album was engineered by Ian Osrin on the Roy B label. Thandi Zulu aka TZ Junior at Dephon Records had a big hit *Move Me* produced by Peter Moticoe on Dephon's Roy B label.

Also from this stable was Sister Blaze aka Maureen Tsotetsi who had a hit with *Number Two Two Seven* in 1989 from an album of the same name on the Roy B label. It was followed by her 1990 sizzler, *We Can Differ But Still Be Friends*.

Margino had a hit *You Took My Love* in 1985 and an album titled *Happy People*.

Tshepiso Mthembu who was born in Mzimhlophe, Soweto, to Maki Mthembu on 20 September 1965 already showed interest in music as a student at Anchor High School in Meadowlands. She started her showbiz career singing, dancing and acting in Gibson Kente's play *Things Are Bad, Mzala*. She later became a backing singer for Lazarus Kgagudi. It was as a backing artist for Kamazu and Eric D that William Mthethwa noticed her. In 1991 he produced her album, *Mashwabana* at Teal Records.

Sister H released *Wa Didiela* on RPM's Tiger label in 1991. It was co-written and produced by Lefty Rhikoto and Ali Maake; Ian Osrin was the engineer.

Lady Thuli released *Living In Africa* in 1990, an album written, produced and arranged by Themba Mawelela aka Little Big Man on the On Record label. She released the hit *Int' Wencane* as part of the duo Tools And Figs in 1991.

Matshidiso Mokoena became known as a member of a trio known as Xilembe. In 1989 they released an album titled *Ncilo Ncilo* on Cool Spot's Tops label. When Xilembe split in early 1991, she went solo using the name, Tshidi. Her debut album was *Ni Famba Na Wena* (Cool Spot, 1991) featuring the hit *Matshidiso* produced by Mally Watson.

Still with Cool Spot, Queen Yende fronted trio, Venus. The other members of the group were Richard Chauke and Peter Tshehla. *Soul Train* (1990) was their album, which was also produced by the in-house maestro, Mally Watson.

Miranda Maila in 1988 released her album *What Are You Waiting For?* produced by Julius Tokolloho on the Sounds Of Soweto label, engineered by Tom Maybury. The album includes a soliloquy ballad, *I Can't Believe It's Over (Our Love Was So Strong)*.

Seipati Mkwanazi released her solo debut album in 1997. She had acted in a drama series in 1989 and appeared in various television advertisements. Seipati was also appointed as the Lux spokesperson and had her own column in *Thandi* magazine.

Adelle First's music was produced and arranged by Tom Mkhize on the Solid Records label. She had hits like *Dance With me* and *Don't Give Up* in 1986.

Dorcas Maloi released her album *Something Special* on the Priority label in 1985 produced by the late Jabu Moses Dlamini and engineered by Greg Cutler, Humphrey Mabote and Lloyd Ross.

Zandi Makeba's 1989 album, *Overload*, was written and produced by Godfrey Nzuzi and engineered by Richard Mason on the MFM label.

Ntombi Yomsuthu aka Angie Gumbi in 1994 released *Xola Nhliziyo* through Teal Records. She co-wrote the music with her husband Richard Felani Gumbi who was also the engineer and executive producer of the album. The late West Nkosi produced the CD assisted by Edho Mabuza and Vusi Tladi.

Fifteen-year-old Kandi King aka Kandi K was assisted by her musician father, Claude King to release her self-titled ten-track album in 1990. The album was arranged, programmed and produced by Claude. It was engineered by Peter Pearlson on Tusk label.

Cy-Zaah released *Life Is Too Short* produced and arranged by Ishmael "Spokes H" Hlatswayo on the RPM label in 1994.

Khululiwe Sithole, a backing singer for Bayete started singing with a gospel group, Goings, at the age of 16. The name of the group was later changed to Jama. In Johannesburg she joined Mbongeni Ngema's Committed Artists and featured in the plays *Sarafina* and *Township Fever*. She later backed musicians like Ray Phiri, Busi Mhlongo, Letta Mbulu, Caiphus Semenya and Jonas Gwangwa. After recording the *Mmalo-We* album with Jabu Khanyile, she found herself a home in Bayete. In 1997 she released her own CD *Isondlo* on the Teal Records label. It was produced by her late husband, Jabu Khanyile. The music was written by Jabu Khanyile, Godfrey Pilane, Mthandeni Mvelase and Dumisani Dlamini. By 2008 after the death of her husband she released her follow-up CD, *Iminjunju*.

Elle aka Relebogile Tisane from Atterigdeville in Tshwane got her name from the French "She", but she is a Tswana lady. In 2002 she won SAMA's Best African Pop Album category for *Is'khathi* – Time. Her other album, *Front Cover*, featured her versions of Brenda's *Life Is Going On* as well as Letta Mbuli's *There's Music In The Air*. The album was nominated in MTN SAMA 11's Best R&B Album category, which was also contested by musicians like Khalil (*Experience Khalil*)

and Nana (*Five Loaves And Two Fish*). The multi-talented lass hosted a radio show, played a lead role in stage play *The Journey* and got a role as a restaurant waitress in popular tshiVenda television drama, *Muvhango*.

Joyce Mamohwibidu Ledwaba aka Majoy from gaMadiba, Mokopane has backed various musicians like Lazarus Kgagudi, Pat Shange and Dan Nkosi. After knocking on various doors, in 2005 she released her Northern Sotho Afro-pop CD, *Modiidi*, featuring tracks like *Limpopo* and *Modiidi wa Matepe*.

Young Kelly Khumalo released her debut album *TKO* at the end of August 2005 featuring tracks like the hit *Qinisela*. The Katlehong-born singer became media fodder following her response to a journalist's question about her status as a young lady. The media was also fascinated by her "revealing" regalia on stage. It is however interesting how relative the term reveal can be – situational or even contextual. In 2006 she released her second album, *Itshitshi*. She later left her company Bonsai Entertainment owned by Mzwandile "Bonsai" Shongwe and Sarah Shongwe who initially met her during SABC 1's talent search, *Crux Gospel Star*. She announced that she would release her next album with ProKelly Entertainment, a company she co-owned with concert promoter, Prosper Mkwaiwa. The album *Siyajabula* was released through her former company due to contractual obligations. In 2007 she starred in e-tv's drama, *Rhythm City*.

The journey continues as we're watching rising stars like Puleng (*Thaba Tshoeu*), Gugu Shezi (*Gugulam*), Bongi Dube (*Ngifuna Wena*), Aya aka Ayanda Mpama (*The State Of Aya*), Zonke aka Zonke Dikana (*Solitary/Life, Love'n Music*), Marilyn Nokwe's daughter Ayanda Ndlangothi (*Music 2 Me*), Mimi Mtenjwa (*Essence of My Soul*), former Umoja star, Zanelle (*Let Me Love You*), Thulile Zama and Naledi. Others include products of the 2007 Queen of Dance competition like Tina, Phumeza Dlwati (*Feeling Brand New*) and Bucie (*Ngicel' indoda*).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# IN TWOS AND THREES

As already mentioned, music trends in the US influenced the South African music industry. The success of female groups like trios and quartets in America gave rise to the emergence of such groups locally. These US success stories were groups like The Crystals, a quartet that had two massive hits *Then He Kissed Me* and *Da Doo Ron Ron* in 1963, Martha and the Vandellas (1967, *JimmyMack*), The Shirelles (*Dedicated To The One I Love*, 1961), The Ronettes (*Baby I Love You*, 1964), The Supremes (*Stoned Love*, 1971), Love Unlimited (*Walking In The Rain With The One I Love*, 1972), Pointer Sisters (*Fire*, 1978) and The Marvellets (*When You're Young And In Love*, 1967).

In South Africa this trend started with groups like **THE SKYLARKS** in 1956 made up of Miriam Makeba, Mummy Girl Nketele, Mary Rabotapi and Helen van Rensburg. In the early eighties the hit *Paradise Road* took **JOY** to greater heights both locally and abroad. The trio's members were Anneline Malebo, Felicia Marion and Thoko Ndlozi. They dominated the charts, won two Saria awards and even toured the United Kingdom. The demise of the trio saw the members embark on own projects: Anneline later became a member of South Of Sahara and Shadiii respectively while she also featured on Hugh Masekela's Botswana-recorded album, *Waiting For The Rain*; Felicia Marion became a member of gospel group Sweetwater Amanzimtoti and later released a solo album *My Heart Is His*, which won SAMA 2's Best Contemporary Gospel Performance category; Thoko Ndlozi released a maxi single *Joburg* and featured in various albums as a session musician.

In Tembisa, Sam "JizaJiza" Mthembu, a hot dancer or "majaivane" from Lydenburg (now Mashishing) formed a trio called Tembisa Happy Queens in 1975. Their live performances were very popular. In 1979 their name was changed to

**HOT SOUL SINGERS** and they were Lindiwe Ndlovu and sisters Ntombifuthi and Nombuso Mabaso. By 1980 the trio had such mass appeal that they became the supporting act for visiting American musicians like Clarence Carter (1980), Two Tons Of Fun and Gene Chandler (1981) at the Colosseum Theatre. Most of these shows were organised by The Quibell Brothers. They also toured with The Ojays during their Orlando stadium and Mmabatho stadium shows. One of their big hits was *Jiza Jiza Wame* dedicated to their manager, Sam Mthembu by his wife Nombuso Mabaso. With the experience he gained from their many shows Sam became a showbiz promoter taking his trio to many venues in southern Africa. At the beginning of 1984 they had a show in Mpumalanga. On the way they were involved in a terrible road accident near Vaalbank, which claimed the life of his lead vocalist and wife, Nombuso Mabaso. The band choreographer and composer who grew up in Natal had just given birth to Senzo Zephania Mthembu at home in Tembisa. Sam who was seriously injured was admitted to the Hillbrow Hospital. The real cause of that accident remains a mystery to many. Upon recovery Sam organised a tribute concert to his wife at Jabulani Amphitheatre. Still on crutches, he was also recording a tribute album at the Satbel Studios, which would include his late wife's favourite hit *Going Crazy* composed by NC Mcondobi and produced by Mac Mathunjwa on the Third World Music label. The Hot Soul Singers continued with members Barbara Tyronne, Nandipha Ngcukane and Ntombifuthi Mabaso. In 1986 when they released a mini album, *We Are Very Hot*, on the Teal Record label the line-up was: Thoko Evidence Mgaga (lead vocalist), Phumzile Cecilia Phakathi and Busisiwe Patience Zungu. It was engineered by Sam Wingate and produced by JizaJiza who roped in some of today's well-known musicians like Daniel "Black Soux" Phakoe who later used the name "Sox", as well as Joeman Tladi of Sankomota fame. In 1988 they released *First Stop* on the Teal Sound label co-produced by Sam Mthembu and Tamsanqa Mpahlwa. Although Sam later did some PRO job for CCP, he kept the name alive.

In 1967 Tu Nokwe formed a trio in Durban's Kwa Mashu Township. In the beginning the trio's name was The Black Angels, but was later changed to **THE ANGELS**. It was made up of sisters Tu and Marilyn Nokwe as well as the late Jean Madubane. In July 1984 they were requested to back Spho "Hotstix" Mabuse at Durban's Kings Park Stadium. They impressed the crowd including talent scouts. Kwela and jazz guitarist, the late Allen Kwela, featured them in his solo recording *The Unknown* in Durban that very year. They impressed composer/arranger Victor Ntoni with their versatility, which allowed them to switch between pop and jazz. Towards the end of that year they arrived at RPM offices and signed a contract under Cheryl Sack's management. They were handed over to producer Mac Mathunjwa. Mac is the son of the Merry Black Birds' trumpeter, Enock "Knox" Mathunjwa. In 1985 their maxi single *Johnny Boy* was released to the excitement of music-loving South Africans. The music was



written by N.C. Mcondobi and engineered by Sam Wingate. In 1986 another maxi single followed with two strong tracks on both sides *He's My Lover* and *My Love Is Not For Sale*. The year 1987 saw the release of their full album *Mr No Problem* engineered by Mark Holland and mixed by Richard Mitchell. But just as RPM was planning bigger things for the album, which like the maxis was on the Right Track label, disaster struck and Mac Mathunjwa's dreams were shattered. Jean Madubane, who was the trio's lead vocalist died in a horrible car crash near Kroonstad on Sunday, 20 September 1987. She was a backing vocalist together with Marilyn Nokwe on Stimela's 1987 National Tour: "The Unfinished Story". She was part of the passengers in Ray Phiri's car. According to their official itinerary they had performed at Free State Stadium in Bloemfontein on that day and were heading for their next venue, Kwa-Thema Civic in Springs. Ray himself was badly injured whereas assistant tour co-ordinator Peter Kunene, and Ashley Subel did not survive the crash. The accident shocked music lovers across southern Africa as Stimela and The Angels were at the peak of their careers. Our musical flags were flown at half mast to mourn crusaders who died in action. Several songs were written by fellow musicians to pay tribute to these gallant cadres of our cultural revolution. The two daughters of Alfred Nokwe and Patty (nee Masuku) were to keep the name of The Angels alive. Very difficult.

Having already released a solo album, *Ubuhle Bami*, in 1985 with tracks like *Izwe Lezinyosi* and *Kwa Rowena*, **TU NOKWE** released another album titled *Mind Your Own Business* (1989) produced by Richard Siluma and co-engineered by Lee Short and Daryll Heilbron on the Gallo GRC label. Tu is a talented singer, composer, teacher and one of South Africa's few female guitarists. According to industry insiders, she went into music through the motivation of jazzman Bheki Mseleku. She taught herself to play the guitar and also got into acting. After the 1976 student uprisings, together with her family, she founded Amajika Youth and Children's Arts Project. The project teaches and trains young people in fields like music, dance theatre and life skills. More than 2 500 students went through it including Deborah Fraser, Leleti Khumalo and Somizi Mhlongo. In recognition of the good work performed by projects of this magnitude, donors and sponsors are always willing to assist. An example of that was when in 2005 the Tu Nokwe Projects Trust received financial assistance from the United States Ambassador's Cultural Preservation Fund.

Her 1996 Teal Records release was *Inyakanyaka* co-produced by Thapelo Khomo and her brother Papi Nokwe, except for *Tula*, which was self-produced. The album was also engineered by Ian Osrin and includes a Thapelo Khomo/Tu Nokwe/Jabu Khanyile composition, *Ubuntu*, featuring the duet of Tu and Jabu. It also featured maestro bassist Don Gumbo, saxophonist Mike Makhalemele and the guitars of George Phiri, Louis Mhlanga, Bheki Khoza and Johnny Chonco. It was nominated Best Music Video, Best Female Solo Vocal Performance and

Song Of The Year in the 3rd annual FNB SAMA. In 2001 she released *Ubuntu*, an album she co-produced with Andile Yenana and Herbie Tsoaeli. It was nominated in the Best Producer category and won the Best Xhosa Music section of SAMA 8. Tu, whose very first composition was *Relax*, became an accomplished singer, composer, lyricist, guitarist, actress and tutor. She's toured countries like Europe, the UK and the US where she enrolled at the reputable Manhattan School Of Music in New York. She has featured in a number of other musicians' albums. Her acting highlights include *Singing The Times* and *Shaka Zulu*. In 2002 she released the album *African Child*, which was nominated for SAMA's Best Female Album. By 2006 she was directing a musical titled *Ngiwafunge Ambomvu* at Johannesburg's Wendybrow Theatre. In 2007 she produced the debut CD of her niece, Ayanda Nhlangothi, titled *Music To Me*. Ayanda is member of Amajika, which is known to its members as "M7". Ayanda's mother, Marilyn later worked with the crossover group, Mango Groove.

Later on the producer of The Angels, Mac Mathunjwa, went into acting with credits including *Umfo Ka Mkhize* (1984), *Gandhi – The Making of the Mahatma* (1996) as well as tv dramas like *Khululeka* and award-winning comedy *Stokvel* for which he also composed the theme song.

Former members of South Of Sahara, Tshidi Helen Leloka and Anneline Malebo met a former member of The All Rounders, Faith Shadi Kekana and formed a new trio, **SHADIII**. It was named after Faith but spelled with three i's at the end to show that they were three, as in Bob Marley's backing vocalists, I-Three (Rita Marley, Marcia Griffiths & Judy Mowatt). Shadiii released a maxi single, *Yes I'm Gonna Give It Up*, in 1985 on RPM's Right Track label written by Sizwe Zako, produced by Allister Coakley and engineer, Creg Cutler. Maybe I should pay a special tribute to Faith Shadi Kekana, daughter of a preacherman who featured in many music projects before going solo. She has travelled the world backing superstars as a vocalist. Besides her session musicianship, she's been a member of the All Rounders, Shadiii as well as Varukweru whose members included Vusi Khumalo (drums), Bakithi Khumalo (bass), Zoli Bacela (guitar) and Ndumiso Nyovane (trumpet). Sadly, Bacela passed away in August 2006, a few days before the death of talented saxophonist, Moses Khumalo. By 2008 Faith had released her debut solo album titled *Ha Re Yeng* produced by Condry Ziqubu.

Former member of the Sound Busters and CJB band, Thami Mdluli and Buli Arosi formed a duo and used the first syllables of their names as a coinage – Tha + Bu. To make meaning out of the sound it was spelled **TABOO**. Some of their hits include *Red For Danger*, *Self-Service*, *Amigo* and *Vampire* on the EFP label produced by Professor Rhythm (Thami Mdluli) himself. Their albums include *Self-Service*, *Amigo*, *Vampire*, *Salute*, *Ba Ile*, *Amasela*, *The Woman Nextdoor*, *Sex Is Taboo* and *Noma Bangatheni*.

Sello Chicco Twala formed a female trio. On his *We Miss You Manelow* album

one of the tracks, *Rachimo*, seems to have inspired the trio's name – **CHIMORA**. This group's members were Tiny Mbuli, Makie Motlounge and the late Tshidi Wildeman. Sometimes they were referred to as "The Chicco Girls". One of their early hits was *Mayibuye I-Afrika* from an album of the same name. Their 1991 album *Intandane* was also written and produced by Sello Twala and engineered by Adrian Hamilton on Dephon's Roy B label. Besides the title track it also featured the hit *Munwe Na Munwe*. The trio's Universal Music release was *Woza Moya*, a gospel CD that featured the hit *Ngangilambile*. In 1992 the subject of polygamy became the title of their CD, *Abafazi Ababili* with guest artist Zakhele Gumede on the Teal Records label. Some of their mid-90s big hits were *Romano* and *Africano American*. On an album simply titled *Chimora* the duo of Nomuntu Kappa and Mohapi Mashego fronted the trio. Besides the already-mentioned *Some More My Cherry* the album also featured *Daddy's Dead* and *Bad Boys*. They featured Nomuntu Kappa on *Being Bitchy is My Kind Of Fun*.

Daniel Tshanda also brought three girls together and called them **DALOM KIDS**. "Dalom" is a name given to him by his friends. In 1987 Petronella Rampou and Jacqueline Rotwana joined Dan Tshanda's *Splash* as backing vocalists. In 1989 Dan added Martha Nzima to the two girls to form the trio. Their debut album *Mbalembale* went double platinum. *Mathambo* (1990) also did well featuring the hit *Nomathemba*. At that point the pressures of showbiz forced Martha to leave the group. Her replacement came in the person of Magdeline Zungu. *Ndancedeni* (1991) achieved double platinum status featuring the hit *God Of Mercy*. In the middle of the pre-election violence they released a message of forgiveness in the form of their album *Sixolele* (1992). It was followed by other albums like *Bazolunga* (1993), *Ncedani* (1994), which achieved gold status in one week, *Izindunduma* (1995), *Greatest Hits* (1996), *Ndivhiseni* (1997), *Nomalizo* (2001) and *Awulaleli* (2004).

In the Eastern Cape Tammarra Maqanda of Zwide tested her potential in The Shell Road To Fame talent search in her hometown, Port Elizabeth. She realised that her future was in music and moved to Johannesburg. Up in KwaZulu-Natal Buyisiwe Maphumulo of Eshowe went to a music session at the Durban SABC television studios. Here she met another music enthusiast from Ntuzuma, Nozipho Mtshali. They became friends and did some appearances together in their province, but later decided to move to Johannesburg. Stimela's bassist, Jabu Sibumbe introduced Tammarra to the two and introduced the three girls to Rufaro band manager and producer Sidwell Duda who named them **ELEGANCE**. The girls backed Rufaro in the recording of their maxi single, *The Mighty Birds*. With the help of the band's keyboard and guitar player Ephraim Hlope they released their debut mini album *Waiting For You* (Challenger, 1987) engineered by Richard Mitchell, Andre Herbst and Fernando Perdigao. It featured hot tracks like *Sunshine* and *Hey Little Boy*.

Kelly Ndlovu brought three girls together: Elsie Nyembe from Dube in

Soweto, Khanyisile Sibiya from Durban and Lizzy Makunyane from Tembisa. The sweetest desire is to see people make use of the talents God has given them. Their desire to do just that gave them the name **SWEET DESIRE**. Their debut album *Sugar Daddy* (Teal Sound, 1986) was produced by Kelly. 1989 saw them release *Sugar Man* on the Thuthuka label engineered by David Moloele. The trio will be remembered for their hit *Love Knows No Age Limit*.

In 1992 producer Emmanuel Diale and engineer Lucas Mokoena took three girls named **PVP** into the Suite3 Studios to put together their first album, *Mannyeo* on the MOB music label. One of the best tracks on the album was *Tell Me Why*. The name of the trio was an abbreviation of the first letters in each one's name.

One of the most powerful duets of the eighties was a hit machine called **CHEEK TO CHEEK**. Its key members were keyboard magician Dougmore Madoda Malotana and singing sensation, Phumi Maduna. Before he met Phumi, Madoda was playing for Johnny Clegg and Sipho Mchunu's mighty cross-over band, Juluka.

Phumelele Yvonne Maduna was born on 22 August 1958. She grew up in Orlando East and attended Emthunjweni Lower Primary, Law Palmer Higher Primary, Orlando High and Kwa-Ceza High School. She is the last-born in a family of six. A lover of music and books, she started singing at the age of twenty. Her interest in showbiz motivated her to join playwright Sam Mhangwani's stage plays and later the late Gibson Kente's. This is where she first met Brenda Fassie. Later she sang for The Mushrooms with Brenda, but The Soul Brothers noticed her talent and invited her to do the first half in their shows. It was at this point that she met Madoda. Their debut album *So Good, So Nice* was released in 1984 on CCP's Bullet label. It was produced by Mally Watson and all the tracks were written by Madoda. They played almost the same music as that of Brenda and The Big Dudes, but with a dominating and stinging keyboard. Their other albums were *One More Try* (1985) and *Can't Buy Love* (1986). After the split of the band, with the encouragement of her mother Mabel, Phumi went solo and released her debut album *Bad Guy*. Almost maintaining the CTC sound, she worked with Anthony Mthembu on keyboards and the album was produced by Selwyn Shandel. Later Ray Mkhize of Gallo Records informed me that she had joined Lucky Dube and switched to Reggae music under the name Sister Phumi.

Madoda Malotana brought Suthukazi Arosi and Velaphi Mnisi together to form **OSHAKATI**. Their debut album *Fire* was dedicated to the people of Namibia from where they got their name. The album was written, produced and arranged by Madoda. Richard Mitchell was the producer.

Neither Madoda nor Phumi became bigger than Cheek To Cheek as solo artists. On Sunday, 18 May 2008 the two announced on national television that they were reviving the group. To demonstrate that, they sampled their

forthcoming album performing a gospel track titled *Woza ku Jesu*.

**ECSTASY** was a duet made up of sisters Edith and Amelia Mnwela. In 1985 they recorded a maxi single, *Take Me Out*, co-written by brothers Koloi and the late Japie Lebona. It was produced by Koloi and engineered by Fab Grosso on the Hope Records label. In 1997 they were flying high on radio charts with *Don't Stop The Music* co-produced by Hendrik Koloi Lebona and Monty Bogatsu of The Minerals and The Directors fame.

In 1991 the duo **IVORY** hit the market with a self-titled album, co-written and produced by the Ngcobo couple, Bheki and Linah for White Horse Productions on the Music Team label.

**XARILA's** album *Mmane* (Stepmother) was produced by Malcolm X aka Malcolm Makume on the EFP label. All the music was written by Edwin Goodman, N. Baloi and P. Bundu.

The name of the late seventies Langa township group, **TINY TOTS** resurfaced when Thabo Mosia composed music for four small girls. Their self-titled 1991 disco album was co-produced by Lefty Rhikoto (Mordillo) and Thabo himself. It was co-engineered by Neville Fox and Dean Spencley on RPM's Tiger label.

Mosia's other kids group was **CHUKUCHA** whose album *Selina* (1989) was released on the Umkhonto Records label.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# WHEN TWO CULTURES KISS

From as far back as the 1950s black was black and white was white in the music industry of South Africa, just as in our daily lives. Besides the cultural differences, government legislation made the meeting of the two very difficult, if not impossible. The two worlds were as different and separate as heaven and hell.

Children are children – innocent, yet curious. A young boy was sent by his mother to the shop, but you know how they walk, stop, listen, watch or maybe touch and then proceed with the journey. As his mother was anxiously waiting for the bread, he was diverted by the sound of a guitar on a street corner. He curiously approached the man who was absorbed in his guitar strumming. The man was Charlie Mzila. Charlie was a caretaker at a nearby building. This was the beginning of a life-long journey for the young boy, *JOHNNY CLEGG*. He was born Jonathan Clegg in Manchester in the UK in 1953, brought up in Zimbabwe, migrated to South Africa, moved to Zambia, and migrated back to sunny SA. His encounter with Mzila was the beginning of a mentoring process in which “Mandlebe” (Johnny) would be taught Zulu culture, dance and language. At the risk of being caught he frequented Mzila’s sessions until in 1969 he met a younger boy, *SIPHO MCHUNU* who worked as a gardener and played a self-made guitar. Wemmar Hostel became the centre of Johnny’s cultural initiation. Due to his karate experience the Zulu warrior dance routines were not that difficult for him to master. Although the police reprimanded little Johnny so many times about mixing with the wrong crowd, the passion was just too powerful for him to obey their orders. The boys simply called their music group Sipho and Johnny.



With the help of producer/publicist Hilton Rosenthal the two finally released their debut album under the name **JULUKA**. The name, “sweat”, was inspired by the perspiration during their dance. These dudes were so refreshingly popular as they presented a desired world in the dreams of most South Africans, especially blacks. I was privileged to compère their life performances in the days of the Lion Lager Road Show. They were usually billed towards the end of the show because theirs was a mixture of heavy dance routines, Zulu cultural displays and political slogans that would work the crowd up into a frenzy. A moving experience from a world yet to come. Most of their songs were banned for preaching about a new order. They taught many people including blacks about Zulu rituals and mythology. As Johnny Clegg was a lecturer of Anthropology at Wits University, he dug deep to understand the culture. His understanding and appreciation of the spirit of the Zulu warrior is also encapsulated in the song *Bullets For Bafazana*. Juluka’s albums include *African Litany*, *Ubuhle Bemvelo*, *Work For All*, *Universal Men*, *The International Tracks*, *Musa Ukungilandela* as well as compilations like *The Best Of Juluka*. Some of their big hits were the following: *Scatterlings Of Africa*, *African Sky Blue*, *Thula Mntanami*, *Walima Mabele*, *Woza Friday* and *Impi*. Juluka 1 ended in 1985 when Sipho went back to rural Kranskop in KwaZulu-Natal to farm. Johnny Clegg went solo backed by a new band, **SAVUKA** (We Have Risen), which included old Juluka artists like Dudu Zulu (percussion) and Derek de Beer (drums). Other members were Steve Mvuso, Solly Letwaba and Keith Hutchinson. Keith’s experience included a project with well-known jazz bass guitarist Danny La Louette in 1983. The two released a self-produced six-track album titled *Warrior* featuring two instrumental tracks, *Batlanga Day* and *Batlanga Nights*. It was engineered by Andre Herbst on the Wea label featuring Eugene Savage on vocals.

Johnny Clegg’s manager was Roddy Quin and most of his shows were organised by Big Concerts. Savuka released *Third World Child* engineered by Bobby Summerfield on the Minc label with his producer Hilton Rosenthal. Some tracks on the album like *Tell Him Again*, *New Earth* and *Are You There?* (Ukhona na?) challenged the status quo and encouraged activism. In 1988 Johnny’s wish to perform in the Nelson Mandela Freedom Festival in London could not be granted due to the cultural boycott of the time. At one stage he toured France and became very popular internationally. He was so big in France that when he had a show on the same day with Michael Jackson, media reports said Wacko’s concert had to be put on hold as the French joined Johnny in huge numbers. The French press is quoted to have quipped that it seemed like the French preferred a white man who wanted to be black than a black man who wanted to be white. Johnny Clegg was nicknamed “La Zoulou Blanc” by the French. As much as local audiences are important, we are part of a global village and it is crucial to be a player in that market. In a 2005 interview with Rob Brown of *Club* magazine, former Springbok Nude Girls star Arno Carstens said the

following about this issue: "People get odd when you say you are going overseas to try and make it. It's like you have to stay in South Africa and suffer for your art. But those that stay are never cool enough, never as cool as imported acts. It's ridiculous. South Africans will never let you down, but as a muso in this country you just slowly rot until you are just a corpse."

Some of Jonathan Clegg's direct challenges to the authorities were his songs *One Man One Vote* and *Asimbonanga*, a "Release Mandela" demand also later covered by the "Queen Of American Folk Music", Joan Baez – *The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down*. According to Clegg, he composed the song one afternoon during the first State of Emergency. He was so depressed and frustrated and thought that the only individual who could rescue South Africans from the madness was "the one we've never seen" – Nelson Mandela. After his marriage to Jenny, which was accompanied by a traditional Zulu wedding ceremony, they were blessed with a son, Jesse. To welcome him, he released the album, *Cruel, Crazy, Beautiful World*. Johnny, Jenny, Jesse. By the way, Johnny had met Jenny while lecturing at Wits University where she worked in the Department of Engineering. Along the way Johnny lost people close to his heart in the violent apartheid South Africa. His friend and former fellow lecturer, David Webster, was shot dead by the faceless hit squads of the regime. His band member with whom he danced for thirteen years, Dudu Zulu, was gunned down in the running battles of the taxi warlords of KwaZulu-Natal. He paid tribute to him in the song *The Crossing*, which was accompanied by a powerful video. According to Zulu mythology a man who gets killed while fighting easily crosses the border between this world and that world. A man who is ambushed or killed when he least expects it, will roam the hills and valleys of this world until a crossing ritual is conducted for him. Their other albums were *Giyani*, *Shadow Man*, *Live And Rarities* as well as *Heat, Dust And Dreams*. In phoenix style, by 1997 Juluka had risen from its ashes to reclaim its former glory. To celebrate this, they released the CD *Ya Vuka Inkunzi* (The Bull Has Risen). To the Zulus a bull is a very powerful symbol of manhood. Among the tracks is *Thandazani*, a prayer for people not to abuse their rights in the new democratic South Africa. Juluka 2's other albums include *Crocodile Love*.

Beyond the year 2000 Johnny was involved in two memorable events. He participated in Dr Nelson Mandela's new struggle, the 46664 HIV/Aids Concert. Johnny is also an ambassador of the campaign. The campaign was launched in 2002 and involved a number of international musicians including Annie Lennox of Eurythmics fame who described Aids as a "genocide". Annie and Peter Gabriel were still headlining the campaign's 5th instalment on 1 December 2007 at Johannesburg's Ellis Park stadium. Jonathan also staged a show celebrating his years in music titled *Johnny Clegg: A South African Story*. I attended the show at the Nelson Mandela Civic Theatre in Johannesburg. What a presentation! It was a combination of a lecture on Zulu culture and mythology,

music performance on stage and off the screen, as well as the introduction and tribute to those individuals who crossed his musical path over the years. He danced with Siphon Mchunu and “Big Mama” Mandisa Dlanga. Breathtaking stuff! In 2006 he released *One Life*, which includes the track *The Revolution will Eat its Children* dedicated to Zimbabwe. The album won SAMA 13’s Best Adult Contemporary Album: English category. In July 2007 Jonathan was awarded an honorary doctorate in music by his alma mater, Wits University. The superstar who completed his masters degree at Wits University impressed his promoters with his contribution in the struggle for multiculturalism and a non-racial society through music. By 2008 a compilation CD of his songs covered by various musicians was released. It was titled *The Power of One: The Songs of Johnny Clegg*. In that year he came up with a musical production titled *Heart of The Dancer* showcasing the various dance moves of his career. The name of the musical kaleidoscope was the title of one of his tracks from Juluka’s third album.

**HAWK** was one of the most powerful groups of the 1970s that defied the colour bar in the Republic of South Africa. Its membership included Dave Ornellas (lead vocals), Mark “Spook” Kahn (guitar), Les Goode (bass guitar), Julian Laxton (guitar), Ivor Back (drums) and Audrey Motaung (vocals). Other musicians who played with the band over the years or featured on its albums included Braam Malherbe, Julian Bahula and the late Billy Mashego. My personal favourite hit of the group was the cover version of the George Harrison composition, *Here Comes the Sun* from their album *African Day* (EMI, 1971). Another hit from the same album was a song titled *Kissed By The Sun*. The group’s other albums include *Africa She Too Can Cry* (EMI, 1972) which featured Ramsay MacKay’s hit composition *Orang Outang*. Their 1974 follow-up was titled *Live And Well*.

**HOTLINE** was another phenomenon of the eighties. Fronted by PJ Powers, they took the local music scene by storm. Born Penelope Jane Dunlop, PJ grew up in KwaZulu-Natal. Playing with the local Zulu kids made her fluent in the language. She later became a member of a female group, Pantha, in Durban. Following the dream of recording their music, they travelled to Johannesburg where they joined MFM. Later the group split and in 1981 Penny joined another rock band in the stable called The Gymslip. With the additional new female member who called herself PJ Powers they adopted a new name, Hotline. The line-up of the band was: PJ Powers (lead vocals), Alistair Coakley (lead guitar), George van Dyk (bass guitar), Bones Brettell (keyboards) and Larry Rose (drums). Their debut album, *Burnout* (MFM, 1981) included a crossover track, *You’re So Good to Me*, which was about a secret love affair. It so appealed to black audiences that the demand for their performances in townships was difficult to ignore. They released *Help* (MFM, 1982) and *Music For Africa* (MFM, 1983). It was during their township performances that at one of their sell-out shows at Jabulani Amphitheatre the Sowetans gave her an African name, Thandeka (the one we love). My main man, Collins Mashego, was the compère of the day. By

1984 it was clear what they were about – a South African bridge-building band. They released *Jabulani* (1984), dedicated to the people of Soweto. It featured eight solid tracks and was produced by Bones Brettell, Greg Cutler and Alistair Coakley. Its launch was accompanied by a “One Day, Three Cities” roadshow, which flew them to Kimberly, Durban and Tshwane on a private Learjet. In November 1984 the band was on the road with the Lion Lager Road Show promoting songs from the album. By July 1985 the album had gone triple gold. Some of their other albums include *Wozani* (1985) and *Current* (1986), but as Ecstasy, Passion And Pain’s song goes, “Good things don’t last forever”. Some of their biggest hits included *Help*, *The Lion Sleeps Tonight*, *Music For Africa*, *Jive Pantsula* and *Sanbonani*. In 1988 a compilation album titled *Best Of PJ Powers and Hotline* was released.

When the band split, **PJ POWERS** embarked on a solo career. I still remember that in 1988 she was in a show that started on 13 January at the Market Theatre titled *I’ll have the glamour now please*. She released *Shadowland* (1991) followed by *Thandeka* (1992) and *Woman Of Africa* (1995), which was nominated for the 1996 FNB SAMA. The album was complimented by her participation in the Sun City concert dubbed “Women Of The World Unite Against Drugs And War”. Fernando Perdigao produced her next album titled *Talk To Me* (2001 SAMA 8 Best Producer nomination), which included the hit, *There Is An Answer* as well as her cover version of Kim Carnes’s 1981 hit, *Bette Davis Eyes*. She also had beautiful collaborations with Steve Kekana on *Feel So Strong*, with Tsepo Tshola (The Village Pope) on the right of children to receive education titled *The Right To Learn*. Gifted songwriter/bassist Victor Masondo produced her other CD dedicated to Nelson Mandela titled *Sondela*. PJ contributed a lot towards welfare projects and community work.

**BONES BRETTCELL** embarked on other projects like the 1984 maxi single *The Sneezing Song*, co-written and produced with Bernie Millar using the name Hey Fever. In 1985 they produced Starlite’s *Celebrate Our Love*. Then followed the 1987 mini album *Mathambo* co-produced with Godfrey Nzuza. It featured two original instrumental hit tracks *Join Hands* and *Everything Is Possible* as well as the South African classic, *The Lion Sleeps Tonight*, produced with the assistance of Greg Cutler and Alistair Coakley. Another project of this production machine was a character dressed in a traffic officer’s uniform. The success of the concept was boosted by a hit titled *Hoi Chacklas* on the MFM labelled debut album. The frontman was commonly known as Mr Chacklas. The 1987 follow-up album was *Chackalackado* still produced by the production trio of Bones Brettell, Bernie Millar and Godfrey Nzuza. The music was written by Sipho Mshazi. In 1988 they released *Everybody Likes Me*. Mr Chacklas was very popular with festival revellers who just loved to dance in front of the traffic cop, without any fear of speed trap tickets. Even those who had had one too many knew he would not ask them to stand on one leg or “blow in here”. His backing band was Casino, which also

had its own records. One should remember that before joining Hotline, Bones played with Clout and Bernie Millar's band, Circus. After that he went into production where he worked with Greg Cutler. Alistair who is a rock axeman to the heart became a rock guitar "mercenary" as on the 1992 albums *People Don't Talk, So Let's Talk* (Ray Phiri) and *Khululani* (Stimela) as well as Bibi Msomi's *What Kind Of Love Is This?* (1987).

In 1983 another great uniquely South African band was born – **MANGO GROOVE**. Its line-up included Jack Lerole, John Leyden, Banza Kgasoane, Mickey Vilakazi, Sipho Bhengu, George Lewis and their England-born lead vocalist, Claire Johnston. Their backing vocalists were Beulah Hashe, Phumzile Ntuli and Marilyn Nokwe. In 1985 they released a maxi single, *Two Hearts*, co-written by John Leyden, Jack Lerole and K. Botha, produced by Julian Laxton and J. Culverwell on the SonoVision label. Their music was a blend of the South African jazz of the forties and fifties and contemporary pop. The trombone player, Mickey Vilakazi who was from the era of Spokes Mashiane composed their hit *Hell-fire*, but unfortunately in June 1988 he passed away. The line-up was later joined by Mduduzi Magwaza and Alan Lazar. Some of their early accolades are five OKTV awards and the Ampex Reel Award For Recording Excellence. Their albums include *Move Up* (1987), *Mango Groove* (1989), *Hometalk* (1990) as well as *Eat A Mango*, which won SAMA 2's Best Adult Contemporary Performance: English. Some of their memorable hits were: *Nice To See You*, *Special Star*, *Island Boy* and *Moments Away*. Claire later married group leader John Leyden. Mango Groove drew record crowds to music venues both locally and internationally. Under the capable management of Roddy Quin the band raised R125 000 for Aids and collaborated with the National Symphony Orchestra. By 1993 they had already sold over a quarter of a million albums in South Africa. Towards the 1994 elections they released an album aptly titled *Another Country* (1993). In recording the historic album some of South Africa's top musicians were roped in: Condry Ziqubu, Nico Carstens, Khaya Mahlangu, Mauritz Lotz, Andrew Tracey and the late Sipho Gumede. In 1997 a must for collectors, *Dance Sum More...All The Hits So Far*, was released. I recently laid my hands on Claire Johnston's solo album, *Africa Blue*, produced by the tall bassist, John Leyden. In August 2005 she was doing shows with Belinda Carlisle. The group is still around though not as active locally as it used to be. In 2006 a collection CD, *Moments Away: Love Songs and Lullabies 1990–2006*, was released through Gallo Records.

In 2005 the hit *Doo Be Doo* by a young seven-piece Afro-pop group called **FRESHLYGROUND** reminded me of the early music of the mango that we used to groove to in the eighties. The membership of the group formed in April 2002 in Cape Town includes Zolani Mahola (vocals, acoustic guitar), Josh Hawks (vocals, bass guitar), Aron Turest-Swartz (vocals, keyboards, percussion), Kyla-Rose Smith (violin), Simon Attwell (flute, mbira, harmonica), Justin Tonkin (electric guitar, acoustic guitar, sax), Peter Cohen (drums). Lead vocalist Zolani



grew up in KwaZakhele and New Brighton in Port Elizabeth. She got involved in acting at Trinity High School and proceeded to study it at the University of Cape Town. This is where she was spotted by Aron Turest-Swartz and joined the band. The group released their debut album *Jika Jika* in 2003. It was their second studio album titled *Nomvula* that brought them to the attention of the nation. The album went gold within a few months of its release and was nominated in MTN SAMA's Best Duo or Group. In 2005 the band won the Metro FM Music Awards' Best Group category. The title track is a cross between Judy Modisapudi and Joan Armatrading's sounds. In November 2006 they won the Best African Act category of the coveted MTV Europe Music Awards at a glittering ceremony held in Copenhagen, Denmark. On 3 September 2007 they released their follow-up CD titled *Ma'Cheri* (Sony/BMG), which was produced by Victor Masondo and JB Arthur. Featuring the hit *Pot Belly*, by the last week of October the album had already gone platinum. Besides outperforming its predecessor, it won the 8th Metro FM Music Awards' Best African Pop Album and Best Group category, pitted against Jozi, Malaika, Mafikizolo and a relatively new group, Ntjapedi (Ha e hlolwe ke sebata) from Sharpeville. The group's highlights include opening for Robbie Williams during his South African tour in 2006, for John Legend at the Positive Rocks Concert in Sun City and performing at the FIFA World Cup Closing Ceremony in Germany. Their world-wide popularity was also boosted by the new technology of mobile music in the form of downloads as ringtones and wallpapers, a trend also taken advantage of by musicians like Danny K, Springbok Nude Girls, Lira and others. This popular group was nominated in five categories of the 2007 SAMA's for their CD *Ma'Cheri*. They made a clean-sweep as they walked away with awards in the following categories: Best Duo/Group, Album of The Year, Best Adult Contemporary Album: English and Best Engineer (David Langemann). The awards were held at the Sun City Superbowl on Saturday, 3 May 2008.

In 1984 a Cape Town group **BRIGHT BLUE** released a maxi single, *Living in Africa*, with lyrics written by Robin Levitan and produced by Greg Cutler on the Jive Wire label. The band's membership was Peter Cohen, Ian Cohen, Tom Fox, Dan Heymann and Robin Levitan. The group that had moved to Johannesburg in the 1980s followed up with a massive historical crossover hit, *Weeping* (1987). The lyrics were inspired by the fear of the regime for the freedom fighters, and its background melodies blended SCM chorus harmonies with the struggle's unity hymn, Nkosi Sikelel' i-Afrika. Yes, a humble yet compelling prayer for the liberation of the masses of South Africa. The song was composed by Dan Heymann in 1986. It was first recorded in 1987 at the Orange 338 Studio in Orange Grove, Johannesburg, by Phil Audoire and David Moloele. They followed the trend and in 1988 released their album *The Rising Tide*. Just before the 1994 first national non-racial democratic elections they wrote *Wouldn't Miss It for The World*, a song written while they were abroad expressing their determination to



come home for the historic event. Bright Blue was nominated in the SAMA 97's Best Single category for their song *Open Your Eyes*. Besides their albums *Bright Blue* (Jive Wire, 1984) and *The Rising Tide* (EMI, 1988), a compilation album of their work was released titled *The Best So Far: Every Now And Then* (1984–2001). Some of the musicians who worked with the band include Scorpion Madondo, Louis Mhlanga and Simmi Zeko. Though the spirit of the band is still alive, its members are also busy with their own projects. In the 1990s Peter Cohen worked with the group Mango Groove and later Freshlyground, Dan Heymann worked in New York as a computer programmer, Robin Levitan went into the architectural business, while Tom Fox formed a group called *THE USUAL*: James Stewart, Yoyo Buys and Paul Tizzard. The group that recorded three albums was nominated in SAMA 3's Best Rock Performance category for *Six Songs From The Inside*. The Usual's hits include *Like A Vision* and *When I Look In Your Eyes*.

**ZIA** was another crossover group that took over from where Hotline had left off. It was also under Mike Fuller's management. The group line-up was: Cindy Alter (vocals), Bheki Gumbi (vocals), Liz Mngomezulu (vocals), Glen Malema (vocals), Ashley Brokensha (vocals/guitar/keyboards), Graham Clifford (guitar/keyboards), Reg Edwards (vocals/bass guitar), Patrick van Rensburg (drums/percussion). The lead vocalist Cindy was from Clout, a group that had a big hit with *Substitute* when she worked with Bones Brettell. In 1986 Zia released a self-titled album on the Teal Sound label produced by Patrick van Rensburg and Richard Mitchell featuring the hit *Nobody Loves You*. By 1987 when they released the album *Kant'Unjani?* on the Gallo label, Glen Malema, Ashley Brokensha and Graham Clifford were out and Andre Fourie, Abe Sibiya and Lawrence Mkhize were in. Other good tracks on the album were *Tsotsie Taal* and *Waiting For The Winds* (*Woza Moya*). Their 1988 release was *The Frontline*.

After an absence of almost 27 years Clout re-grouped and in 2005 they were promoting their come-back album *Since We've Been Gone* featuring *I Feel Alright*.

Other groups also made some contribution to the movement like e'Void and Via Afrika. Later Dozi also moved into this direction. **DOZI** was born Henk Opperman on 23 March in Hluhluwe, KwaZulu-Natal. The "dozer" whose music career went professional in 1987 also presented a tv music programme titled *Kom 'n Bietjie Binne* on SABC 2. Young **LEKGOA** aka Francois Henning released a kwaito debut CD titled *Lekgoa le Ready* (1999). However, by 2007 Francois had gone back to his Afrikaner roots with the release of *Snotkop*. Amongst white audiences black musicians like Steve Kekana, with his album *Alone In The Desert* and duet with PJ Powers, were favourites. Siphos Mabuse's *Burnout* was also a favourite in that market as was Mandoza's *Nkalakatha* produced by Gable Roux.

A February 1985 studio concept resulted in a massive hit titled *Lifesaver*. Its chorus had a line "I'm Suffering", which appealed to the suffering black masses of South Africa, especially after Jimmy Cliff's hit *Remake The World*, which had

a line that went “Too many people are suffering”. After that studio concept in February, the musicians parted ways to pursue own interests, some went as far as the USA and Europe. The success of *Lifesaver*, which featured the distinct voice of Dan Tsietso Motijoane (Coyote), made them think about the possibility of forming a band. Kenny Mathaba, who followed Malopoets to Switzerland in 1983, returned home and discussed the idea with Greg Francis. The result was the birth of a group that became known as **OZILA**. According to Kenny, the name was inspired by a West African musician, John Ozila. They approached Teal Record Company and recorded a mini album titled *Wola Wola* written and produced by Kenny Mathaba on the Teal Sound label. The original Ozila line-up was Greg Francis (drums/percussion), Jerome Francis (percussion), Kenneth Mosala (bass guitar), Jack Ngoka (lead vocals), Eddie Adams (lead vocals), Kenny Mathaba (guitar/harmonica/keyboards/congas), Gavin Poonan (guitar). The band was popular with festival revellers, especially when they performed *I'm Suffering*. Another factor that appealed to music fans was their multiracial composition in a segregated state. In 1987 they released *SOS* “Save Our Souls”, an album once again written, produced and arranged by Kenny Mathaba. It included *Wola Wola* and their debut single *Life Saver* in the people’s chosen title, *I'm Suffering*. The band was reduced from the original membership of seven to six. Pat Mokoka and Herbie Buys joined in when Kenneth Mosala, Jack Ngoka and Gavin Poonan left. However, the *Shayela Phansi* band did not stand the test of time.

Perhaps I should pay tribute to the co-founder of Ozila, **KENNETH MATHABA**, who is one of South Africa’s rare talents. Kenny’s father, Ernest Sepiri Mathaba grew up in the Mokopane area, moved to Nelspruit, got married to Maserame Phylista from Witbank (now eMalahleni) and went to settle in Orlando West in 1957. That is where Kenny was born on 19 January 1957. He was born into a family of six brothers and one sister. His late elder brother, Mike Moruti Mathaba, used to play keyboards. Kenny started playing lead guitar around 1968 inspired by Witbank (now eMalahleni) Mpaqanga groups. In 1972 he and his brother played for the Mad Dogs in Dube. Later he was with various bands like Balopi, Black Hawks, Twilight Band and Babsy Mlangeni’s band. At one stage he was a member of a resident band at the Pelican Night Club in Orlando. In 1983 he flew to Europe to join Malopoets in Switzerland and returned in 1985 to form Ozila. After the band’s *SOS* album he went into studio production where he produced artists like Charm, Olive Masinga, Thoko Ndlozi, Thandi Seoka and Lydia. Due to his rare skills, Ray Phiri requested him to assist in his solo projects, whereafter he became director of the Shell Road To Fame talent search. Kenny wrote music scores for Oliver Schmidt’s films like *Mapantsula*, *Location Culture*, *Hi-jack Stories* and *COSATU’s 10 Years* documentary. *Mapantsula* won the coveted Vita Award featuring Thomas Mogotlane. By the way, actor and director Mogotlane, who was born on 10 June 1953, passed away on 3 December 1993

after a short illness and is buried in Ga-Rankuwa, Tshwane. Kenny also wrote the soundtrack for Mark Angels's *Endangered Species*. Kenny served as a member of The Johannesburg Youth Orchestra board, as well as panel adviser of the National Arts Council. As a freelance artist he also worked with PJ Powers and Jonas Gwangwa. He said the biggest honour of his career was to produce Jonas Gwangwa's two albums, *A Temporary Inconvenience* (1999) and *Sounds From Exile* (2000). The night I met him he was playing a Fender "Stratocaster", but this left-handed guitar maestro's ideal guitar is the mahogany wood-made Gibson 355. Amongst his peers he has the greatest respect for guitarist Lawrence Matshiza. Kenny is one of South Africa's best-known harmonica players. Maybe I should mention that professional players of the instrument are few. Continentally we have musicians like Ismael Lo, while on the international front Kenny informed me that the number one harmonica star is Jean Toots Thielemans. Stevie Wonder is also an excellent player.

The Rantseli brothers, Marc and Alex's duet **MARCALEX** was another crossover duo. These Diepkloof dudes released their debut album *Marcalex* (1988) through Tusk Music. The hit *Heartbreaking Love* put them on the charts of most radio stations in South Africa. They followed up with *Boys B Boys* (1990) featuring Caroline Fassie on the title track. The duo regarded the album as an extension of the first one. The hit *Quick Quick* took the country by storm. Then followed *Yeah!* (1991) featuring the hit, *Never Never* backed by Vicky Sampson, Caroline Fassie and Dolly Setiloane. Another track *Positive* featured the voice of their father. The duo's other albums were *Wakin' Up!* (1992) and *Enjoy* (1995). Alex was married to Cape Flats-born media personality, Gerry (Elsdon) who's been a presenter on both pay-channel M-Net and SABC, Media lecturer at Allenby College as well as editor of a Christian woman's magazine called *Soul*. By 2008 she was still with the magazine as its contributor for a column titled "Life Coach". Alex also used to be the magazine's music columnist. After ten years in 2007 the brothers released a CD titled *Stolen My Heart* through Electromode.

**SIBONGILE KHUMALO** is one of South Africa's most talented, schooled and versatile female musicians of my time. Her professionalism has endeared her to cross-cultural audiences both at home and around the world. She was born Sibongile Mngoma on 24 September in Orlando West, Soweto, to a musical family. Her father, Professor Khabi Mngoma, was a music teacher and her mother, Grace (nee Mondlana), was a chorister. At the age of thirteen she was already attending music and drama lessons with the Ionian Youth Music Programme. One musician who greatly inspired the young girl was Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi's mother, the late Princess Magogo Constance KaDinizulu (1900–1984).

Sibongile passed her matric at Meadowlands High School and proceeded to do her BA(Mus) at the University Of Zululand (now KwaZulu-Natal). In 1980 she graduated and became a lecturer at the same university. She later

joined FUBA as head of the Music Department. In 1983 Sibongile obtained her BA(Hons) History Of Music at Wits University. She also holds a Higher Diploma in Personnel Management (Wits University). In 1985 she married the late theatre director/producer, Sipiwe Khumalo. Between 1986 and 1989 she was the Funda Arts Centre Co-ordinator and later head of music at the Madimba Institute Of African Music based at the Funda Arts Centre.

A multi-talented individual, Sibongile also contributed to the dramatic arts in South Africa. She acted in theatre productions like *Goree* (Matsemela Manaka), *Marabi*, *Baby Come Duze* (Mothobi Motloatse) and *The Lion and the Lamb* (the Market Theatre Company). She was involved in live music performances for quite some time before she could release her songs on record. In 1993 she won the Standard Bank Young Artists' Award. Her performances include "The Three Faces Of Sibongile Khumalo" (Kippies, 1992); "Rhythms Of Africa" with the National Symphony Orchestra, (Sun City, 1994); a performance with the London Philharmonic Orchestra in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Sun City (1995); "Handel's *Messiah*" with the late Lord Yehudi Menuhin in Johannesburg and Cape Town (1995); "The Brahms Alto Rhapsody"; "Sisters in Synch with Aviva Pelham"; "Sibongile and Friends" as well as "Melodi International Jazz Festival" with Bob Mintzer (2005). The Melodi concert featured the voices of Thandi Klaasen, Dorothy Masuka, Abigail Khubeka, Gloria Bosman and Sylvia Mdunyelwa. She also produced that prestigious festival. Some of the local celebrated musicians she performed with include Hugh Masekela and Sophie Mgcina.

Sibongile also performed concerts in France conducted by Hubert Soudant (1995), with the Cairo Symphony Orchestra in Egypt, with Brodsky Quartet in London during Africa '95 as well as the SAA 50th Anniversary Celebrations at the South African High Commission in London. Sibongile had the honour of gracing occasions like Dr Nelson Mandela's 75th Birthday, his inauguration in 1994, and she led anthems of both South Africa and New Zealand at the Rugby World Cup finals in Johannesburg (1995). The highlights of her career include singing *The Messiah* under the baton of the late Lord Yehudi Menuhin.

Sibongile released her debut album, *Ancient Evenings* (1996), through Sony Music South Africa. It was strategically launched as South African Airways sponsored her tour of Johannesburg (Civic Theatre), Cape Town (Baxter Concert Hall) and Durban (Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre) scheduled for three days at each venue. The shows were directed by the man who used to affectionately call her "Sunshine" – her late ex-husband, Sipiwe Khumalo, assisted by musical director Themba Mkhize. *Ancient Evenings* won SAMA 3's Best Vocal Performance: Female and Best Adult Contemporary Performance categories. It also won Motsumi Makhene a SAMA in the Song Of The Year category. Her CD *Sibongile Khumalo: Live At The Market Theatre* (1998) was SAMA's Best Adult Contemporary Album winner. *Immortal Secrets* (2000) was nominated for SAMA 7's Best Producer category.

In 1986 I was invited to a welcome party at Sibongile's new home in Mondeor. The family had just moved out of their Dobsonville house. She is a "rooted" individual who strongly believes in cultural values. When the IBA issued broadcast licenses to new radio stations in the new democratic South Africa, Sibongile co-presented a programme on Gauteng's Kaya FM with fellow musician Hugh Masekela on whose album *Sixty* (1999) she's featured on the track *Mbombela*. This made her a favourite with radio listeners as witnessed on Women's Day 2005 when the nation woke up to her Sound Of Breakfast on Metro FM's. It was part of a special programme schedule that featured various female personalities as presenters. Sibongile featured as a soloist in Mzilikazi Khumalo's *Ushaka: An Epic in Music and Poetry on Shaka, Son of Senzangakhona* (Sony Music Entertainment, 1997) which celebrated the life of one of the most powerful leaders in Africa. She featured in the recording of *The Best Of Allen Kwela* to pay tribute to one of the champion guitarists of our time. She won the Best Female Artist category of SAMA 9 for *Quest* (2002), which was also nominated for Best Producer. In October 2005 she followed up with a self-titled classical album. Having earned respect from her peers in the industry, Sibongile was appointed chairperson of the National Arts Festival in 2006. Perhaps 2007 should go down history as one of her best years. As she celebrated her 50th anniversary on the banks of the Vaal river, she also launched her record label, Magnolia Vision Records. In 2008 she was featured in a tribute to Letta Mbulu on Letta's 60th birthday at the Grahamstown Arts Festival with Ringo Madlingozi and Mimi Ntenjwa.

Sibongile's protégé, **WENDY MSELEKU**, was born to Zaza and Langa Mseleku of Lamontville, Durban in 1974. The Mselekus are a known music family. Her vocalist father Langa's siblings included the late singer and Cape Town film commissioner Pinkie, pianist Bheki, and Millicent. Wendy grew up with brother M'Du and sister Andile who encouraged her to focus on her dreams. Wendy also had a theatre background as she had toured with Mbongeni Ngema's *Sarafina* cast and acted in *The Lion and the Lamb* at the Market Theatre with Dr John Kani. Backing musicians like Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, Vicky Sampson and Sibongile Khumalo was a valuable experience that prepared her for even greater things. In 1995 she released the mini album *Wendy With Friends* (Sony Music South Africa) featuring The Family Factory Choir. It was co-produced by Lindelani Mkhize and Mthunzi Namba. In 1996 followed *All In One*, a ten-track CD composed and produced by Mthunzi Namba including two tracks from her 1995 mini album. I had the honour of facilitating the launch of her third album *The Powerhouse* at Jack Botes Hall in Polokwane. The attendance was so huge that we nearly experienced a stampede. The album was nominated in FNB SAMA 5's Best African Pop Album category pitted against Jabu Khanyile's *Umathimula*, Brenda Fassie's *Memeza*, Mahube's Music From southern Africa and the category winner, Bongo Maffin's *The Concerto*. Her untimely death on



21 August 2000 robbed the industry of one of its few schooled musos. It hit me badly because it wasn't long after she'd been to my house visiting my daughter, Mokgadi. She couldn't cross the dreaded river of 27. For me, her evergreen hit will remain *Umnuculo Wasekhaya (Ding Dong)*, a reflection of her deep appreciation of her fellow South African artists. By 2007 her sister, Andile who studied music at the University of KwaZulu-Natal was a budding jazz singer.

Many black South Africans previously thought that the violin was a western musical instrument reserved for formal classical music until the Khemese brothers from Soweto changed this view with their string quartet. For more than 30 years there had already been a symphony orchestra and a youth orchestra in Soweto. Sandile Khemese went through these orchestras and learned to arrange African music for strings. He grew up listening to the music of composers like Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. In 1978 together with his elder brother Reuben they started their own string quartet. However, this was punctuated by a scholarship offered to Sandile. He went to Britain on a six-year scholarship at Manchester's Royal Northern College of Music. In 1986 he returned to South Africa and continued from where he had left off. **THE SOWETO STRING QUARTET** is Sandile Khemese (first violin and musical director), Reuben Khemese (cello and elder brother), Thami Khemese (second violin and younger brother) and Makhosini Mnguni (viola and childhood friend). By 1992 they had turned fully professional performing at big functions, and in 1994 they performed as part of Dr Nelson Mandela's inaugural celebrations when he became the first black president of South Africa. The world took note and from there they travelled extensively promoting their own blend of string music. Their debut CD *Zebra Crossing* (1994, BMG) caused a sensation when it won FNB SAMA 1's Best New Artist/Group, Best Instrumental Performance and Best Pop Album categories. Then followed *Renaissance* (1996), which won the SAMA 3's Best Instrumental Performance and Best Producer categories. It was produced by Graeme Beggs and featured Vusi Mahlasela on the track *Weeping*. Next was *Millennia* (1998) self-produced, arranged by Themba Mkhize and Johan Laas and engineered by Richard Mitchell. Then followed a remix of old hits titled *Old School Township* (1998) on the Gallo Music Productions label, produced by the young talented Alexis Faku of Oyaba fame. Beyond the millennium celebrations they released *FOUR* (2001) produced by Don Laka, *Our World* (2003) and *Soweto String Quartet Plays Gospel* (2005), which won SAMA 12's Best Contemporary Gospel Album category.

The success of the SSQ inspired the formation of other young groups like the Motswako String Quartet. Formed in 2000 the group membership is Bernard Madumo and Tshepo Mngoma (violin), Tshepo Komane (viola) and Kutlwano Masote (cello).

The Buskaid Soweto String Ensemble was formed in 1997 under the tutelage of British music teacher Rosemary Nalden.

In February 1995 the award-winning Imilonji Kantu Choral Society recorded



the album *Flower Of Soweto/Blomster I Soweto* with international muso, Marianne Antonsen. It was recorded at Downtown Studios, Johannesburg under the directorship of the choir conductor, George Mxadana. This celebration of the new South Africa was released in 1997 by Gallo Record Company. Featuring some of South Africa's best traditional songs, it was co-produced by Erik Hillestad and Thapelo Khomo.

**SIBONGILE MNGOMA** was born in Soweto and educated in KwaZulu-Natal. She did her BA degree at UCT and received honours in Drama Education. Thereafter, she continued to study opera at the university's College of Music. Later through Italy's Accademia Musicale Chigiana she prepared herself for world-class performances and obtained her highest honours. A top class opera singer, she featured in Mzilikazi Khumalo's *Ushaka: An Epic in Music and Poetry on Shaka, Son of Senzangakhona*, the recorded version of which was released by Sony Music in 1997. The multi-talented diva was a presenter at Gauteng's Classic FM. Her self-produced CD, *Glimmer Of Hope* (2004, Universal Music), was nominated for SAMA 11's Best Female Artist.

By 2005 there were groups like **AFROTENORS** who released the album *A New Dawn*. They were nominated for the 10th Kora All Africa Music Awards's Best Group: southern Africa and Best Revelation Of The Year categories. The CD won the Best Video section, also contested by fellow SA stars like Zamajobe and Simphiwe Dana. After touring various countries like the US and Italy, in 2008 they promoted the follow-up CD *This Is The Moment*.

Kora All Africa Music Awards' ten-year anniversary celebrations were planned to be staged over four days (1–4 December). The programme included a two-day music festival at Durban's Absa Stadium, a fashion show and the grand finale on 4 November at Durban's International Convention Centre as the continent's illustrious musos were honoured. I hope the music of "the last of the first people" will one day be included in this prestigious occasion. If you want to experience the atmosphere they would bring to the event, listen to musicians like Queen of the Sands, Maxy whose CD, *Makorakoretsa*, is a nostalgic marvel to listen to. It was recorded by Robert Dargie in the Gaborone suburb of Mogoditshane, Botswana. Some of the most harmonious tunes of this continent are found in the music of the Pygmies in equatorial Africa.

## CHAPTER NINE

# THE ERA OF THE STEAM TRAIN

What Harari was to the seventies, Stimela was to the eighties. Harari was the university of the seventies and Stimela became the institution of the eighties. The leader of Stimela, **RAYMOND CHIKAPA PHIRI**, was born on 23 March 1947 and grew up in the streets of a Nelspruit mining compound; a place called Hermansburg. When he was three his father, Mr Chikapa, died. Later, his mother Minah married Kanyama “Justnow” Phiri who was a troubadour from Malawi. Young Ray accompanied him to gigs and loved his guitar style. He made himself a tin guitar and ended up playing a Spanish one.

In a radio interview Ray said that at the age of four he suffered calcium deficiency and he was admitted to the Crocodile Valley Hospital. He stayed there for nine years and learned a lot about life from Father Bernard. Ray’s keen interest in guitar was sharpened in 1960 when he attended a show of Alexandra’s Flaming Souls. He loved the superb styles of the band’s guitarist, the late Herman Fox. In 1962 his father lost his fingers in an accident at work and handed his guitar over to him. After passing Standard 6 (Grade 8) Ray, who says his biological father was John Mshana Zulu, joined a band, The Five Boys, as a dancer. This band was backing Joyce Mogatusi’s Dark City Sisters who toured Nelspruit in 1967. He toured around the country with them for two years. When the group disbanded he stayed with his relatives in Daveyton, Benoni in the former East Rand (now Ekurhuleni). In 1968 he joined the Jabavu Queens and continued dancing. His dancing moves earned him the nickname “Mfana sbungu” because it was as if he had no bones in his body, like a worm.

In Johannesburg his cousin formed a group named Amazim-zim (a cannibal tribe). When they went to record in 1970, Gallo Records preferred the English version of the name, The Cannibals. Their first hit was in 1973. When their lead guitarist left, Ray took over. They recorded *Highland Drifter*, which did well in Zimbabwe but was banned in South Africa. According to Raymond, the song was inspired by his childhood memories. In 1956 the residents of the Crocodile Valley Citrus Estate fled into the mountains fearing for their lives during the women “dompas” resistance. I can relate to that because in my village, Matome in Zebediela women were also intimidated not to accept the notorious identity documents. There was a song in our village that went, “Sekhukhune is coming to finish us off, because of the “dompas”. It was against this background that the young Ray felt like a “highland drifter...mountains are my home”. Through the advice of producer West Nkosi, in 1974 they were joined by Jacob Radebe aka Mpharanyana. With him they became a hit machine. Among their highlights together was the album *Hlotse*, which turned platinum in three months. When Mpharanyana left them, they recorded *Total Rejection*. Within The Cannibals there was his homeboy, drummer Isaac Mtshali who was also a dancer in his early days in Nelspruit.

Another homeboy of theirs, Jabu Sibumbe who had danced for The Cannibals later became a drummer for the Mthunzini Girls. In 1976 he formed The Midnight Stars and later joined township soul supergroup, The Movers as a bassist. Here he met keyboardist Lloyd Lelosa who was from Vosloorus where he had cut his teeth with The Challengers in 1977 and later played for The Wavelets.

In 1981 The Movers toured Nelspruit and shared the stage with The Cannibals. At the end of that show Ray and Isaac talked to Jabu and Lloyd about forming a band. They named it **STIMELA**; the name represents a train, locomotive, power and raw energy. Its vision was that of a powerful vehicle moving forward carrying those who share the same vision of playing excellent, professional South African music, those who were prepared to sacrifice for the cause through discipline, hard work and humility, serving the people’s dream of liberation without fear or favour. Therefore, the four core members at Stimela’s birth on 30 April 1980 were:

- Raymond Chikapa Phiri – lead guitar
- Isaac “Mnca” Mtshali – drums
- Thabo Lloyd Lelosa – keyboards
- Jabu Sibumbe – bass guitar

The group started out as a session band and for nine months they built their name by backing other known musicians like Sipho “Hot Stix” Mabuse, Steve Kekana, “Om” Alec Khaoli and Ebony. In 1983 they worked with producer, composer and arranger Abel Chemane on Thandi Mbongwe’s self-titled album,

which was released on the CBS label. Some of their projects included Adaye led by Tom Chiloane (*Turn It Up*), Kumasi led by Paul Ndlovu (*Woman*), Street Kids led by Oupa Poho (*Game No.1*) and Dan Nana Motijoane (Coyote). Ray was already a producer. His other productions include Cecil Mitch (Mitchel) who is known for hits like, *Straight From The Heart* composed by Lloyd Lelosa and Thandiwe (1984) as well as *Farewell My Love* (1986).

Stimela's basic sound was Afro-fusion and their first singer was Joy White. When they cut the single *I Hate Telling A Lie* with Gallo Records, Ray led both on guitar and for the first time on vocals too. Ray Phiri the singer was born! They were later billed as curtain raisers in a show at The University Of Limpopo, but they surprised music fans when they overshadowed the seasoned bands. From here they became masters of the stage across the length and breadth of South Africa. They became "The People's Band" and in my radio shows I called them "Gedlegedle Trene Ya Botsotsi" (the slow train of the staff riders). I was privileged to compère most of their shows within my radio footprint. When the excitement had reached fever pitch, I would shout at the top of my voice, "The Best Band In The Land!" and the crowd would go even wilder! The launching of Stimela was perfectly timed to fill in the gap left by Sakhile's sabbatical. The band's debut album was *Fire, Passion And Ecstasy*. In 1984 Charlie "Babas" Ndlovu joined "the institution" from "the university" to play synthesisers. This institution of self-taught musicians created a family arrangement whereby other musicians were welcome to join and showcase their talent in certain shows or projects. The core members could also embark on their own projects but not forget to come back home. These family friends included Dan Nana Motijoane, Thapelo Khomo, Ntokozo Zungu, Sibusiso Victor Masondo, Veli Shabangu, Sandile Ngema, Branny Ledwaba, Teaspoon Ndelu, Emidio John Hassan, Mandla Masuku, Thami Sobekwa, Beulah Hashe, Marilyn Nokwe, Phumzile Ntuli and Jean Madubane. Some of these friends like Nana and Thapelo ultimately formed the heart of the band. Their other albums include *Look, Listen And Decide*, *Shadows*, *Fear And Pain*, *Khululani*, *Siyaya*, *Don't Ask Why* and *The Unfinished Story*. Another song of theirs, which became a thorn in the flesh of the authorities, was *Whispers In The Deep* co-written by Ray Phiri and the late Ashley Subel. Ray's duet with Katie Pennington in *Where Did We Go Wrong* is one of their memorable videos. In the absence of Ray, Ntokozo Zungu played the guitar while Nana Motijoane took over as lead vocalist. Jabu Sibumbe was replaced by Sandile Ngema on bass similar to the 1992 *Khulumani* album, which was co-produced by the band with engineer Dave Segal.

When Paul Simon (of Simon & Garfunkel fame) visited South Africa scouting for a good South African sound, he invited Ray and Isaac together with other musicians like Bakithi Khumalo (Thetha) and Ladysmith Black Mambazo to record the 1986 *Graceland* album, which was followed by a world tour. Ray later worked with Paul Simon on yet another album, *Rhythm Of The Saints*. When he

and Isaac returned home, the Stimela family embarked on the 1987 national tour titled “The Unfinished Story”. The much publicised tour was cut short by the accident you’ve read about in the story of the trio The Angels and the tragic death of Jean Madubane and two other crew members. In 1989 Stimela released one of their most powerful and soulful albums, *Trouble In The Land Of Plenty*, featuring hot tracks like *Can’t Spend Your Life Just Taking*, *Ngithathe We Stimela* and *I Long To Return*. It is Stimela in full swing like a hungry cheetah that has taken a well-calculated final decision to attack its prey without mercy. Other tracks include *Sharp As A Razor* and the title track *What’s Going On (Trouble In The Land Of Plenty)*, which blends choruses of the slave’s lament, *Emilanjeni Ya Se Babilone* (By the rivers Of Babylon), with Osibisa inspired brass power.

When Ray Phiri ventured into his solo projects, Nana Motijoane took his place as lead vocalist. Ray, who had already produced many works including Lionel Martin Pillay’s 1987 album, released his own music. His solo projects include *A Man, A Dog And A Cow* (1989), *People Don’t Talk, So Let’s Talk* (Rampant Records, 1992) working with Richard Mitchell, *How* (CCP, 1999) self-written and produced, as well as Chikapa’s *11 Years* (Primedia, 2000), an album he produced with the help of Lindelani Mathonsi. It was nominated for SAMA 7 in the Best Producer category. I was invited to the launch of *People Don’t Talk, So Let’s Talk* together with my colleagues in the media industry and it was a highly professional affair. Ray whose other guitar inspirations include Eric Gale and Carlos Santana is an excellent example of a self-taught musician. The multi-talented guitarman wrote the soundtrack for the 1997 Ramadan Suleman film *Fools*, which featured Patrick Shai and Hlomla Dandala. He also wrote two tracks for the 1990 Ladysmith Black Mambazo album, *Two Worlds One Heart*. Ray’s versatility and adaptability was witnessed in his collaboration with Los Angeles-raised South African rapper Young Nations on *Zwakala Emzansi*, the debut single from his 2005 full debut album *Nations Uprising* (Draztik Productions). The album was produced by both Draztik Productions and ace-producer Megahertz. Ray Phiri’s greatest honour from his people is the Ray Phiri Arts Institute in his home province, Mpumalanga.

Jabu Sibumbe’s earlier productions include Ebony’s 1987 *Feeling Good* album. In 1989 he walked into the studio with Sisco Mokoena to produce *Sisco The Champ* (Gallo GRC). In 1990 he joined the nine-man reggae outfit, *Slaves*, and together they released a hot album titled *Kneel Down* (GMP) under producer Richard Siluma with engineer Dave Segal. He featured on Peta Teanet’s 1991 album *The Real Peta Teanet* playing bass guitar and produced *Weekend Emotions*, a Fifth Avenue album featuring Noma Jakes in 1992. In 1993 he featured on Jabu Khanyile’s solo debut album, *Mmalo-We*.

Eventually both Ray and Jabu rejoined Stimela in 1994 and travelled to Mmabatho in Mafikeng to record a come-back album with engineer Peter Thwaite. The result was the 11-track *Don’t Ask Why* produced by Ray Phiri. In this

major relaunch project the Stimela core was joined by family members Sibusiso Victor Masondo (bass), Ntokozo Zungu (guitar), Veli Shabangu (percussion), Nana Motijoane (vocals) and Thapelo Khomo (Fender Rhodes/synthesiser). Additional members were Philip Meintjies (drums), Soyaphi Louis Mhlanga (guitar), Paul Hanmer (piano), Barry Snyman (alto and tenor sax) as well as the late Moses Taiwa Molelekwa (piano). On backing vocals the choir members were Lena Khama, Khanyo Maphumulo, Wendy Mseleku, Khululiwe Sithole and Luyanda. The regrouping was celebrated in style by their record company Gallo, which arranged a train ride on the Magaliesberg Express. Their 1996 *Out Of The Ashes* album was nominated for SAMA 3's Best Duo or Group and Song Of The Year categories. It won the Best Album Package category.

In fact, all the members/friends of the band either had their own solo projects, productions or guested in other musicians' works due to their respected musicianship.

**THAPELO KHOMO** is one of South Africa's excellent producers. An artist in his own right from the days of Wataja and Malopoets, he has his own solo projects like the 1998 *Imbumba* CD, which was self-written/produced/arranged and recorded under the pseudonym, Ma Humble (the humble one). It was engineered by Humphrey Mabote. He also featured on many albums as a guest artist like on Ozila's 1986 *Wola Wola* and McCoy Mrubata's 1999 album, *Phosa Ngasemva* where he played organ on the title track. Some of the musicians he produced include Danny "Kamazu" Malewa, Jabu Khanyile, Nana Coyote, Ebony, Nomuntu Kappa, Pappa Makhene, Mandla Masuku, Kutu, Simphiwe Dana, Musa Mashiane, Thandiswa Mazwai and Marianne Antonsen featuring Imilonji Kantu Choral Society. Thapelo also produced Siphso Mbele's Coca-Cola Full Blast Music Show 2 entry song *Don't Take Her* and participated in Oliver Schmidt's film *Mapantsula*. He has won several awards including SAMA's Song Of The Year with Jabu Khanyile's *Umkhaya-Lo* as well as Best Producer for the same album. In 2005 his Simphiwe Dana production, *Zandisile*, won SAMA 11's Best Jazz Vocal and Best Newcomer categories. A humble and publicity-shy person, he had his own studio in his house in Extension 3, Dobsonville, Soweto at the time of writing this book.

The late **MANDLA MASUKU**'s hits include Siphso Mshazi's composition *Uyabazi Abantu?* (1987, Teal Records). Some of his albums are *Keep On Moving* (1989) and *Turn Over And Start Again* (1991). As a solo artist, the former member of Stax popularised saxophone solo and inspired a new generation of blowers led by Fortune Xaba. Fortune, who started playing saxophone at the age of 14 in Durban is a product of Mbongeni Ngema's stage plays *Magic At 4 am*, *Mama* and *Sarafina 2*. In 1996 he won the Solo category of the Shell Road To Fame talent search. That led to the recording of his debut album simply titled *Fortune* (Sony Music, 1996) featuring the track *Mi Fe Le Wa Kuti*.

Coyote was born **TSIETSI DANIEL NANA MOTIJOANE** in 1955 in the mountain



kingdom of Lesotho and grew up in Sharpeville. While still a student at Makabelane High School in Qwaqwa he formed a band with his friends. He later joined the powerful local band Black Five, which achieved national recognition. In 1980 he went back to Lesotho to join the late Frank Leepa's Uhuru. Dan was part of the studio concept that gave birth to the hit song *Lifesaver* in 1985. He has since collaborated with many musicians and groups in South Africa as indicated in various chapters of this book. As a solo artist he released albums like *Don't You Wanna Know Me*, *Vuka Zenzele* (1989), *Majaja* (2003) and *Mo Fe* (2007). As already shown, his unique, rich voice has been featured in many musicians' songs including Ladysmith Black Mambazo's *I'll Take You There* from their album *Heavenly* (Gallo Records, 1997). He did justice to that cover version of the classic that was popularised by The Staple Singers. He later became a member of the Trio with Steve Kekana and Joe Nina, but continued with his solo career.

Ntokozo Zungu released *Guitarman* in 2001 co-produced by Robbie Malinga and Mjakes Thebe.

The late Joy White who was from Soshanguve in Tshwane and later became Stimela's first lead vocalist, released a hit co-written by Steve Kekana and Mac Mathunjwa titled *Hupapa Twida*. In 1987 he released his solo album *Take Me* on the RPM Right Track label. The album was produced by Peter Moticoe and included a tshiVenda song *Tshituku-Tuku*.

The late Teaspoon Ndelu also released his album *New Horizons* (2001).

Stimela also participated in Charmaine Modjadji's 1985 album *Give Praise Where Praise Is Deserved*, which paid tribute to Bishop Mpilo Tutu who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984. The musicians who went into the RPM studios for the recording of the historic album were Anneline Malebo, Mara Louw, Katie Pennington, The Angels, PJ Powers, Neville Nash, Jean Rockwell, Selby Vaughn, Ebony, Street Kids, Amampondo, Sipho Gumede and Stimela. The Tutus recommended that the launch of the album should be at Regina Mundi in Soweto. Thereafter, Charmaine went abroad on a mission to promote the album.

In 1989 Stimela recorded a live show at the Market Theatre and divided it into two albums, *Stimela Live: The 1st Half* and *Stimela Live: The 2nd Half*. The track, *Cause I Love You* featuring Thami Sobekwa was recorded live at the Durban City Hall. They later released *Stimela Live 3*. During the 1992 OKTV Awards the band received a number of accolades. Incidentally, those were the last "Octaves". Their great hits have been released by their musical home, Gallo Records, on a 2003 CD compilation titled *Stimela: Best Of Steam Tracks*. In 2005 they were honoured by various institutions for their many years of dedication and contribution to the South African music industry. I recently attended their concert at Meropa Casino in Polokwane and the guys' sound is still as together and authentic as I heard it in the eighties at Lebowakgomo Showgrounds. They moved everyone doing their awareness song, *No Condom, No Sex*. My thanks

goes to the African gods who protected Ray Phiri in several horrific car crashes and allowed him to survive and continue with the crusade. Hats-off to the band members for their unity, mutual respect, discipline and professionalism. At one stage rumours were doing rounds that they were contemplating the recording of a reflective album, allegedly titled *Then And Now – Here We Are*. They remained rumours until Saturday, 17 November 2007 they recorded their live double CD at the Playhouse in Durban titled *25 Years, 25 Songs in 25 Days*. According to Ray, the CD, together with a DVD titled *The Missing Chord*, were to be released on Dr Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday (18 July 2008). The Steam Train is weary of rampant piracy. However, the usual tensions and tiffs that dog successful groups keep raising their ugly heads now and then.

The era of Stimela was the peak of the South African live music concerts – no miming. As already alluded to, big shows were a headache to inexperienced and unskilled technicians. As a result, most technicians for such festivals were our white compatriots some of whom did not quite understand our kind of sound and boosted unwanted sounds and suppressed the most vital in the middle of a show. This sometimes ended in unnecessary riots as fans got irritated. It became even clearer when musicians from abroad toured South Africa; professional white companies would win the deals. But the situation has improved as there are more black sound companies. I recently talked to one young man who owns such a company. His name is Bongani Ngubani and his company is VB Sound. Bongani who was born in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal started engineering at Making Music Productions in Cape Town where his friend worked. Later this company went into artist management and handled business of the likes of Jimmy Dlodlu, Vicky Sampson and Judith Sephuma. After three years of studio work, he went to Johannesburg where he freelanced in night clubs. He realised a gap in the market and started VB Sound. In 2005 he was in his second year with one of the most powerful shows in the country, Joyous Celebration. He was in charge of its sound and Mageek Music, owned by another young black man Kentse Mphahlwa, designed the shows. During our discussion he shed light on a number of issues and myths about sound engineers, but said the most crucial issue to sound engineers is that musicians should always arrive on time at performance venues for sound checks.

In the seventies in Lulekani township, Phalaborwa there was a group called The Big Cats. Among its members was one Paul Ndlovu. His talent soon caught the eye of Ray Phiri. Inspired by the male duo trend of the 1980s, the ***STREET Kids*** was born. It was made up of Paul Ndlovu and Oupa Poho. The success of their debut single, *Life Is A Game* written by Ray Phiri urged them to tour and release a full album *Dancin' All Night* in 1984. The self-produced album was engineered by Richard Mitchell and David Segal on RPM's Right Track label. The music was written by the duo, Ray Phiri, Masqala, Lloyd Lelosa and that hugely talented unsung songwriter Nobathembu Mcondobi. The hits on the

album included *Love Rip Off* and *Last Night (You Moved Me)*. It also included their earlier *Game No. 1*. They later had another hit *I'm Mobile, Are You Available?*

**PAUL NDLOVU** later embarked on a solo career with the help of producer Peter "Hitman" Moticoe. In 1985 he released two hits *Khombo Ramina* and *Mukon'wana* on a maxi single, engineered by Ian Osrin. It was clear that the Shangaan-disco music king had arrived. Paul's trademark was his sailor's cap. The crowds loved this humble star from the north with his band, Mordillo. Mordillo was Lefty Rhikoto (leader and lead guitar), Themba Mazibuko (lead vocals), Joshua "Joeman" Tladi (keyboards), Japie Bodibe (bass guitar), Abram April (drums), Joseph Tshabalala (keyboards) and Rogers Mvelase (keyboards).

Paul followed up with another maxi single *Tsakane/Hi Ta Famba Moyeni* in 1986. He was one musician who opened my eyes to the overwhelming power of the radio. He was billed to perform in a beauty pageant organised by the Lebowa Show Committee near Lebowa kgomo (Capital of former Lebowa homeland). Unknown to many, the company that sponsored the event was targeted by the unions for labour-related matters, which in those days were also political. In the middle of his performance "missiles" started flying to the stage. The anarchy developed to a point where I realised there was the potential for a full-scale calamity; people were bleeding from cuts caused by bottle glass, some were hiding underneath tables, some standing on top of tables that were about to break from the heavy load. Other people were climbing on the rooftop of the arena but the supporting pillars could not take the weight. In this confusion, I forgot about the rules and regulations of my employer, the SABC, which prohibited public speaking without prior approval, grabbed the microphone and called for calm. Many people would in years to come phone the radio station to thank me for saving their lives. I felt humbled.

As for Paul himself, he died tragically on 16 September 1986 before we could talk person to person about the incident. When RPM's PRO Vasco Sithole phoned me about his untimely death I was shattered and at the end of that year I recorded a tribute to Paul in a programme titled "Re Gopola Dinatla Tša Mmino" (Remembering Fallen Music Heroes). The tragic and untimely death of Paul shocked the music fraternity. The disappointment and disbelief, as in Tupac Amaru Shakur and Elvis Presley's cases, created so many myths around his death. After this his record company, RPM released the album *Cool Me Down* featuring hits like *Dyambo Ri Xile*, *I Wanna Know Your Name* and the title track itself. The six tracks had already been recorded before his death. Long after his departure, the life of this great star was celebrated when a tombstone was erected for him on 26 February 2005. A businessman, Hendrick Shai of Heaven Life Burial Society donated two tombstones for Paul Ndlovu and his father. Munghana Lonene FM was the media sponsor of the event. Later, on 31 March 2007 it was an honour for me to read his profile as he was presented with a posthumous Lifetime Achievement Award. It was received by his family on

his behalf at a show dubbed “Golden Oldies Music Festival” at the Polokwane Showgrounds. The event was organised by Kazo Promotions.

In 1987 Paul’s band **MORDILLO** under the leadership of guitarist **LEFTY RHIKOTO** released *Sailor Man*, a tribute album to the late star. It was produced by Peter Moticoe and engineered by Lee Short. The ballad *Rest In Peace* was co-written by Johnny Mokhali, Lefty Rhikoto and Moss Tladi. Almost all the RPM black artists participated in the recording of the album. Mordillo’s trademark still remained the ship crew regalia. Later Mordillo released albums like *I’m Crazy* (1987) featuring the hit *Voyager*, followed by *Runaway Bus* (1989) produced by Lefty Rhikoto on RPM’s Tiger label. They were also involved in the recording of Bibi Msomi’s album *What Kind Of Love Is This?* (1987). When the band split, the members joined other bands; Joshua Seliba Tladi later joined Sankomota.

The vacuum left by Paul Ndlovu had to be filled; someone had to claim the Shangaan-disco throne. One of his big fans in Tzaneen took the challenge. His name was **PETA TEANET**, a man who would change the face of the music industry and break its norms. He was born Ntahleng Teanet Peta on 16 June 1966 in Letsitele. His mother Emma sang many traditional songs to the child and that laid a strong foundation from which Ntahleng’s future music inspiration would benefit. His family later moved to the village of Thapane outside Tzaneen where he grew up. Teanet started singing publicly at the age of 18 in church at Relela village, where he also helped pray for the troubled souls. Later he played keyboards and sang for a group called Relela. The band caught the attention of Radio Tsonga’s music producer, Roy Ngoben. He exposed them to the broader public. After the passing away of his hero, Teanet went down to Johannesburg with the aim of sustaining Paul’s legacy. After knocking on many doors, he eventually met the leader of Mordillo, Lefty Rhikoto, who was prepared to produce him. Using the name Peta Teanet, his debut album *Maxaka* (1988, Challenger) hit the streets. It was engineered by Tom Maybury and released through RPM Record Company. That was the birth of an unchallengeable hit machine. The album featured the hit *Hixewetile*. From there whatever Peta touched turned to gold and platinum! It was soon clear that he would later produce his own work when he co-produced his next album, *Divorce Case* (1989) with Tom Maybury. It featured the hit *Matswele*, a composition inspired by a young lady who was warning an unruly guy not to touch her breasts without her permission. The lyrics were in my language, Northern Sotho, a language the music industry discouraged commercial artists to use as a medium in their songs as the belief was that it was not “singable” and would not “sell”. When I interviewed him, I complemented him for the breakthrough and promised to support his efforts in challenging the myth. *More Hits From Peta Teanet* followed in 1990. In 1991 he released a self-written/produced album, *The Real Peta Teanet*, assisted by Jabu Sibumbe on bass guitar and Tom Fox on lead guitar. It was engineered by Ian Osrin at The Digital Cupboard. Later in his career he arranged with his

publishers, Mac-Villa to present me with a gold disc for the role I had played in his career, but I explained to RPM's PRO Ali Mpofu, how risky that gesture was. I felt that it was too early in his career to make such public statements, which might discourage other media people from giving him their full support. Though he was disappointed, especially because according to Ali the disc was ready, he finally respected my point of view. His other albums included *Peta Teanet & The Special Servants* (1991), *Saka Naye Jive* (1992), *Utakutsakisa* (1993), *Peta Teanet Will Excite You* (1993), *Will Excite You* (1994), *Double Pashash* (1995), *King Of Shangaan Disco* (1996), *Greatest Hits* (1999) and *More Hits From Peta Teanet*. Peta produced many artists including members of his family. He defied the norms by not relocating to Johannesburg, but built his own studio, Peta Teanet Studio in his Tzaneen house. Peta also produced the music of his mother Emma, brother Forsta and his wives Shamila and Vuyelwa. Emma's self-titled 1990 album featured *Katotoma* as well as a duet with her son Ntahleng on *This Is My Mother*. As an established and sought-after producer his work always carried the seal of approval, "A Peta Teanet Production". In 1992 he announced his break from recordings to complete his matric certificate. Outside the family circle the musicians he produced include Ebony (Lena Khama), Ashante (Lindiwe Mpobole) and Girlie Mafura.

Peta belonged to that breed of African men who strongly believe in polygamy but in my discussions with him this issue was never raised. Matters of the heart are just as personal as religion. Generally, polygamists marry two or three wives at most. I remember that the last time we met in 1996 Peta had eight wives and thirteen children. He stayed with them in a white mansion in the town of Tzaneen. Besides Shamila and Vuyelwa some of his other wives were Betty, Rosinah, Miranda, Glory, Do It and Dikeledi. He had invited me to meet him at the local hotel in Polokwane and proudly told me he had booked the whole second floor of the hotel. Doesn't that remind you of musicians like Thomas Shinyori Chauke whose five wives are his backing vocalists called Shinyori Sisters? Thomas is a humble undefeatable champion of xiTsonga traditional music who'll come under the spotlight in other parts of this work when we focus on that genre. Other showbiz polygamists include the Giyani, Limpopo Province musician, Daniel "MD" Shirinda who at the age of 72 had 43 children and six wives, five of whom were allegedly recruited by his first wife, Tsatsawane. Siphon Mchunu of Juluka fame also had six wives and more than twenty five children. In the past this was mostly the preserve of kings and traditional healers, but continentally the late great Fela Anikulapo Kuti broke any musician's record with his 27 wives. Not for the faint-hearted!

Like his hero Paul, Peta died a tragic death at a young age. Like a candle in the wind, he lived a fast and short life. He was shot dead in 1996 promoting his forthcoming album. By the time he met his death he had many platinum discs behind him and was actively involved in local politics. On the day of his burial



our government sent a delegation under the leadership of the premier of the province, Advocate Ngoako Ramatlhodi, to pay their last respects. The SABC delegated me to speak on its behalf at the funeral. I went to Tzaneen with my colleague Peter “Mr Cool” Phaahla. As I took the stage my escort was RPM’s Abram Mija, a committed professional who at the time of writing this book was with Gallo Record Company. I appealed to the mourners not to bury Ntahleng Teanet Peta like a victim, but a victor and superstar. It was very clear that not only the locals felt the loss; car registration numbers told a story of a national hero. Teanet was laid to rest at the family cemetery in Thapane. On 23 October 2005 the family unveiled his tombstone with pomp and ceremony.

In 1997 Mama **EMMA PETA** paid tribute to her son with the release of *A Tribute To Peta Teanet*, composed and produced by his younger brother Forsta with the exception of *Kuhamba Kanjani*, which was earlier composed and produced by the late star. Teanet’s mansion in the Aqua Park suburb of Tzaneen was bought by businessman Peter le Roux two years after his death and turned into a guest house. Peta’s family had moved back to the rural village of Thapane, outside Tzaneen. Mama Emma passed away in 2006 and is buried at the local Thapane community cemetery against her wish to rest next to her son due to local politics. After honouring him with a Lifetime Achievement Award at Polokwane Showgrounds on 31 March 2007, Kazo Promotions requested me to pay the family a visit to present them with an artist’s impression of Teanet. It was still very clear that the villagers of Ga-Motupa, Relela, Moleketla and Thapane were proud of their son as some told me that the area was named after the star as the Peta Teanet Area.

Peta’s younger brother, **FORSTA** aka Black Force who has his own solo career, released a series of albums titled *The Black Force Volume 1* and so on under Peta Teanet Productions. *Volume 2* (1991) featured the hits *Khongonya* and *Nimosa*. In 1998 he released an eight-track *Volume 8* through Mob Music. After the departure of his brother he also went into productions as evidenced by his 1997 album *Wa Khondema* engineered by Mava Lee on the CCP label. In the same year he also produced his mother Emma’s album. One of his big hits was *Khepepe*. Forster has moved the family recording studio back to the village and is managing the business. By 2007 when I paid the family a visit he was still an amateur polygamist with only two wives.

A member of the Peta Teanet Band, **AMON MVULA** was born in Messina (now Musina) but grew up in Zimbabwe. He embarked on a solo career after the death of his leader. Son of Goodson and Shirley, Amon was more of a performer than just a musician because of his unusual if not unique stage choreography. He told me that he grew up listening to the Chimurenga music of Marondera-born Thomas Mapfumo aka “The Lion Of Zimbabwe”. The heavy rhythms of tunes like Ngoma Yarira and Hondo performed by Thomas Mapfumo And Blacks Unlimited cultivated the love for African music in the young boy whose



sound would reflect the Malawi-Zim-SA connection. He also followed the rhythms of Oliver Mtukudzi And The Black Spirits, as well as Jonah Moyo's Devera Ngwena Jazz Band. As a young boy he spent most of his time at the circus where he envied the balancing skills of the actors. After practice he ended up perfecting his act of balancing a bicycle wheel on his head, hand, stomach, knee and any flat part of his body. He gained experience playing with groups like System Tavzida, John Chibadura and Zhimozhi Jazz Band. His solo career gave birth to a series of albums titled *Makorokoto* (Vol. 1–4). Amon's "brother" in the industry was Gallo's Abram Mija who also came from Musina. Mija worked with the likes of Thabo Mosia in shaping Amon's music career as far back as his RPM days. Amon's shows were very popular because of both the music and the magic. Multilingual Amon also produced other musicians' work as seen with Tsimba's Zimfluence. I did not know when I met him at the Albassini Dam Music Festival that it would be his last performance I witnessed. He later called to tell me he had bought a house in Tshwane, is married to Althea and his neighbour is homeboy Oliver Mtukudzi. Sadly, the "Wheelman" passed away in Zimbabwe at the end of June 2007 aged 36. What a loss! Immediately after his funeral Gallo released his all-Tshivenda CD *50/50*. As fate would have it, within days another Zimbabwean musician followed him – Philani Dube. An original guitarist of Oliver Mtukudzi's Black Spirit Band, Philani died at Chitungwiza after a long illness. He was buried at New Magwegwe, Bulawayo. At the time of his death only one other original member of The Black Spirits was still alive.

After the departure of Peta Teanet, the Shangaan-disco throne had once again been vacated and someone had to carry the torch and run on. **PENNY PENNY** came forward from a royal family in Hanani village to claim the crown. He was born Eric Kobane into a family of 68 children and 17 wives including his mother, Nyanisi. Upon the death of his father his mother who was a farm worker could not afford to send him and six other siblings to school. At the age of nine he had to work in the tomato plantations of Mooketsi popularly known as ZZ2. At the age of 19 he left for the West Rand to work at West Driefontein gold mine near Carletonville. Here he won many trophies in breakdancing contests but, the harsh working conditions drove him back home.

By 1986 he was in Johannesburg desperately trying to earn a living by working as a fast food cook and a street hawker. His break came when he was a cleaner at Selwyn Shandel's recording studios in Kerk Street. This is where he met ace-producer Joe Shirimane who taught him the tricks of the trade. Before long Eric, who never went to school was writing songs. His debut album *Shaka Bundu* achieved double platinum status and the second one achieved triple platinum. Following the success of his first album, his backing vocalists were called the Shaka Bundu Girls. They also released their own music as a group. His 1997 album *Laphinda Shangaan* also achieved double platinum status in a short space of time. His follow-up, *Makantja Jive* (1998) also went beyond the

platinum status within a few weeks' time of its release. My all-time favourite from his music is a track titled *Hai Ka Mina*. In 2000 he performed at our local Chuene Resort in front of many Thobela FM listeners who were celebrating the rise of the radio station's listenership to more than three million. One listener walked away with the new C-Class Merc.

"Papa Penny" as he is affectionately called by his fans is one energetic performer and when the going gets tough, he dances "topless". I learned that he later toured many African countries like Mali, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Zimbabwe as well as Mozambique where his wife, Zinya came from.

His producer, Joe Shirimane is a musician in his own right boasting albums like *Hambanini* (1998), which featured the hits *Nosi* and *Khethile Khethile*. Penny Penny also features on the album. Joe's 1999 release was *Jele* on BMG Africa's label. He has also produced artists like Esta M, Zaiks, Candy N'Wayingwani, Hasani and Phalaborwa's Abel Mongwe. Joe owns recording facilities called Shirimani Studios where he programmed music like Sporo Kai One's albums *Kondelela* and *Jackpot*. In 2002 Joe and Penny were nominated in SAMA 9's Best African Pop Album category for *Ndiwe Ndiwe*.

Another muso who promoted Shangaan Disco was **PETER MARINGA**. Among his albums was *Ma Africa* (Teal Records, 1987), which was produced by Peter Moticoe and featured the hit *Mama Jane*, as well as *Ndzi Lumiwile* (1989) co-written with his producer and engineered by Lee Short.

The story of the formation of **CJB** is very interesting. Sound Busters, an off-shoot of Hot Soul Singers' band was made up of Thami Mdluli, Charles Khumalo, Neo Mphaka, Cyril Mnculwane, Oupa and frontman Benjamin Ball. This is the band that released Benjamin Ball's first hit, *Flash A Flashlight*. Later Johnny Mokhali also joined that group. When Mokhali and Ball became stars in their own rights the group released them to get their own backing bands. The remaining members of the group who had met producers Banzi Kubheka and John Galanakis at the recording studios started a studio concept called CJB. As the other members still had some contractual obligations, only Neo John Maphaka and Cyril Mnculwane became the known members of the new band. A teacher by profession, Neo from Diepkloof had already played for big soccer clubs as well as music group Umoja. Cyril had played for bands like Young Ones, Daffodils, Additions, the Kori Moraba Band as well as Juluka. The other members of the original Sound Busters later formed Taboo. When I interviewed CJB in 1984 at the release of their debut single *Tonight I Need Somebody*, I was told the acronym stood for Cyril, John & Banzi. The hit single that went gold within a few weeks of its release was written/produced by Banzi Kubheka and engineered by John Galanakis on Minc Music's Sound Rays label. In 1985 they released the album *Happy Birthday* mainly written by the duo also including the debut single. By that time they were in huge demand as concert performers. Theirs was a 'handsome man' image, always neatly dressed with groomed hair.

Cyril aka Napoleon was behind the keyboards and Neo the frontman belting tunes with his powerful raspy voice. This arrangement is common as also seen in bands like Cheek To Cheek and Soul Brothers. Maybe I should mention that early in his career Cyril used the surname, Nkosi. *Your Love Is Power* was co-written/produced by the duo and engineered by B. Summerfield in the same year. In 1986 they released *The Boss Is Back*. Their 1987 album *This Is My Country* was released by CCP on the CJB label. It was self-produced/arranged and co-written by Neo Maphaka and J. Masenya featuring the hit *Masawane*. One of their monster hits was *Banyana Ba Nišhebele* from their album *The Godfather*. In the same year they released *Nazo/Jika Mapantsula*.

The duo later moved to Dephon's Roy B label to release their self-written/produced/arranged album, *The Boss Is Always Right*, which was engineered by Adrian Hamilton. On the sleeve cover they explained what CJB stood for at that time – Cyril And John's Band. A very smooth marketing strategy of changing meaning without tampering with the name. Their 1990 album *Get Down* was sold by the title track. Later on Neo went solo and released his album *The Love You Need* (1991, On Record) under the name Neo "The Boss" Maphaka. The album was written, arranged and produced by the team of Fred Woods, Ronnie Robot, Neo Maphaka and Themba Mawelela who was also known by the names "Sometimes" or "Little Big Man". Fred Woods was the engineer. Themba Mawelela was also an artist with a solo career boasting albums like *Diponpone* (1990). Cyril Mnculwane got involved in production work like on the Bibi Msomi album *Makebamilitis* (1990). I recently met him at a charity concert at Polokwane's Peter Mokaba Stadium; he was still very hot on his keyboards.

The two composers/producers who started the above project, Banzi Kubheka and John Galanakis, were just very creative with concepts. Banzi had been a school teacher but later became a record company salesman, a talent scout, promoter, public relations officer and producer. John had tried architecture, accountancy, and worked in a bank. He later followed his piano-playing talent to perform in clubs and restaurants. Gradually he became a session musician, arranger, composer and producer. In 1985 the two created **BANJO** (Banzi & John), which hit the market with the maxi single *No No No, No More/In The Middle Of The Night*, self-written/produced and engineered with the help of Ian MacMurray on the Hit City label. Both tracks were hot and long like a summer night. Their 1986 maxi single was *I Don't Want Your Lovin'/Please don't Go*. In the same year Hit City released a young fourman group from Kagiso in Krugersdorp simply called Kagiso. Its members were Stephen Ndemande (drums/vocals), Harry Montshosi (guitar/vocals), Benson Mophokane (keyboards/vocals) as well as Peter Maosi (bass guitar/vocals). The ten-track self-titled/written debut album was produced and engineered by John Galanakis on Hit City's Leopard Records label. During his recordings with Stephen Ndemande, John realised the huge potential in him as vocalist and composer. He was asked to lead a new

project named *Vibe Talk* whose first single *Cheeky Lady* had some success. The second maxi featured *Weekend Lover* co-written by Dan “Sox” Phakoe, Peter “Hitman” Moticoe and John Galanakis. The B-side track was written by John and Stephen titled *Let Us Be One*. After projects like General MD Shirinda’s *Music Is The Food Of Love* and Hildah Ratombo’s *Zwamangadzo*, Banzi moved on and worked with Phil Hollis at Dephon. John continued building the Hit City brand with Blondie Makhene as I’ve already shown in the earlier pages of this book. At Dephon Banzi’s productions included Bibi Msomi’s 1990 album *Makebamilitis*. John Galanakis produced another group on the Sound Rays label in 1986 called Future whose line-up was Billy “Future” Nkokha (lead vocals), Enos “Themba” Lubisi (synthesiser), Jackie Mthembu (fender rhodes), Daniel “Oupa” (bass guitar) and Victor “Veli” Tunzi (drums). Their maxi single *You Can Do It* was engineered by Neville Holmes and released by CCP. John signed young groups like **VENDA KIDS**, which was mainly made up of the Singo family members. The band was the brainchild of Samson Singo who was an accomplished artist and composer. The members of the band were his three sons and their friends: Ntango Singo (lead vocals), Makana Singo (backing vocals), Ndivha Singo (lead guitar/bass guitar), Madini Ramakuwela (backing vocals), Tshifhiwa Molizi (backing vocals), Tshililo Nemusombori (bass guitar) and Emmanuel Netshifefe (drums). In 1986 they released *The Lord Is My Shepherd* (Leopard Records), with the title track being the only gospel track of the six. All the tracks were composed by Samson Singo. John Galanakis was the producer, arranger, programmer and engineer. By 1989 when they released the album Rambo they had changed their name to The V Kids.

Christopher Mukwevho who was the leader of another top hot group in Venda, Thrilling Artists, identified talent in his brother’s son, Colbert. The young nephew was given drums and he beat the hell out of them. After being featured in this popular group, Colbert later went solo with reggae music. But he later went pop with his band The Comforters and recorded their music with Hit City. In 1986 their maxi single *Monthend Lover* was released on the Leopard Records label co-produced by Albert Khumalo and Steve MacNamara who was also the engineer. On the flipside was *Arms Of Love* and both tracks were written by Colbert. We’ll read more about him in the chapter on reggae music.

Another star of this stable was **DAN NKOSI**. Dan became involved in music at an early age in his hometown of Ermelo in Mpumalanga. He participated in music contests that were organised by the local radio station where amongst others he met the young Lovederia Malope and her sister Cynthia. It was through his band that the gospel star finally left Mpumalanga for Gauteng. In 1986 Dan released a self-written mini-album, *Uyakuni Maria*, produced and engineered by John Galanakis on Hit City’s Leopard label. It featured the track *Pikinini (Shov’ingolovane)*. Dan Nkosi was such an energetic performer that his fans nicknamed him “Steamroller” following his 1987 album, *Gandaganda*. Some of

Dan's memorable hits are *Julia*, dedicated to one of his dynamic dancers and backing vocalists, as well as *Wash'umkhukhu*.

In 1990 John Galanakis created an instrumental music studio concept and named it JG Project. He wrote, arranged and produced the album titled *Khay'elitsha Sunrise* (Hit City Records).

At CCP Records David Sangweni continued with Chicco's trend of singing with children. Using the name **MALUME**, backed by four little girls, he released *Piki Piki* (Flame, 1988), an album co-wrote with musicians Patrick Magadze and Leonard Muvenda jointly known as Patleo and produced by Peter Moticoe. It was engineered by Fab Grosso and released through CCP. His other albums include *Matsipatsipana* (1989) and *Okay Malume* (1991).

At Mob Music David Simelane released disco albums like *A Viva!* (1990) also singing with four little girls.

The production duo of Patleo produced Mistress who also performed with three kids. Her albums include *Rine Ri Vhuya Haya* (EFP, 1990) featuring the hit *Our Leader Mandela*. The production team's other product was Zwina Phungo.

In the mid-eighties there was a six-man band trend and maybe the bands that follow will serve as an illustration of the pattern.

**THETHA** was another top group of the time. The band was formerly known as Exit, but had to change its name for a lucrative overseas performance contract. Thetha is an isiXhosa word for "speak". Its members were Vusi Khumalo (leader & drums), Wings Segale (lead vocals), Bakithi Khumalo (bass guitar), Lawrence Matshiza (guitar), Makhaya Mahlangu (percussion) and Bushy Seathlolo (keyboards). Their 1985 maxi single *Love Me Tonight* became this Afro-funk group's big hit taking over from where the previous hit *Move Me Closer* had left off. The 1985 single was co-written by Wings Segale and Dumisane Ngubeni of The Big Dudes fame and produced by Mally Watson on CCP's Flame label. In 1986 they released their album *Dark Street, Bad Night*. It was dedicated to a number of heroes who had passed away including Mozambique's President Samora Machel and our local jazz legend Kippie "Morolong" Moeketsi. Morolong, who was born in 1925, had died three years back in 1983 at the age of 58.

When Thetha split up, some of the members went solo, like "BK" who released his self-written/produced 1988 solo album, *Step On The Bass Line*, engineered by Richard Mitchell. The album was given a nod by his peers. Its sleeve notes were signed by greats like David Sanborn and Nathan East. This master of the fretless bass in 1990 hit the market with another album titled *On Friendly Bases*, co-produced with Koloi Lebona and engineered by Fernando Perdigao still on his former group's label. Locally Bakithi worked with various musicians including Tsepo Tshola ("Thank you BK"). By now the whole world knows about his hand or should I say bass in Paul Simon's album, *Graceland*. "BK" later went abroad and worked with various international musicians including Hugh Masekela and Paul Simon. Bushy Seathlolo worked with The Big Dudes. The late Wings Segale



who had been trained by Gibson Kente early in his career featured as a backing vocalist on many musicians' albums in South Africa. He also boasted a solo album to his name. Vusi Khumalo's well-known project was Dondo consisting of himself, Khaya Mahlangu, Lawrence Matshiza, Fana Zulu and Afrika Mkhize. Guitarman Lawrence Matshiza later worked with Hugh Masekela's band which followed the demise of Kalahari. As a producer Matshiza's products include Judith Sephuma's *New Beginnings* (2005) and Siphokazi Maraqana's *Ubuntu Bam'* (2006). His guitar prowess shines on albums like The Dube Family's *We Are What We Are* (1989), Linda Kekana's *I Am An African* (2002), Tsepo Tshola's *Winding Rivers And Waterfalls* (2005), Sello Galane's *Free Kiba In Concert* (2005) and many others.

Guitarist Daniel Tshanda always had a dream of forming his own band. When the opportunity arrived the Soweto bassist formed "The Flying Sounds", a six-man band that would promote a unique blend of township pop. Their first 1986 demo tape, "Mr Tony" did not make it, but they did not give up. On the recommendation of Ray Phiri, the band's name was changed to **SPLASH**, a band that would work with Stimela. Splash was Dan Tshanda (lead vocalist and bass guitar), Penuel Kunene (drums), Joseph Tshimange (keyboards), Patrick Mthimkhulu (keyboards), Albert Mthimkhulu (keyboards) and Peter Leotlela (keyboards). In the same year their big break came when they recorded their debut album *Peacock* with Gallo, a record company that was to be their life-long musical home. Two men who'll always be associated with the success story of Splash are engineer Dave Segal and producer Hamilton "Vala" Nzimande. However, later Dan himself produced the music of his artists Splash, Dalom Kids and Patricia Majalisa.

In 1991 two members of Splash formed their own band, **MATSHIKOS**. Their debut album *The Park Is Mine* was engineered by Lee Short also on the GMP label. As the business grew, Tshanda established his own company, Dalom Music, to look after the affairs of his artists. Dalom Music has offices in South Africa and Botswana. Dan wrote music for his groups. The 1987 album *Snake* features the hit *Potilo* and did very well for this six-man band. Their other albums include *Tshokotshoko* (1990), *Eye For An Eye* (1990), *Nesindande* (1991), *Khoma Khoma* (1992), *Money* (1992), *One Comma Five* (1993) and *Why?* (1994).

When cellular phones were introduced in South Africa in 1994 and the two giants Voice And Data Communications and Mobile Telephone Networks marketed their businesses aggressively. Splash released an album *Cellular* to reflect the new means of communication. Cellular phones spread like wild fire and the gadgets are used by young and old, rich and poor, male and female in every street, city, town, township, village and shack. In 1996 Splash released *Ndosala*, followed by *Double Face*, which included an anti-crime track, *Stop Crime*. In 2001 Dan Tshanda released *Ndivhuwo* in appreciation of the support he enjoyed over the years. The CD was dedicated to his wife Sylvia Mpho Tshanda and his son,



Ndivhuwo. Sylvia who hails from Botswana was also a staff member of Dalom Music South Africa. In 2005 the couple was hosted by Zwai Bala on SABC 1's Tuesday evening programme *All You Need Is Love*. It was vividly clear that the two were madly in love. On the album *Ndivhuwo* Dan worked with his former lover, Patricia Majalisa as well as Jacqueline Rotwane and Bonisile Ndlovu of Dalom Kids. According to Dan, who by 2005 had released the CD *Sylvia* the highlight of Splash's career was their performance in Botswana where they packed the national stadium to full capacity. Daniel Tshanda is one of those visionaries who realised early in their careers that music is not only entertainment, but also a serious business.

When Richard Makhubele met Godfrey Nkuna and Godfrey Khumalo in 1986 they formed a band named *VOLCANO*. Yes, an eruption! Later they were joined by Shadrack Banda and Amos Maluleke. The following year in 1987 they recorded their debut mini album *Watch Out* on the Gallo label produced by the late West Nkosi and co-engineered by Dave Segal and Humphrey Mabote. The songs were co-written by Richard Makhubele and West Nkosi while Felani Richard Gumbi took care of the arrangements and played all keyboards. Splash had just released their debut *Peacock*, and it was soon clear that the two would be rivals in this township pop market. After two other albums at Gallo, *Msamaria* and *Lugano*, they left the stable towards the end of 1990 and joined Eric Frisch Productions. This move was expensive for the group as they lost Godfrey Khumalo, Shadrack Banda and Amos Maluleke. Their first album on the EFP label was *Gamurah* in 1990, written and produced by Richard Makhubele featuring the hit, *Amakhosana*. Their engineer became John Wainwright. The lost members were replaced by Sipho Nkoane, Jerry Sibanyoni and Richard Dibe to make it a band of six men. The new line-up was Richard "Poso" Mkhubele (lead vocals), Godfrey Nkuna (keyboards), Richard Dibe (drums), Sipho Nkoane (bass guitar), Jerry Sibanyoni (keyboards) and Zecco Malapane (synthesiser). Their fifth album as a group, the second recording with EFP, was simply titled *Volcano 5* in 1991, produced and engineered by the same musicians as the previous one. Backing vocals were provided by Buli Arosi, Veron Mazibuko and Zozo Makhathini. The group's other albums include *Tshigubu Tshanga* (1993), *The Bold And The Beautiful* (1994), *Khegu* (1997), *Mama Ka Sbhongile* (1999) and *Tiyisela*.

Teal Trutone also boasted a six-man band in the name of *ASHIKO*. Exactly what inspired the name is not very clear except that it could have been influenced by the 1975 Hugh Masekela's recording of OJ Ekemonde's composition *Ashiko* on his album *The Boy's Doin' It*. Ashiko is translated as "World Of Time" – No time to lose. The band Ashiko was Alpheus Mofokeng (lead vocals), Thomas Tladi (guitar), Innocent Hala (keyboards), Diliza Maneli (keyboards), Bonakele Mbambisa (keyboards) and Skipper Shabalala (guitar). In 1980 they released their album *Get Ready*. It was followed by others like *Gumba Fire* (1986), *Umaseven* (1987) and *Wachaggo Man* (1988).

**ZASHA** was a band fronted by Godfrey Mthimkhulu. Their albums include *Love Target* (1986), *Hayi Ngodlame* (1989), *I'll Be There For You* (1991), *Stop That Game* (1992) and *Save The World* (1994).

**RUFARO** was a group managed by Sidwell Duda. Its members were Eric Mmusi (lead guitar), Ephraim Hlope (keyboards), Moses Mahlangu (bass guitar), Joseph Mngoma (drums) and Shadrack Rameya (keyboards). Joseph, Shadrack and Moses had gained experience as session musicians. When they met Ephraim from The Cannibals and Eric, who had played for Cheek To Cheek and Sparks, they decided to record. Their debut maxi single was *The Mighty Birds* backed by Elegance, a trio in the same stable. In 1987 they released their self-titled mini album, produced by Sidwell Duda and engineered by Sam Wingate and Lee Short.

Six guys called Wa'De released an album titled *Mr Big Mouth* in 1989 featuring tracks like *Bushy Bushy* and *Pele Pele* on the Orange Records label.

Sensations was an EFP seven-man group produced by Thami Mdluli. In 1988 they released *Chapter 2* engineered by Les Goode featuring tracks like *Ninja* and *A.I.D.S.*

In 1985 a Reamusic group called City People released a self-titled mini album produced by Dennis East. The album was self-produced and the music was composed by Clive Risko and Garry Finch on the Ream label. It featured tracks like *Selfish Lover* and *You Made A Fool Of Me*.

From Kwa-Mashu, Durban the group **STAX** was formed in 1983. The band was led by teacher and song writer, Qunta Mbele who held a BA degree in music from the University of Zululand (now KwaZulu-Natal). Other members were the late Mandla Masuku (sax), Bongani Nkwanyana (bass guitar) and Zweli Mhlongo (drums). After backing Daphney Hlomuka, they signed a six-month contract to perform at Umlazi's Executive Hotel where they had the opportunity to back top acts like Mara Louw. The Afro-fusion group that was inspired by the band Sakhile won a number of contests and subsequently joined CCP Records in Johannesburg. In 1985 they released their album on CCP's Flame label, produced by Tom Vuma and Selwyn Shandel. It featured the hit *Nothing For Mahala*.

Kataki was a group created by the late West Nkosi. Its members included Walter Dlamini of Walter and The Beggars fame. Their 1984 mini album *Kataki Vol.1* was engineered by Richard Mitchell and David Segal on Gallo's Soul Jazz Pop label. Other West Nkosi studio concepts were Earth Power and Westreet which released a maxi single, *I Like It* in 1985. Westreet musicians were Sipho Godfrey Nzuza (lead vocals), Mac Mathunjwa (keyboards) while on backing vocals they had Thandi Seoka, Nelcy Sedibe and Ntomb'futhi Mabaso.

The All Nighters was a Mob Music disco group which released albums like *626* and *Theola Moya* in the early 1990s. It was produced by Lucas Mokoena and Malcolm Makume.

Freeway was a Dephon Music group led by Chris Sithole and a former member of the Additions, Ace Mbuyisa. Their first album was *Majita*, produced by Pat Shange and Rick Wolff and featuring the voice of former Hot Soul Singers member, Lindiwe Ndlovu. They followed up with *Stand Up For Your Rights*.

Another Dephon Records group was Mike & Peter. In 1990 they released *Mother-In-Law* (Mukon'wana), a disco album produced by Phil Hollis and engineered by Steve Cooks.

Juicy Mixx was a 1984 CCP studio concept using the voice of Sipho Zungu. The music was written by Condé Ziqubu and Russell Kramer who also produced it.

Solly and The Soul Hearts released *O Robala Matsekela* in 1984 produced by Marks Mankwane and engineered by Keith Forsyth.

There are also musicians who seemed to make it but somehow their careers were short-lived: in 1986 ON Records released Monwabisi Sabani's monster hit *When She Saw Me On TV* produced by Terry Dempsey, Ronnie Robot and R. Stirling. Mafika Shabalala who used the name Mafika released albums like *Roadblock* (1988) and *Alien Town (Joburg)* (1990) through ON Record. He worked with Themba Mawelela.

The same stable had **WHOOSHA** releasing albums like *Mosquito* (1987), which was produced by Julian Laxton, Ronnie Robot and the late **CHARLES SEJENG** who was the voice of the group. Charles was the producer who had discovered Katlehong's Dee Dee Antonio and recorded her 1987 debut mini album *Confusion* on the ON Record label. His voice will always be remembered for the hit *Mashonisa*.

From Eric Frisch Productions Ali Maake released albums like *Rhizondo* produced by Lefty Rhikoto and Peter Ngobese, as well as *More Hits From Ali Max* where he worked with Moses Mofokeng.

Tom Vuma's Miracle Music released Danny Mashinini's self-titled 1988 album as well as his *Georgina* (1989). Danny whose real surname was Masemene hailed from Zebediela in Limpopo Province. Tom composed, arranged and produced the albums. The label also released Nno Mhlongo's 1988 album, *Make My Day*.

Stargo Man aka Stagalash Mudau who was produced by Patleo released his album *Wa Lahla Mlenze* (Teal Records, 1990). It was followed by Tsakane (Midnight Beat, 1991). He later released *The Man Is Yours* (Gallo Records, 1994) as Stargo Namagange, which he co-produced with Zayne Sibika and Mandla Mofokeng.

Dan Mosa's albums include *Happy Song* (1990), *Praat Te Veel* (1996) and an album interestingly titled *Volume 8*. Other such musicians include Sofire Chambale aka Sofire – *It's Over* (Mambo Music, 1986); Isaac Mofokeng aka Cool Cat – *Let Your Love Shine* (Spinna, 1987); Tom Dollar aka Tom Chiloane – *Without You* (Hi-Trax, 1987); Shalom aka Tata Sibeko – *The Sky Is The Limit* (Hot Stuff, 1988); Okie Mashiloane – *I'm Missing You* (Tusk, 1990); D'Rich – *Folomane* (Tops, 1989); Dennis Gumede – *Crime Doesn't Pay* (GalloGRC, 1989) and *My Wicked*

*Neighbour* (GMP, 1990); Morgan And The Savers – *Darling Darling* (Black Cat, 1989); Fast Move – *Uzolala La* (Red Label, 1989); La Viva – *Special Night* (Red Label, 1989); Sparks – *She's A Lady* (Gallo, 1986); Skyf Connection – *Ten To Ten* (Number One, 1985); The Third Wave – *3rd Wave* (DPMC, 1992); Sky Jinx – *Nightwatch* (On Record, 1987); Street Beat Kids – *Pantsula Jive* (Street Beat, 1989), Soulman Zuthai – *Burning Love*, and Ozias Ntsele – *Taximan*.

Besides individual groups or musicians, record companies and certain brands released compilations of the hits of the eighties. Amongst them are *Jukebox Jive*, RPM's *Six Pak Maxi Hits*, *Jika Hits*, *Maize Generation Music Sensation*, *Celebration* (a Gallo series sponsored by Brylcream), *Gallo Goes Gold* (1939 to 1989), CCP's *Everybody's Dancin'* series, CCP's *Superfly* series, CCP's *Waar Was Jy* series, BMG's *Zibuya More* sponsored by Nugget, as well as The Stars Of Africa – *Where Are You?* (2004), 41 local hits of the eighties non-stop dance medley selected by Phil Hollis and Peter Khowana on the Dephon Entertainment label. The revival of the music of the era was given a boost by Angus Gibson and Teboho Mahlatsi's tribute to soccer television series, *Zone 14*, as well as concerts like the Kungwini Cultural Festival staged by Phil Hollis and Peter Khowana in Bronkhorstpruit on 24 September 2006.

## CHAPTER TEN

# SKA FLOWERS

**S**ka is the original form of Jamaican reggae music. This form of music developed through the years to become a force in the international music industry. Reggae was mainly protest music against social injustices. Some of the exponents of this genre are musicians like Jimmy Cliff, Toots Hibbert, Burning Spear, Don Carlos, Linton Kwezi Johnson, Eric Donaldson as well as pop-reggae stars Johnny Nash, Third World and UB40. But the sole icon of the movement remains Nine Miles-born Bob Marley aka Robert Nesta Marley. Together with other disciples this son of St Anne embarked on an unprecedented crusade to spread reggae music accompanied by Rastafarianism. The movement regarded the late Emperor Haile Selassie 1 of Ethiopia as its great prophet. Born “Ras Tafari” the movement affectionately hailed him as “King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God”. Countries with oppressive regimes were labelled by the movement as “Babylon” and liquor as “Babylon waters”. From Trenchtown, Jamaica, the disciples of Rastafarianism, **BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS**, created many apostles around the world. Marley’s band members were Winston Hubert Mackintosh (Peter Tosh) and Neville Bunny Livingston (Bunny Wailer) as well as the I-Three – Alfarita Constantia Marley, Judy Mowatt and Marcia Griffiths. It was significant that in February 2007 the (now Ghanaian) Rita Marley brought the Africa Unite concert to South Africa to coincide with Bob Marley’s birthday.

In South Africa the most successful star of this genre was Lucky Dube. He was born **PHILIP LUCKY DUBE** on 3 August 1964 in Ermelo, Mpumalanga Province where he was brought up by his granny on behalf of his mother, Sarah, who was working. His first group was The Skyway Band. In 1979 Lucky launched his music career as an mbaqanga artist and released his debut album titled

*Lengane Ngeyethu*. It was followed by others like *Umadakeni*, *Kudala Ngikuncenga* and *Abathakathi*. His music home became Teal Records, which he joined in 1982. He worked with his cousin and producer Richard Siluma after parting ways with his backing band, Super Soul. Lucky's reggae inspiration was mainly Peter Tosh whilst his local favourite musician was his stablemate, Sipho Hotstix Mabuse. Before he focused on reggae music, one of his experimental projects with producer Richard Siluma was *Kaapse Dans* (1984) under the name Oom Hansie on the Teal Sound label. His debut reggae album was *Rastas Never Die* (Plum Records, 1985) featuring the hit *Fresh Air*. Dube's reggae music career will always be associated with producer Richard Siluma, engineer Dave Segal and his band, Slaves. It was his 1987 album *Slave* that crowned him King of Reggae as it made history in South Africa by selling over half a million units in a relatively short space of time. At this point even his previous albums *Rastas Never Die* and *Think About The Children* went gold.

Lucky's live performances were like a mighty wind, especially at huge outdoor venues. I remember how he would work soccer crowds into a frenzy just before the games could start. He exuded so much energy and ran around the field tracks wielding the Rastafarian scarf to the ululations and roar of the fans! They would go even wilder as he went into the falsetto he had learnt from Steve Kekana. He dominated the charts of South Africa's radio stations, performed beyond the country's boundaries and even beyond the continent. His producer at one stage told me he felt like a visitor in his own country because between 1989 and 1994 he had become a globe trotter spending months and months in countries like Japan, United States, Europe, the Caribbean Islands and so on.

At the height of his career some critics started questioning Lucky's Rastafarian credentials, whereupon he would simply respond by saying that he was singing a South African blend of reggae and he was not trying to outshine anyone or claim any rank. I met with him on many occasions and he was a very sober man who would entertain us by imitating the drunk – a gifted actor. This talent was witnessed when he starred in films like *Getting Lucky*, *Lucky Strikes Back* and *Voices In The Dark*. In South Africa this genre of music suffered at the hands of state censorship machinery due to its protest character; many of his peers like Carlos Djeje had some of their tracks silenced. Dube released so many albums at Gallo Records that either went double gold or platinum including *Rastas Never Die* (1985), *Think About The Children* (1986), *Slave* (1987), *Together As One* (1988), *Prisoner* (1989 OKTV Awards winner – Hit of the Year & Best Male Vocalist), *Lucky Dube: Captured Live* (1990 OKTV Best Selling Vocalist), *House Of Exile* (1991 OKTV Awards Video of the Year), *Victims* (1993), *Live In Concert* (1993), *Trinity* (SAMA 1's Best Reggae Album category and Best Single for *Feel Irie*), *Serious Reggae Business* (1996), *Taxman* (1997 SAMA winner – Best Pop Performance), *The Way It Is* (1999 Kora Awards – Best Africa Video/SAMA winner – Best Reggae Album), *Soul Taker* (2001 SAMA 8 winner – Best Reggae Album/Best Producer



nomination), *The Rough Guide To Lucky Dube* (2001), *African Reggae King* (2001), *The Other Side* (2004) and *Respect* (1996).

By 1997 he had learnt so much from his producer cousin that when he released *Taxman* he was already conceiving, arranging and producing his music. This reggaeman received so many gold discs, platinum discs, nominations and awards in this genre, just like Rebecca did in gospel. Some of his career highlights include performing in Jamaica's annual Reggae Sunsplash Festival sharing the stage with giants like Winston Rodney's Burning Spear. He also toured with Peter Gabriel who featured him in the first American WOMAD festival in 1994 at which he was crowned Best Selling Recording African Artist. This was later confirmed when he received the Artist of the Year accolade at the 1996 Ghana Music Awards. Remember that until 1991 Africa's best-known reggae musician was Côte d'Ivoire's Alpha Blondy aka The Rasta Of Cocody with his band, The Solar System. But Lucky turned the tables. No wonder Berry Gordy's Motown Records signed a deal with him.

One of Lucky's unforgettable projects will always be the album *Reggae Strong For Peace* (1991). The album was engineered by Dave Segal on the GMP label. The title track was co-written by Richard Siluma and Lucky Dube, who also produced the album appealing for calm during the political violence fuelled by desperate elements after the release of Dr Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela. Other musicians in the campaign were Harley and the Rasta Family, Sister Phumi, O'Yaba, Jose Carlos, Carlos Djedje, Slaves, System Enemy, Sipho Johnson, Black People's Choice as well as Angola and the Groaners. The band Zasha was part of the choir section.

In 2005 Lucky participated in the Live Aid: Music Against Poverty Concert, which in South Africa was staged at the Mary Fitzgerald Square in Johannesburg. His 2006 offering was *Respect*, a powerful blend of Reggae with some indigenous genres that was later released world wide through Warner Music International. Lucky continued to collect reggae music awards as seen with the 2006 Channel O Spirit of Africa Music Video Awards, where he won the Best Reggae Video for *Respect*.

Following his performance at MACUFE, the nation was looking forward to his participation in the OR Tambo Music Festival of Diversity on 28 October 2007 at Germiston Lake, but it was not to be. In the midst of world rugby fever, Lucky was unlucky when a gunman's bullets ended his life on the night of Thursday, 18 October 2007 in Rosettenville, Johannesburg. It was a sad reminder of how his hero Peter Tosh met his death on 11 September 1987. As "Rastas never die", his music will live on and on through his 22 albums, 3 DVDs, and films. His legacy lives on in his musician daughter Bong'i whose debut CD was titled *Ngifuna Wena*. The title-track became a hit, which was flying high at the time of her father's death. That was a sad reminder of the tragic deaths of our musos like Gito Baloi, Peta Teanet and Teaspoon Ndelu; very sad especially just five

days away from the anniversary of Lebo Mathosa’s fatal car-crash night.

Lucky Dube, and Peter Tosh’s lives were like two sides of the same coin:

LUCKY DUBE	PETER TOSH
Born 1964 in third world Ermelo, South Africa	Born 1944 in third world, Westmoreland, Jamaica
Raised by a single woman	Raised by a single woman
Live recording titled <i>Captured Live</i>	Live recording titled <i>Captured Live</i>
Used reggae to fight apartheid	Used reggae to fight injustices
Killed by robbers who stole nothing	Killed by robbers who stole nothing
Died in 2007	Died in 1987
Died aged 43	Died aged 42 (6 weeks before his 43rd birthday)

I could go on and on to draw more parallels between the two musos who died in towns other than their places of birth due to the concentration of wealth in big cities at the expense of rural towns. Did they fight back when attacked? As if to send a strong message to the dark forces of evil that Lucky’s death would not be in vain, the Boks battled it out in full view of the whole world and brought the William Webb Ellis Cup home to sunny SA, just two days after his death. As if the blood of the “Together as One” reggae prophet was spilled to reinforce the unity of the thirteen-year-old nation, preparations for his burial were accompanied by the nation’s celebrations and ululations of our nation in unity over the World Cup victory. One thing is certain – it’ll not be easy for the world to forget this moment of ecstatic paradox.

By the morning of Sunday, 21 October 2007 the police had arrested four suspects in Spruitview, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality in connection with what they described as a “botched hi-jacking”. They appeared in the Johannesburg Magistrate Court on Tuesday, 23 October. The reggae legend who was a member of the Nazareth Baptist Church (Shembe) was laid to rest on Sunday, 28 October 2007 at his Engogo farm near Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal. In 2008 MTN SAMA 14 honoured Lucky Dube posthumously with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Ahoy!

Two other musicians also passed away in the midst of this storm. Tshidi Wildeman, a well known member of Chicco’s 1980s female trio, Chimora, passed away at the age of 38 on Saturday, 20 October after a long illness. Tshidi, who had performed in stage play *Ipi Tombi* also worked with the late Paul Ndlovu.

Her funeral service was held at 1965 Mpane Street, Orlando East, Soweto. She was laid to rest at the Avalon cemetery. Former bass guitarist of Elias Baloyi and Mamba Queens, Peter Hlungwani also passed away in that week. After parting with Elias, he had formed his group Peter Hlungwani and the Sonos. He was buried on Saturday, 20 October 2007 at Magorho village near Olifantshoek in the Hlanganani/Elim area. The theatre community also suffered a blow as veteran actor Patrick Mynhardt passed away at the age of 75 while staging his show in London. "Hempies" will be missed by both stage and television audiences across the land. Just a week later on a Friday afternoon, KwaZulu-Natal lost "Shaka Zulu", Henry Cele at the age of 58 at St Augustine's Hospital. How hungry was the grave?

Lucky Dube's band **SLAVES** was named after his 1987 album of the same name. They released their debut album *Kneel Down* in 1990, produced by Richard Siluma and engineered by Dave Segal. The line-up of the group was Thuthukani Cele (lead vocals/keyboards), Eugene Mthethwa (keyboards), Chris Ntaka (guitar), Jabu Sibumbe (bass guitar), Vuli Yeni (tenor sax/vocals), Jabu Mdluli (trombone), Ray Mohono (drums), Ndumiso Nyovane (trumpet/flugel horn/vocals) and Chris Dlamini (timbales, congas and ukamba).

After Lucky Dube's departure the band renamed itself **ONE PEOPLE BAND**. By June 2008 the band was rehearsing for another reggae legend, Eddy Grant's three-year tour dubbed "The Eddy Grant Reparation Tour". Born Edmond Montague Grant in Guyana in 1948, Ice Records boss Eddy emigrated to north London in 1960. A multi-instrumentalist who excels in the lead guitar, he became known as leader of The Equals in 1965. The band's first big hit was the 1968 Eddy Grant composition, *Baby Come Back*. Most South Africans know him for his anti-Apartheid anthem, *Gimme Hope Johanna*, a song he says he recorded in a Barbados studio. He says it was inspired by the inhumane treatment of South African blacks by the former white regime. The European tour was preceded by Eddy and the One People Band's performance at Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday celebration concert in Hyde Park, London on 27 June 2008. The 46664 concert was locally screened by SABC 2.

**PHUMI MADUNA** of Cheek To Cheek fame who had joined Lucky Dube as a backing vocalist and supporting act, later went solo and released her reggae albums using the name Sister Phumi. Some of her hits included *High Life* and cover versions like *Suspicious Minds* and *Stuck On You*.

Christmas 1985 saw the David Gresham Record Company release the music of their own reggae king, **CARLOS DJEDJE**, titled *Jah Give Us This Day*. Carlos also released his music with the Black Talent label and did well at festivals, but his music never sold as big as one would have thought. Perhaps it had to do with management and marketing strategies. His songs like *No To Apartheid* brought him to the attention of the authorities. I had the opportunity to work with him at various festivals.

In 1989 **IZINDLOVU**, under the leadership of Elphus Mkhize, released *Ezami Ziyawina* through Ken Haycock's Cool Spot Productions. The album was engineered and produced by Mally "Ntshebe" Watson. This was the forerunner of a group that became known as Jambo consisting of Siphso Johnson Mdletshe, Elphus Mkhize and Mandla Nongena. Through Cool Spot, Jambo released albums like *Prodigal Son* (1988), *Bad Friend* (1990), *Calling All Children* (1991), *Give Us Power* (1992) and *No One* (1996), which was nominated for SAMA 3's Best Reggae Performance. On some albums like *Bad Friend* Jambo featured lead vocalist Siphso Mdletshe as Siphso Jonson. He later went solo and released the album *Unborn Child* using the name Siphso Johnson Jambo. The album was produced by Richard Siluma.

Another Cool Spot group was led by Angola Maseko known as **ANGOLA AND THE GROANERS**. The Groaners were Ganjafree Ntshwene, Ras Lindo Ngwane and Spearman Sephakwe. Their album *Going Forward* (Lion of Judah, 1990) was written and arranged by Angola. The producer and engineer was Mally Watson.

**PRINCE AND THE BUFFALOES** was formed by former Lucky Dube bass guitar player Joe Senoamadi, former Izinkunzi keyboardist Philip Ngcobo and vocalist Patrick "Prince" Mbatha. In 1990 Enoch Nondala produced their album *Stop The War* on Reamusic's REAM label.

From the same stable came *Changes*, an album by **SONS OF SELASSIE**. The group consisted of Manchi (lead vocals/guitar), Lawrance Sihlabeni (keyboards/backing vocals), Wakhile Xhalisa (bass guitar/backing vocals), Ras Dully (keyboards/Harmonica), Gerry Mboa (drums) and Wayaya (percussion).

In 1991 Thami Sobekwa of The All Rounders fame released reggae album *People Let's Unite* through Shandel Music using the name Izakka.

Tusk Record Company released Mbongiseni's *World Of Sorrows* (Diamond, 1991) produced by Shams Mkhwanazi.

Another group from this stable was **MUSICAL ROOTS**, which consisted of Zweli "Spider" Nxele (lead vocals/keyboards), Siphso "Mickey" Mabuza (drums), Aubrey "Levi I" Magaba (bass guitar), Justice "Sticky" Tshabalala (lead guitar), Funwako "Benjamin Saint" Mahlomuza (rhythm guitar), Richard "Wadada" Ramolefe (trumpet), Stanford "Bongo Napatali" Magaba (bongo drums) and Patrick "Reuben" Magaba (percussion). In 1991 they released a self-titled, self-produced and self-arranged album engineered by Dane Stevenson.

Limpopo reggae star, **COLBERT MUKWEVHO**, caught my attention in 1986 as leader of a pop group, The Comforters. They released their hit *Monthend Lover* through Hit City Records. By that time at the age of 21 he already had 40 songs to his credit as a composer. Colbert was born at Gumbani and graduated at Makhado Teachers' Training College. Growing up in a music family, he became a member of Thrilling Artists, a band led by his uncle Christopher at the age of ten as a drummer and bass guitarist. Later in his career he returned to reggae music with his group Harley and the Rasta Family, which had big hits like *Lion*

*In A Sheep's Skin* and *Sweet Reggae Music*. As already indicated, the group also participated in the 1991 RSFP Band's album *Reggae Strong For Peace*. In 1997 they won SAMA 3's Best Reggae Performance for their self-titled album. The hit *Why?* was nominated for SAMA 2000. The tireless Colbert's CD *Mulovha, Namusi na Machero* had already sold in excess of 45 000 units at the time of writing this book. His son, Percy followed in his footsteps and released albums like *Here I Am* while still a student at Rand Tutorial College in Observatory, Johannesburg. A truly musical family, considering the fact that Colbert's father Abel played the guitar way back in 1947; Colbert followed in his footsteps, then Percy as well as Percy's son, Junior. After years of doing everything by himself, in 2007 Colbert employed Castro Musinyali as his manager.

It is still interesting to me to realise how in the province of my birth, Limpopo, Venda dominates reggae music. Besides being the home of **HARLEY AND THE RASTA FAMILY**, it also boasts Khakhathi, Roxley Masevhe, Ntshenge and The Jah Live, etc. In general, some of the area's music legends include Irene Mawela, Elvis Mandiza, Eric Mkhese, Nyelisani Singo and others. Having said that, the Music Department of Univen is also doing a sterling job in producing South Africa's next generation of schooled musicians. Maybe these musicians will start a hype of activity in the province that will create jobs in nightclubs and city venues enough to stop the exodus of talent to other provinces. Musicians like Thomas Chauke, Peta Teanet, Isaac Mmadi, Winnie Mmadi, Nkele Mphahlele, Malo A Botšheba, Rastaman Nkushu, The Stone and Healer Express have resisted this temptation but they still face a lot of challenges. I guess this is the same with musicians in other provinces excluding Gauteng and Cape Town.

In 1991 Gallo Records released **O'YABA's** album *Caught Up* produced by West Nkosi and engineered by John Lindemann. The music was composed by Tshidiso Alexis Faku, Oupa Mokoena and Benrobert Mopeli. They followed with albums like *Tomorrow Nation* (1990), *One Foundation* (1993), *Unhinged* (1996), *Crazy Love* (1998 SAMA 5 nomination) and their compilation CD *The Game Is Over*.

In 1990 Dephon released *Beautiful Woman Is Like A Rose*, an album by a reggae group from Mozambique called **BLACK PEOPLE'S CHOICE**. The album was produced by Pat Shange and engineered by Adrian Hamilton and Graham Handley on the Jungle Roots label. Almost all the tracks were written by I Marleco.

After thirteen years on Robben Island, freedom fighter **JAMES MANGE** led his group **WHIPLASHES** into the Downtown Studios to record their album *Read My Story*. He wrote, composed, arranged and produced it. Engineered by Humphrey Mabote, it paid tribute to fallen heroes of the struggle and thanked all those who fought for the release of the political prisoners. It was released on RPM's Africa label. James played flute, harmonica and lead guitar. The Whiplashers were Tebogo Direko (bass), Jongumuzi Sisulu (alto sax), Chris Mofokeng (drums), Andile Misheki (tenor sax), Roger Khoza (piano), Happy Mkefa (alto sax) as well as Daniel Kapueja (rhythm guitar) who also released his own solo music.

There was also System Enemy fronted by one of the Siluma brothers, which had hits like *Rhythm Is An African Thing* and *Bad Boys*.

Rastaman Nkhushu caught my attention in 2004 promoting his second album *Ba Ntimile Zolo* at our local shopping complex in Lebowakgomo. He produced the album under the guidance of experienced executive producer, Richard Siluma. His debut album was *Re Sepela Bošego Le Ma Rasta*. Rastaman Nkhushu whose real name is Mackson Ntšhakathe Hlagala was also a radio presenter at our local community radio station, GLFM in the Lepelle – Nkumpi Municipality.

Also produced by Richard Siluma are Master Dee's *Smile* and Siphso Dube's *In My World*.

Other bands of the eighties were Sky Blazers whose albums include *World War 111* (DPMC, 1989) and Marks Mankwane's *The Rasta Kids* whose 1984 self-titled album featured *Eyes See*.

The Survivors was a ten-member group led by Sakamora from Alexandra Township. There is also Earthquake as well as individuals like Vuyani Qali.

Tidal Waves was formed in 1998. Its members are Jacob "Zakes" Wulana (guitar/vocals), Samuel "Drumbo" Shoai (drums), Andile "Topline" Faku (keyboards) and Nhlanhla "Lucky" Mthlane (bass). Their album was nominated for SAMA 7's Reggae category pitted against Earthquake. The Yeoville-based group's other albums include *Harmonijah*, *Muzik an da Method* as well as *Afrika*. Their video *Money* scooped the Best Reggae Video category of the 2005 Channel O African Music Video Awards. In October 2007 they announced their world tour that kicked-off in Australasia.

There is a band that distinguished itself doing good reggae covers led by Victor Khojane. It is called **DR VICTOR AND THE RASTA REBELS**. Dr Victor was born Victor Khojane in Kimberly, Northern Cape Province. Most of the band members were also born there. The other members were Gustav Smith, Winston Dlamini, George Longane, David Argus, Petrus Williams and Gladwin Mafoko. One of their popular party hits was the cover of Eddy Grant's *Gimme Hope Johanna*.

Khojana was nicknamed Dr Victor by his fellow band members as he could fix any technical problem on the stage including microphones, guitars and keyboards. Victor started his career as a session musician and worked with greats like Siphso Mabuse in the eighties. The band that pushed him into the professional arena was CCBeat. After churning some hits they caught the eye of Dephon Records where they became a backing band for Yvonne Chaka Chaka and Sello Chicco Twala. As Dr Victor he became very popular at live shows for his magnificent cover versions of pop classics like Three Dog Night's *Shambala* (Teal Records, 1994), which won them SAMA 1's Best Single category. The album *Stress* was nominated for SAMA 7. 1997 saw the release of *Fatty Boom Boom*. In 2003 they won SAMA 9's Best Dance Album category for the album *The Sunshine Daze Remixes*. Their other albums include *If You Wanna Be Happy*



(2004) and *When Somebody Loves You Back* (2007). Other popular cover versions of theirs included Kori Moraba's *Tsoang Tsoang Tsoang* and Dr Alban's *Hello Africa*. Make no mistake, they also have their own original compositions.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# NEW SCHOOL

Towards the end of the eighties young musicians ushered in a new era. These youngsters started experimenting on new sounds, aligning themselves with international trends, but recognising local styles as well. This style was mainly influenced by house music and rap, but later the township culture (location culture) and lyrics that express the joys and pains of the youth through street lingo started to dominate this new sound and led to the birth of kwaito music. Kwaito is township music mostly fusing international dance and local rhythms like mbaqanga and township soul. The lyrics are mostly repetitive street slang. It later developed into various brands where only the initiated could tell the difference between kwaito, swaito, kwaihop, kwai-house, kwai-jazz, lesenk, d'gong, guz, etc. The best thing to come out of these developments was the establishment of new independent labels mainly by the musicians themselves. Some of the labels were Kalawa Jazmee, 999 Music, Wolla Music, TS Records, Ghetto Ruff, Bula Records, Bulldawgz and others. The biggest challenge facing these new companies was the distribution of their products. Independent record companies would go out and look for new talent and record it. The big companies like Gallo, EMI, Sony and BMG would take the responsibility of music publishing, copyright administration, marketing, sales and distribution. In the end the major companies would take the biggest chunk of the profits. In 2006 the “new kids on the block” formed the Association of Independent Record Companies (AIRCO) to address these burning issues. Irfaan Gillan became its chairman. This would address the frustration that had driven some artists to sell “from the boot”. On one radio talk show, musician Spencerman Madibane highlighted the seriousness of this problem that threatened to turn musicians into street hawkers. In response to this, an initiative dubbed “Music

Everywhere” was launched under the leadership of Sello Twala and Mzwakhe Mbuli. The magnitude of the challenge is easily recognisable when big deals are clinched. An example of this occurred during the countdown to the FIFA World Cup in South Africa in 2010 when it was reported that Sony/BMG had already clinched a deal with FIFA to record the official song and the official album of the historical event. Hopefully some local musicians and independent labels will benefit from some spin-offs of the deal or the games. AIRCO is a member of Worldwide Independent Network (WIN), which was established in January 2006 at MIDEM (the world’s music market), France.

Back to the birth of kwaito music. In the nightclub circuit, house music from Europe dominated the dance floor. This gave rise to the demand for locally brewed house music. In 1988 **JE MOVEMENT** released a hot dance album *Ma Dea Luv*. The name of the group was a coinage of the initials of the duo, the late James Nyingwa and Elliot Faku. Their other albums were *Bad Girls* (1989) and *Guilty* (1990).

Producers like Chris Ghelakis, George Vardas and Danny Bridgens came to the party in a big way. In 1989 DPMC released *Get Down*, a hot dance album performed by a trio called **NEW AGE KIDS**. Its members were Marcus Ndlovu, Isaac Majola and Justice Mmusi. The product was a joint venture of Chris Ghelakis, George Vardas and Jack Master. Later in 1992 the band featured Marcus Ndlovu on their album *I La La Love You* still working with the same production team of 1989.

When Marilyn, Bridget and Beverly Alexander met producer/engineer George Vardas they walked into the studio in 1989 and came out with the eight-track album *Smooth Lover* featuring the hits *Pump Up The Jam*, *Tomorrow* as well as the title track on the DPMC label. The three were collectively called **SYNDICATE SISTERS**. Two tracks on the album were composed by Sydney Mogopodi of *Mama’s Baby* fame. Their 1991 album titled *Foolish Games* featured fellow musicians Ringo Madlingozi and Ronny Joyce.

In 1990 CSR released a self-titled album of a six-man band called **SENSATION**. The songs were written by band members George Mokobane, Timothy Macothoza, Steve Mokgachane and Joseph Mashilo. The late James Nyingwa of JE Movement and George Vardas programmed the music. It was produced by Chris Ghelakis and George Vardas featuring the voice of Blondie Makhene.

In the same year a producer/engineer called M’Du Masilela who worked with Peter Snyman released his debut dance hit project *LA Beat*, which sold more than 25 000 units.

In 1991 **PT HOUSE** released the album *Big World* on Music Team’s Azania Records label featuring tracks like *Qinisela* and the title track. The music was co-written by N. Mohale and D. Bridgens. The producer, engineer and mixer was Danny Bridgens.

Katlehong Rap Movement, **KARAMO**, was another Chris Ghelakis project in 1991. The group released *Bra Music*, which also featured a cover version of

Sipho Mabuse's hit, *Burnout*. It was produced by Chris Ghelakis, Marvin Moses and JP Beat and released on CCP's Family label. Their other release was *Busiu* which was nominated for the 1996 SAMA .

Talking of Katlehong, the group **2 BLACK 2 STRONG** from that township had a hit with a song titled *Katlehong Most Dangerfull* from their Tusk labelled album, Reinforcement. The group was fronted by Kalashnikov.

The trend later took another dimension as nightclub deejays also remixed international music to suit the local flavour and released compilation albums.

Long before we knew deejays could also release their own music, in 1985 Maropeng Mahune, a night club deejay at Easy By Nite in the East Rand (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality), released a single titled *Sexy Girl* using the name Ruby Roepsie. It was composed, produced and arranged by the CCP powerful production team of Tom Vuma and Selwyn Shandel on the King Records label. His follow-up was Top Top (1989), a mini album co-produced by Alec Khaoli and Colin Smith who also engineered it. Using the name Roop C, Mahune released it on the GalloGRC label. This trend was to be sustained by younger deejays from night clubs and independent radio stations like Bob Mabena whose 1996 album *Funkier – The Remixes* won the SAMA 3's Best Pop Music Performance: Rap category. Today there are many deejays and TV personalities who have developed the trend into a roaring business, especially through compilations and remixes. Some of them include DJ Christos, Glen Lewis, DJ Fresh, DJ Cleo, DJ Ganyane, DJ Christos, DJ Bongz, DJ Brian, DJ Fistas, DJ Mavusana, Rudeboy Paul, DJ Jeff, DJ Bakstina, DJ Monde, DJ Mphulo, DJ Mbuso T, DJ Switch, T-Bo Touch, Vinny da Vinci, Eddy Zondi, Black Coffee, DJ Sdunkero and many others. SABC 1 weatherman, the late Jabu Sithole, YizoYizo 3/MTN "Ten-Ten Specials" man Killa G aka Lucky Zulu, Sipho "Psyfo" Ngwenya, Tennyson Legethe and others followed in the footsteps of media personalities like Gene Letsholo, Kina Shirinde, Force Khashane and Joe Mafela by also venturing into music. Sadly, after releasing his second CD titled Ubuntu, Jabu Sithole passed away in June 2006 and was laid to rest at the Lenasia Cemetery. Okumhlophe!

The **MONWA AND SUN** duo was formed when Monwabisi Dennis Yekani met Poth Nkotsoe. As already mentioned, Monwabisi had been in music for some time already and with the younger Poth they made a formidable team that released their debut album *Majekeje* on the Cool Spot label. Their follow-up in 1989 was *Tigers Don't Cry* featuring the title track as well as *Makonrad*. All the music was written by Monwabisi, engineered and produced by Mally Watson. In 1990 they both went solo. Monwa's debut album was *Aweyo*, still on the Cool Spot label. It featured the title track and *1990* written and arranged by Monwabisi and produced by Mally Watson who also engineered it. Poth released a self-titled solo debut album in 1990 on Tusk's Diamond Music label featuring the hit *Swear To Sweat*. All the music was written by Poth Nkotsoe, produced

by Selwyn Shandel and engineered by Argentinian Jorge Arrigone and Selwyn Shandel. In 1991 Monwa followed Poth to Tusk Music and released *Mama Kuse*, a self-written album produced by the same production team that had worked on Sun's album.

Cool Spot Productions in 1989 released the music of yet another young male duo, **MM DELUXE**. The name was made up of the first letters in the names of the two musicians, Mduduzi and Mandla. Their self-written album *Where Were You?* featured a hit *Muchacho*. It was co-produced by Monwabisi Yekani and Mally Watson. Backing vocals were provided by Poth Nkotsoe, Gabi Mdluli, Amelia and Khulukazi Mnwela. This was the beginning of another musical journey as the two musicians, Mduduzi Masilela and Mandla Mofokeng later went their separate ways to unleash a string of hits in the new genre called kwaito music.

M'Du was born **MDUDUZI MASILELA** in Zola South, Soweto. Though his mother Evelyn gave him the necessary support, it was his grandparents, Roselyn and Paul who had a lasting impact on young Mduduzi's musical career. They gave him piano lessons to keep him off the streets. When Mdu became a star he never forgot them; granny Roselyn was the only VIP at one of M'Du's album launches I attended in Johannesburg. She is very proud of him. Later M'Du worked with musicians like Pat Shange, Yvonne Chaka Chaka and Chicco at Dephon to gain more experience and exposure. It was in 1988 on completion of his matric that the above MM Deluxe was conceived. He started experimenting with sound, mixing European and township sounds to create a new sound. In 1990 he found himself working with Peter Snyman as producer and engineer and released *LA Beat*, which did very well and encouraged him to continue with production. By 1992 he had joined one of the most progressive executive producers of the time, Chris Ghelakis at CSR Records where he continued with his production and engineering work. After two years he decided to establish his own production house and named it M'Du Productions. With all the experience he had gained over the years, he took the microphone and embarked on a solo career as the kwaito artist known by the name M'Du. His debut album *Tsiki Tsiki* became a huge hit accompanied by a powerful dance party video. In 1995 he joined Sony Music where he released *Y U 4 Me*. Some of the albums that followed and sold beyond gold included *Ipompe* (1996) nominated for SAMA 3's Best Township Pop and Best Kwaito Dance categories; *Always Da Case* (1997) and *M'du or Die* (1998). In the same year he showed the true colours of the keyboard tiger he is by releasing his piano solo jams album, *Let M'du Jam – the other side* (1998). It was not a surprise to those who took note when he produced the late Dennis Mpale's *Nothing But The Jam* (1997). His backing band, Mashamplani also released their albums on their own including *Kunjalo Kunjalo*, *Neva Neva* and *Hey Kop*. In 1999 Mashamplani was Sydney, Surprise, Tumi and Tshediso. Tokollo Tshabalala of TKZee fame was once a member of the group. M'Du also worked with another new musician, the late Bongani William Makhubela aka MaWillies, whose

debut album featuring the hit *Intwenjani* became an overnight success selling more than 300 000 units. MaG-Mbos is another kwaito group M'Du produced. His duet, *50-50*, with homeboy Mandoza, became a monster hit. He co-wrote and produced Dr Victor's songs like *Bayangena Bayaphuma* in 1994. "Chomi Ya Bana", as M'Du is affectionately known, also worked with international stars like Jean Michel Jarre and Kenny Latimore. Mduduzi is married to Sara, sister to Jairus Nkwe of another kwaito group, Trompies. Sara has been a pillar of support to M'Du Records through her company, Saratainment. M'Du's 2000 release *No Pas No Special* was nominated in SAMA 7's Kwaito category. SAMA 9 nominated *The Godfather Chissa* as Best Kwaito Music Album. In 2005 his album *Ya Rocka* achieved double platinum status. The album was also nominated for SAMA's Best Album category, as well as Song Of The Year for *Sabela*. Then followed *C-Simple* (Wolla Music, 2005). Wolla Music also released the music of artists like the female group Fohloza. In 2006 despite his tight schedule, which included jetting out to London, Belgium and France, producing musical scores for the BBC and Sky News, he also released an Afro-pop album titled *Believe It Or Not*. Through his Chomi Ya Bana Foundation he helps disadvantaged youth with their education.

The other half of MM Deluxe, **MANDLA MOFOKENG**, joined M'Du's brother-in-law Jairus Nkwe, Eugene Mthethwa and Zynne Sibika to form a kwaito music group called **TROMPIES**. The name was inspired by a naughty, always-in-trouble but bright kid in an Afrikaans cartoon titled Trompie En Die Boksombende. Their albums include *Shosholoza* (1998) and *Mapantsula* (2000 SAMA nominee), which were released by Kalawa Jazmee Records. Some of their big hits were *Magasman*, *Madibuseng*, *Sgiyangengoma* and *Zodwa*. These four later had their own projects individually and earned themselves nicknames like "Spikiri" (Mandla Mofokeng), "Donald Duck" (Eugene Mthethwa), "Mahoota" (Zynne Sibika) and "Jakarumba" (Jairus Nkwe).

Mandla from Meadowlands, Soweto, has been involved in the production of many local musicians' albums including the theme song for SABC television soapie *Generations*. By 2005 he released a double album, which produced the hit *Current*. Eugene, who caught my attention in 1990 as keyboardist of reggae group Slaves, went on to produce his own music like the ten-track album titled *Who's Wrong, Who's Right?*, which was released by Heita! Records. In 2005 at the height of the ANC Deputy President Jacob Zuma saga he released music supporting Zuma's leadership and his right to a fair trial. He also worked with groups like Ghetto Monks, Ghetto Life and Indoor Smoke. By 2007 he was the Anti-Piracy Chairperson of AIRCO. This son of a preacherman was also MD of Blocks Entertainment. By 2007 he owned a record label, Kasi Records. Meadowlands-born Zynne who also became known as DJ Vetkoek is a trained pianist who did his music diploma at the Royal Academy in London. In 2002 he released his debut album *DJ Vetkoek vs Mahoota*. He uses the name DJ Vetkoek



as a disc jockey at clubs and Mahoota as an artist and producer. In 2003 he followed up with *Licensed To Hoot* and later *Ezakwazulu*. The gifted muso won the Best Soudtrack category of SAMA 10 for SABC television's *Tsha Tsha*. In 2004 Trompies' album *Respect* was nominated in the Best Duo Or Group category of MTN SAMA and the video of their track *Bengimngaka* in the Best Music Video section. It may interest you to know that the members of this group form the last part of the record company name, Kalawa Jazmee. Kalawa stands for Laka/ Mdlongwa and Jazmee for Jairus, Zynne, Mandla, Eugene and Emmanuel. Yes, yes, let me answer that one. Emmanuel is the singer, songwriter and producer Mojalefa Emmanuel Matsane aka Mjokes or Copperhead who said in an interview he regarded himself as "the fifth unofficial member of Trompies". His debut album was *Thabo Thiba Thabang* (Gallo Music, 1995) and by 2005 he had released *From Battery To Coil*. In 2006 Trompies released their long-awaited CD titled *Can't Touch This*.

In 1995 son of celebrated soccer coach Stanley "Screamer" Tshabalala, Tokollo was a member of M'du's band Mashamplani. The following year he was a member of a new kwaito group, **TKZEE**. The name is a coinage of band members' names Tokollo, Kabelo and Zwai. The three dudes met at St Stithians College in Bryanston in 1991. Though they attended prestigious schools, their hearts were with music. Their combination was hot: Tokollo Tshabalala and Kabelo Mabalane were fluent rappers, composers and vocalists while on the other hand Mzwandile "Zwai" Bala had classic and choral background. Though their music genre was kwaito, they invented their blend called "Guz", which draws its influence from a variety of music styles. Their debut mini-CD was *Take It Easy* (1996), which was nominated for SAMA 3's Best Pop Music Performance, followed in 1997 by *Phalafala*, which went platinum. In 1998 when the world soccer craze in South Africa was at fever pitch, they released *Shibobo* featuring soccer star Benni McCarthy on the title track. Another 1998 album *Halloween* featured their big hit *Dlala Mapantsula*. The album dominated the FNB SAMA 5 nominations and won the Best Kwaito Album, Best Kwaito Single and Best Duo or Group categories. It included *Sikelela*, the theme of the local dubbed version of television show, Stansford and Son. It also featured musicians Gwyya and 2Shot. The group's musical home was BMG Records. Like Stimela, TKZee created a family arrangement with musical friends like S'bu Ntshangase, Dr Mageu and Kagiso "Gwyya" Diseko. In 1999 they invited the friends to release the *TKZee Family album Guz 2001*. Mzwandile's younger brother Loyiso was also featured on the album. Their track *Izinja Jam* became SAMA 7's Best Kwaito Single. Some of their other big hits are *Masimbela* and *Happy Summer Song*. The group also had its own recording label, TKZee Recordz.

By 1998 "majimbos" each had their own projects. **TOKOLLO TSHABALALA** whose influences include the late US star, TuPac Shakur released his solo albums like *Gusheshe* and *It's Alright*, winner of Best Kwaito Single category

of SAMA 8. Some of his hits include *Mas'thanda*. His follow-up CD was titled *Waarheid* (Is'kathi).

**KABELO MABALANE** grew up in Diepkloof, Soweto fascinated by Mapantsula. His ventures early in his career included a duo called 2 Slice. When he went solo he released his debut album *Everybody Watching* through Prime Media. He worked with different music producers like Trompies' Mandla "Spikiri" Mofokeng, Moses Taiwa Molelekwa and Godfrey "Guffy" Pilane to complete the album. Featuring hits like *Pantsula 4 Life*, it went platinum within weeks of its release. It was followed by albums like winner of SAMA 9's Best Kwaito Music Album, *Rebel With A Cause* as well as *And The Beat Goes On*, which also won the same category in SAMA 10. In 2004 the Kora All Africa Music Awards crowned him the Best Male Artist: southern Africa. The hits of the man popularly known as "Bouga Luv" include: *Pantsula 4 Life*, *As Long Ngisaphefumula* as well as *Love Me Or Leave Me Alone*, winner of the 2005 Channel O African Music Video Awards' Best Kwaito Video and Video of the Year categories. He was nominated in SAMA's Artist Of The Year category for *The Bouga Luv Album*. Kabelo later worked with a kwaito group called Black Jack. The other members of the group were Howza and Gurash. Black Jack's 2005 debut album was titled *Industry Hijack* produced by D-Rex aka David Campos. D-Rex was Kabelo's partner in a company known as Groove Luv Records. Later Gurash aka Archibald Motlhatlhedi went solo and by June 2008 he was working on his forthcoming debut album to be titled *Winner Takes It All*. Kabelo made history in 2005 when he became the first South African to sign a five-year endorsement deal with Reebok. The footwear range resulted in him being part of the Jay Z concerts in South Africa in 2006, as the latter also had a relationship with the brand. This led to a streamline of other endorsements including ringtones, t-shirts and so on. In the same year he was awarded a certificate at Rhema Bible College for his quest to understand the Word better. He continues to recommend abstinence as the most effective method of dealing with the Aids pandemic, especially to the youth. After participating in the 2006 annual Comrades Marathon for charity, he worked with Mandla Mofokeng and D-Rex to release his follow-up album, *Exodus* and set the music scene ablaze with his sizzler track, *Dubula Dubula Dubula*. The album was nominated in the Best Male Artist, Best Kwaito Album and Song of the Year categories of the 13th SAMA's at which he was both performer and MC. He walked away with the Best Kwaito Album category. In 2007 his recording label Groove Luv Records was relaunched and renamed Faith Records boasting young musicians like Martin Phike and Howza (*Cut To The Chase*). This was followed by his latest offering, *I Am A King* featuring Danny K, produced by Guffy and Zwai Bala. He so impressed the organisers of the South African Music Awards at the 2007 as MC of the gala event that even in 2007 he was requested to guide the proceedings of the night at Sun City, North West Province.

**MZWANDILE "ZWAI" BALA** grew up in Uitenhage, near Port Elizabeth with

elder sister Pinkie and younger brothers Loyiso and Phelo. He became the first black member of the famous Drakensberg Boys' Choir. This musical kid recorded his first solo album while he was still a matric student. In 1995 he went to Scotland where he studied music at Edinburgh University. He also composed jingles for SABC television's youth programme, Jam Alley. The versatile songwriter, producer and musical director is also a television personality who hosted the popular shows *All You Need Is Love* (SABC 1) and *Gospel Grooves* (e-tv) as well as a radio show on Gauteng's Classic FM. The star of *Strictly Come Dancing* contest has featured in various live collaborations. His album *Lifted* won SAMA 8's Best Rap Album. Together with brother Loyiso and the Bala Family, their CD *Genesis* was nominated in the Best Urban Gospel Album category of the SAMA.

After 2000 TKZee released a "less kwaito" album, *Trinity*, which some critics say was a sign of maturity as they were no longer boys. During the festive season of 2000, family member Dr Mageu aka Malusi Ignatius Ntshebele released *Geuzin Wamampela*, which featured the hit *Fella Kae?* In 2005 he worked with S'bu to release *Twenty Four Seven* through Electromode. The group was nominated in SAMA 11's Best Duo or Group category. By 2005 SonyBMG had released TKZee's compilation CD titled *Guz Hits* featuring 16 of this kwaito machine's evergreens.

One Kalawian who earned the title of "Top Dog" early in his career is **THEBE MOGANE**. The title in kwaito circles refers to master of the game. The man who grew up in Limpopo and North West provinces always comes out smoking with the release of every album. He took the local music scene by storm with his album *Di A Boa* (Ko-philly). His other albums include *The Vibe Continues*, *Abuti Bula Buti*, *Tempy Life*, *Tempy Pusher No.1*, *Top Dawg* as well as his 2005 sizzler, *Lenyora*. Some of his big hits include *Ungawa Kum* and *Sokoloko*, an observation on the "debt" lifestyle of today. He recently performed in a local nightclub and fans screamed at the top of their voices for "Mokone" to do what he's known best for. I thought to myself the 'top dog' has surely arrived. On Saturday, 1 October 2005 he was billed with Sello Galane, Judith Sephuma, Zozo and Prime Circle for the South African Music Week launch in Polokwane. For the 2006 festive season he released a CD titled *Tha Rocka*.

On the other side of town a natural born dancer, **SELLO ARTHUR MAFOKATE**, was hitting the market with hit after hit and earned himself the title "King Of Kwaito", a hot crown claimed by several musos in this genre. A dance trend-setter, he would in future introduce styles like "twalatsa" and "qopetsa". When I first saw Arthur he was with his dance group, Fame Youth Club, from Lebowa kgomo on SABC television's weekend programme, *Lapologa*. We met face to face when I became a deejay and I lived a few streets away from his. My first impression of him was that of a focused and disciplined talented individual. I still hold that view about him. He had an insatiable drive to become a star. His teenage passions were soccer, dance and music. Arthur, whose sibling is also

called Lolo, would choose music from my collection for his club, which included his sister and brother, the late muso Makhendlas. My relationship with him was that of brothers and we respected that. At a later stage he went to Johannesburg, where he initially came from. In Lebowakgomo the siblings stayed with their mother Grace who was a nurse at neighbouring Groothoek Hospital, whereas their father Enos was still in Johannesburg where he became a champion show jumper. In Gauteng Sello did piano lessons at school and later worked with various artists especially at EFP to prepare himself for the “big times” vision. His musical inspiration was Brenda Fassie and Sello Twala. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, the track *Blenda Fashion* from his 1994 CD of the same name revealed his adoration for the late Nokuzola Fassie for whom he danced and later produced. As a model he won the title of Mr Soweto in 1992. Like M’du he started his musical journey as a producer/sound engineer with artists like Sun, Taboo and The New Age Kids. With the launch of the Coca-Cola Full Blast Music Show in the early nineties he joined hands with Joe Nina to contest with two projects – as Q-Face singing *I Need It* and in a trio called Out Of Control singing *Let’s Dance*. The trio had already won the “Kool Aid Dance To Stardom” in 1989, the Soweto Dance Competition in 1989, 1990 and 1991 and reached the finals of the “Shell Road To Fame” talent search in 1990.

In Coca-Cola Full Blast 2, together with Ashley Mzolo, they presented two other projects: Heaven singing *Holy Spirit* and Twin Prestige singing *Forever More*. In Full Blast 3 he presented the trio, Helela. He used to tell me whatever money he won as part of the prizes, he’d invest for his future recording studios. I believed him.

We used to agree on many issues except for his impatience with the slow wheels and red tape of the industry. I would encourage him to take time and empower himself before venturing into bigger projects upon which I knew he had the potential to embark. In 1994 he released his debut CD *Windy Windy* on the CCP Record Company label featuring the title track as well as *Ayaphanda* and *Where’s Da Bass*. He had written, engineered, programmed and produced the album. When he launched his record label with Joe Nina, he used his house number in Chiawelo, Soweto – 999. 999 Studios focused on kwaito music with the slogan, “In Sound We Rule”. The same year he released *Blenda Fashion* under the name, Bambezela. He co-wrote the music with Tronix, who had worked with him on two tracks of the *Windy Windy* album. As his mixing skills improved, he started using the nickname “Mix Maestro”. Another name he used early in his career was “Scamtho King” (King of Rap) as on the CD *Vuvuzela*. 1995 saw *Bambezela Volume 2* release *Zama Zama Yo!* Later he stuck to the name Arthur for his solo work, which produced albums like *Kaffir* (1995), *Mnike* (1995), *Die Poppe Sal Dans* (1996), *Oyi-Oyi* (1997), *Chomi* (1998 SAMA 5 nomination), *Felicia* (1998), *Yizo, Inja, Umpostoli* (1999), *Twalatsa* (1999), *Seven Phezulu* (2001), *Haai Bo* (2002), *Skulwyt, Mamarela* (2004), *Sika Lekhekhe* (2005),

*Vanilla & Chocolate* (2006), and *Dankie* (2007). On 16 June 2007 he received the Golden Circle honorary award for his contribution to music.

The tragic death of his younger brother, **MAKHENDLAS** aka Oupa, in 1998 left music lovers shattered especially as his album *Iminwe* was still rocking the “bash” crowds. Arthur’s album *Seven Phezulu* was dedicated to Makendlas. I attended the funeral service of this young star at Gallagher Estates and the MC, radio preacher and my former colleague Thuso Motaung, saved the day by not allowing the occasion to deteriorate into a mourning session, but a celebration of a young and gifted life. Some of Makhendlas’s albums included the self-titled 1995 CD, which featured *I-Job Yi-Job* and *Shapela Phansi* on the Rampant Records label as well *Jammer* (1998) on the CCP Records label, both engineered and remixed by Arthur.

By 2001 Arthur’s 999 artists included Abashante, Supasta, Pantsula, Ishmael, All Stars, Queen (Iyaya), Purity (Naledi Thali), Nestum, Speedy, Zombo, Stitch (Lucas Tshepo Setwaba), New School, Chax and Melazzi. Other artists like Lira, Press, Power, Marabi, Chomee (Thulisile Madihlaba) and Sgonondo (James Vuma) followed later. When she released *My Fantasy* in 2007, Chomee was the hottest property on the local live performance scene. I always suspected that her stage name was inspired by her producer’s 1998 SAMA-nominated album of the same name. By 2001 Arthur was a television presenter hosting the popular youth programme, *Ezimtoti*. The programme led to his anchoring the Beacon Smoothies road show, which exposed and developed new talent amongst young musicians, especially in the kwaito genre. This culminated in the compilation of a 16-track *Kwaito Hits* CD including his composition *Jaiva Smooth*. After 13 years in business, 999 released a compilation titled *Best of 999* celebrating the journey. Arthur also appeared in the early episodes of Duma Ka Ndlovu’s tshiVenda television drama *Muvhango*, which gave exposure to most of our musicians and somehow revived the career of Sis Mara Louw. God be praised for sustaining the crew and cast of the soapie through their turbulent 2005. Unfortunately one of its former stars, Lindiwe Chibi aka Doobsie, passed away on 8 May 2007. May her soul rest in peace!

In 1992 Don Mahwetša Laka, together with “The Big O” Oscar Mdlongwa and DJ Christos at Kalawa Records, formed **BROTHERS OF PEACE** in 1992. In 1994 Oscar Mdlongwa and Bruce Sebitlo released BOP’s album *Traffic Cop*. The wonderful performance of the album in the market encouraged them to release *King Of Kwaito Uyagawula* and this time they hit double platinum. After this album the group that also worked with Dr Mageu released five other CDs including *Mapodisa* (1998) and *Zabalaza* (2002). Their *Project A* was nominated in the Kwaito category of SAMA 7. *Project C* was nominated in SAMA9’s Best Duo or Group category. In 2004 followed *Project D: Life Iskorokoro*, a dedication to the stars who had just left us like Sipho Gumede, Tebogo Madingoane, Brenda Fassie, Chiskop’s FBK, Gito Baloi and Dolly Rathebe. In producing



the album they were assisted by Mandla Mofokeng and Zayne Sibika both of kwaito group, Trompies. Both “Oskido” and “Dope” are also hot composers and producers behind the success of kwaito artists like Mafikizolo, Malaika, Bongo Maffin, Trompies, Alaska, Thebe and Skizo. The stable’s other artists included Copperhead, Chakaroski, DJ Oscar, DJ Pepsi and Spikiri.

As kwaito music artists increased in number, the cake shrunk and record companies tried every trick in the book to entice consumers and increase sales. It was in this environment that two female-fronted groups took centre stage in a whirlwind of rivalry unparalleled before – Boom Shaka and Abashante.

From Kalawa Records, **BOOM SHAKA** was a foursome made up of two girls, Thembi Seete and the late Lebo Mathosa as well as two boys Junior Sokhela and Theo Nhlengethwa. The group’s name was a coinage inspired by the power and greatness of the king of the Zulu nation, Shaka, as well as the “boom” explosion of their music sound.

**THEMBI SEETE**, born in 1976 in Dube, Soweto later moved to Yeoville with her mother Rebecca, and her brother. She met Lebo and Theo in the night clubs.

**LEBO MATHOSA** was born on 17 July 1977, grew up in Barwa Street, Daveyton and was later sent to live with her grandparents in ga-Sekororo, Tzaneen in Limpopo Province at the age of eight. Her parents, Nomvula and Gerrit brought her back to Gauteng when she was 11 years old. She started singing in Sunday School choirs at the International Assemblies of God and received standing ovation several times for her powerful voice. When she moved to Johannesburg to matriculate at St Mary’s High School in 1991 she got more involved in music. Together with Thembi and Mmabatho they formed the LTM Girls. However, it was when she met deejays Christos Katsaitis and Oscar Mdlongwa that Lebo “Mmadibuseng” Mathosa’s gate to the music highway was opened. She was inspired by the music career of late Brenda Fassie.

**THEO NHLENGETHWA** was born in 1975 and grew up in Springs. He always wanted to be a star. A clothes designer with a unique style of dress, he influenced the group’s regalia.

**JUNIOR SOKHELA** was born in 1973 in Meadowlands, Soweto though later in his life he found himself in countries like Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. On his return to South Africa he ended up roaming the streets. Together with some boys they formed a breakdance group called Brown Bread Street Connection. It died when some members were arrested. Chicco Twala requested him and Ishmael Morabe from Rustenburg to join him. When they parted ways with Chicco, Junior met Nomuntu Kappa and was exposed to a wider audience. He and Ishmael later joined Cape Town’s Prophets of Da City with whom they toured Switzerland in 1992. Junior later met the other three members of the group in a Hillbrow night club. Boom Shaka hit the local market with their debut single *Makwerekwere* (1994), followed by the monster hit *It’s About Time* (1995), which went multi-platinum. Another hit of theirs, *Thobela* introduced its own kind of



dance craze. Their 1999 self-titled eight-track album was a mixture of R&B, raga and maskandi music. On this Bula Music release they worked with the maskandi music star, Bheki Ngcobo. The next album *Ain't No Stopping (Us Now)* (1997) went gold within a short space of time of its release. Their follow-up album was titled *Bambanani*. The group's name was later registered as a company, Boom Shaka Entertainment. They used their popularity and influence on the youth to create Aids awareness and promote safe sex. Their other albums include *Boom Shaka* (1994), *Words Of Wisdom* (1998 SAMA 5 nomination) and *7th Anniversary* (2001). Later the girls embarked on their individual solo projects.

In 2000 Lebogang Mathosa embarked on a solo career and her debut CD *Dream* won her SAMA 7's Best Dance Album and Best Dance Single for *Intro*. As if that was not enough, she was also crowned the Best Female Vocalist. The album reached gold status within four weeks! In 2004 she followed up with *Drama Queen*, which also won her SAMA 11's Best Dance Album category. Eleven years since she entered the music scene as part of Boom Shaka, Lebo scored an international release, *Lioness*, in 2005. In the same year she was nominated in the Best Female Artist: Southern Africa category of the Kora All Africa Music Awards. In 2006 the "queen of choreography" was nominated for the Mobo Awards held at the Royal Albert Hall in London on 20 September. Some of her hits were *Tsodio*, *Ngifunukuganga*, *Awudede* and *I Love Music*.

Besides her music career, the multi-talented Lebo appeared in television soaps like *Generations*, *Backstage*, *Muvhango* as well as Norman Maake's film *Soldiers Of The Rock*. The lady declared "Africa's Sexiest Woman" by *FHM* magazine travelled the world and supported worthy courses. Among the awareness campaigns she participated in, daring Lebo featured in the *Vagina Monologues*. Her international recognition was again confirmed when popular US R&B superstar Keith Sweat featured her on the track *I'll Trade (A Million Bucks)* on his album titled *Didn't See Me Coming*. After the departure of Brenda Fassie many music fans nationwide pinned their hopes on her to carry the torch of our township pop music.

On the morning of 23 October 2006 the nation was shocked to learn about her death in a car crash at the age of 29. The accident happened shortly after midnight when her male driver mysteriously lost control of her Toyota Prado vehicle on the N3 highway and hit a tree, near the Grey Avenue on-ramp in Germiston. According to her producer and mentor DJ Christos, she was busy with her fourth album scheduled to be released in 2007. Lebo whose international career was taking off smoothly under the management of Roddy Quin is sorely missed at night clubs, stadiums and various music awards celebrations. After memorial services at the Sandton Convention Centre (26 October) and Benoni Town Hall (28 October) the "lioness" was laid to rest at the local Phumulani Cemetery, Daveyton in Benoni. As great musicians live longer, towards the 2006 festive season there were reports about her record company CCP sweating 24/7 to release her secretly-recorded tracks as part

of her album to be titled *Dance To My Music – Music My Way*. I have the utmost respect for the Latin proverb “Say nothing but good about the dead”; as such, I regard the politics of her childhood adoption as a private and personal family affair. May the “drama queen” rest in peace.

Thembi’s debut solo album *Smatsatsa* won the 2003 SAMA’s Best Music Video category. She focused her attention more and more on her acting career. Thembi appeared in popular local television dramas including *Yizo Yizo*, *Zone 14* and *Gazlam’*. She also co-presented a television street dance contest, *Jika Majika* with the likes of Prokid. By 2007 her popularity as a personality saw Rage Clothing taking care of her wear. In an interview she promised her fans to release her follow-up CD in 2008.

Rapper, songwriter and producer Junior went into production and later released his own works. Theo continued with his other love – fashion designing. In 2006 Theo featured on Revolution’s CD *4U* on the track *Feel The Music*. Following the success of the track, he released his debut solo CD titled *Ngiyabonga* (Universal, 2007) written and produced by Joseph and George Mothiba of Four Sounds Productions. The album was dedicated to his friend, the late Lebo Mathosa, his brother Sphiwe and Iggy Smallz. My favourite track on the CD is *Never Let You Down*, dominated by stinging and nostalgic piano notes that remind me of the music of Bruce Hornsby and The Range.

999 Music created **ABASHANTE** – Abel, Queen Sesoko and Nestum Nyakale. The name of the group is also a coinage. Aba is the shortened version of Abel, one of the original group members. The last part of the name, Ashante drew its inspiration from the great Ashanti Empire in south Ghana. The Ashanti people, whose social organisation is based upon matrilineal kin groups, speak the Twi language and as expert farmers harvest sufficient cocoa to can even export it. In a sense this part of the name emphasises the dominance of women in the group. Their albums include *Girls* (1996) nominated for SAMA 3’s Best Newcomer Group, *Settlin’ Tha Score* (1997), *Dreams* (1998 FNB SAMA 5 nomination), *Intwenjani?* (1999), *Vuk’uzenzele* (1999), *Ayoyo* (2001), *Mus’lento* (2002). In the early days of our country’s democracy the group caused a stir when they performed their kwaito version of the national anthem, but that made people understand what freedom of expression is all about. Abel was later replaced by Tebogo Zombo Ndlovu. When Queen Sesoko who is the mother of Arthur’s daughter Owami later went solo, she used the name *Iyaya*, which literally means “It’s Going”, something always moving forward with success. By 2005 she had released two albums, *Iyaya* (1998) and *African Queen* (2002 SAMA nominee). She parted ways with 999 Music and in 2007 released *U Fikile*. Her album *Sweet Little Things* is forthcoming.

After presenting television youth programme *Jam Alley*, getting married to Bilal Petersen and giving birth to baby Saabir, Nestum Nyakale returned as part of a 999 Music trio called Collabo. Other members of the group were former

Abashante band mate, Tebogo Godfrey Ndlovu aka Zombo from Alexandra township, and a new 999er, Mandla “Power” Simelane. Their 2005 ten-track debut album was *Fezekile* featuring tracks like *Umcimbi* and *Thel’umsindo*. By the way, Zombo’s solo venture produced albums like *Mduduzi*, *Mamba*, *The General* and *Zombo*, which was nominated for SAMA 9 pitted against the likes of Kaybee’s *Sessions*. By the end of 2007 Zombo’s health was failing him due to his HIV status and efforts by Arthur to raise funds for his health bills were cut short by his death on 17 February 2008 at the St Francis Care Centre in Boksburg, Ekurhuleni. Zombo was laid to rest on Saturday, 23 February 2008. Abashante’s Abel who introduced the ragga element into kwaito music passed away at the beginning of August 2006. He was fatally hit by a car in Booyens, Johannesburg. It was a huge loss to the group, which after ten years in the industry had planned to go back into the studio for a new album by the original members.

In 2007 a versatile jazz musician was roped in to resuscitate Abashante. Her name was Thiye Mbola. Born on 10 August 1984 in Welkom, Free State she was attracted to Johannesburg by the MIDI programmes. She was a former member of Sophia Tones, a group whose other members were Preston and Jamela. Earlier on she had featured in contests like the Coca-Cola Popstars, M-Net Idols as well as Backstage-EMI Superstars. In the same year at 999 Music, Thiye also released her own solo jazz CD titled *Who Am I?* produced by her cousin Vusi Preston Sihlangu. Press was former lead vocalist of 101 whose albums include *Cry No More* and *Young, Gifted and Black*.

**SPEEDY** aka Harold Rangakane Mahlaku was born in Mapetla, Soweto. Earlier in his career he was a member of a duo named Intimate. The other member of the duo was Brickz. They participated in the radio-diven talent search campaign, Coca-Cola Full Blast Music Show. Later when Speedy met Oscar Mdlongwa at Club Arena, they became friends. Oscar introduced him to Junior Sokhela of Boom Shaka. Junior introduced Speedy to Thebe’s dancer, Stoan Seate from Mmabatho in the North West. Speedy and Stoan met Zimbabwe-born Apple Seed to form **BONGO MAFFIN**. In 1996 they released their debut album *Leaders of Da Gong* featuring Thandiswa Mazwai from Soweto on the single *Summertime*. Yes, Bongo Maffin – Thandiswa Mazwai (Red), Harold Matlhaku (Speedy), Tshepo Seate (Stoan) and Anesu Adrian Mupemhi (Apple Seed). The first part of the name was influenced by the African bongo drum and the second half by ragga music from the West Indies. In 1997 they released *Final Entry*, which catapulted them to stardom and sold triple platinum in one year. The album also won the group the Best African Pop SAMA award. They championed the new school “Back To My Roots” movement with songs like Abigail Khubeka’s *Iphindlela* on their 1998 CD *The Concerto* as well as *Ndiphendule* from their 1999 CD titled *IV* originally done by Caiphas Semenya and wife Letta Mbulu. This movement was later joined by groups like Mfikizolo and Malaika. The 2001

*Bongolution* CD was recorded by three members – Stoan, Apple Seed and Red – Speedy had decided to go solo.

They won Kora All Africa Music Awards' Best African Arrangement (2000) and Best African Group (2001) categories. The CD also won SAMA 8's Best Group section. These "Leaders Of D'Gong" wrote most of their lyrics and were assisted by the Kalawa production team with music. Some of their biggest hits were *Thath'Isigubhu* from their SAMA-winning album, *The Concerto, Mari Ye Phepha* from *IV* and *The Way Kungakhona* from *Bongolution*. From their 1996 *Final Entry* days, their success grew rapidly, but some members wanted more artistic freedom.

Speedy left Bongo Maffin after the release of their Kora award-winning album simply titled *IV*. In 2000 he released his debut single *Rumours*, which was launched in style on tv screens. It was followed by his debut solo album *Sgubu sa Mampela* the following year. His career saw him go from Primedia to 999 Records and to Electromode. The multi-talented artist who is also an actor appeared in Oliver Schmidt's *Hijack Stories* and appeared in SABC's *Gaz'lam* as well as e-tv's *SOS* series. His 11-track album *Still Standing* (2003) was recorded and released through 999 Music. Other albums include *Evolution* and *Le Ngoma*. Speedy has performed alongside the likes of Macy Gray, Kelly Price and Sisqo, with whom he recorded a single titled *She: So Hot* and continued to work. In 2003 he registered his own record label SD Records and by 2006 he had signed two artists, Temko and Mbongiseni. In a surprise move, in mid-2007 he announced that he was re-joining Arthur Mafokate's 999 Music as artist and business partner and went on to release his CD *Going Live* with the stable. In 2008 he joined Mfundu Vundla's SABC 1 soapie *Generations*.

Later on **THANDISWA MAZWAI** also went solo releasing *Zabalaza* (2004), which won her many accolades including SAMA 11's Best Female Artist Of The Year and Best Adult Contemporary Album Of The Year. It also won the producer, Malambule a Best Producer award. The album defines who she really is as well as her Xhosa cultural background. Thandiswa who was born in the Transkei in 1976 and raised in Soweto also won a Kora Award as Best Female Artist: Southern Africa. Her stage choreography is unmistakably African, while her regalia includes beaded jewellery designed by her sister Ntsiki Mazwai (Nontsikelelo). Ntsiki is a designer and poetess who released her own poetry CD in 2005. Thandiswa's video *Lahl'Umlenze* won the Best Female Video category of the 2005 Channel O African Music Video Awards. Outside the borders of South Africa she was recognised with a nomination in the BBC's Awards For World Music 2005. No wonder she embarked on an overseas tour that would also allow her to perform with Miriam Makeba on her farewell shows abroad. In the same year her own people in the Eastern Cape Province honoured her as an achiever in the Arts. In 2006 her album was nominated for the International Reggae and World Music Awards. Thandiswa's father, Thami Mazwai, is one

of the most respected media gurus in South Africa and founder of Mafube Publishing. By the way, the Mazwai clan name is maMiya.

Prolific Setswana praise singer **STOAN SEATE** released his album *Tsela Di Matlapa* (2004) and became a television personality presenting programmes like Castle Loud and Lilizela Mlilizeli. Besides acting in *Soul Buddyz*, he also presented Motswedding FM's weekend programmes, Hip-Hop Show and Party Time. Seate who named his company Stone Age later released another CD titled *Heart of Stone*.

**APPLE SEED** was born in 1973 in Zimbabwe's Village 11 and grew up in Mbare, Harare. At the height of Bongo Maffin's popularity he had to leave South Africa due citizenship documents. To the relief of the groups millions of fans, he returned to rejoin the group. He changed his name to Jah Seed and also got involved in productions and deejaying.

At the end of 2005 Bongo Maffin released their long-awaited album *New Construction* (GRC) still working with their old production team. The album won SAMA 12's Best Duo or Group category. The group owned a clothing range.

Bongo Maffin will go down history as a creative outfit that chose not to follow the lucrative market of groups like Boom Shaka and Abashante, but championed a cultural trend that inspired outfits like Mafikizolo, Malaika, Seed and Metswako.

The group **SEED** comprised Thuli Thabethe, Velaphi Ngqagu and Patrick Lebeko. In 2004 the trio released the album *In The Soil* (Gallo Records). All tracks were self-composed, produced and arranged by D-Rex. By 2008 they had released the follow-up CD titled *Germinating*.

In 2006 Ghetto Ruff boasted a young Afro-pop group, **METSWAKO** whose CD titled *Re Tswa Hole* took the music scene by surprise. It was produced by Thabiso "Thaso" Tsotetsi. My personal favourite track is *Ke Gopotse Gae*. Metswako is Tshepo Komane, Shamla Botipe and Bernard Madumo. The trio's debut CD was *Phenduka* (2003).

**AKASIA** was a female group consisting of former Joyous Celebration singers Asanda Bam, Fikile Zikhali, Hlengiwe Dlamini and Tumi Letsoenyo. The four were identified by Joyous Celebration choreographer, Somizi Mhlongo to form the quartet. Asanda and Hlengiwe were the lead vocalists, Fikile and Tumi mainly dancers. Their 11-track debut album *Raunchy* (1999) featured tracks like *Full Attraction*.

**SOUL'D OUT** was a product of Sony South Africa's auditions conducted in 1997 at Mega Music. In 1998 they released their self-titled R&B album, co-produced by Godfrey Pilane and Mthunzi Namba. The three musicians Thembi Skosana, Kamogelo Moilwa and Mbuso Thabethe invited Zamo Nkosi to feature in two of the tracks. The hit *Show Some Luv* charted on most radio stations in the country. The album won the group SAMA's Best R&B Album category and was nominated for Kora All Africa Music Awards' Best Newcomer category



in 1999. Mbuso, Thembi and Zamo later became television personalities. In 2005 Thembi who lived in Soshanguve moved to Cape Town, went solo under the name Desert Chyld and released a 12-track deep house-Afrosoul album titled *Milestone* produced by Guffy Pilane and Glen Lewis. Zamo presented a number of television shows but the most prominent was *Mojo*. He co-hosted it with his designer wife Khensani. Her company, Stoned Cherrie also released a compilation CD titled *Stars At Play*.

**CHISKOP** was another popular kwaito group boasting among their hits *Thando* and *Umhlaba Uyahlaba*. The group members were Sphiwe, Sizwe, Sibusiso and Mdu. The name was inspired by the clean-shaven heads style of certain township guys. They started working with ace producer Gabi le Roux in 1996 to release hits like *Klaimar* and *Abantwana*. Gabi co-produced their 1998 CD *Zonke Bonke* with Tim White. Other albums included *Ghetto 2000*. Mdu, whose real name is Mduduzi Tshabalala later went solo and released his debut album *9 II 5 Zola South* in 1999 using the name **MANDOZA**. It featured the hit *Uzoyithola Kanjani?* produced and composed by Gabi with self-written lyrics. The album was followed by *Nkalakatha* featuring Sbu from Chiskop and Tokollo from TKZee. It shot to the sky selling more than 25 000 units within the first week of its release and became SAMA 7's Best Kwaito Music Album. Some music critics say its success is a combination of Gabi's Midas touch, crossover kwaito as well as Mandoza's aggressive township attack. Whatever the reasons, the public – black and white – just loved the track. I attended a number of corporate functions organised by our white compatriots and they all had one thing in common – *Nkalakatha*. He followed up with albums like *Godoba* (SAMA 8: Winner of Best Song Of The Year, Video Of The Year and Best Producer nomination), *Tornado* and *Mandoza*. His 2004 album *Sgelegeqe* was nominated in MTN SAMA's Best Kwaito Music Album category. It was followed by Phunyuka Bamphethe (2005) with tracks produced by D-Rex, Gabi le Roux, Guffy and Arthur Mafokate. *Nkalakatha* remains the highlight of his career so far. Some of his other hits include his duet with homeboy, M'Du Masilela, *50/50*. Interestingly, he named his son after Tokollo of TKZee, which makes him another Tokollo Tshabalala in the house! Mandoza is an ambassador for Dr Rolihlahla Mandela's 46664 HIV-Aids awareness campaign. His awards include Kora's Best Artist: Southern Africa in 2001 and Best African Video (2004). In the spirit of the new South Africa that Dr Mandela fought for, Mandoza teamed up with Danny K to release a crossover album, *Same Difference*, which featured tracks like *Friday* and *Ooh Child*. Maybe this is the way to go, judging by the popularity of multiracial groups like 340ml. Mandoza also starred as a rugby player in the film *No. 10*. In 2005 he announced the unveiling of his clothing range, MDZ Mandoza. The follow-up CD *Ngalabezi* was released in 2006. His partnership with Danny K was rewarded by the 2006 Channel O Spirit of Africa Music Video Awards. They scooped the Best Collaboration Video for "Music". The star whose name was inspired by a tv



cartoon character released another CD titled *Champion* in 2007.

**DANNY K** aka Danny Koppel is a typical “new school Johnny Clegg”. Though he grew up in Johannesburg’s northern suburbs, he hung out with black friends, most of whom were also into music, like Jimmy Bangura. He listened to a lot of black American music from Berry Gordy’s Detroit-based Motown. His father, Gary was very supportive and encouraged his son to follow his dream. Gary took his sons to a Spho Mabuse show and that was the turning point in little Danny’s life. As he grew up he loved the music of TKZee and worked with Khanyo Maphumulo and the late Tiny Siluma on some of their projects. While still a university student doing a law degree, he already had a hit *Hurts So Bad*. He continued with his postgraduate Business Management studies. When his father advised him to go for observations at Downtown studios he hardly knew that he’d meet his mentor, Alexis Faku. In 2001 he released a self-titled 14-track album produced by Alexis and Peter Martin on the Primedia label. The album was nominated in the Best Producer category of SAMA 7. In 2003 he released *J23*, a tribute to his “guardian angel” late brother Jarren, who died tragically in a helicopter crash on 8 June 2003 at the age of 23. By the way, J3 is also the name of his record label. Danny K’s other hit was *Love In The Club*. In 2005 he was the joint winner of SAMA’s Best Pop Album category with Mandoza for *Same Difference*. His follow-up R&B CD *This Is My Time* (2006) won SAMA 13’s Best Pop Album: English. His relationship with prolific songwriter Roy Julian Benjamin aka RJ Benjamin (Swimming In the Soul of Music) has enriched his catalogue. It was interesting to note that the manager of Metro FM’s Best Styled Artist was his mother Pam. Surely Danny is in warm and safe hands!

The television youth drama *Yizo-Yizo* could easily be the film version of kwaito music because they share one thing in common – reflecting today’s youth culture uncut. The educational series directed by Kroonstad-born Teboho Mahlatsi reflects on the culture of learning in black schools. It was launched on 27 January 1999 on SABC 1 at 20h30. Among the accolades the television drama serial received was the 2005 Channel O African Music Video Awards. It produced some of South Africa’s hottest kwaito musicians like Bonginkosi “Zola” Dlamini and Dumisani “Chester” Dlamini who was discovered by Mbongeni Ngema. Chester also became a successful producer and artist who collaborated with Young Nations aka KASH (Kept in Africa’s Subliminal Hold) on his 2003 sizzler titled *Win*. By 2005 Chester was in Namibia shooting a film on the life of that country’s former president, Sam Nujoma.

Another musician who was involved with the series, Kylllex aka Theminkosi Faku became a successful producer and worked on *I Am Free*, an album by a young Afro-house muso, Malik aka Sabelo Zwane who grew up in Daveyton, as well as Cream’s Sebayayi Sola.

**ZOLA** was born Bonginkosi Dlamini and grew up in Zola, Soweto. His mother, Sebenzile Thembi Dlamini is a staunch Zionist. As a youngster some of his

friends were today's musicians Mandoza and Mapaputsi. Many of us took note of him when he played the role of Papa Action in a television drama produced by the African Cultural Centre graduate Teboho Mahlatsi, *Yizo Yizo*. The CD, *Yizo Yizo 2*, won SAMA 8's Best Soundtrack/Original Score category and Zola was nominated in the Best Kwaito Single category as Papa Action for *Ghetto Fabulous*. In 2001 he released his debut album *Umdlwembe* under the name Zola produced by Kaybee through Ghetto Ruff. The album did well in the market and achieved sales of more than 80 000 units within a short time of its release. It went on to win the Best Kwaito Music Album, Best Music Video for track *Ghetto Scandalous* and Zola was voted Artist Of The Year in the Standard Bank SAMA 8. At the time he was at Jabulani Technical College for courses on Drawing and Bricklaying. The success of the album necessitated focus on his solo career without worrying about homework and assignments.

In 2002 the star who later became known as Zola 7 released *Khokhovula*. His fame was boosted by the awards he received for his music: Metro FM's Song Of The Year in 2001 and SAMA's Artist Of The Year category in 2002 and 2005. He presented the television youth programme *Take 5* and later initiated his television programme called *Zola 7* assisting the youth to achieve their dreams. It was through the programme that he discovered a young girl singing opera in Soweto and recorded her for his album, *Bhambatha*. The track was titled *Don't Cry*, a harmonious blending of opera and kwaito! It sold more than 120 000 copies and won him SAMA 2004's Artist Of The Year category. Some of the great tracks on the album are *X Girlfriend* and *Ntombazana*. By 2005 he had added the album *Ibutho* to his catalogue and it went platinum within weeks of its release. It was followed by a DVD, *Zola – The Journey Part One*.

The multi-talented Zola aka Zola 7 played the role of a gangster in yet another film, Zola Maseko's *Drum*. He also featured in the first South African Oscar-winning film, *Tsotsi*, both as actor and musician. The Gavin Hood-directed film starring Presley Chweneyagae and Terry Pheto was an adaptation of Athol Fugard's book. In 2006 he addressed the United Nations world conference on the Arms Control Bill in New York. In the same year he received a Special Recognition award at the Channel O African Music Awards held at Gallagher Estate in Midrand on 15 October. He owns a record label called Guluva Entertainment. He is Zola, he is from Zola, his mother is Zionist and he is Zulu. A success story – from an artist to a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador!

Zola's Zola homeboy, **MAPAPUTSI** aka Abbie Sandile Ngwenya, is known for hits like *Izinja* (2002) from his second CD, which reached triple platinum as well as *Woza Friday*. His albums include *Kleva* (2003), *Last Man Standing* (2004), *Grova Mo* (2005) and *Still Barking* (2007). At the time of writing this book he was almost ready to release his follow-up album.

**SKEEM** was formed in 1996 by friends who used to be deejays in the nightclubs of Hillbrow: Teba Shumba, Jacob Mogwatle, Lucky March and Ishmael Morabe.

The four brought their various influences into the group: Teba came from Gugulethu with a reggae background, Jacob a rapper, Lucky a pantsula with traditional music background and Ishmael a hip-hopper from the North West. Their biggest hit was *Waar Was Jy?*, which won SAMA 3's Best Township Pop Performance category. In 1999 they won the coveted SAMA 5. Their albums include *Salute*, which won them an award in the Coca-Cola Full Blast Music Show '99, *Can't Get Enough*, which achieved double gold sales and *Ozwa*. Their other hit, *Re Tla Be Re Le Daa*, was included on the *Yizo Yizo* album. By the time they released *Ema* through M'Du Masilela's Wolla Music, Ishmael had gone solo in 1999. Jacob Mogwatlhe passed away in early 2005. RIP

**ISHMAEL** was born Ishmael Molefi Morabe on 30 November 1971 in Wolmaransstad in the North West Province. He grew up in Rustenburg. After being recruited by Ramon of world-famous Cape Town hip-hop group POC in a Hillbrow nightclub in 1990, he went to the Mother City. In 1996 he became lead singer of Skeem and went solo as E'Smile releasing the single *Jo'burg City* (1997). His debut album *Mr House* won him SAMA 5's Best R&B Album. The album *Iskhathi Sa Khona* co-produced with Kaybee was released under the name "E'Smile II Ishmael" through Lance Stehr's Ghetto Ruff. It led to the nomination of the two musicians in the Best Producer category of SAMA 7. He later joined Arthur's 999 Music to release albums like *Akuna Mathata* (2002) and *S'Manje Manje* (2003), but eventually went back to Getto Ruff. Some of his memorable hits include *Roba Letheka* produced by Arthur Mafokate and released through 999 Music and *Avulekile Amasango* produced by Kaybee and released by Ghetto Ruff. In 2005 he released his album *Long Way Home* still working with Kaybee. The CD was awarded SAMA 12's Best R&B Album category. He mentions the Semenya couple, Letta and Caiphus, as his local inspiration. At the time of writing this book he had seven albums to his name and was part of that jazz funk hip-hop outfit, Jozi, whose other members were Bongani Fassie, Crazy Lu and Da-les. That's the Motherland Crunk guys for you!

Victor Kebareng Bogopane entered the kwaito arena as Doc Mabena, but after realising the confusion that could arise as there already was Doctor Khumalo And Bob Mabena, he changed his name to **DOC SHEBELEZA** and became popular with the youth for hits like *Ebumnandini* and *Ngibhoboze*. His albums include *Ingagara*, *Ingwazi*, *Ngcono Ngife*, *Fihla* and *Amantombazane*. Shebeleza's production and song writing skills can be witnessed in his other projects including a four-man band called Ama-Skumfete made up of Tshepo Mohale, Ashuwa Komane, Tony Tsambo and KK Okhonchane. The band's album *Tsipha* was sold by the dance craze of the same name.

TS Records, like 999 Music, Bulldawgs and Kalawa Jazmee, was home to some of kwaito's rising stars. One of their sensations was **MZEKEZEKE**, whose debut album *Sguqa Ngamadolo* hit the music industry like a Tsunami. It was something fresh and unique in South Africa, especially the mask that always

hid the face of the performer and his township street lingo. The man from Welamlambo Section, Tembisa received so many accolades in a very short space of time from the SAMA, Metro FM Music Awards and Duku Duku Awards. In fact, he has won SAMA's Artist Of The Year and Song Of The year in 2003 as well as in 2004 for his *Storotoro* album. His other powerful hit was *Akekho Ugogo*. Albums like *Izinyoka*, *Ezasekasie* and *Ama BEE* endeared him even more to his throng of fans. With the release of his 2005 CD *Ama BEE*, the man behind the concept, DJ Sbu aka Sbusiso Arthur Leope, announced the retirement of the artist known as Mzekezeke. DJ Sbu was not only a musician, but also a deejay at youth radio station YFM as well as presenter of popular youth tv game show, *Friends Like These*. He also featured in SABC 1's music show, *One*. Together with Thembinkosi "TK" Nciza they own TS Records. Besides his focus on production and management of artists, DJ Sbu released a new album titled *Y-Lens Volume 1*. It won the 8th Metro FM Music Awards' Best Compilation section. His remixed version of Josh Groban's *Remember When It Rained* will always remind us of December 2006. It won SAMA 13's Song Of The Year category. By 2007 he had released his follow-up CD *L'Amour A Tours Le Droits* (Love Has Every Right) and moved on to present Ukhozi FM's morning drive show "Ezasekseni", which won Stars of Mzansi's radio show category. In May 2008 he returned to youth radio station YFM.

**BROWN DASH's** debut CD was *Puff & Pass*. His album *Mthandazo Wabolova* featured a hit *Phans' Komthunz*, which won SAMA's song Of The Year award in 2005. The album itself won the Best Kwaito Music Album category. In 2005 the star also known as Siphiwe Mpamile announced the September release of his third album, *Dashboard*, produced by Godfrey "Guffy" Pilane and Mandla "Spikiri" Mofokeng. *S'Khathi Sakhona* was his 2006 festive season release boasting the production prowess of M'Du Masilela, Jabulani Ndaba, Robbie Malinga and Gabi le Roux. In 2006, together with stable mate Ntando, he parted ways with his record company, TS Records.

In 2005 the group **IZINYOKA** released *Half White N Packet Chips*. The trio was formed by 51 Cent, Sashman and Manando. Their album was produced by the likes of Robbie and Mjakes. In 2005 their CD *Thebelele* was nominated in Metro FM Music Awards' Best Kwaito category.

The above category was also contested by Durban's **T'ZOZO & PROFESSOR** (Thokozani Zulu and Mkhanyiseni Langa) whose CD *Woz'e* Durban took the kwaito scene by storm. This duo's nominations included Best Album, Best Newcomer, Best Song and Best Kwaito categories. Thokozani Zulu originally from Umgababa township and Professor Langa from Umlazi township won the Best Kwaito section. In 2007 they entered the 8th Metro FM Music Awards contest with their CD titled *Togetherness*.

In 1998 Teal Records released **CREAM's** single *Sebayayi Sola* produced by Kylllex. Their 1999 album *Time Is Money* was released by Universal Music. The album was

produced by Jamela, Cream and Quentin Foster who also recorded, engineered, and programmed it at Rhythm Life. The members of the group were Ezee Dogg, Tu Short and Play. Their trade mark was their hair-styles.

**ALASKA**'s hit *Accused* introduced them to music fans as a new dynamic band on the kwaito scene. Their albums include *Alaska 2000* and *Most Wanted*, which featured the hit, *Hosherr*.

Skinny Bwoy, Shakes, Asanda and Spencer are members of a group called **TRYBE**. They had a huge hit, *Diba-Diba*, which also promoted a dance craze of the same name. Their albums include *Shelela* (Universal Music, 2000), engineered and produced by Gabi le Roux. Gabi was nominated as Best Producer for the album in SAMA 7.

One of the groups that produced a new kind of sound within the kwaito genre was **MAKHUFE**. The name should not to be confused with the annual event Mangaung African Cultural Festival (MACUFE). By the time they released their fourth album, *Senganga*, it was clear that their blending of traditional Sotho, kwaito and house music would result in a new sound; they defined the sound as Lesenk music.

Other groups of the era that come to mind are Oda Meester – Vusi, Lerato and Ntsikelelo (FNB SAMA 5 nomination); Ghetto Luv – Yolanda, Chantal and Wanda Baloi, who later moved to Cape Town in 2002 where she worked with Loading Zone and released solo albums *Voice* and *So Amazing* thereby winning the Kora 2004 Best Arrangement category; as well as one group that said much about the new democratic South Africa, 3Sum, a gay band consisting of Koyo Bala, Jeff Moyo and Amstel Makwane. Their debut CD was titled *Dirurubele* (Butterflies) and was released through EMI. The trio won the 2005 Metro FM Music Awards' Best Styled Group category. Their 2007 follow-up *Siyavuma* was released through Prokelly Entertainment.

**KWANI EXPERIENCE** was another young new-era group who defined their kind of music as "Mudaland funk". Their debut album was titled *The Birth Of The Mudaland Funk*. They were nominated in three categories of the Metro FM Music Awards viz. Best Group, Best Styled Group as well as Best Newcomer. The 2004 original line-up of eight, which included Nosisi Ngakane (vocals), Siyolo Jumbo Dazana (saxophone) and Madite Moalusi, later changed to seven. By 2007 when they released their second CD *Live After Birth* the outfit of six dudes and a lady vocalist membership was Nkoto Keitu Malebje (female vocalist), Kwelagobe Petros "PO" Sekele (poet/rapper), Mahlatse Riba (piano), Frank Magongwa (bass), Gontse Makhene (bongos/congas/djembe), Monde Mkhizwana (drums) and Bafana Nhlapo (percussion). The CD was produced by respected musician, Sibusiso Victor Masondo and also featured percussionist Tlale Makhene. The band was featured on SABC 2's *Weekend Live* on Saturday 20 October 2007 in a programme that was dedicated to the Springbok rugby team due to face England that night.



There was also *UJU* whose music is not easy to put in a box as they mix poetry, hip-hop, mbaqanga and other genres to produce their unique sound. In 2005 the group was still independent of any contractual obligation with record companies, and their debut album was *Cape To Cairo*.

There was also Blue African Skies whose debut album was titled *Hlabelela*.

Among the generals of this new school music there is also **ROBBIE MALINGA**, an ace producer who also has his own music career with hits like *Insimbi* and *Mporomporo*. By 2005 he had released albums like *Susana*, which was nominated Best African Pop in SAMA 11, as well as Meadowlands released through TS Records. His 2006 remake of Mahlathini's *Lilizela Mlilizeli* took the music fans way back to the glory days of mgqashiyo featuring one of African Pop's top musicians, Ntando.

**DJ CLEO** is one hot young producer who left YFM in 2002 to focus on his music career. He was born Tlou Cleopas Monyepao on 24 December 1979 and grew up in Vosloorus, East Rand (now Ekurhuleni). After a stint with gospel group Bonafide and church band, he studied sound engineering at Allenby Campus. Through his "Will Of Steel Productions" he released CDs like *Es'Khaleni*, with Extension 2 featuring DJ What What on *Goodbye (Time To Say Goodbye)* in 2005. This dance floor version of the Sarah Brightman hit won the Best Dance Video in the 2006 Channel O Spirit of Africa Music Video Awards. This was followed by *Es'Khaleni Zone 3*, winner of SAMA 13's Best Urban Dance Album. The track *Ndiya Ndiya* was nominated Song Of The Year for SAMA 2006. His fans and music collectors in general were happy when he released the 2007 follow-up *Es'Khaleni Phase 4*, winner of Metro FM's Best Dance Album section. His hit *Ngihamba Nawe* was nominated for MTN SAMA 14's Record of The Year category, the most liberated section of the awards without male this, female that. The category was won by DJ Sdunkero's *Maputo Song*. However, his *Phase 4* went on to win the Awards' Best Urban Dance Album category. DJ Cleo's other products include the music of Pitch Black Afro, Mzekezeke, Brown Dash, Doc Shebeleza, DJ What What and Brickz.

**BRICKZ** aka Sipho Ndlovu from Zola, Soweto wrote and performed with Speedy as Intimate as well as homeboy Mapaputsi before he could release his debut CD, *Andapende*. He signed a two-album contract with DJ Cleo's Wheel of Steel and released his debut CD *Facebrick* (2005). It featured the hit *Sweetie, My Baby*, which was complimented by a powerful video for television viewers. The "Babyface" from Zola scooped both the Best Newcomer and Best Kwaito Album categories of SAMA 12. In 2006 Brickz won the Best Kwaito Video for *Tjovitjo* in the Channel O Spirit of Africa Music Video Awards. The track was also included on the soundtrack of the blockbuster movie *Tsotsi*. His next CD titled *Estokfeleni* (Ghetto Ruff) was nominated for the 8th Metro FM Music Awards and won SAMA 14's Best Kwaito Album section. In 2008 Ndlovu, who already had his own company Brickado Music, was given his clearance by Wheel of Steel.



A graduate of Lehurutshe College Of Education, **GODFREY PILANE** from Tlhabane, Rustenburg in the North West Province, uses the Educational Psychology he studied to enhance his artists' creativity. Playing his parents' guitar and keyboard at home cultivated the passion that pushed him into the 1987 Shell Road To Fame. Though he did not win, he went on to perform with an R&B group called Exceed, a somewhat prophetic name him. His interest in production was sharpened by his engineer friends Jabu Nkabinde and Kaybee. Passion sent him into studios with groups like POC and Devante (1995), a group later nominated in SAMA 7's Best Producer for their Richard Aronson-produced album *Elements Of Love*. As a musician he uses the name Guffy, which was derived from his first name, Godfrey. Maybe you can try saying "Godfrey" with food in your mouth.

Godfrey's association with Kaybee produced hits like *Jakalas* and *Vuka Mawulele*. On his ten-track *O Rata Mang* (Sony Music, 1999) he dedicated the track *Kgabo Mokgatla* to his father, Meshack Pilane. His mother is so proud of him that she paid him a surprise visit on SABC 1 television show *All You Need Is Love* for the nation to know how precious he is to her. His other albums include *Phodile* (2001) and *Gufsta My Producer*. Godfrey Pilane owns a music company named Guffy Productions. Some of the musicians he has produced include Kabelo, Tokollo, Mandla Mofokeng, Family Factory, MaWillies, Khanyo, Sbu, Hugh Masekela (Revival) as well as the late MaWillies and Brenda Fassie (Paparazzi). Perhaps one of his biggest achievements was the discovery and production of the group Malaika.

The producer who proved that music knows no colour is affectionately known as Ibomvu. **GABI LE ROUX** was born in Johannesburg to Pastor Le Roux. Like Selaelo Selota he is a champion athlete. By 1976 he was touring the country with rock musicians like Neil Solomon and The Passengers as a keyboardist. Inspired by George Duke he went into production. His first project was in 1999 with Themba Ngwenya, the mbaqanga musician. As already shown, most of his successes were scored on the kwaito front with stars like Mandoza, Mashamplani, Trybe and others. But what some of us may not be aware of, is that he has released his own albums like *Ibomvu* (2000) and *Let The Music Talk*. He owns a recording studio, Mighty Music Studios in Cape Town. Besides the afore-mentioned works, he has also worked with artists like Busi Mhlongo, Ringo Madlingozi, Ntokozo Zungu, Thozama Margaret Motsage, the late Nokuzola Brenda Fassie and others.

Besides Oscar Mdlongwa of Kalawa there is another Oscar, Oscar Mlangeni who co-owns a record label with Nimrod Nkosi named Bulldawgs. Both men were in the television industry, Oscar producing the popular youth programme, *Jam Alley* and Nimrod presenting the same programme. Nkosi later anchored the National Lottery's tv game shows. This stable boasted young kwaito stars like Mzambiya aka Nkosinathi Zwane, Nomasonto "Mshoza" Maswanganyi and

Sboniso Msawawa Dlamini. **MZAMBIYA** from Zola in Soweto impressed national television viewers by dancing and speaking fluent township lingo commonly called Tsotsitaal in Nimrod Nkosi's *Jam Alley* show. From there the "Bulldawgz" of youth music released his hot albums including *Jersey #10* featuring Orlando Pirates' Steve Lekoelea, which sold over 25 000 units. His other albums are *From Zola To Hollywood* (2000), *Heir To The Throne* (2002) and *Zikode* (2004). One of his big hits was *Iskathi*. Mzambiya also worked with Backstage star, Loyiso "Chippa" Mangena on *Mzambiya vs Chippa – Undisputed* (2003), *Chippa vs Mzambiya – Undisputed Part Two* (2005).

Another dynamite, **MSAWAWA's** albums include *The Hurricane* (2001) and *Sibalukhulu* (2004). The hit *Bowungakanani?* surely proved that "dynamite comes in small packages". In 2005 he went into the studio with producer "Techno" to work on a 12-track album that features tracks like *Ingoma Yami Ingaphakathi*.

**MSHOZA** aka Nomasonto Maswanganyi released her debut album, *First Lady* with Bulldawgz Productions. It propelled her to stardom at the age of 18 setting dance floors ablaze with the hit *Kortes*. She later joined Mzura Kuse's Ziyawamo Productions and released the albums, *The Return* (2005) and *Intomb' Emnyama* (2007). In May 2007 she was negotiating an exit in order to join ABK Productions. By January 2008 she had released her latest offering titled *Vimbani* as wedding bells were ringing for her and Witbank (now eMalahleni) businessman, Jacob Mnisi.

Maybe I need to pay tribute to the guys from the North West Province who revolutionised local music by effectively popularising hip-hop in the Setswana language. This music presentation is known as Motswako. **BAPHIXILE** guys, Blax Myth aka Sipho Mabena and Prof. aka Sobukwe Seremane released albums like *Ngoma* (Sony, 1998) featuring *Da Roof* and *Kasiology* (Virgin Child, 2000) featuring hits like *Shate!* In 2004 their *Apesam Bakwadz* was nominated in the Best Rap Album category of SAMA 11.

Jabulani "Jabba" Tsambo aka **HIP-HOP PANTSULA** also hit the market with songs like *Mafikeng* and *Tswaka*. His albums include *Introduction* (1999), *Maftown* (2002) as well as *O Mang?* (2004) on which he worked with another new hip-hop musician, Mr Selwyn. *O Mang Reloaded* was released in 2005. In 2007 the five-times Channel O Awards nominee surprised both judges and viewers by winning SABC 2's *Strictly Come Dancing* finals with his professional dance partner, Hayley Bennet. In the same year he launched his own record label, Lekoko Entertainment. As if that was not enough, he was nominated for the MTV Base Awards and released his CD *Acceptance Speech*, which stirred a storm on the dance floors featuring *Music and Lights*. HHP was the first recipient of the music section of the first Stars of Mzansi Awards on 29 February 2008. Other nominees in the SABC 1 event were Lira and Freshlyground. *Acceptance Speech* received three nominations in the SAMA 2007: Best Album, Best Male Solo and Best Rap Album categories. The hit from the album titled *Music and Lights*

contested the MTN Record of the Year category. HHP came out tops in the Best Male Solo Artist and Best Rap Album categories. The Awards' Best Female Artist category winner was Karen Zoid for *Postmodern World*.

**TUKS SENGANGA's** album *Mafoko A Me* was crowned Best Rap Album by SAMA 12. It featured his massive hit, *525 600 Minutes*. The talented Tumelo Meshack Kepadisa from Mafikeng was later featured in a Massed Choir Festival on Sunday, 24 September 2006 at the Standard Bank Arena. What a befitting honour and moment of glory! His 2006 follow up was *MC's Prayer*, winner of the 8th Metro FM Music Awards' Best Hip-Hop Album Award.

Another group, **MORAFE**, was formed by Khulani, Towdee and Kay-G. These Mafikeng guys' debut album was *Maru A Pula*, which was released through Ghetto Ruff.

To enjoy more rhythms and rhymes from this generation, sit back and listen to Bongo Maffin's praise singer, Stoaan Seate, rolling with ease and sailing above song and dance. Institutions like Mmabana Cultural Centre deserve a page in the history books of South Africa's cultural revolution!

Thulani Ngcobo aka **PITCH BLACK AFRO** was born in Orlando, Soweto to Geli and Raynold Ngcobo. He rose to fame in 2003 with the success of his debut album *Styling Gel*, which featured two hits *Ntfontofo* and *Pitch Black Afro*. The CD reached the double platinum sales status within three months of its release. The former cleaner and waiter wears a wig to enhance his image. Having studied Classical music, specialising in piano and voice, he embarked on his music career after Simply Red performed at his place of work, the Dome in Northgate, in 1990. His musical home is Ghetto Ruff. Among his awards were Metro FM's: Best Newcomer, Best Hip-Hop Album and Song Of The Year (*Pitch Black Afro*). His follow-up albums included *Split Endz* and *Bigger, Blacker, Better*. Other Ghetto Ruff artists included Spykos and Bravo.

**SKWATTA KAMP** is a group formed by Fantumslikar aka Slikour, Shugasmakx, Nish, Flabba, Bozza, Nemza, Infa, Relo and company. The majority of its members were friends from Leondale, Ekurhuleni. In 2001 they released *Skwatta Kam-pain*, followed by *Khut En Joyn* (2002) for which they received SAMA's Best Rap Album Award as well a Metro FM Music award. Their album *Mkhukhu Funkshen* (2003) took the local music scene by storm and won SAMA 10's Best Rap Album as well as a Kidz Choice award. They also won Metro FM Awards' Best Hip-Hop category in 2003. Their hits include *Umoya*, *Child's Play* and *The Clap Song*, winner of the 2005 Channel O African Music Video Awards' Best Hip Hop Video. They were nominated in the 10th Kora All Africa Music Awards' Best Hip-hop category for *Washmikhukhu*. After leaving Gallo Records and joining EMI they released *Bak On Kampus* (2006). Some members later released own solo projects. Slikour aka Siyabonga Metane was born on 13 April 1981 in Katlehong, East Rand (now Ekurhuleni). He released *Ventilation Mixtape Vol. 1* featuring peers like HHP, Pro-Kid and Proverb. It was followed by

*Ventilation Mixtape Vol. 2* in October 2007. Relo aka Refiloe Tsotetsi who holds a fashion design diploma also went solo. In 2008 the group released *Kings and Queens of Tomorrow* urging children to report abuse. They were also part of local musicians who recorded *Not in My Lifetime*, following the May 2008 uprisings against foreign nationals.

**MR SELWYN** aka Selwyn Ngwenya was born in Pimville and has worked behind the scenes with other known hip-hop musicians to sharpen his skills including Amu on *The Life, The Rap, The Drama*. The release of his album *The Formula* was accompanied by the video, *Shake It*. Recognitions from SAMA 2004 and the Channel O Music Awards are confirmation that Selwyn has a bright future. His follow-up CD was *Zone 5*, a dedication to Pimville.

**PROKID** aka Linda Mkhize is from Klipspruit, Soweto. His debut album was titled *Head & Tales*. He followed up with other sizzlers titled *DNA* (2006) and *Dankie San* (2007). Like most of his peers, he is a product of the Soweto Black Sunday Movement. On the first Stars of Mzansi Awards his collaboration with the Parlotones was mind-blowing!

**PROVERB** worked for Gauteng's youth radio station, YFM and went on to release his own music. In 2007 his CD titled *Manuscript* was nominated for the 8th Metro FM Music Awards.

Some of the most creative productions were from **REVOLUTION**, a duo made up of Alexandra-born brothers Joseph and George Mothiba. The project was a real revolution as it turned the music of old African uncompromising stars, Philip Tabane and Fela Kuti into nightclub hits through their debut CD, *The Journey* (SAMA 9 nominee). They won SAMA 10's Best Dance Album section for *The Journey Continues* as well as SAMA 11's Best Duo Or Group category for *Another Level* (Universal Music, 2004), an album that went beyond the triple platinum status. It featured some of the new generation of jazz musicians like Pops Mohamed, McCoy Mrubata and Jimmy Dlodlu. These kind of remixes gave jazz music another face and made it easily accessible to the youth. By 2006 the duo had released *Roots* through their label, 4 Sounds Productions. It featured the voice of Makwarela-born Madhuva Madima of Muvhango fame on *Light Of My Life*. The talented Maduvha is niece to the well-known gospel star, Itani Madima. Many music fans first knew her as a member of Joyous Celebration and later as a stand-in for Mafikizolo's Nhlanhla Nciza (née Mafu) during her maternity leave. Revolution produced Madhuva's self-titled debut CD. The brothers' next albums were *4U* and *Fusion*.

There is also **DURBAN'S FINEST** (Sox and Tira) whose album, *Vol. 2, The Finest Level* won the 2005 Metro FM Music Awards' Best Compilation category. The two deejays were facing stiff competition from T-Bose's *Nightpulse* and DJ Claude's *Stereocandi Essential Tunes 2*. The Best Dance category was scooped by DJ Bongz while Sy Ntuli was the winner of the Best Jazz category. The Best Compilation category's winner of SAMA 13 was Flabba's *Nkuli vs Flabba*. Tira

was the first winner of the Club DeeJay category of the first Stars of Mzansi on 29 February 2008!

**MAGGZ**, who was born Gift Magubane, paid his dues performing with the likes of Prokid. He was featured on the latter's CD, *Head & Tales*. In 2007 the Pimville lad released his long-awaited debut CD aptly titled *Sorry For The Long Wait*.

In 2005 **WIKID** aka Andile Thekwane brought back bump jive clothed in hip-hop reviving the magic of The Movers. He won the 2005 Metro FM Music Awards' Best Hip-Hop category for his CD *Anger Management*. The CD also featured his father's hit composition, *Bump Jive*.

**GANG OF INSTRUMENTALS** (GI) was formed in 2004 by former students of the South African School Of Motion Picture Medium And Live Performance (AFDA) in Johannesburg, Mandla Ngcongwane and Tumi Masemola with two other friends. The name was inspired by one of Dr Dre's tracks. The two mentioned use stage names Lady Naturelle and Mandla N. They released their debut album, *Kassi Flava*, which featured the hit *Cry 4 Me*. The other two friends left the group for solo careers when the very close partners Mandla and Tumi focused on their production company, Black Brain Pictures whose products include SABC comedy, *City Ses'la*. Later GI was joined by Bongo Riot who was already a solo performer. The Channel O nominees' other CDs include *Salute* (featuring *Number One Girl*) and *Round 3*.

Some of the most promising young voices at the time of writing this book were those of a girly trio, **TYTE** whose *Tindzaba* placed them on radio charts. The group consists of Klerksdorp-born Pearl Moagi, former SABC 1 continuity presenter Kedibone Mkhabela and her sister Florence.

Also watch out for **BOJO MUJO** from House Therapy Records who after his debut CD followed with *The Return of Bojo Mujo – Session 2* (2005). His *Destiny – Session 3* was burning dance floors as this book was completed.

**BASHANYANA** was a young trio consisting of Obed Mohajane, Khumbulani Mhlongo and Sipho Sabelo. Their debut album *Molamo Waka O A Chesa* featured songs in Sotho languages.

In 2004 the group Geneses released their CD *Roll Ova* through Sheer Sound.

The Mathews brothers Reez and Russel from Eastwood, Pietermaritzburg were known as members of R&B trio, Ashaan whose CDs include *She's Got My Heart* (2002) and *On The Road* (2003). Realising that their music was well-received "down-under", they flew out to Australia. After staying in Australia for two years, they returned home in 2005 and took a break from music. They later formed a new group, **JUNEMA**. The name was a coinage of the months of their birth, June and March. The duo's Afro-soul debut CD was titled *True Reflection*.

SAMA 2006 nominated a young man called **L'VOVO DERRANGO** for the Best Kwaito Album and Song of The Year categories. The trailblazer was born Thokozani Ndlovu on 1 September 1979 in Newcastle. His schoolmates named him L'Vovo after the American rapper, LV. His debut album *Bayangisukela*



scooped the Best Kwaito Album category of the 8th Metro FM Music Awards, while the title track won the Song of the Year section. He then followed up with *The Teddybear* (2007).

Musicians in this category include Zubz, Jub-Jub Maarohanye, Zulu Mobb, Hidden Force, Young Nations and many others.

The new school era, locally and internationally, was also characterised by “sampling”. Sampled tracks include Double Exposure’s *My Love Is Free*, Betty Wright’s *Tonight Is The Night*, Ten City’s *That’s The Way Love Is*, Womack and Womack’s *Baby I’m Scared of You*, Gladys Knight and the Pips’ *Midnight To Georgia*, Joni Mitchel’s *Big Yellow Taxi*, the list goes on. Another trend was that of “mashing” whose purpose is to cross over from one track to another without creating a gap in-between. It also creates such a smooth transition that a dancer/ listener hardly realises the change. Both techniques call for proper copyright clearance with publishers.

One would have thought that beyond the liberation struggle politics there would be very little lyrical controversy in music. Wrong! This new school music, especially kwaito and hip-hop, got the nation talking. Some of the songs that caused controversy by playing to the pelvic gallery included *Sika lekhekhe* (Arthur Mafokate), *Sista Bethina* (Mgarimbe aka Nkosinathi Mfeka) and many others which for unknown reasons did not raise any big storm. However, what is interesting is how the negative publicity ends up promoting the songs to platinum levels, for example *Ama Weekend*, which carries the track *Sista Berthina* sold over 250 000 units! Sadly, Mgarimbe’s fellow musician and producer Jabu Mdinge passed away in July 2007 and was buried in Orange Farm.

The growth of hip-hop as a global phenomenon resulted in the need for players to meet annually and exchange ideas. In 2005 a Global Hip-Hop Summit was staged at the Bassline in Newtown, Johannesburg. The event, which was sponsored by the United Nations, was organised by Siphosithole of Native Rhythms Productions and Lee Khasumba of YFM.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

# FINE MALE VOICES

One of the finest male voices of the eighties belonged to **BIBI MSOMI** the son of Noshukela and Mantombi Msomi. From a young age Bibi was inspired by vocalists like “Mama Africa”, Miriam Makeba. He released his maxi single *You Are The Flower/Frustrated Mind* (Wea, 1985) co-written with Almon and Thokoza Memela who also produced it. It was arranged by Almon Memela and engineered by Philip Nel. His album *What Kind Of Love Is This?* (Right Track, 1987) was produced by Peter Moticoe and engineered by Humphrey Mabote and Lee Short at RPM record company. By 1990 he was with Dephon Music where he released an album that paid tribute to the continent’s female superstar, Miriam Makeba titled *Makebamalitis*. Banzi Kubheka and Cyril Mnculwane co-wrote and co-produced it. It was engineered by Bruce Williams on the Roy B label. Guest artists included Cyril Mnculwane (keyboards and drums), Khaya Mahlangu (saxophone) and Larry Amos (guitar). The producers employed the star-studded backing choir of Faith Kekana, Beulah Hashe, Phumzile Ntuli, Star Mabaso, Deborah Fraser, Marilyn and Tu Nokwe.

The childlike yet selling voice of Michael Jackson motivated many youngsters to sing like him in many contests in South Africa. Producer Richard Siluma saw an opportunity in the trend and went into the studio with **RUBEN BEEWA** in 1985. They came out with a maxi single, *Baby You Turn Me On/Free Your Love* written by Ruben and Lloyd Lelosa on the Plum Records label. The success of the project in a category that had no real local challenger encouraged Ruben to release a self-written 1986 mini album titled *Ring My Bell*. It was co-arranged with PH Phaake who was also the producer on the Racey Records label.

**JOE NINA** aka Henry Makhosini Xaba grew up in Kwa-Thema, Springs, East Rand (now Ekurhuleni) surrounded by music. At the tender age of three he

was already accompanying his parents on music tours. His father Solomon Xaba was a guitarist and saxophonist in his day. Solomon had a band called The Shammings in which his mother Lettie was a backing vocalist. Amongst Bra Sol's albums was *Khamba*.

Henry produced the music of his sister, Nhlanhla Xaba aka Nina Sista including the album *Baba Ka Boy*. He also produced the Nina Brothers, a band consisting of his brother, Vusi Xaba and cousins Thabo Mokone and Jeff Mhlongo. They released three albums including *Sgubhu*.

I first met Henry in the Crown Mines building of Tusk Music. He was under the supervision of a PRO called Chessman who fell under the Diamond Music label. At that time his recording name was King Rap, the name I still call him to this day. A few years back when he lay in hospital after a car accident, at his bedside I just called the name and without turning he knew it was me as he responded "Hi, Bra Max!". Henry's 1990 album with the label titled *Midi* (Tell Me) was composed and arranged by him and Chessman. Above his super talents as a multi-instrumentalist, producer, songwriter, arranger and performer, Henry possesses one of the most magnetic voices. He first got into music when the drummer in his father's band left the group. He later had to substitute the lead vocalist who had also left the band and played piano as well. Henry's debut album *Makoti O Tshwana Le Pere* (EFP) was released under the name T. McCool. After joining Tusk Music he also released music as Hot Slot Machine, but the name was changed to King Rap in 1990. When Taso Stephanou launched the Coca-Cola Full Blast Music Show in the early nineties, King Rap worked with Arthur Mafokate and entered the talent search with two songs, *I Need It* as Q-Face and *Let's Dance* as Out Of Control. After this project he joined CCP Records and released *Brokee* using the name Salimaya, which was inspired by the mensah of Mali, Salif Keita. It was when Makhosini released the album *One Time, One Vibe* featuring the track *Boza* that he changed his stardom name to Joe Nina. It stuck. One of his passions as a young Kwa-Thema boy was soccer. He played for a promising football club named after its sponsor, Creepy Crawly. It was as a hot foot player for the club that he earned the name Joe. When he broke his knee his parents were only too glad to remove him from the soccer pitch and place him on stage behind the drums. His second album as Joe Nina was the massive hit, *Ding Dong*. His 1996 album *Joy* (Kuya Sheshwa La) won SAMA 2's Best Township Dance Performance category. Other township pop albums include *1-2 One Two* (I-Life Inzima), which was nominated for SAMA 3's Best Township Pop category, *Rain Down R&B* (1997), *Egogogweni* (1998), *Sbali* (1999), *Mababasa* (2000) and *Nomthandazo* (2001), winner of SAMA 8's Best African Pop Album category. His 2005 release was *Moments*, a 12-track album featuring the hit *Ebunzimeni*. It also included our South African national anthem. Some of his memorable hits were *Ding Dong*, *S'Bali*, *Zodwa*, *Pascalina*, *Maria Podesta* and *Phuma Kimi*. Around 1997/98 the music industry changes that swept the country

with kwaito music accompanied by bashes included performing to back-tracks. Joe Nina who also boasts a Smirnoff award openly challenged the trend and chose live performances as he argued that “miming” was undermining concert revellers and stifling artist creativity and flexibility on stage, as musicians could only sing a song the same way every time if they were on record.

His other productions include Twins’ 1994 self-titled album *Khanyo Maphumulo’s Iyangibiza* (1999) and the Nina Tribe album, *Teddy Bear* (Primedia Records, 2000). Nina Tribe was Kabelo, Mokete, Pholo and Tebogo. During our meeting in 2005 at a Hammanskraal hotel he told me that one of the highlights of his career was composing nine songs for the Brenda Fassie album *Abantu Bayakhuluma* and flying to the UK to record it in Butterfly Studios, London. The two musicians composed and arranged the music together and that was Joe’s first trip outside the country. The album won the first FNB SAMA’s Best Vocal Performance Female category. He was also requested to write the music score and theme song for Les Blair’s BBC Channel 4 movie production *Jump the Gun* and ended up appearing in the movie that starred Baby Cele. Together with Cele they performed the track *Better Life*. Other South African musicians featured on the sound track included M’Du, Bright Blue, Brenda Fassie, Karoo, Malombo and Mashamplani. Joe says the UK movie with the slogan “Bullets And People Don’t Mix” made him realise that acting was not for him. From there he focused on his passion – writing, producing, arranging and performing music. In the same year, together with Ray Phiri they wrote the music score for the soundtrack of the Ramadan Suleman film *Fools*. The film was adapted from Njabulo Ndebele’s book. Joe writes, arranges and produces for a variety of musicians and genres. The year 2006 saw the release of his CD *Travel The Gravel*, which was nominated for SAMA’s Best Pop Album: African. A befitting bonus for his loyal fans was a 17-track collection album titled *The Best Of Joe Nina* featuring some of the best musicians of our time.

Among some of the giants of South African music Nina worked with was Ray Phiri. Between 1995 and 1996 they created the record label, “Killa Joe Music” whose products included Joe Nina’s *Talk To Me*, as well as projects like D-Style and New Perspective. During that time they worked closely with musicians like Hugh Masekela and Mara Louw. Joe later teamed up with Steve Kekana and Nana Motijoane in a project called The Trio. The Trio performed at many venues and released their debut album titled *My Pride, My Joy* in 2004. His serious side as a musician is revealed in his 2001 project, *Lakim*, featuring Joe Nina CD titled *African Cup*. *Lakim* was inspired by a name he was given when he turned to the Muslim community for guidance in his life, Abdul Ragim. The late great Ratau Mike Makhalemele who also worked with him featured on the track *Soulful Man (Song For Bra Mike)* blowing his horn. The CD was released by the independent, bold and pioneering jazz label, Sheer Sound. It was produced, composed, programmed and engineered by Mr Henry Makhosini Xaba himself.

Just before the eighties could slip into the pages of history, Shandel Music unleashed *Mama's Baby*, a hit by a young musician, with a sweet voice, called Sydney. His full names were **SYDNEY MOGOPODI**. His albums included *Smoko Majita* (1993) and *Mama Joyce* (1997). Though he had other projects and featured on other musicians' work, his monumental hit remains *Mama's Baby*. He was part of the Golden Oldies Music Festival staged at Polokwane Showgrounds on 31 March 2007.

From the talented Bala family in Uitenhage, **LOYISO BALA** followed his brother Zwai into the music industry. He is the third born in a family of four. He too sang with the Drakensberg Boys Choir with whom he travelled all over the world between 1990 and 1995 as a young boy. After matriculating at St Stithians College in 1998, he furthered his music studies with UNISA doing Bachelor Of Music while teaching music at his former college. His first opportunity in professional music came when he was featured in TKZee's *Guz 2001* singing tunes like the self-composed *Girl Without A Name*. BMG signed him to release his single *Mus'Ukukhala* (2000), which won him an award for Best R&B Artist and a nomination for Best Newcomer in the 2000 Metro FM Music Awards. It was followed by a self-titled album. Another single was released in 2001 titled *Silky Soft Skin*. Then followed a full album, *Wine, Women And Song*, which went gold in early 2005. I guess George Benson gave him the proverbial handshake for the excellent cover version of *Give Me The Night*. The album was co-produced by his brother, Zwai. It achieved gold status. In 2004 he released his fourth album, *Amplified* on the Creative Kingdom label. The album won SAMA 11's Best R&B Album category. When Creative Kingdom moved to Dubai, he joined SonyBMG and released *Blow Your Mind* (2007), which won Metro FM's Best R&B Album category. His song writing and producing talents were confirmed when he did songs for Mfundi Vundla's television soap opera *Backstage* and the educational drama, *Tsha Tsha*. He also appeared in both. Together with his brothers Zwai and Phelo they released the CD *Bala Brothers...B3*. If his extensive travelling all over the world is anything to go by, Loyi is still going to blow us away with his own blend of R&B.

Another excellent isiZulu balladeer is **MATONTO** aka Calvin Gudu. In 1997 he shook the local music industry with his isiZulu R&B ten-track album titled *Igugu Lami*, which was released by Mob Music. The multi-talented Matonto wrote, produced, engineered and mixed the whole album by himself in the Noize Box Studios, London. This is one album that has shown that, with determination and the right resources, South African musicians can produce the same quality music as foreign music, which has attracted our consumers.

In 1979 **JOHNNY MOKHALI** arrived in Johannesburg from Mafikeng in the North West Province. His music career stretches back to the mid-seventies. Johnny hit the big time with a love song titled *Mpule*. From there he released many successful albums, some of which have been released in the UK. Most of

Johnny's songs are in his home language, Setswana. He later released his self-written and produced album *Majasana* (Drum Rock, 1988). His other album *Modimo O Phala Baloi* (1991) features hits like *O Ntsoetsa Mahutsana*. His wife has been very supportive of him and can also be seen with him on the cover of his 1993 album, *O Manoni Wame*. Among some of the awards he won was SAMA's Best Traditional Performance category with his 1996 album *Sediba Sa Mafoko*. It featured hits like *Ke Go Gopotse*. The album *Gankitla Ke Hloboga Morena* was nominated for SAMA 7. Most of his albums included gospel tracks. God saved this singing sensation from a terrible car accident and we hope to continue benefiting from his soul-enriching lyrics.

Former policeman, the late **UMANJI** aka Johannes Nkuna set the stage on fire at a 2006 show I attended in Boksburg. The crowd just couldn't get enough of his live version of the hit *Moloi* from his 1999 debut album of the same name. *Moloi* (The Witch) was inspired by the many witchcraft-related killings in the province of his birth, Limpopo. The alleged man-manipulated lightning strikes resulted in the broad day-light burning of those "responsible" or even their houses. The album was nominated in SAMA's Best Newcomer category in 2000. He had a deep rich voice that could surprisingly rise to the highest pitch. Besides his mother tongue, xi-Tsonga, this star from Zebediela also sang in many other languages. His penetrating voice sometimes reminds one of musicians like Vusi Mahlasela and Youssou N'Dour. Umanji's other albums included *Wantolobela* (2001) and *Indlala* (2003), which was nominated in SAMA 2004's Best Male Composer and Best Contemporary Album categories. His 2004 album *O Baba O Re Ha!* was produced by Selaelo Selota. It featured the hit, *Moruti Shumba* and won him a 2004 SAMA in the Best Composer category. In 2005 he featured in two categories of the Munghana Lonene FM Awards. After recovering from a TB attack related to his HIV status in 2007 he released a CD titled *Byala*. Unfortunately Umanji was lost to the music industry on 26 February 2008 and laid to rest on 8 March amongst his people at Mogoto cemetery, Zebediela.

The success of Boys II Men in the US inspired the formation of local groups like **TWINS**. The band was formed by two sets of twins: Brothers Percy and Lesley Sithatho from Alexandra and brothers Lucky and Nhlanhla Shabangu from Soweto. I remember the early days of the group very well because they'd pass by my house for a cup of tea and we would share their dreams – very determined! They even offered to record jingles for my programmes and when we went into the studio to do that, we just had a ball. At that stage they were under the supervision of Lucas Mahlakgane, one humble yet assertive professional. Their self-titled debut album featured the hit *I'm In Love*. They worked with Joe Nina to release the ten-track CD on RPM's MGS label. Their hits include *Sengiyasha*, *Higher And Higher* and *Shona Phansi*, which was nominated for SAMA 3's Best Township Dance category. In 1997 the Shabangu twins produced *Check No Coast* (Gallo Records), an album by a duet called Fire Jazz, which featured hits like

*Siyabashosholoza*. In 2007 Twins recorded four tracks that were included on the *Best Of Twins* album. They were also working on their new album to be released before the end of that year.

In 1999 Sony Music released *Sthandwa Sam*, an album performed by a quartet called **IVU**. The group's members were Stephen Molakeng, Thabo Mdluli, Innocent Modiba and Brian Makiwane, all of Joyous Celebration fame. The title track sold the CD very well as it was charted on radio stations across the land. Thabo later became a tv presenter doing educational programmes on tourism as well as agriculture (*Ulimo*). He also released a solo CD titled *Wonderful Life*. By 2008 Mdluli was married to Nhlanhla and presenting Lindelani Mhkize's brainchild, the television talent search titled *I Want To Sing Gospel*. Stephen became co-presenter of SABC 1's *Gospel Gold* with Lerato Moloi of Muvhango fame.

Another group, **CANARIES**, released *Kune Mbizo* in 1999 under the production guidance of Bheki Ngcobo. It was engineered by Felani Gumbi and released by Universal Music. The group was made up of Themba Herman Masemola, Sibusiso Clement Mngomezulu, Sibusiso Desmond Mnyakeni and David Maseko. Bheki also featured on a track titled *Melody From A Distance*.

**DENIM** was an Afro-Pop outfit popularised by their handling of cover versions. The group membership was Baldwin Manye, Bobo Seritsane, Tumi Mashego, Leonard Moloi and Sangoma. Their 2007 release was the album *Full Circle*. Their strength lay in their stage presence and choreography.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN MUSIC

**L**ong before the national agenda of the African Renaissance, some musicians had already started the journey to self-rediscovery. The champions of this movement include a man who knighted himself “Sir Alton” – **DUMISANI ALTON MASHABA**. This giant was born on 24 December 1954, the seventh child in a family of 12 within the community of the Mandzawu in the former Eastern Transvaal. Dumisani became a famous singer, writer, arranger and producer. After matric, he studied Theology with UNISA, but the artist in him cried out louder. To prepare himself for the world of showbiz, he did a management diploma with the Institute of Personnel Management and studied drama through the National Dramatic Guild Of New York. He toured South Africa with his most successful drama, *The Promise*, and managed a group called The New Generation. His second album, *Dancers Of Africa*, blended the Mandzawu/Tsonga traditional sounds with contemporary rhythms to bring out a Pan African feel. Just when his kind of sound started appealing to the masses he crossed over to the other world.

Following in his footsteps, a regiment of mostly young musicians also produced a blend of music that could easily appeal to Africans anywhere in the continent and the diaspora. Even established jazz legends like Hugh Masekela joined the trend and made us very proud to be who we are – unashamedly African!

Another band of the time, **Tou** had a big hit titled *Legato Ka Legato* and featured on the charts of most black radio stations in the eighties.

**SANDILE RINGO MADLINGOZI** was born in 1964 in Gugulethu township, Cape Town. He was into music from a very young age and fell in love with The

Beatles' drummer, Ringo Starr aka Richard Starkey. His idolisation of Ringo led to his nickname. He cut his musical teeth in a local group, Ikwezi, writing songs and singing in Langa. At a Cape Town jazz workshop in 1984 he met Alan Cameron and their common vision led to the formation of an eight-man band, PETO. The band became a huge success and won awards like Shell Road To Fame (1986) and Autumn Harvest Personalities Of The Year (1987). It was also nominated in the OKTV Awards' Best Township Music category. The group released *Khaya – Where The Heart Is* (1988) featuring the title track.

In 1989 Ringo and Alan broke away from Peto to explore new horizons of their creativity in a new group, Gecko Moon. The name was symbolic of their meeting, inspired by the co-ordination of the moon and the earth. The new group's self-titled debut album was released on the PVB label and set ablaze by hits like *Green Green* and *Reggae Party*. But later Ringo wanted to spread his creative wings wider and went solo. The night I interviewed Alan Cameron at a night club in Johannesburg he still talked with fondness about the glory days of Gecko Moon. Alan and S'Khumbuzo Fassie co-wrote *Taxi Jam* for S'Khumbuzo's entry into the Coca-Cola Full Blast Music Show 3.

After the late Bob Marley producer, Chris Blackwell persuaded him to make music in his own language, Ringo released his debut album, *Sondela*. The album was so strong it won him SAMA's Best Male Artist and Best Adult Contemporary categories. It also won a category in the Kora All Africa Music Awards. His *Mamelani* CD featured hits like *Ngizokulinda*. It won him the Best Male Artist category of SAMA 5. Ringo Madlingozi, who believes there's always room for improvement, attended classes for training in his best instrument – his voice. Ringo also attended guitar lessons. By the way, he is also a good drummer and percussionist. The CD *Buyisa* won SAMA 7's Best African Pop Album section. On the album he invited his peers to help him spread the love: Joe Nina, Oliver Mtukudzi, Steve Dyer, Fana Zulu, Victor Ntoni, Pondo Doloai, Tlale Makhene and Zolani Mkiva.

Ringo's duet with Oliver Mtukudzi on *Into Yam* revived the hit in style. His powerful voice is so much in demand that he also guests on other musicians' albums like on McCoy Mrubata's 1999 album, *Phosa Ngasemva*, where he featured on the track *Abukho*. Ringo whose fan base is dominated by females was roped into the UB40 project when the group was requested by the UN's Kofi Anan to help fight the Aids pandemic. *Ntumba* (2002) was nominated SAMA 9's Best Adult Contemporary African Album. The following year he won the Best African Pop Album category for *Ringo Live*. In 2004 his album *Baleka* was nominated in SAMA 11's Best Contemporary African Adult Album category. The 10th Kora All Africa Music Awards nominated him in the Best Male Artist: Southern Africa in the same year. Ringo, whose gap in his front teeth had almost become part of his brand, closed it in 2006 for health reasons as it never was his choice but the result of an accident in his days of yore. In

the same year he released a 16-track CD simply titled *Ndim Lo*, as if to say the real me is without a gap. In 2006 he released his second DVD, *Ringo Live 2*. The Massed Choir Festival 2007 featured him as the guest artist. His 2006 CD won the 8th Metro FM Music Awards' Best Male Vocalist section.

**JEFF MALULEKE** was born to Dora and Johannes Maluleke in Bushbuckridge. As a Maluleke he is a M'Nwanati; it is the name of his clan. He showed interest in music while still a student in Bushbuckridge. He met another student who was learning to play guitar, Patrick Dubazana, and together they started the long journey. Jeff entered the music scene in the early days of kwaito music working with Arthur Mafokate as Papa Jeff. Their album *Pinky Pinky Yo!* featured the hit *Chirwali*. Later with Patrick Dubazana they released their music under the name, Hagonya whose album *That's The Way* (CCP, 1996) was nominated for SAMA 3's Best Duo Or Group category. When he started releasing albums like *Djovo* as Jeff Maluleke And Hagonya it was clear that he intended going solo. The hit *Byala Bya Xintu* won SAMA 5's Best Video category. His self-produced 2000 solo album *Juliana* was released by CCP Records and won him SAMA 7's Best Producer category. It featured the hit *Sala N'wana Mama*. In 2001 he released *Kilimanjaro*, which he wrote, arranged and produced. It was engineered by Jasper Williams. It features tracks like *Woman Of Africa*, *Woman In A Desert* as well as *Let's Save The World*. Like his previous CD, it was also nominated in the Best Producer category in SAMA 8 and won the Best Adult Contemporary African Album. In 2002 Kora All Africa Music Awards crowned him Revelation Of The Year. On the album *Mambo* he featured the legendary Hugh Masekela. His CD *Shimatsatsa* revealed a progressive master musician. In 2005 he released *Ndzilo*, which was nominated for the SAMAs. It was followed by *A Twist of Jeff* (2007) His other works include writing the signature theme for SABC 2's comedy *Ashifa Shabba*. Jeff has taken xiTsonga music to another level.

In 1992 my friend Moss, whose music taste I've learned to respect over the years, bought me a music cassette as a present. He said it was the new African voice in music. It was titled *When You Come Back* and I fell in love with the voice, the guitar and the message. It is how I came to know a young musician called **VUSI MAHLASELA**. It featured hauntingly beautiful tunes like *Tonkana*. Later when I introduced African music to the radio station I was leading, Vusi who was one of the political voices of the mid-eighties challenged me to come up with proper African jingles relevant to the vision of the station. When I returned the challenge, he obliged and that led to a professional relationship that we still share. At the time he lived with his grandmother Ida in Mamelodi, Tshwane. This is where besides being a political poet he taught himself to play a self-made guitar. Maybe I should mention that Mamelodi is one of the cultural melting pots of South Africa.

Born in Lady Selborne in 1965, Vusi Sidney Mahlasela grew up listening to the music of the Malombo Jazzmen as well as the African traditional dances

of the migrant hostel dwellers. His sharp and smooth voice endeared him to choirmasters and students alike at school. Poetry is his first love, hence the inclusion of the works of poets in his music. After the 1976 student uprisings Vusi got involved in protest activities and even joined the late Dr Fabian Ribeiro's poetry group, The Ancestors Of Africa. With the guidance of the likes of Nadine Gordimer he received his poetry education. He belongs to that rare breed of African firebrands like Lefifi Tladi, Kgafela Oa Magogodi, Ingoapele Madingoane, Lesego Rampolokeng, Duma ka Ndlovu, Maishe Maponya and the late Matsemela Manaka.

By 1986 Vusi had already recorded a maxi single as lead vocalist of a Mamelodi group, Mahube. Mahube was formed in 1979 by students Bethem, Philip, Bernard and Sydney, who were later joined by bassist Elias Seelane. The maxi single was produced by the late West Nkosi on Gallo's Soul Jazz Pop label. My visit to his home resulted in the popular jingles that came to be associated with SABC's Thobela FM in my time. He later asked me to serve as a director on the board of his project, the Vusi Mahlasela Music Development Foundation based at the South African State Theatre in Tshwane. I obliged. That is how I met the foundation's administrator, Pat Ranoto, who in 2006 released his debut album, *My Roots*. Keyboardist Pat whose stage name is Wadee was born in Phahameng, Modimolle in Limpopo Province. It was when his parents moved to Mamelodi that he met Vusi. I'm always humbled by talented musicians who are down to earth and level-headed like Vusi. His Yamaha guitars have accompanied this former Pleasure Invaders member to release albums like *When I Come Back* (1992), *Wisdom Of Forgiveness* (1994), *Silang Mabele* (1997), *Vusi Mahlasela And Louis Mhlanga Live At The Bassline* (1999) and *Miyela Afrika* (2000) featuring Andy Narell, Faith Kekana and Tsepo Tshola. In 2002 he released *Jungle Of Questions* with a band he called Proud People's Band made up of Johnny Motuba (drums), Elway Masango (bass guitar), Moses Mafiri (Acoustic guitar and alto sax), Queen Ranyama (vocals), Tani Mello (keyboards) and Paul Majoro (Electric guitar). It was nominated in SAMA 9's Best Producer category. Whenever we met Vusi would ask me to trace the particulars of his old favourite song, Ali Mapulana's *Kolobjana' Makgolo (Kolozwana)* and I was only too glad to do so. He included it on the album and it became one of his most popular songs at festivals. Vusi has won many awards including SAMA 4's Best African Pop and Best Male Solo categories. His other album, *Miyela Afrika*, was nominated in the Best Producer category of SAMA 7. He was also honoured by the Kora All Africa Music Awards as well as PANSALB for his promotion of various indigenous languages through his music. The man affectionately known as "The Voice" has travelled extensively around the world and played with star guitarists like George Benson and Joan Armatrading. His best professional friend is Zimbabwe-born Louis Mhlanga. BMG Africa is his musical home where he's worked very close with Lance McCormack. As part of his 87th birthday celebrations in July

2005, former state president Dr Nelson Mandela made Vusi an ambassador of his 46664 HIV/Aids Programme together with TV actress/youth presenter Kim Engelbrecht, SABC 2 *Morning Live* presenter Leanne Manas and fellow musician, Dozi. On 14 November 2006 Vusi received the honour of being entered into the Afropop Hall Of Fame in New York City. He told me how humbled he felt to receive the great honour already bestowed on music giants like the Mensa of Mali, Salif Keita and the “Prince of Mbalax”, Youssou N’Dour before him. While some music lovers across the world may recognise him as the man whose music helped the film *Tsotsi* to win an Oscar Award, some will salute him as the musician whose CD *Naledi Ya Tsela* (Guiding Star) was released in the US and climbed on to the ATO Records charts in March 2007. The CD won two SAMA categories of Best Male Artist and Best Engineer, which went to Lloyd Ross. His strong character saw him defeat epilepsy by accepting and managing it. A true African who is passionate about his roots, Vusi traced his genealogy to the Zwane’s; that is how his full names became Vusi Sidney Mahlasela Ka Zwane.

**JABU KHANYILE**’s father, Mathimula, was a singer in Mbube groups. He was of royal blood; in fact he was supposed to be a chief in Nkandla, KwaZulu-Natal but due to work in Johannesburg he ended up making Soweto his home. Jabulani was born on 8 February 1957 in Soweto. He was a self-taught drummer and guitarist who was fascinated by The Question Marks hit *Hey Mr Moonlight*. As Jabulani grew up in Mofolo, all his mother Mamofokeng wished for him was to become an announcer. No, not a radio announcer, but a train schedule announcer. Yes, you guessed right, the voice above our heads at the railway station that says “The next train to Soweto will leave Platform 14 at 4 p.m!” His brother John was a dancer for The Additions, a band owned by Joseph Madeira. The band was formerly known as The Daffodils and in those days had a big hit titled *Millie*. John later played drums in the band. Members of the band were Ignatius Madeira, Frans Madeira, Ace Mbuyisa and John Khanyile. In 1974 Jabulani joined the band as a drummer too. One of their biggest hits was *Chelete* produced by the late Roxy “Black Cat” Buthelezi. In 1978 Jabu moved over to join The Movers under the management of the late David Thekwane. As “Bra Day” also managed Boyoyo Boys, the two bands regularly traded roles; that’s why Jabu’s voice is heard on the Boys’ monster hit *Pule*, which was later also re-arranged by UK’s Malcolm McLaren. In 1984 he joined Bayete, a band previously known as Jaws. In its Jaws days its members were Jaws Dlathu (bass guitar), Arthur Shabalala (keyboards), Johnny Chonco (guitar), Raymond Molefe (trumpet), Mfaniseni Thuse (trombone), Mduduzi Magwaza (alto saxophone) as well as two ladies, Mandisa Dlanga and Stella Khumalo. When the ladies left the band, the guys gave it a new name – Bayete. The name was inspired by the Zulu royal salute. As already indicated in the first chapter of this book, in 1984 Bayete joined Koloi Sabata Lebona’s Kaya Records and recorded a self-titled album with the hit *Shosholoza*. Just after the recording of

that album, new members joined the band: Jabu Khanyile (drums), Themba Mkhize (keyboards) and Fana Zulu (bass guitar). Themba and Fana were from the band, Sakhile. In the new set-up Jabu and Themba wrote the band's music. The Bayete that recorded *Blue Monday* (Decibel Music, 1986) had so changed the line-up that it had only two of the 1984 members, viz. Mfaniseni Thuse and Arthur Shabalala. The other musicians were Kelly Petlane and Sello Mphatsoane (horns), Jabu Khanyile (vocals and drums), Fana Zulu (bass), Themba Mkhize (synthesiser), Chwane Mhlongo (first guitar). *Blue Monday* was produced by Jerry Mhlanga and Chwane Mhlongo and engineered by Keith Forsyth. In 1987 they released Mbombela, which featured the title track and was accompanied by a powerful video. *Ha Re Yeng Hae* was released on CCP's Flame label in 1990. The self-produced album featured the hit *Mbube* and was engineered by Richard Mitchell. With the African map on the cover, that album reflected the new vision of the band – "Ha Re Yeng Hae" – back to our roots. On the album there were two new names, Sello Montwedi (drums) and Levy Kgasi (trumpet and flugel horn). Guest artists were Scorpion Madondo (alto sax), Louis Moreira (trumpet), Khaya Mahlangu (tenor sax) and John Hassan (percussion). That was the last album of the old Bayete before the band split.

Jabu Khanyile went solo and in 1993 felt the need to revive Bayete as his backing band. From there they would be known as Jabu Khanyile and Bayete. His old writing partner, Themba Mkhize, who toured the African continent with Caiphus Semenya, brought him a collection of West African music on his return. After listening to the whole collection and blending it with South African mbaqanga and township soul, he came out with a truly Afrocentric sound that became his trademark. I can easily relate to the exercise because when I was a radio deejay the late great guitar king, Marks Mankwane, would bring me tapes of programmes from radio stations around the world. He did that as he was touring with Makgonatšohle Band backing Mahlathini and Mahotella Queens. That exposed me to world music early in my career and shaped my views on the people of the world and their music. To strategise for the new vision, Jabu had to get the new African sound right and to achieve that he had to work with a new producer. Having fallen in love with Kamazu's products, he approached his producer, Thapelo Khomo. Their debut album was *Mmalo-We* (Teal Records), recorded at the Digital Cupboard and engineered by Ian Osrin. All the tracks were composed by Jabu and Thapelo who produced the album and also played all keyboards. For backing vocals he used some of the best voices in the industry: Khanyo Maphumulo, Khululiwe Sithole, Thembi Kubheka, Batho Mhlongo and Tshidi Mannye. Three tracks sold the album – *Mmalo-We*, *Thabo* and *Ten Times Love*. It won the first SAMA's Best Performance – Male, Best Producer and Song Of The Year categories. His other albums were *Umkhaya Lo* (1996), *Africa Unite* (1997), *Umathimula* (1998), *What About Tomorrow?* (1999), *The Prince* (1999), *Thobekile* (2000 SAMA Best Group & Video), *Umbele* (2001) and *Wa*



*Nkolota* (2003). When we met in 2005 he was launching *Hiyo Lento*, which was released by Lindelani Mkhize Entertainment (LME). His backing vocalists in the live performance that night of the launch were his wife Khululiwe Sithole, Ayanda Zulu and Themba Masemola.

By 2004 he had collected eight SAMAs, 2 Koras, Anti-Racism Stand Award, which he received in Spain in 1999 and Best Outstanding Performance: Royal Command – for his performance at the Royal Albert Hall on Thursday 11 July 1996 where Queen Elizabeth was so impressed by his performance that she stood up and danced!

Jabu was also a celebrated producer. Among his productions are Khululiwe Sithole's CD *Isondlo* (1997) on which he involved Godfrey Pilane with whom he had previously worked on his own albums. He co-produced Bambata's CDs, *1906* and *Ukhandampondo* (poll tax) with Sipho Sithole on the Gallo Records label. The two men were jointly nominated in SAMA 7's Best Producer category for 1906. Jabu told me there were some unforgettable moments of his career that he would take with him to the grave.

When he was performing with Bayete in Mmabatho, a lady cleaner at the Mmabana Cultural Centre asked her son to carve a wooden sculpture of Jabu singing. The woman presented it to him with pride.

While performing *Ha Re Yeng Hae* at Kippies, a Mosotho sangoma woman kneeled in front of him and got possessed by the spirits right there!

At one of his shows in Germany a woman bound to a wheelchair approached the stage and asked for an encore, whereupon she stood up and danced!

In Kenya at a show he shared with Sankomota, a blind man talking to him through an interpreter gave him a fly-whisk made from a giraffe tail symbolising African royalty.

Jabu had toured most of the continent's countries including a performance during the inauguration of Olesegun Obasanjo as president of Nigeria. Outside Africa he'd been to the UK, USA, Europe and Australia. Guest artists on his albums included Youssou N'Dour, Papa Wemba, Wally Badarou, Lagbaja, Lucky Dube, Javi Noti and Trilox Gurtu. He also did duets with musicians like Yvonne ChakaChaka on Caiphus Semenya's *Ndiphendule* as well as Tu Nokwe on her *Ubuntu*, which he also had composed. In 2001 he was part of the "Asiphephe" road safety awareness campaign for the KwaZulu-Natal province. He recorded the album with Mandoza, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Deborah Frazer and Busi Mhlongo. Jabu was part of Sir Bob Geldof's 2005 "Make Poverty History" Live 8 Concert in South Africa. By the way, Jabu was the neighbour of his producer Thapelo Khomo in Dobsonville. By 2006 his fans were beginning to worry because of reports of his ill-health due to sugar diabetes. On Sunday, 12 November 2006 as I was driving to the local shopping complex, I was shocked to hear the radio announce his death caused by the conditions he battled to the last breath – sugar diabetes and prostate cancer. I could not believe that

even before the flowers on Lebo Mathosa's grave had lost their freshness the country had lost another icon. Jabulani Khanyile (49) was laid to rest on Friday, 17 November 2006 at Avalon Cemetery, Soweto. The "prince" left behind his two wives Nomasonto and Khululiwe as well as nine children. What more confirmation that he was a prince can one ask for than the adherence of the majestic rains to the traditional royal send-off? As a consolation to his many fans after his death, a DVD he had recorded with Busi Mhlongo live at the Market Theatre was released.

Great minds think alike, but do great minds die alike? Two weeks after Eddie Levert's "prince" Gerald toured South Africa, he passed away due to a heart attack. It was as if this American "prince" and our African "prince" Jabu Khanyile agreed to walk together to the other side. You ask why? Read this:

- Both died on the same weekend
- Both died of chronic ailments
- Both died in their 40s (Jabu 49, Gerald 40)
- Both were recipients of the KORA All Africa Music Awards (Jabu SA/Gerald Diaspora)
- Both were buried on Friday, 17 November 2006
- Both had musician fathers

Surely, the African gods must have smiled as they welcomed two of their talented sons to join the bigger orchestra up there.

Let me pay tribute to that bass player who shared a name with the band he played for – Jaws. **CHRISTOPHER MLUNGISI CHRISTOPHER DLATHU** was born on 14 September 1957 at Van Wyksrus. His father, Douglas of the Xhosa Mayirha clan, used to sing in choirs. His mother Eunice was also a chorister. In the late sixties the family moved to White City Jabavu in Soweto. Christopher is one of four boys and six sisters. Two of his brothers Sisco and Sidney were musicians. Sisco played guitar for the Square Souls in Dobsonville; Sidney was a double-flute player who specialised in a C and a G blowing them simultaneously. The left-handed Chris always ran into trouble with Sisco as he would play his guitar while his brother had gone to work. The problem was that he had to retune the guitar to suit a left-handed player, a trick he was taught by a maskandi musician. He practiced almost every day after school and when Sisco returned he'd be greeted by the strange sound from his guitar and know that his brother had fiddled with his instrument. Chris was later roped into the family music group called Dlathu's Band. Sam Maishwane of The Heroes in Orlando recruited him. Chris played his first professional bass guitar with the band consisting of Sammy Maishwane (leader), George, Mofuta and Balaza. When The Heroes disbanded, Sam who was later known as Sammy Klaas formed The Sounds in Dobsonville. The band was managed by the late David Thekwane. One of their hits was *Six*

*Mabone (S'azi Abangcono)* with lead vocalist Rammy McKenzie who was from The Young Lovers. Later The Sounds left David to be a resident band at the Cobweb Night Club in King Williamstown. They changed their name to The Chosen Few. Under the production skills of Kolozi Lebona they had hits like *Ride On Dancing*. For about seven years under Sabata's management they performed mainly in Cape Town. The band was so versatile and played all sorts of music styles; this made them all-rounders. The disadvantage of that was the lack of identity, which ultimately frustrated the group and led to its split in 1987. Some members joined Kenny Sephai's Rasmataz. The new line-up was Sammy Klaas (lead guitar), Bushy Seatlholo (keyboards), Christopher Dlathe (bass guitar) and Carlton Malete (drums). It was around that time that the band The Big Dudes was formed to back Brenda Fassie who was also part of Rasmataz.

It is interesting how Chris got the name Jaws. They went to perform in Boksburg and on their arrival the coloured music fans were disappointed to see a small boy carrying a big bass guitar. But when the show started, they were all shocked by the magical performance of the boy. One man took him to his house and told his family, "Don't be deceived by his size, on stage he is as powerful as Jaws." The name stuck. Four years later he went to play with Rich Fever in Durban. After three years with the rock 'n roll band, he returned to Johannesburg to play at the Pelican with Impact, which later changed the name to Exit. Wings Segale and Linda Bernard approached them with an overseas performance contract. The promoters wanted an African band so Exit got a new African name – Thetha. Jaws left the group to work with Chicco Twala and Yvonne Chaka chaka at Dephon. Bakithi Khumalo who worked with West Nkosi joined the new band to replace Jaws on bass guitar. During his time with Chicco their biggest hits were *Makhombo* and *We Miss You Manelow*. After four years he started freelancing and among others he played for Hugh Masekela, Caiphus Semenya, Thandi Klaasen and Jonas Gwangwa.

As I talked to him he was strumming his favourite bass guitar, a Steinberger. Among his professional peers he spoke with admiration about Fana Zulu, Jabu Sibumbe, Victor Masondo, Victor Ntoni, Herbie Tsoali, Mlungisi Gegana, Musa Manzini, Bakithi Khumalo and one of the first electric bass players in South Africa, Joseph Makwela of Makgonatšohle Band.

In 1981 six guys formed one of the most progressive bands of the eighties and named it **SAKHILE**. They were Sipho Gumede (bass guitar), Khaya Mahlangu (saxophone), Gabriel Segwagwa Thobejane (percussion), Menyatso Mathole (guitar), Madoda Mathunjwa (drums) and Don Laka (keyboards). Don was later replaced by Themba Mkhize. In 1982 they released their self-titled debut album. From the onset Sakhile was never your average band; it was a classy, intellectual, laid-back band of the elite. As a result, their music sales suffered a great deal. You see, the real music buyers are the grassroot people who have no connections in higher places, but the music was above their heads. The elite are

not a good sales support clientele; if they buy music it is mostly from the US or the UK. Whenever they need a local album they'll call so and so to ask for a sample or complementary copy. After this album the group disbanded. Siphso Gumede formed a group called Peace. The huge public outcry that followed made the members think twice and in 1987 they staged a comeback in Soweto at Eyethu Cinema. In the new set-up Themba Mkhize was substituted by Alexandra-born Jabu Nkosi on keyboards, whereas drummer Madoda Mathunjwa was replaced by Percy Kunene. The band revived its former glory and in 1988 they were invited to perform in Switzerland and Italy. Their determination to play quality African music despite the poor sales created tensions between them and the record companies, which determined the success of a band on the basis of sales. Their albums included *New Life* (1983), *African Echoes* (1989), *Phambili* (1989), *Welcome Home* (1992) and *Sakhile* (1997). The latter was digitally remastered by Sony Music as part of its Classic Collection series. As almost every member of the band was a musician in his own right, it was not long before they each went solo. In 1997 Sony Music Entertainment released a compilation album of their great hits under its Classic Collection series.

Today we know **KHAYA MAHLANGU** as a respected saxophone star in his own right. Khaya was born in Soweto in 1954 and started playing trumpet while under guidance of musician, writer and film maker Molefe Phineas Pheto in the early seventies. It was at high school level that he switched to this life-long relationship with the saxophone. Having played for Balupi, he had a stint with the Beaters in 1975 and by 1976 he was part of the resident band at the Orlando East nightclub, Pelican, which has been an incubator for most of our musicians like Lebo Morake. Realising the need to sharpen his skills, he went to study music at the University Of Zululand (now KwaZulu-Natal) under a man he met in a township youth programme back in 1971 in Soweto, Professor Khabi Mngoma.

In 1980 he joined Spirits Rejoice led by the late Duke Makasi. A year later he joined Sakhile. A former member of Dondo, Khaya featured on many musicians' albums and worked with the likes of Abdullah Ibrahim and Jonas Gwangwa. Khaya toured the US and Europe with Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba. He arranged, produced and played in Hugh Masekela's 2002 album, *Time*. His other productions include Busi Mhlongo's *Freedom*. The respected Mahlangu was the musical director of the television jazz programme *Bejazzled* (2001) for which he also composed the theme song. He also released his own albums like the album *To You My Dear* (1985). Working with the best in the game like Fana Zulu, Sylvester Mazinyane, Prince Lengoasa, Hugh Masekela and Sibongile Khumalo, Khaya later released a ten-track album titled *Khululeka* in 2006. It was nominated for the Best Contemporary Jazz Album category of the SAMA.

**JABU NKOSI** released *Back Home* (1990) and *Remembering Bra Zacks* (1997) dedicated to his legendary saxophonist father Isaac "Zacks" Nkosi. His other

projects include *Our Kind Of Jazz Vol. 1, Roots and Rosie* (2003). Jabu featured on various musicians' albums and played at many shows as a session musician.

**GABRIEL SEGWAGWA THOBEJANE** who started playing with his uncle Dr Philip Tabane in Mamelodi found a collaborative home with Langa's group, Amampondo. In 1996 he left South Africa with guitarist Madala Kunene to join the late Doc Mthalande in London. They featured on Mthalande's last album *Respect* and together with Busi Mhlomo featured on one of the tracks, *Doda*. Thobejane released his solo album *Madiba* (1997) and like his band mates featured on many albums and live performances of other groups. In 2004 he did shows with Madala Kunene and Bernard Sibusiso Mndaweni. He also joined the new wave of young poets to add rhythm and colour to their poetry sessions.

Pianist, composer, producer and musical director, **THEMBA MKHIZE**, was born in Durban in 1957. He started out playing with a local band, Dukes Combo and later went professional in 1981 playing piano for Sakhile. While with the group they released the albums Sakhile and New Life. He toured a number of this continent's countries with Caiphus Semenya's musical, *Buwa*. He joined Bayete in 1984 and became one of the finest musicians in South Africa. His creativity and passion helped to shape today's Bayete sound. In 1991 he was part of Hugh Masekela's homecoming tour dubbed "Sekunjalo". Some of his best productions include the 1998 Sibongile Khumalo Live At The Market Theatre, as well as her 2000 CD, *Immortal Secrets* for which he was nominated as Best Producer in SAMA 7. He has featured on many albums in South Africa including his work on the re-recording of Babsy Mlangeni's *Sala Emma*. This 2001 recipient of the Daimler-Chrysler South African Jazz Award has also worked with Thembi Mtshali, Jimmy Dlodlu, Linda Kekana as well as the SSQ. His piano graced the soundtrack of Zola Maseko's film *Drum*. A calculative perfectionist, he ultimately released his own albums: *Tales From The South* (1999), *Lost And Found* (2001) and *Hands On* (2004). *Lost And Found* was nominated in the Best Producer category of the Standard Bank SAMA 8, whereas *Hands On* was nominated for Best Contemporary Jazz Album and won the Best Male Artist category in MTN SAMA 11. I love the positive philosophy on the sleeve cover of the album *Lost And Found* – "He Who Finds Himself, Was Never Lost".

Themba was the musical director of Jazz Meets Symphony 2005. The Jazz Foundation Of South Africa concert featured Bhekumuzi Luthuli, Xolisa Dlamini, Marcus Wyatt, Sello Galane and Themba Mkhize himself. The 45-piece orchestra was conducted by respected trumpeter, Prince Lengoasa. On National Heritage Day it was staged at the Linder Auditorium in Parktown and on 28 September played at the annual MACUFE in Bloemfontein. The show was made available on CD and DVD. According to the foundation's CEO, Oupa Selemane, the concept aims to showcase the diversity of musical talent in the industry. Themba is also a Metro FM Awards winner. In 2006 he released a 14-track album featuring songs from his three albums aptly titled *The Collection*.



His son, Afrika, is also a keyboardist who worked with groups like the Moss Mogale Unit.

The Cato Manor-born **SIPHO GUMEDE** who died at the age of 53 on 26 July 2004 owned a recording studio in Durban. He released more albums than the other members in his solo career including *Faces And Places*; *Blues For My Mother* (SAMA 5 nomination); *Peacocks Today, Feather Dusters Tomorrow*; *New Era*; *Down Freedom Avenue* and *20 Years Of Life*. He also released compilation CDs like *The Best Of Sipho Gumede*. As early as the mid-seventies Pops Mohamed invited him and the late Basil Coetzee to record Pops's debut album *Black Disco* on As-Sham label. There was so much demand for another *Black Disco* album that Sipho and Pops released five more albums under the logo. Sipho, Pops and Basil were members of Movement In The City, a band that released *Black Teardrops*, which was produced by Rashid Vally through Gallo Records in 1981. Other members of the band were Robbie Jansen, Roger Harry, Monty Weber and Richard Peters.

By 1984 Sipho had released a solo single, *Kingo*, on Priority Records' Reaction label and formed the group, Peace. In the early nineties together with Pops they released *Kalamazoo* featuring Mzi Khumalo on saxophone and Ian Herman of Tananas on drums. Sheer Sound director Damon Forbes supported the concept and *Kalamazoo 2* and *3* followed. In 2003 *Kalamazoo 4* was released featuring new blood: Xoli Nkosi on keyboards, Moses Khumalo on saxophones and Thabo Mashishi on trumpet under the subtitle "New Crossings". Gumede's 1996 album *Ubuntu-Humanity* was nominated in three categories of the 3rd annual SAMA: Best Adult Contemporary Performance, Best Contemporary Jazz and Best Producer categories. He was nominated as Best Producer for his album *New Era* in SAMA 7. Sipho was also part of a stable band called Sheer All Stars consisting of Paul Hanmer (piano), McCoy Mrubata (saxophone), Errol Dyers (guitar), Frank Paco (drums) and Sipho himself on bass guitar. Part two of his CD and DVD, *Best Of Sipho Gumede* compilation was released in July 2005. Like most stars he had his own Afro-jazz band called Jika. One year after his death, his tombstone was unveiled at Stellarwood Cemetery in Durban on 6 August 2005.

By the way, in 2004 Sakhile released a reunion album, *Togetherness*, just before Sipho passed on. They were nominated for SAMA 11's Best South African Traditional Jazz Album as well as Best Duo Or Group categories. Sipho was posthumously nominated in the same awards for his album *African Sunrise* in the Best African Contemporary Adult Album and Best Male Artist categories.

The Afro-jazz combo Sipho formed in 1984 called **PEACE** consisted of Sipho Gumede (eight string bass, acoustic bass, percussion and vocals); Jabu Nkosi (keyboards and synthesisers); Nelson Magwaza (percussion and drums); Bheki Khoza (guitar) and Thembi Mtshali (lead vocals). They released a self-titled album. Drummer Nelson Magwaza died on 14 April 1984 after a short illness. Nelson who was born in Umlazi, Durban went professional in 1965 and joined bands like Heshoo Beshoo whose members included guitarist Cyril Magubane



and saxophonist Henry Sithole. Nelson also played in musicals like *Phiri, Isintu* and *How Long?* From 1973 to 1983 Nelson was a member of the combo, The Drive. He had just joined Peace when he died.

In the early eighties there was another powerful group, *SPIRITS REJOICE* led by tenor saxophonist, the late Duke Makasi. Some of the members of the group included young Khaya Mahlangu as well as Lulu Gontsana. Saxman and producer Duke who was a member of The Drive at one stage will be remembered for his albums like *Arise And Shine* (Vulindlela, 1984). It featured tracks like Zacks Nkosi's composition, *Hellfire*. It was produced by Greg Cutler and Sipho Gumede. I still remember that RPM released it simultaneously with Lionel Martin Pillay's *October Magic*. That year Duke's release was voted the Best Jazz/Fusion Album in South Africa, while Pillay was voted the Best Fusion Artist. Some of the musicians Duke worked closely with included the great drummer, Louis Moholo.

In the neighbouring mountain kingdom of Morena Moshoeshoe and Morena Letsie three guys formed a band in the year of the storm, 1976, and gave it a name associated with the total freedom that Africans were longing for – *UHURU*. It might interest you to know that one of the high-life bands that used to accompany President Kwame Nkrumah on his road shows in Ghana was known as Uhuru Dance Band. The original members of the Lesotho band were Frank Moki Leepa, Maruti Selate and Moss Nkofe. Later they were joined by the son of a Tyatyaneng preacherman who sang in church halls with his family choir, Tsepo Tshola. Tsepo who had also played with groups like Blue Diamonds joined the band through Frank Leepa.

In 1979 they toured South Africa but the authorities cut short their performances and ordered them to leave the country and never to return, without furnishing them with reasons. I guess the authorities saw them as "bad elements". This move frustrated their efforts to record music with South Africa's record companies. They disbanded in 1981, and in 1983 lead vocalist Tsepo Mobu Tshola went to work with Hugh Masekela's Kalahari (formerly Mother) based in Botswana. The entertainment industry in Lesotho was placed on shaky ground following the 1982 attack of civilians in that former "protectorate" by the forces of apartheid South Africa. Later Frank Leepa and Moss Nkofe formed a new band and called it *SANKOMOTA*. When Maruti returned from his studies in Europe he rejoined the two and they recorded their debut album *Dreams Do Come True*, which featured the hit *Now Or Never*. From there they released other albums with Tsepo who also returned to the band. While in London with Hugh Masekela, Tshola met Julian Bahula who encouraged him to bring Sankomota to England. Subsequently, Sankomota stayed for a long time in England performing and developing their product. Some of their albums are *The Writing's On The Wall* (1989) featuring Tsepo's composition, *Papa*, and *Exploration – A New Phase* (1991) featuring yet another Tshola composition, *Stop*

*The War*. The song was unofficially launched at a festival I attended at Ellis Park stadium. Tsepo asked all of us to sing the chorus and as we were sick and tired of the political violence, the whole stadium roared with the outcry, "Stop the war!" After that Tsepo embarked on a solo career. Later the band's stability was shattered by a tragic road accident that claimed the lives of some of its members. In 1993 Sankomota released *After The Storm* featuring the hit *Afrika* with all songs written by Frank Leepa as if signing off from a career to which he had dedicated himself for many years. One of their memorable shows on the continent was organised by the Kenyan promoter, Tamokati Ndongala in Nairobi. At the time the band members were Frank Leepa, Richard Sekgobela, Tsepiso Mpotle, Sello Montoedi, Joel Matsela and Khaya Dlamini. Their backing vocals and dancing team was made up of Sharon Dee, Nozipho Nguse and Joyce Skefu who was later to be the star of a tshiVenda SABC 2 television serial drama, *Muvhango*, liked for her favourite phrase, "You must never!" Later on Joyce played the role of "Maletsatsi" in e-tv's soapie, *Scandal*.

**TSEPO TSHOLA** embarked on a solo career releasing albums like *Let's Hold Hands* (1994) and *Nothing Can Beat The Truth* (1995). His inclination towards gospel music earned him the name, "The Village Pope". His 2002 album *2 New Dawn* was nominated in SAMA 9's Best Producer and Best Engineer categories. The album was co-produced by the "Time Trio" – Hugh Masekela, Khaya Mahlangu and Blondie Makhene; Richard Mitchell was the engineer. Tsepo's unique rich gravel voice is so in demand that he was invited to do duets with several musicians including Rebecca Malope, PJ Powers and the late Brenda Fassie. In fact it appears that there was just something special about the Uhuru/Sankomota connection – Tsepo Tshola, Nana Motijoane, Tshepiso Mpotle and Frank Leepa all had rich heavy voices. In 2005 Tsepo released, *Winding Rivers And Waterfalls* with a strong line-up of musicians who included Khaya Mahlangu, Zwai Bala, Hugh Masekela, Fana Zulu, Themba Mokoena and Lawrance Matshiza. In December 2006, Tsepo was made an honorary bishop by the AME Church of Africa.

Tenor saxophonist, **BHUDAZA MAPEFANE** from Hlotse is a humble star who received his music education at Mmabana Cultural Centre in 1987/88 and was with Sankomota between 1989 and 1992. He left the band when Tsepo and Frank went their separate ways. After assisting Tsepo on his 1994 CD, he worked with musicians like Lucky Dube. After the death of his mentor and brother Mochoko in a car-crash in 2001, he released his debut album titled *Bo-Mapefane* (Universal Music, 2003). It was produced by "Captain" Frank Moki Leepa just before his departure and sold over 300 000 units featuring hits like *Lekhokhoma* and *Tjontjobina*. The UCT graduate became a frequent feature at music festivals across the country. His follow-up CD was *Mohokare* (2006), named after the Caledon River, which forms the boundary between Lesotho and South Africa.

**TSHEPISO MPOTLE** had a stint with Sankomota as a lead singer. He was born in Maokeng near Kroonstad and started singing with local groups like The Echoes

and Kroonstad Red Lions. He was introduced to the broader music industry by William Mthethwa through his band Young Five in 1992. His albums include *Volkstad* and *Lengolo*. His gospel albums include a duet with fellow musician Keketso Phoofole titled *Konyana* (2006).

**TANANAS** was formed in 1987 by three musicians: Steve Newman (guitar), Gito Baloi (bass guitar) and Ian Herman (drums). Gito, son of Serafirm Baloi (1937–2000), was born in Mozambique and arrived in South Africa in 1986. The group's kind of multicultural sound that blended jazz, Mozambican Salsa, ragtime, Spanish and township jive so well could only be defined as rainbow music. In those days many record companies were still too rigid to record this strange sound. An independent label called Shifty Records gave them a chance in 1988 when it recorded their self-titled album. In 1990 they moved to Gallo Records where they released *Spiral* (1990) and *Time* (1992). By 1993 the pressures of showbiz became unbearable and the band split. Ian Herman went to the US, Steve Newman did his own projects with the likes of Tony Cox while Gito Baloi embarked on a solo career. In his solo career Gito released these albums: *Ekaya* (1995), *Na Ku Randza* (1997) and *Herbs & Roots* (2001) self-written/produced and released by Sheer Sound. He'll always be remembered for moving songs like *Hinkwafo*. In 1994 Ian Herman and Steve Newman tried to revive the group but Gito was too involved in his flourishing solo career. The two went on using the name Tananas (Wide Ensemble), which created a family environment whereby different musicians like Vusi Mahlasela could do some projects with them. In 1994 they released *Orchestra Mundo*, which won them FNB SAMA 1's Best Jazz Performance category. Their 1996 release, *Unamunacua* was nominated for FNB SAMA 3's Best Producer category. It won the Best Contemporary Jazz Performance and Best Engineer sections. After that Ian went back to the US to settle in San Francisco, but in 1998 Steve reunited the band with Gito successfully. They released their sixth album, *Seed* and promoted it through their participation in 2000 WOMAD (World of Music, Arts and Dance). Their other albums were *The Collection* (1997) as well as *Alive In Jo'burg* (2001). In the US Ian worked with the likes of Matt Venuti and the jazz band, Junk. Steve continued to work with Tony Cox even performing in night clubs. You'll certainly remember Tony for his album *Cool Friction*, which contested the 1997 FNB SAMA's Best Instrumental Performance category with Tessa Ziegler's *Late Afternoon At The Road Café* and the Soweto String Quartet's *Renaissance*. Tony won the category for *Matebele Ants* in SAMA 7 and in SAMA 9 for *China*. His collaboration with Steve Newman, *About Time* was nominated SAMA 9's Best Duo or Group. Once again in 2007 he won MTN SAMA 14's Best Instrumental Album category for *Blue Anthem*.

**GITO BALOI** died in a tragic robbery incident on 4 April 2004 (444) at the age of 39 in Johannesburg on his way home from his show in Tshwane. I called his house that morning whereupon we agreed I should send the few lines I wrote

after hearing the news of the passing away of this great musician on the radio.  
These are the lines:

### SONG FOR GITO

G for greatness  
I for intelligence  
T for talent  
O for oracle.

B is black  
A is African  
L is liberated  
O is Original  
I is inspiration

So in love with your gita Gito,  
African sounds from Maputo.  
Started playing for bananas,  
Graduated into Tananas.

Eloquent and prolific man,  
Harmless, humble, handsome and human.  
Shared your genius with Steve Newman,  
Ruled the stage with Ian Herman.

The nightclubs are poorer without you,  
This Friday is no good without you.  
Though yours was known as World music,  
To me it was African magic.

Gito Baloi "Na ku randza"  
"Herbs and roots" your last stanza.  
"Ekaya" spread a message of peace,  
I pray for you to rest in peace.

I was pleased in 2007 when in a television interview Dave of Grassroot mentioned their intention to release Gito's unknown work. The group that includes Louis Mhlanga and Concord Nkabinde used to jam with the late guitar maestro.

A project that now and then reminds me of Gito's sound is Abe Sibiya's Live Culture. The album titled *A Man, A Boy And A Girl* (Melodi Music) which features a nostalgic track, *Inkomo Zikababa*, was nominated in SAMA 7's Best

Producer category. All the songs were composed, arranged and produced by Abe who also played piano and synthesiser. The label was co-owned by former Tusk Music executives Kgomotso More and Ali Mpofu. Ali's company, Ukhamba Productions, later produced the television choral music programme, Imizwilili.

**MALAIKA's** self-titled 2003 debut CD sold over 400 000 sales units. It was produced by Guffy Pilane who also became their manager. The trio was made up of Jabulani Ndaba, Bongani Nchang and Tshedi Mholo. Jabu and Bongani who were from Klerksdorp, North West Province released a CD in 2000 as a group called Stouters, but it did not register any success. The two were conductors of a church gospel group at the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Meadowlands. The choir's lead vocalist, Matshediso Florence Mholo, was born on 27 September 1976 in Boikhutsong, Lichtenberg. The 1995 Shell Road To Fame national finalist graduated at Unibo in 1999. The former lady teacher joined the two. The group won the MTN SAMA 11's Best Selling Album category for the CD, *Malaika*. Their other accolades include the Metro FM Music Awards' Best Group Of The Year, the Kora All Africa Music Awards' Revelation Of The Year and the Best African Group. Their hits included *Mhla Uphela Amandla*, *Sebakanyana* and the cross-over *Destiny*, which won the 2005 Channel O African Music Video Awards' Best African Pop category. They followed up with *Vuthelani* (2005) and were nominated Kora All Africa Music Awards' Best Group: Southern Africa. The album also won SAMA 12's Best African Pop Album category. Malaika won the Best Duo Or Group category of the 2006 Channel O Spirit of Africa Music Video Awards for *2 Bob*. In 2007 the group released the CD *Sekunjalo*, featuring the late Jabu Khanyile on the track *Kiss Kiss*. Its demand saw them tour countries like the UK and Canada. The CD won SAMA 14's Best African Pop Album category. Sadly, Jabulani Harold Ndaba who was born in Heilbron, Free State on 4 October 1976 died on 14 July 2008 at Tshepong Hospital, Klerksdorp after a long illness. The singer, composer, songwriter and producer known as "Sjava" was laid to rest at the Klerksdorp Cemetery on 19 July 2008.

Another group in this category is the Bloemfontein quartet, **KAYA**. Their debut CD *Kunzima* featured hits like *Sthandwa*. They were nominated in Metro FM Music Awards 2005's Best African Pop category and won the Best Newcomer category, which was also contested by Kwani Experience and T'Zozo & Professor.

The above two groups entered a market that was already created by **MAFIKIZOLO**, another "back to roots" Afro-Pop group fronted by Schweizer-Reneke born Nonhlanhla Sibongile Nciza (née Mafu). The name of the group was inspired by a Theo Kgosinkwe composition, *Mafikizolo*. When he handed the song to producer Oscar Mdlongwa of Kalawa as a demo, the producer thought, that would be a winning name for a group. Theo is a composer of repute who has written songs for the likes of Busi Mhlongo and Hugh Masekela. Jacob Mafu's daughter, Nhlanhla who later married Thembinkosi "TK" Nciza of TS

Records, grew up in Kagiso. She attempted a music degree at Wits University. The other members of the group are Theo Kgosinkwe and the late Tebogo Tebza Madingoane who left us tragically on the morning of Valentine's Day 2004. Today Mafikizolo's hits include *Ndihamba Nawe*, *Sibongile*, *Emlanjeni*, *Gugo' Thandayo* and *Nisixoshelani* which always reminded me of Baltimore's *Tarzanboy*. Their awards include The Cell C For Yourself Award (Metro Awards 2002), SAMA 8's Best African Pop Album and Best Group categories as well as SAMA 10's Best Duo Or Group for their album *Kwela*. Their albums include *Mafikizolo* (1997), *Music Revolution* (1998), *Gate Crusher* (2000), *Sibongile* (2002), *Kwela* (2003), *Van Toeka Af* (2004) and *Tribute To Tebza* (2004). In 2005 they were nominated Best Group: southern Africa in the 10th Kora All Africa Music Awards. Their 2006 release, *Six Mabone* (nominated in six categories) won the Best Duo/Group and Best Pop Album: African categories of the SAMA 13. Mafikizolo also won the Best Compilation DVD category for *The Hits*. The group continued to work with the Dangerous Combination Crew (DCC) and by 2007 they had released a DVD, *The Journey, The Hits*.

In 2006 the lead singer **NHLANHLA NCIZA** was released by Mafikizolo's company Kalawa Jazmee to record her debut solo CD with her hubby's TS Records. Even before the release of the 14-track album, Zinathi's mom disclosed that she was working with the masters of the game like Nana Coyote, Siphon Mbele, Theo as well as songwriters Robbie Malinga and Mojalefa Thebe. The result was her CD *Inguquko* (2007), which hit the gold disc mark in September of that year. The cherry on top was the launch of her own clothing range, the NN Vintage as well as the signing of a deal to become the new face of hair product, Sunsilk.

**NTANDO BANGANI** was born in Bushbuckridge and raised in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng. While attending music classes at Manu Technical College with his Kagiso homegirl Nhlanhla Nciza (née Mafu), she introduced him to TS Records. He released his debut album, *Kwantu*, featuring the hit *Bendingazi*. It sold over 50 000 units and was nominated for the Best African Pop category of SAMA 11. His second album, *Imvelaphi-Heritage*, was produced by Robbie Malinga. It dominated the 2005 Metro FM Awards nomination list by featuring in the Best African Pop, Best Album, Best Male and Best Song (Dali Wam) categories. Ntando won in all the categories. The awards were staged in Port Elizabeth on 26 November. In SAMA 12 he scooped both the Most Popular Song of the Year as well as the Most Popular Artist of the Year categories. Like Ringo Madlingozi, his music reflects his roots. After leaving TS Records in 2007 he released the album *Uhambo Lwam* (EMI/Born Fire).

**KUTU** is a four-man band led by Oupa Lebogo. Oupa is the general secretary of the Creative Workers Union Of South Africa (CWUSA), a position he also held in the former musicians only union, Musicians Union Of South Africa (MUSA). The actual meaning of the word kutu, is the stem of a tree that joins the roots to the branches; it is the main line of a family or race. The members of



the band are Oupa Lebogo, Philip Boikanyo, Ephraim Mothoa and Patrick. Their 1996 debut album, *Majakathata*, featured tracks *Nthoena*, *Badisi* and the title track. In 1998 they released *Melodi*, which featured the tracks *Tlaki* and *Chuchu* on the Gallo Records label. It was followed by *In The Ghetto* (2000) produced by Thapelo Khomo featuring tracks like *Inyaka Nyaka* and *Motintinyana* as well as the title track that promoted children's rights. Guest artists on the album include Godfrey Mgcina, Sello Montwedi, Nana Motijoane, Sidwell O'Neil, Isaac Mtshali, Khaya Dlamini, Bheki Luthuli, Sipho Madondo as well as Thapelo Khomo himself. Backing vocalists were Khanyo Maphumulo, Beulah Hashe and Max Mtambo.

**CHARM** was a group whose members included Mike Petlele and Bassie Chose. They released an album titled *Kwela-Kwela*, produced by Kennny Mathaba in association with Afro Pop Productions on RPM's Africa label. The music was co-written by Kenny Mathaba, Johnny Mokhali, Mike Petlele and Bassie Chose. Humphrey Mabote and Peter Pearlson were the RPM Studio engineers.

**AFRIKA** was another four-man band that released a self-titled album in 1987 on the RPM label. The album was produced by Peter Moticoe and engineered by Sam Wingate. The music was written by the band members L. Langa, A. Mmotong, M. Mahlangu and S. Dlamba. It featured the track *Ya Memeza I-Afrika*.

In 1986 Tom "Bishop" Mkhize produced and arranged the music of **AFRICAN IMAGE**'s album *Reality* on the CTV - Music Team's Spinna label. The music was composed by Tom Mkhize and Neville Nash featuring the tracks *The Way I Feel* and *From The Roots*.

Ndixolele Mbali was born on 6 February 1976 and grew up in Eziphunzana township, East London in the Eastern Cape. His mother was a vocalist and pianist. A self-taught guitarist, he registered for music courses at the East London Technical College. In 1997 the former Cambridge High School student left Duncan Village for Johannesburg. Together with homeboy Mxolisi Lokwe aka Mxo they formed a group called Roots 2000. In 2003 he released a self-titled debut album featuring the hit *Amantongomane* using the name **SLIQ ANGEL**. He followed up with CDs like *Sunrise* (2005) and *Isizalo* (2008). Sliq, who plays guitar, drums, sax, bass guitar and clarinet described his music as "soul-funk".

Mxolisi Lokwe aka **Mxo** was born on 20 November 1978 in Zwide, Port Elizabeth, and grew up at Kwa-Dwesi near East London. He was schooled in Uitenhage and completed his matric at Woolhope in Malabar. His music career developed as he played with local groups like Black Power Crew and Lil' Homies. In 1999 he left Port Elizabeth for Johannesburg. After working in a music shop, he joined Unity Records and did gigs at venues like the Bassline and Horror Café. This is where he met Sliq Angel to form Roots 2000, which took the live music scene by storm. Having played for Jungle Connection in Yeoville, they each went solo, with Mxo releasing his debut album *Peace Of Mind* (2003) produced by Afrika Mkhize and featuring tracks like *Zandy bone* and *Green Leaves*. The album

was nominated in the Best Male category of MTN SAMA 11. His recording label is called MLOK Records. This talented artist released his follow-up CD in 2006 titled *MX-Funk*, a name that also defined his music genre.

From Queenstown, **CAMAGU SIYABULELA MABUYA** released his debut album *Uhambo* (2005) after struggling for 11 years to get a recording deal. Son of a drumming vocalist, he trained at Natal Technikon. He describes his music genre as African soul.

**CHOPPA** was born Robert Muluana in Maputo, Mozambique. Though he trained as an electric engineer, his passion for music led him into the world of showbiz where he became a composer, singer, choreographer and dancer. He took the local music scene by storm with his cross-over sounds blending Brazilian, Spanish and African rhythms to bring out dance floor hits like *Margarida*. His albums include *Batukeiro* (2000), *Omunye Nomunye* (2001) and *Waga Waga*.

**NEO MUYANGA** who was born in Soweto came to my attention performing his beautiful ballad, *My World*, which became a signature tune to the first series of SABC television's hit programme *All You Need Is Love* hosted by Hlomla Dandala. This keyboardist had been busy with duo BLK Sonshine (with Masauko Chipembere), which released a self-titled CD. Some of their best tracks are *Born In A Taxi*, *Crazy* and *Building*. The Afro-fusion musician later moved to Cape Town for better inspiration. Neo Muyanga later released his debut solo work *The Listening Room*, an album he worked on while researching the music of the Muyanga people of Mozambique. This beautiful musician also featured in film maker Bev Ditsie's documentary on the Blondie Makhene family, which was broadcast on SABC television on 8 August 2005.

**KHUMBULA** is a group whose nucleus is former members of Lucky Dube's backing band. They are Skipper Shabalala (vocals/guitar), Msizi "Chunky" Mashiyane (guitar), Bheki Masina (bass) and Andile Nqubezelo (drums). They caught my attention when they set dance floors ablaze with their CD *Bayakhuluma*. Theirs is a fusion of traditional maskandi guitars and deep African rhythms. Their follow-up CD *Khetha* did not disappoint their fans.

**BOW & ARROW** is a band made up of a pool of experiences from various bands like Labantu, All Rounders, African Herbs and The Soul Brothers. The members are Thami Sobekwa (vocals), Theko Masiteng (drums), David Prentjies (bass guitar), Tikkie Chaka (trumpet), Jele Mqikela (trombone), Nhlanhla Oliphant (saxophone) and Michael Skosana (keyboards). Their debut album, *Lena Lefatshe*, was released through Bula Music in 2005.

**JIMMY MNGWANDI** who co-wrote the hit *Chico* for his group Image in 1985 has played with many musicians both on stage and record. By 2005 he was member of a trio called Bazwaana whose other members are Adam Howard and Bez Roberts from the UK. They released a CD called *Newtown Breeze*.

I thought I was dreaming in 2002 when someone from the music industry told me about a new CD by Herman Fox. After clarification I discovered that

he was talking about **HERMAN “FOX” MANGANYI**. Hermann’s CD turned out to be *Tsakane Tsakane*, a powerful rendition of xiTsonga lyrics wrapped in the Afro-pop sound. It was produced and engineered by Don Laka at his Lakdon Studios, with lyrics written by Herman and music by Don. It is part of Don Laka’s Bokone Music catalogue.

**MINA NAWA**, a young and vibrant Afro-pop trio from Daveyton, introduced itself to the music industry with the debut CD titled *Njalo*. The members of the group managed by Isaac Masia of Masia Sound Productions are Carlo “Nutti” Mpanza, Zanele “Mazet” Masemola and Candid “Manchild” Shaw. They were crowned Best Newcomer by the 2005 Channel O African Music Video Awards for their video *Le Ngoma*. In 2006 their platinum-status CD saw them nominated again for the same awards in the Best Collaboration Video category. Their popularity sent them touring African states like Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Tanzania. Their follow-up CD was titled *Stronger* (Sheer Sound).

**MALINI** is a duo made up of Toffo Goge and M’du Ntombela. The lass and lad met while backing Rebecca Malope and Vuyo Mokoena. The group’s name was inspired by the question they were always asked upon request of their services – “How much?” Their 2004 debut CD was titled *Basilindile*. It was followed by *Inkinka* (2006) and *Jikelele* (2007).

The only child in a family that had lost many siblings before they could see this world, **LESEGO REETSANG** from Kanana location, Klerksdorp in the North West is a rising Afro-soul artist. It took him ten years before he could release his debut CD aptly titled *My Music* (2006). His partnership with his childhood friends, Jaziel Brothers (Luthando and Ntobeko Ngcizela) in producing the album really paid off handsomely. It received three SAMA 13 nominations. His fans will tell you that you haven’t seen anything yet until you experience his stage performances. As for the producers Jaziel Brothers who had also worked with the likes of Jub-Jub Maarohanye and Kelly Khumalo, by 2008 they were the toast of live music festivals promoting their CD, *The Beginning*.

**SIPHOKAZI MARAQANA** was born on 9 September 1977 and grew up at Jambeni village in Lusikisiki, Eastern Cape. She was brought up by her staunch Christian granny. After singing with a local gospel group, in 1999 at the age of 22 she went to Johannesburg and stayed in KwaThema, Springs for a while before moving into the innercity of Jozi. She received formal music education at the Sibikwa Community Theatre Project. The National Arts Council offered her a bursary to study Music Technology at East Side College (Parktown College). It was here that she met a teacher who greatly motivated her – guitarist Bheki Khoza. In 2001 she flew out to Japan with college friend Musa Mhlongo, who was invited to perform at a cultural exchange concert. After performing in front of the Japanese crowd, the Afro-soul star who mentions Busi Mhlongo and Stevie Wonder as her inspiration has travelled the world as a backing vocalist for musicians like Tsepo Tshola, Pat Matshikiza, Ringo Mdlingozi, Stimela, Zamajobe

and Simphiwe Dana. Many of us first heard her voice on Pat Matshikiza's CD *Seasons, Masks and Keys* as she sang *Vula Mama*. In 2006 she released her debut CD *Ubuntu Bam* through Siphso Sithole's Native Rhythms label. She co-wrote some tracks with songwriter friend Musa Mhlongo for the CD that was produced by guitarist Lawrance Matshiza. The musicians line-up boasted the who's who in SA music. Five SAMA nominations including Best Producer, as well as her inclusion on the Cape Town International Jazz Festival line-up can mean only one thing from the music industry – confidence! She was crowned Best Newcomer by SAMA 13 and won the Best Adult Contemporary Album: African category. She went on to win the 8th Metro FM Music Awards' three categories: Best Female Vocalist, Best Newcomer and Best Produced Album. If you ask me, my favourite track on the CD is *Amacala*.

**CAMAGWINI** was born Siphokazi Buti in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape. Like Marqana she was raised by her granny. She loved music from a young age, although choirmasters at school disliked her way of singing. Her inspiration came from musicians like Suthukazi Arosi, Tu Nokwe and Dorothy Masuka, but her real heroine was "the urban Zulu", Busi Mhlongo. The Afro-soul singer left her home for Johannesburg in 2006 at the age of 24. Her musical home became Siphso Sithole's Native Rhythms Records. Camagwini's debut album *Zivile* (2007) was nominated for SAMA 14's Best African Album and Best Newcomer categories. The latter category was won by EMI South Africa's Tasha Baxter who also scooped the Best Pop Album: English category for *Colour of Me*.

There's also the young **MATHAPELO MASILELA** whose rich voice promises to enrich and widen the scope of Afro-pop. Her album *Sthandwa Sami* was well-received by music lovers and she became a jewel at live concerts.

Soweto-born **TEBOGO PHUME** entered the music field as a keyboardist in his family church choir. At the age of 14 the talented musician who grew up in the Vaal Triangle formed his own group, The Mighty. He later became drummer and lead vocalist for a Sharpeville-based group, Mac Jay's. Among other institutions Tebogo sharpened his skills at FUBA School of Music, Johannesburg, and the University of Cape Town, where he formed the band Mozania. He later joined Kgaogelo Mailula's Kgalala as well as Cuba Groove. In 2006 the Jazz Programme graduate released his CD titled *Gola o Di Bone* (Phela Re Phele Music Productions).

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# JOY OR JAZZ

The late 1980s saw the emergence of a new regiment of young musicians who blended traditional South African rhythms with elements of traditional jazz to create a uniquely South African sound. Some of them had been session musicians who have mastered their particular instrument of trade while some have studied music up to tertiary level. They had been inspired by senior master musicians like Dr Philip Tabane, Allen Kwela and Themba Mokoena on guitar; Julian Bahula and Gabriel Segwagwa Thobejane on drums; Joseph Makwela and Victor Ntoni on bass guitar; Sankie Chounyane and Abdullah Ibrahim on keyboards; Hugh Masekela on trumpet; Jonas Gwangwa on trombone; Kippie Moeketsi on saxophone, as well as Dolly Rathebe and Miriam Makeba's vocal prowess. They ushered in an era of a new Afro-fusion sound ranging from the guitar-strumming fingers of Selaelo Selota and Jimmy Dlodlu, the drum-beating hands of Sello Galane and Tlale Makhene, the traditional instruments of Pops Mohamed, the double-bass of Mlungisi Gegana and Musa Manzini, the keyboard-stroking fingers of Themba Mkhize, Sylvester Mzinyane, Don Laka, Paul Hanmer and Moses Taiwa Molelekwa to the captivating voices of Judith Sephuma, Gloria Bosman, Linda Kekana, Simphiwe Dana and Zamajobe Sithole. The return of the glory of jazz was boosted by the passion and professionalism of these young musicians and the unwavering support of local initiatives like the Standard Bank Joy Of Jazz. Both young and old flooded back to legendary big concert venues like Moretele Park in Mamelodi to experience the magic of musicians like Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, Caiphus Semenya, Miriam Makeba, Letta Mbulu, Don Laka and many others.

The launch of the Puisano Jazz Programme in November 2007 with the

aim of promoting jazz performances in communities added momentum to this movement. Is it joy or jazz?

The Afro-jazz renaissance movement was led by the late composer and piano genius, **MOSES TAIWA MOLELEKWA**. Before his tragic untimely death he raised the bar and took the South African jazz music to another level, leaving his peers to continue with the race at a pace never dreamt of before. Moses Taiwa Molelekwa was born in 1973 into a musical family in Tembisa, near Johannesburg. His grandfather was a pianist and his father, Jerry, was a jazz enthusiast whose love for the music of Thelonius Monk earned him the nickname “Monk” among his peers, most of whom were collectors of jazz music. Moses did his piano studies at FUBA where he was the first to receive the institution’s Best Student Award in 1987. Before long he was performing in Johannesburg’s respected clubs with established musicians. He was a founding member of the award-winning bands Brotherhood and Umbongo. They showed their true colours in the Gilbey’s Music Of Africa Competition held in 1991 and 1992.

Molelekwa’s debut album *Finding One’s Self* (B&W, 1995) won him FNB SAMA 2’s Best Traditional Jazz Performance as well as Best Contemporary Performance categories. It was produced by Pops Mohamed Ismail. For one album to win for both the old and the new can only reveal the master blender behind it, a genius who can fuse the sounds of two worlds and times to set a new standard for future musicians of the genre. Moss was a world-class pianist who could play anywhere, anytime with the world’s best. The line-up of musicians on his album *Genes And Spirits* is not only a clear testimony of the respect he had for his profession of choice, but also the high esteem with which his peers world-wide regarded him. On the album he dedicated one track, *Spirit Of Tembisa*, to one of the fastest growing townships in Gauteng – Tembisa. Most old residents of this location used to live in Alexandra township, including my paternal uncle, Edward Mojabelo (Moedi Section) and my friend, Moses Matlalepoo (Hospital Hill). The album was nominated in FNB SAMA 5’s Best Producer and Best Male Artist categories, and won the Best Contemporary Jazz Performance section. At that gala event he set the stage ablaze with TKZee and Loyiso Bala. Taiwa’s improvising skills made him so versatile.

As much as he could journey between the traditional and the modern, he could also cruise smoothly between jazz and kwaito. When respected former head of FUBA School of Music Geoff Mapaya recorded his Afro-fusion album, *Thobela Mmirwa* (2001), he invited one bright former student of the institution to sit behind the keyboards on two tracks, *No Idea* and *Ya Warang*. Moss excelled! He also made a valuable contribution to Sibongile Khumalo’s album in the form of his composition titled *Free Spirit*. As a musical mercenary his assignments included Stimela’s regrouping album *Don’t Ask Why*, Jimmy Dlodlu’s *Echoes From The Past* and Kabelo Mabalane’s *Everybody’s Watching*. Like that US jazz pianist and composer, Thelonius Monk who influenced the development of bebop in



response to swing, Taiwa was already developing a characteristic pianistic style of his own that was destined to change Afro-jazz as we know it.

On 13 February 2001 the nation learned with shock that the bodies of both Moses and his wife/manager, Florence “Flo” Molelekwa (née Mthobo) were discovered in their Johannesburg offices. They are survived by a son who at the time was six years old. Moses Taiwa Molelekwa lived his brief stay with us so fast and vast, so fruitful and fertile that his musical globe trotting will take a privileged few among us a life-time to match. After his departure his other works were released on two albums, *Wa Mpona* and *Darkness Pass*. Besides “Shaluza” Max Mntambo, other peers/admirers who dedicated a track or album to him as a salute to his pioneering spirit include:

- Jimmy Dlodlu – *River Of Dreams – Afrocentric* (2002)
- Themba Mkhize – *Song 4 Mo – Lost & Found* (2001)
- Mpumi Dhlamini – *A Journey With Taiwa – Combined Elements* (2007)
- Geoff Mpaya – *Thobela Mmiroa* (2001)

This is just to mention but a few. The most precious gift with which the new South African nation can reward Moses Taiwa Molelekwa is to react positively and with vigour to his plea – finding ourselves. In memory of Moses, Jerry established the Moses Taiwa Molelekwa Arts Foundation in Tembisa. The development of the jazz art form at the centre gave birth to the Taiwa Jazz Band. By 2008 the band whose founder member and manager was Joe Mkhombo was so much in demand at live shows that for instance, it was billed for the 2008 instalment of the festival, which was started by the Grahamstown Foundation in 1974, the Grahamstown National Arts Festival (26 June–05 July), Ekurhuleni Arts Festival (27–28 June) as well as another show at Germiston Lake.

Guitarist **SELAELO SELOTA** was born on 3 January 1965 in Sekuruwe, Moletji near Polokwane in Limpopo. The first band he saw perform was The Young Masters from Mogoto in Zebediela. The group was performing in Polokwane. As a student he excelled in athletics, the sport he later continued with as a mine worker in Carletonville for three years. A nasty experience during a big strike at the mine made him think twice about his future. Selota, whose passion for music was fuelled by working as an usher at The Market Theatre and cleaner at Kippies Jazz Club, followed his dream and studied music through the FUBA Academy. In 1994 he followed the dream to the University of Cape Town where he ended up lecturing to music students. On completion of his music studies he was ready to conquer the world playing his guitar, writing songs and fondling the microphone. Selota had bought his first guitar in 1988 to perfect his skills until he could comfortably use it in composing songs. The obvious need arose to form a band, and in 1996 Taola was born. This experimental band consisted of Selota himself on lead guitar, Sylvester Mazinyane (keyboards), Sello Galane

(percussion), Maxwell Vadima (bass), Frank Paco (drums) and lead vocalist, Judith Sephuma.

In 1997 Selaelo won the Adcock Ingram Music Award for Jazz. As if that was not enough, he went on to win the Old Mutual Jazz Into The Future's Instrumental category in 1999. Keith Lister's BMG Records saw huge potential in him and in 2000 released his debut album, *Painted Faces*. The album shamed the prophets of doom as public reception was awesome. It went on to win SAMA 7's Best Newcomer and Best Contemporary Jazz Album categories. In 2001 he released his second album, *Enchanted Gardens*. From the start BMG allowed him room to move because only he understood the sound he wanted to champion; as such, he wrote and produced his albums. His second album was recorded with Tuli Mike Masoka (bass), Nkanyezi Cele (drums), Sylvester Mazinyane (piano), Godfrey Mgcina (percussion) and Xolisa Dlamini (vocals on two tracks). He led with his two lethal weapons – his guitar and vocal cords. The album was nominated in the Best Producer category of SAMA 8 and achieved gold status.

In 2004 I met him at Meropa Casino during the Limpopo Morula Awards where he was honoured together with fellow musicians Caiphus Semenya, Thomas Chauke and Shalati Joseph Khoza. Shalati is a respected choral music composer whose works include the 2008 Kruger National Park 110th birthday song. The awards, organised by the Maesela brothers, Letepe and Raleigh, were meant to honour and celebrate the achievements of sons and daughters of Limpopo Province. Selota launched his own label, C-Lota Records in 2005 and released the third album, *Stories Lived And Told*. Later on he launched a new label called "Live@TheShack" through which he released his follow-up CD *The Azanian Songbook* also featuring his 14-year-old daughter, Tebelelo on the track *Ordinary Day*. Tebelelo's mother is Judith Sephuma. Selaelo is one of the musicians I admire so much for his ability to revisit his childhood days with his guitar. There is a vivid village in his music. As Letta Mbulu says, "in the music the village never ends". On stage he is fireworks and exudes so much energy that regularly renders him "topless". The guitarman who wrote the soundtrack for the television series *Nomzamo* also entertains writing film scripts. In 2005 he was quoted to have said he was planning to release a 100% instrumental album in the near future.

Selota's production and songwriting skills also gave birth to Judith Sephuma's triple platinum CD, *A Cry. A Smile. A Dance*; the late Umanji's *O Baba o Re Ha!* and Labella's *Child Of The Soil*. He also produced the music of groups like Ziyaduma whose *Phelandaba* was released with Sheer Sound in 2005; the Limpopo boys trio Muzo's CD *Nnete (The Truth)* as well as Paledi Malatji's *The First Prince*. By the way, the Malatji's are of the Baphalaborwa royal blood up in the north-eastern part of the Limpopo Province, near the Kruger National Park. At an early age Malatji who was brought up by his traditional singer granny, "Koko

Mangwako" was fascinated by the gravel voices of the sangomas. He later sharpened his musical skills playing in a school band in Orange Farm.

**LUNGISWA PLAATJIES** was born in Langa township, Cape Town, in 1973 and grew up among influential music practitioners like her traditional doctor grandfather, Dr Shadrack Plaatjies, Dizu Plaatjies of Amampondo and violinist, Monde Plaatjies. She prepared herself for the music career by studying at Music Action for People's Progress (MAPP) in Cape Town.

At a relatively young age she travelled far and wide, especially with Amampondo as a backing vocalist and dancer in the eighties. This resulted in the release of their debut album, *Uyandibiza* (1983). It is interesting and impressive to note that she mastered the art of playing the traditional mbira and marimba musical instruments at a young age. She released her self-titled debut album through MELT 2000. Her music is deeply embedded in the cultural and spiritual wealth of our ancestors. In 2002 she released *Unonkala* (Sony Music) with the help of producer Donald Mahwetša Laka who also composed the music and added his nifty guitar work. Don engineered and mixed it at his Lakdon Studio and shot the photos for the cover. Lungiswa wrote the lyrics, played kalimba and mbira and sang both lead and backing vocals. Multi-instrumentalist Pops Mohamed added a continental touch to the album with his kora strumming nimble fingers. She has other albums as member of Amampondo and collaborated with Madala Kunene and Max Lasser on a project called Madmax, which was recorded in Switzerland. The project was repeated in 2004. Other projects she featured in include *Madosini*, *Skeleton* and *Tribal Ethno Dance*.

In 1990 **LOADING ZONE** came to the attention of the public as a backing band. They backed the late Brenda Fassie, but what was not known to many was that it was one of South Africa's energetic and versatile groups that would produce young lions like Jimmy Dlodlu. After their impressive performance at The Market Theatre's Kippies, they became a resident band at Hillbrow's Cotton Pub. They mostly played popular cover versions of musicians like Al Jarreau. Their credibility saw them back greats like Miriam Makeba. It was during their Namibian tour that the DRC's Papa Wemba requested them to be his backing band. At home they worked with Sello Twala, Marcalex and Mike Makhalemele. Some of its members recorded with big local and international stars like Stimela, Sibongile Khumalo and Toto. All the members of the band lived in Cape Town, mostly students at the famous UCT College of Music. As already alluded to, they worked with another UCT product, Jimmy Dlodlu, and recorded *Echoes From The Past* (1997) with him. In 2000 when they released *Overdue* their line-up was Frank Paco (drums), John Hassan (percussion), Lucas Khumalo (bass), Allou April (guitar), Sylvester Mazinyane (keyboards) and Jack Ngoka (vocals). In 2005 they released another album titled *Takin' Off*.

Mozambique-born **JIMMY DLUDLU** is without doubt another master guitarist of my time. At the age of 13 he fell in love with the guitar after listening to the

American maestro George Benson playing on radio. On a borrowed guitar he practiced day and night to improve his skill. At a later stage he realised that besides George Benson there were other good international musicians like West Montgomery and Charlie Christian. As he gained more insight into the music, he understood that in order to succeed he first had to understand the music of his own people, African jazz. This urged him to follow the music of greats like Zacks Nkosi. For commercial reasons at the time, Jimmy worked mostly with pop musicians like Dr Victor's CC Beat, Spho Mabuse and others.

After playing with Loading Zone who did jazz-fusion covers, he became a guitar toting mercenary who spent most of his time around the Market Theatre like a lion waiting for prey by the side of the river. That is where he met fellow session musicians most of whom would later feature on his CDs. At a concert in Botswana he met another South African guitar giant, Themba Mokoena, whose guitar-playing style blew him away. In South Africa he became Mokoena's protégé. In 1994 during the annual Grahamstown National Arts Festival he was playing with Herb Ellis when he was booked to play with gospel group, Friends First. That was a revelation to him; he realised how still lacking he was in the trade. Within no time he had enrolled with the UCT's College of Music where he spent four years studying. That is where he met some of his peers like Selaelo Selota, Musa Manzini and Judith Sephuma who were also there to equip themselves for the industry. He became leader of C-Base Collective, a band whose members were UCT students. On completion of his studies Jimmy took the music industry by storm with the release of his debut album, *Echoes From The Past* (Gallo/Polygram, 1997). He dedicated the CD to his late father. Besides specialist musicians like bassist Fana Zulu, keyboardist Themba Mkhize and percussionist John Hassan, he also featured Capetonian, Mark Goliath as keyboardist, co-producer and co-writer. His association with the Mother City was also reflected by his management company, Making Music Productions. In 1999 he released *Essence Of Rhythm* (Universal Music). Like the debut, it was self-written and self-produced. A track from the album titled *Winds Of Change* won SAMA 7's Best Single category. Track number five on the CD *Mr Mokoena* is dedicated to his mentor, former Pedlars member Themba Mokoena.

Today Jimmy is a respected musician who has won a number of SAMAs and Metro FM Awards. He is in demand and features in most of South Africa's major jazz festivals. His next album was titled *Afrocentric* (Universal Music, 2002), featuring the Soweto String Quartet, Hugh Masekela, Ernie Smith and Bebe Winans. My indulgence on the album is *Africa Africa* as it was very much in line with the sound I was promoting as a station manager. It also makes you feel very proud to be an African. The album carries two dedications, *Basil Goes To Church* to Basil "Mannenberg" Coetzee and *River Of Lost Dreams* to Moses Taiwa Molelekwa, featuring the captivating voice of that cultural activist and catalyst, Duma ka Ndlovu. To expose the album to the international community,

its release in England, Holland and Germany was followed by a European tour. The self-produced album, *Afrocentric*, won him the Best Male Artist, Best Contemporary Jazz Album as well as the Best Producer categories of SAMA 8. Jimmy's 2005 offering was *Corners Of My Soul*, which saw him win SAMA 12's Best Male Album and Best Jazz Album categories. In 2007 he dropped his fifth CD, *Portrait*, which won SAMA 14's Best Contemporary Jazz Album section. Now that he's been through college, travelled the world and performed in front of kings and queens, his dream is to rise to the level of champion guitarists like Luiz Sallinas of Argentina.

**PRINCE KUPI** was born in Diepkloof, Soweto. After attending school at Giyani Primary School and Fidelitas High, it looked like he would end up being a medical doctor. It was when he heard the music of guitar masters like George Benson that he followed music as a career. He was introduced to the instrument by Rankitseng Ramela. Prince who studied music at Soweto's Funda Centre also became Professor Darius Brubeck's student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. While in Durban he led a jazz band known as Ba'Agisane and later played with The Brown Rock Band from Mozambique. Some of the local master guitarists he performed with include Jimmy Dlodlu, Selalelo Selota and Louis Mhlanga who influenced most of his future works. Dancer and choreographer Nomsa Manaka's brother, Kupi featured in various recordings and live performances. His album *Loxion* (2002) was dedicated to his "teacher", Mr Ramela. Produced by former US muso Andy Narell, the CD was nominated for SAMA 9's Best Newcomer, Best Contemporary Jazz Album and Best English Album. An unfortunate car crash took Prince (36 years) and his theatre actress wife Zandile Ngcobo (32 years) away from us on Sunday, 8 June 2008. The couple's Volkswagen Polo overturned on the N3 near Heidelberg Road, Johannesburg. At the time of his death, Prince, who also performed with stars like Caiphus Semenya, Tlale Makhene and Sibongile Khumalo, was a member of the Letta Mbulu band. After a memorial service at the Bassline in Newtown, Johannesburg on Thursday, 12 June 2008 and a funeral service at Funda Centre in Diepkloof, Prince Kupi was laid to rest at West Park Cemetery on Saturday, 14 June 2008. His wife, Zandile was buried the next day in Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal leaving behind their five-year-old child, Bohlokoa.

Durban-born bass guitarist and composer, **MUSA MANZINI**, grew up in Cape Town. He realised early in his life that he had to get the right education for his career. He is a member of the UCT class of jazz who wants nothing less than excellence in music. Having worked with most of his peers both in recordings and live performances, by 2005 he had three albums to his name: *New Reflections* (2000 SAMA 7's nominee), *Tributes And Memories* (2003), as well as *My Bass* (2005). Some of the most impressive music scores he wrote include those for Mfundi Vundla's *Generations* and *Backstage* as musical director, a project he was engaged in for four years.



**MARCUS WYATT**, who worked a lot with Jimmy Dlodlu, is a gifted trumpet blower who was born in Cape Town in 1971. He grew up in the Eastern Cape's friendly city of Port Elizabeth. His love for jazz was inspired by his participation in the South African Naval Band. But this also opened his eyes to his shortcomings and he decided to equip himself better at UCT's College of Music where he obtained a degree in music compositions and arrangements. His talent won him the Southern Comfort Jazz Scholarship (1994) and the Adcock Ingram Jazz Soloist category (1995). In 1996 he was a runner-up in the SAMRO Overseas Bursary Competition. Other bands he played with were Blues Broers, Cape Town Jazz Orchestra and the Marcus Wyatt Quartet. Wyatt's debut album, *Gathering*, featured the cream of SA Jazz and was nominated for SAMA 7, a contestor in the same category as Africa Oye's *Moment Of Truth*. Marcus has travelled the world with big names and returned home for the recording of *Africans In Space* (Sheer Sound, 2002), an album featuring tracks devoted to Alexandra jazz legend, Zacks Nkosi. It also features the voice of Nontuthuzelo Pouane. As a producer Marcus's projects include *Momentum*, a 2001 album by Heavy Spirits. The album, which was released by Sheer Sound contain 13 original tracks. The Heavy Spirits line-up was Gershwin Nkosi (cornet), Mokowe Mashiane (alto saxophone), Paul Vranas (tenor saxophone), Vincent Molomo (electric bass) and Garland Selolo (drums). In 2007 Wyatt's CD, *Language 12* was nominated in Metro FM Music Awards' Best Jazz Album category.

**TRIBE** is a hot Cape Town quartet of established jazz musicians. The band consists of Kesivan Naidoo (drums), Charles Lazar (bass), Mark Fransman (pianist) and Buddy Wells (saxophone). Kesivan is a UCT graduate who completed his BA Mus. (Jazz Performance and Arrangement) and furthered his music studies abroad through SAMRO's scholarship programme. He played with the UCT College Jazz Ensemble, pianists Idris Hotep Galeta, Jack van Poll and Bheki Mseleku. Lazar is a graduate of Berklee College of Music in Boston. Fransman was on Jimmy Dlodlu's C-Base Collective and composed Winds Of Change for Jimmy's 1999 album *Essence Of Rhythm*, a composition later reworked as a collaboration with Bongo Maffin. Wells worked with Manu Dibango, Miriam Makeba and other big names. In 2003 they released an album titled *Our Language*. The list of music stars with whom they recorded includes David Leadbetter, Winston Mankunku Ngozi, Virtual Jazz Reality, Trully Fully Hey Wow Band and Kaolin Thomson.

Although guitarist **GEOFF MAPAYA**'s cultural roots can be traced back to Limpopo Province, he grew up in Tembisa. He prepared himself for his career for 12 years: three doing the arts at FUBA, four doing music at UCT, one doing education method and four doing his masters at Wits University. He has not only earned respect from his peers and students because of his tutorship at FUBA School Of Music, but also as the head, and he contributed immensely to the development of the South African music industry as an executive member



of MUSA. The seasoned musician and academic's debut album was Thobela Mmiroa (Universal Music, 2001). The guitarist featured former Fubists, Moses Molelekwa and Nontuthuzelo Pouane on the album. Besides his own songs, he included his colleague Magalane Phoshoko's composition *Rebone* as well as guitarist Lawrance Goreoang's *I Love Ikageng*. This spirit of brotherhood and generosity that allows others to shine in his work is best described by percussionist Sello Galane on the sleeve cover: "This capacity to acknowledge greatness is in itself a hallmark of greater character in his role as a composer, producer of his own work and the music written for him by others." Mapaya's other albums include *Black Maria* showcasing his command of the strings and *Statements*, which was released through Universal Music in 2005. By 2007 the talented musician was a lecturer at Univen and was also in charge of various music learnerships.

The first time I heard **ZIM NQAWANA**'s solo initiative I found myself attached to the radio during a Sunday jazz programme, hoping for more. The track was the laid-back *Qula Kwedini*. The 'zimocracy' man, Zim was born in Port Elizabeth in 1959. He started playing flute at the age of 21. His skills were sharpened by Prof. Darius Brubeck at the University of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal). It was as a member of the university-based Jazzanians that he went to the International Association Of Jazz Educators Convention in the USA. This resulted in scholarships to the Max Roach/Wynton Marsalis jazz workshops. Subsequently, he received a Max Roach scholarship to further his jazz studies at the University Of Massachusetts. The scholarship was named after the world-renowned champion jazz drummer who sadly passed away in August 2007. Zim returned to the "kwantunent" at the beginning of the nineties and worked with some of South Africa's big names in jazz.

Nqawana's efforts to develop young musicians and form jazz groups include the 100-piece drums For Peace Orchestra, which performed during the inauguration of Dr Nelson Mandela as the first black president of the new "zimocratic" South Africa. His music is rooted in traditional percussive sounds blended with Indian and western classical music. The first time I witnessed his magic on stage I was very much impressed by the unity of sound within his eight-piece band, Ingoma. This multi-instrumentalist's album, *Zimology* (1998) received an award as the Best Packaged Album (SAMA 5). His 2000 release *Ingoma* won SAMA 7's Best South African Traditional Jazz Album category. The Peter Pearlson-engineered album, *Zimphonic Suites* received more nominations than any in SAMA 8 and won the Best South African Traditional Jazz Album, Best Album Packaging and Best Engineer categories. Nqawana's other albums include *San Song* and *Vadzimu*, which won SAMA 10's Best Male Artist and Best South African Traditional Jazz Album categories. As a producer Zim was nominated as SAMA 9's Best Producer for Hotep Idris Galeta's *Malay Tone Poem*.

George and Ivy Bosman's daughter, **GLORIA BOSMAN**, is a tigress whose vocal

talent connects the past to the present; no wonder, at her young age, she was featured with some of the country's most matured musicians like Dorothy Masuka, Thandi Klaasen, Abigail Khubeka, Sibongile Khumalo and Sylvia Mdunyelwa for the 2005 Melodi International Jazz Festival in Sun City, North West Province. Gloria Bosman was born in Mofolo, Soweto to a Xhosa mother and a South Sotho father. She grew up in Pimville and started singing in church choirs. Her dynamic voice led to her 1993 participation in the production *SA Love* at the Market Theatre. This resulted in a scholarship from two banks to study opera at Technikon Pretoria. Thereafter she was involved with various productions including *Jubilation*, *Woman In Spirit* as well as *The Lion And The Lamb*. She later spread her wings and entered the music industry. Her debut album was *Tranquillity* (Sheer Sound, 1999). It was produced by master pianist, Paul Hanmer of *Trains To Taung* fame and recorded with musicians Menyatso Mathole and Louis Mhlanga (guitars), Herbie Tsoaeli (bass), Basi Mahlasela (congas and percussion), Paul Hanmer (piano) and Rob Watson (drums). Fernando Perdigao was behind the desk and also co-produced. She became so much in demand for live performances and inspired a whole new regiment of female jazz vocalists. Her follow-up was *The Many Faces Of Gloria Bosman* (Sheer Sound, 2001) still working with Hanmer, but with new musicians here and there like Zolile Bacela (guitar), Godfrey Mgcina (percussion), Valentia Ferlito (piano) and the two bassists, Concord Nkabinde and Lucas Senyatso. Her 2002 release, *Stop And Think* was nominated for SAMA 9's Best Female Artist and Best Jazz Vocal Album categories. It was followed by *Nature Dances* and the self-produced CD, *Emzini*. Gloria has blessed many important occasions like Artes Radio Awards and corporate functions. Due to the popularity and respect she's gained from the broader public she also presented e-tv's jazz show, *Jazz Indaba*.

**SYLVIA NCEDIWE MDUNYELWA** is a jazz singer and actor from Langa in Cape Town. Her interest in showbiz at a young age landed her in Victor Ntoni's sextet in the seventies. She has paid her dues working with seasoned musicians of the Cape like Winston Mankunku Ngozi of Yakhal'Inkomo fame as well as the Ngcukana brothers. Her passion to pass on jazz music to the youth urged her to bring together young musicians and expose them to the wider world of music. In the early 1990s she led a youth group to Canada where they participated in the International Children's Jazz Festival. Subsequently, the Educational Opportunities Council awarded her a scholarship to further her music studies in the US. Some of the highlights of her performances are the Berlin Festival in 1994 and her 1997 show in Bogota, South America. Besides her performances she also presented "Voice Of Jazz" on P4 Radio. By the way, P4 Radio Cape Town was launched on 1 September 1997 as a "smooth jazz" station. Sylvia's recordings include *Ingoma* (2000 SAMA nominee) with the All Star Jazz Band as well as *African Diva – Live In Africa*.

**JUDITH SEPHUMA**, a former student of MC Sehlapelo Primary and Kgaiso High

School in Polokwane, possesses one of the most powerful female voices in the industry. It is the voice that made her a finalist of the 1994 Shell Road To Fame talent search. To fully equip herself for the music industry, she completed a Performers Diploma in Jazz at UCT's College of Music in 1997. By 1998/99 she was touring Europe with Jack van Poll, a Dutch jazzman. Later on the South African government requested her participation in a performance for the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund in Europe. She was backing Jimmy Dlodlu in 1999 at President Thabo Mbeki's inaugural festivities. To crown it all, she won the Old Mutual Jazz Competition 1999 award for Best Jazz Vocalist. Four years after graduating from UCT she released her debut album, *A Cry. A Smile. A Dance* (2001) produced by guitarist Selaelo Selota. The album became a big hit and is a collector's item, also available in the Kenny G version. It won SAMA 8's Best Female Artist and Jazz Vocal Album categories. In 2002 Judith won the Kora All Africa Music Awards' Best African Female Artist category. She also won two Metro FM awards. In 2003 she received a platinum disc as the album hit the over-50 000 sales mark. After four years she released her follow-up album, *New Beginnings* (2005). The album was a product of Judith and former Thetha guitarist Lawrance Matshiza who also produced Siphokazi's Ubuntu Bam. She dedicated the track *Mme Motswadi*, to her mother, Miemie Sephuma. Another track, *Re A Lotšha*, was co-written by Judith and super percussionist Sello Galane. The CD won SAMA 12's Best Female Artist category for Judith, Best Producer for Lawrance as well as Best Engineer for Jasper Williams. As if that was not enough, it scooped the Metro FM Music Awards' Best Jazz Album in 2006. She is married to Sphiwe Mhlambi.

Another Limpopo-woman who blew a storm with her trumpet is **KGAOGELO MAILULA**. The Mailula people are found in ga-Mamabolo, Limpopo province. Their village is aptly named ga-Mailula. "Kgao" released her debut album titled *La Mogale*. It was recorded with her band Kgalala. She also belongs to the new generation of schooled musicians. With the support of hubby Magalane Phoshoko one hopes for greater things to come. By 2007 she was one of the chosen few teachers to groom a new generation of female leaders at Oprah Winfrey's institution in South Africa.

**PHINDA MTYA** entertained many music lovers as a backing vocalist for the likes of Oliver Mtukudzi and Suthukazi Arosi. She grew up in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape singing in school and church choirs. While busy with a Social Science degree at Fort Hare University, the music fraternity enticed her with lucrative offers. In 1992 the late Brenda Fassie brought her to Johannesburg after seeing her perform in an East London club. A year later she met her hubby, Morgan Matlala. Her debut solo album, *Into Yam* (1996) did not perform well in the market. Amongst her other projects, she sang in *Mafube* as well as playing the role of Rafiki in the *Lion King* for two years in Canada. After 11 years she released *Mbheka Phesheya* (2005), produced by Steve Dyer, which

won SAMA 12's Best Adult Contemporary Album category. In 2007 she went into the studio with the same producer and followed up with *Yithi Paha*, an album that was nominated for SAMA 14's category she had won in 2005. It is interesting to note that she moonlights as a tow-truck driver since the family owns a tow-truck business.

Son of Mary Kate and Ernest Smith in Durban, **ERNIE SMITH's** guitar could easily be mistaken for that of Cape Town's superstar Jonathan Butler by some uninitiated ears. Ernie who grew up in Wentworth stormed onto the music scene with his self-written, arranged and co-produced debut album, *Child Of The Light* (Sheer Sound, 2001) and the continent's premier awards, the Kora All Africa Music Awards crowned him the Most Promising Male Artist. The album also won SAMA 8's Best Newcomer and Best Adult Contemporary English Album. Jasper Williams engineered, mixed and co-produced it. The recording line-up was Ernie Smith (lead guitar), Karim Darris (percussion), Godfrey Mgcina and Kwazi Shange (drums), Roland Moses, Themba Mkhize, Valentia Ferlito and Neil Gonsalves (keyboards), Marcus Wyatt (trumpet) as well as Henry Leggard and the jazz section winner of the 2006 Standard Bank Young Artist Award, Concord Nkabinde on bass. His 2002 release, *Lovely Things*, won SAMA 9's Best Adult Contemporary English Album. In 2005 he left Johannesburg for his hometown Durban and took a break to reflect on his personal life. A year later he released his follow-up album titled *Beautiful Woman* (2006). In 2008 as he and his wife Lucretia welcomed their daughter Israela into this world. Ernie also released the long-awaited CD, *Everything Around Me*. The devout Christian's record label was aptly named "Child Of The Light".

The first time I met Tshwane songstress, **LINDA KEKANA**, she was the main artist at a Women's Day celebration in Polokwane. She performed songs from her SAMA-nominated debut album, *Rebirth*. The album title and the music revealed her to be a renaissance musician who wants to revive and instil African moral values into the nation. The Kekana couple compose songs together; Linda sharp with lyrics, and "the tiger" Ephraim providing the music and playing the guitar. Inspired by the historic "I Am An African" speech by the then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, the Atteridgeville-born star released an album of the same title through Gallo Records in 2002, which was produced by Dumisani Dlamini. It won SAMA 9's Best Jazz Vocal Album section. On the album she worked with Sello Manyaka (saxophone), Isaac "Mnca" Mtshali and Kwazi Shange (drums), Mlungisi Gegana, Fana Zulu and Herbie Tsoaeli (bass), Godfrey Mgcina and Peter Masilela (percussion), Dumisani Dlamini, Themba Mkhize and Andile Yenana (piano), Lawrance Matshiza, Oupa Makhubela and Ntokozo Zungu (guitar). This is one of the few CDs that carry the Aids helpline tollfree contact number. In her live performances she was backed by the group, Siyaya, whose members included Sewela Selamolela, Jake Naniki Selamolela, Thato Lenake, Joseph Rasego and Johnny Motuba who also played drums in Vusi Mahlasela's Proud

People's Band. Her next album, *Kodumela*, was produced by Thapelo Khomo.

While Queenstown is known for being the hometown of President Thabo Mbeki, it is also home to some of South Africa's great musicians like Todd Matshikiza, Margaret Singana, Mongezi Feza and Stompie Mavi. In the early seventies another young man in that Eastern Cape neighbourhood by the name of **MLUNGISI GEGANA** had his life changed by the arrival of a new musician neighbour called "Matenesana". From there, Lungi never looked back. Amongst his influences he cites Tete Mbambisa, the Ngcukana brothers, Alvin of the Dyers music family, Zim Ngqawana, McCoy Mrubata and Feya Faku. His session musicianship exposed him to the right connections in jazz circles and earned him a lot of respect amongst his peers. He is one of the few double bassists in the country and features on many recordings for this speciality. In 2004 Mlungisi released his self-written album, *One Step Forward* (Gallo Records) through Sheer Publishing. The line-up included the who's who of today's South African jazz music like Jasper Cooke, Valentia Ferlito, Godfrey Mgcina, Sam Mataura, Percy Mbonani, Kesivan Naidoo, Johnny Chonco, Basi Mahlasela, Vusi Khumalo, Louis Mhlanga and Andile Yenana.

Born in King William's Town, Eastern Cape, **ANDILE YENANA** was the 2005 Standard Bank Young Artists' Award winner. He is a product of Natal University's Centre for Jazz And Popular Music under guidance of Professor Darius Brubeck. Having paid his dues as a freelancer, he released his debut album *We Used To Dance* (2002 SAMA nominee) through Damon Forbes's Sheer Sound. The album was so well-received that he was encouraged to release his follow-up, *Who's Got The Map*, which featured local musicians like saxophonist Sydney Mnisi. The album dominated SAMA 12's nominations as it featured in the categories Best Male Artist, Best Instrumental Album and Best Jazz Album. Many musicians have featured him on their albums as their pianist of choice, but he remains a member of Zim Ngqawana's band. Many jazz fans have experienced his live performance magic at various concerts including the Grahamstown National Arts Festival where he shared the stage with the Duke Ngcukana Quintet in 2005. He also featured in the Standard Bank Joy Of Jazz Joburg International Festival sharing the platform with that US wizard of the strings, Stanley Jordan as well as Lee Ritenour, Dave Koz and Dianne Reeves. Andile was nominated Best Producer for Suthukazi Arosi's *Ubuntu* album in the Standard Bank SAMA 8. He co-produced *Abantwana Be Afrika* with the great Winston Mankunku Ngozi. In 2007 he was invited by Univen to lecture in Music. Andi played for Voice, a quintet that was formed to preserve the rich heritage of the music of greats like Nick Moyake, Kippie Moeketsi, Johnny Dyani and Dudu Pukwana. In 2001 the outfit released *Quintet Legacy Volume 1* through Sheer Sound. Who were the other members of Voice?

Tenor saxophonist, **SYDNEY "ACE" MNISI** who hails from Tembisa. He is a product of both FUBA Academy in Newtown and Pretoria Technikon. He



has toured with various musicians and recorded with the likes of Sylvester Mazinyane, Andile Yenana and the late Dennis Mpale.

Bass specialist, **MOTLATSI HERBIE TSOAELI** is a Capetonian who credits Prof. Merton Barrow of Jazz Workshop as his mentor. The talented guitarman who plays both electric and acoustic bass with ease has featured on great musicians' albums including Gloria Bosman, Mankunku Ngozi, Suthukazi Arosi and Linda Kekana. His musical home is Zim Ngqawana's band, *Ingoma*. He was nominated in the Standard Bank SAMA 8's Best Producer category for Suthukazi Arosi's album, *Ubuntu*. The other members of Voice who need no introduction were trumpeter Marcus Wyatt and the late drummer, Lulu Gontsana.

**FEZILE "FEYA" FAKU** is a self-taught trumpeter from New Brighton in Port Elizabeth. He grew up listening to the sounds of bands like the Soul Jazzmen who used to play in the hall opposite his home. He later did a Performers Diploma in Jazz Studies at the University Of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal). His early influences include the late pianist, composer and arranger Tete Mbambisa, saxophonist Christopher Columbus, "Mra" Ngcukana as well as George Tyefumani who inspired him to play flugel horn. A man of quintets, he worked with Mankunku Ngozi's quintet and the Paul van Kemenade Quintet. He also led his Durban-based quintet, The Core. His mentor on drums was the late Lulu Gontsana. He is a member of Mahube whose album was nominated in the 5th FNB SAMA's Best African Pop Album category. Mahube was a Steve Dyer-directed collaboration show consisting of Oliver Mtukudzi, George Phiri, Suthukazi Arosi, Phinda Mtya, Scorpion Madondo, Barry van Zyl, Andile Yenana, Herbie Tsoaeli and Sean Fourie. Fezile who also worked with Abdullah Ibrahim and Bheki Mseleku boasts albums such as *Homage* and *The Colours They Bring*.

**CONCORD NKABINDE's** bass guitar skills saw him work with musicians like Ernie Smith, Family Factory, Gloria Bosman, Johnny Clegg and the Grassroot Project. This talented muso's independently released albums include *The Time The Season* and *This Is My World*. Besides his local itinerary he has toured countries like Germany, France, Switzerland and the US with Johnny Clegg from whom he says he has learned a lot about the industry. Concord's knowledge and talent were also recognised with his involvement in teaching music students across South Africa on the Standard Bank National Youth Jazz Festival programme. His music draws from across various genres like rock and Spanish, but the "Soweteness" always comes through the "worldness".

Another hot bassist, **LUCAS SENYATSO** released his debut CD on 7 July 2006. Having worked with stars like Hugh Masekela, Gloria Bosman and Judith Sephuma, it was time for him to show the world what he's made of. The CD was titled *All of Me* and was nominated for SAMA's Best Contemporary Jazz Album. It was launched at a Birchwood Hotel jazz evening shared on stage with guitarists Ray Phiri as well as Oupa "Poy Poy" Makhubela who was presenting



his second album, *Stand Up*. Afro-jazz lady, Nombulelo Maqetuka's debut CD, *Essence of Love* was also launched that night.

Counted amongst the talented young bass guitarists of South Africa is **OUPA "POY-POY" MAKHUBELA**. He started his music career in 1975. Some of the bands he played with before joined the Don Laka crew was *The Young Movers*. I personally took note of the musician as Don Laka's bass guitarist. He later went on to release his own solo debut titled *Unity*. It was followed by *African Spirit*. In 2006 he released his third CD titled *Stand Up*.

Guitar wizard, **BHEKI KHOZA** grew up in Chesterville, KwaZulu-Natal Province. He started playing guitar at the tender age of six. Though his passion was soccer, the influence of a neighbourhood guitarist uncle Robert aka Spirit won the day. His informal training was later complemented by music studies at the University of Hartford, US in 1991. While playing in Mbongeni Ngema's plays in Durban, Mbongeni advised him to move to Johannesburg where he could widen his scope. The versatile guitar maestro who plays jazz, pop, fusion and reggae styles teaches music at Wits University and Damelin College. Besides featuring on various musicians' recordings, this former shop steward of the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU) has also played for bands like Jazz Pioneers and Thayima. I experienced his stage magic while he was with Sello Galane's Free Kiba band playing side by side with the late Steve Zulu. He also composed the music score for the movie *Sophiatown*. His 2006 CD *Getting To Heaven Alive* received three SAMA 13 nominations and won the Best Instrumental Jazz Album award. The left-handed Mseleku's productions include Simphiwe Dana's *The One Love Movement On Bantu Biko Street*, winner of four SAMA 13 awards. In February 2008 he represented South Africa at Cuba's Havana International Jazz Festival. His band, the Bheki Khoza Quartet, which was made of Jimmy Mngwandi (bass), Nkanyezi Cele (drums), Mncedi Kupa (piano) and himself on guitar performed at Casa de la Cultura de Plaza before he could return home to wife, Nomvula and concentrate on the material of his next album.

Former Musical Roots trumpeter, **RICHARD "WADADA" RAMOLEFE** has embarked on a successful solo career. The hornman known to jazz lovers as Richie Ramolefe is highly in demand for live performances. His debut album, *Uzongikhumbula* includes Alan Silinga's all-time favourite composition, Ntyilo Ntyilo. I first saw the Tshwane-based musician perform at the popular open-air jazz venue, Moretele Park in Mamelodi, Tshwane.

The first time I heard the voice of Labella it reminded me of Letta Mbulu's powerful yet controlled renditions. **LABELLA DANI** from Gugulethu, Western Cape was one of Selaelo Selota's first artists on his record label, C-Lota. How do you like the sound of that – Labella for the new label. She grew up listening to the music of stars like Anita Baker. When she first met Selaelo, she was participating in the Shell Road To Fame talent search with her group. Later at UCT she met Judith Sephuma who invited her to join her as backing vocalists

for Jennifer Jones. This Afro-pop and soul lady of song sang for 11 years before she could record, gaining valuable experience backing stars like Sibongile Khumalo. Her debut album was titled *So Lonely*. It was followed by *Child Of The Soil* produced by Selota.

**RACHEL KWENZEKILE NHLABATHI** aka Rae was born in Dlamini, Soweto. Having started as member of Tattoo in 1999, she is another promising artist whose debut *Kwenzekile* was released through Gallo Records in 2006. It was recorded at Downtown studios by Neil Kuhn and produced by Siphiwe Dhlamini. She co-produced, co-wrote and co-engineered the album. The gem was nominated for the Best Female Artist and Best Vocal Jazz Album categories of SAMA 2006.

IKS communication systems leader, the drum remains one of the most fascinating musical instruments. Not every musician can maximally express himself through these “hollow” talkers of various shapes and sizes. In 1999 I was captivated by the skills of a young man who was part of the stage band for the 5th SAMA in Sun City, North West Province. His name is **TLALE MAKHENE**. Afro-jazz champion percussionist/drummer, Tlale is the son of Mpho Twala and the late film star, Ramolao Daniel Makhene. Growing up in a showbiz environment, he was exposed to many jazz albums and musicians at a young age. Instead of following in the footsteps of his multi-award winning father and singer/actress mother, he chose the ancient African communication instrument. He learned this fine art of communication from his granny. The church and school gave him the opportunity to practice his beating skills, which have turned him into something of a drum god. Among the musicians who inspire him are Segwagwa Gabriel Thobejane, Sello Galane, Vusi Khumalo and Danish drummer Lars Stork. He has featured on many musicians’ albums including Judith Sephuma, Ringo Madlingozi, Sylvester Mazinyane and Heavy Spirits. His debut album *The Ascension Of The Enlightened* (2004) was the winner of the 11th MTN SAMA’s Best Contemporary Jazz Album, a category won by Dondo for *Changing Times* in the previous year’s awards.

Ga-Mashashane is not only ancestral home to legendary trombonist Jonas Gwangwa, but also to another Northern Ndebele son, percussionist par excellence and cultural activist, **SELLO GALANE**. Watching him in action he always reminds me of a member of Youssou N’Dour’s Etoile de Dakar, tama player Assane Thiam. Sello was born to Maeke and Cecilia Moaki Galane on 28 September 1966 and grew up in Leboneng, in Temba-Hammanskraal. Son of a Kiba lead dance – *malokwane*, he grew up surrounded by township *trupa* dancers of neighbouring villages of Majaneng and Ramotse, and spent his formative years listening to his mother’s singing of Lutheran Church hymns. He sang in a family choir. Sello developed a keen interest in his father’s tutelage and legacy of Kiba-Dinaka. Later he got introduced to the haunting music of Philip Tabane by Selaelo Selota. Together with fellow musicians Selaelo Selota, Magalane Phoshoko and Judith Sephuma, Galane graduated from the University of Cape

Town. They had started off, in 1990, using Kiba rhythms to enrich jazz music. When they each went their separate ways in 1991 to embark on solo careers, Galane reversed the experiment by enriching kiba music with various elements from jazz and pop. He chose to embark on a research project to define a music discourse of Kiba and to grow its repertoire beyond the confines of a single tribal tradition. He later dubbed this creative approach and genre – Free Kiba. In 1993 he attended workshops at the Ethnomusicology College of Zimbabwe in Harare.

From Zimbabwe, with a deeper understanding of African music, and together with Judith Sephuma, Sylvester Mazinyane, and Clement Benney, he was part of Selaelo Selota's 1996 project, Taola. Taola fused Nguni and Bapedi idioms with jazz. The project was performed internationally at the *Fin de Sciecle la Johannesburg* in France. Galane took his project of *Kgapana*-women dance group to perform in Nantes and Paris in France the same year. In June of the same year he presented the *Mapostola* group at the 35th Festival of American Folklife's Sacred Sounds Stage. These experiences and experiments enriched the Free Kiba movement as we know it today. He describes it as "a tradition of music making and cultural communication of the Amandebele of Moletlane, the Bapedi and is akin to the vhaVenda Tshikona."

When his father passed on, he decided to take the baton and continue with the race. To achieve this, he went up north to the heartland of Kiba music – Limpopo Province. This is where as a teacher at Kagiso High School he met his protégé, Judith Sephuma. His quest for Kiba placed him in an ironic situation: Sello, a lecturer at Kwena-Moloto Teachers College came face to face with his mentors – simple rural women without a book, pen or chalkboard. For almost nine years they schooled him into a Kiba music graduate. Due to his academic background, his researched interpretation of the art form resulted in a sound never heard before – Free Kiba. He freed the music from the mountains, valleys and village streets of Limpopo into the corridors of power at the South African State Theatre, the Market Theatre and world stages.

Today Sello and Basadi Ba Kgapana Ensemble are proud of their tireless efforts to promote what many in the industry thought to be a waste of time. Due to industry scepticism, the activist established his own company, Kgapana African Music Records (KAMR). Glad to have returned to his father's place of birth, Sello made Polokwane his home where he lives with his family. Having been to his home several times, I can without any fear of contradiction say the man lives the music. Cultural to the bone, spiritual to the soul, the upbringing of his children is a true reflection of his vision. His business offices are in Tshwane at the South African State Theatre. Galane the academic, together with Marcus Ramogale, researched the origin and religious expression value of the ZCC's Mokhukhu dance in a 1997 project titled *Faith In Action*. He has travelled extensively especially to African countries in his quest to find similarities in

the continent's ethnic sounds. Besides the "200+ Years of Kiba Music of South Africa" celebration roadshow and recordings of his CDs and DVDs, in 2005 he was the musical director of *Mother of Rain – Mapula*, Aubrey Sekhabi's musical starring Vusi Kunene. Sello was also part of "Jazz Meets Symphony 2005", an innovation of the Jazz Foundation of South Africa. One of his greatest achievements was his contribution towards the recognition of Dr Philip Tabane for his pioneering spirit by the University of Venda.

Musicians Sello has worked with on his Free Kiba Live series available in both CD and DVD include Luyanda Madope (piano), Kwazi Shange (drums), Lawrance Matshiza (acoustic guitar), Bheki Khoza (guitar), Sandile Jwaai (bass), Ricky Sekhale (soprano/alto sax). Galane plays sekgokolo (father drum), kgalapedi (mother drum) and matikwane (small twin drums) and lead voice in all his recordings. The backing vocalists he has worked with in his recordings most regularly are Ofentse Montshiwe, Nombulelo Maqetuka and Thembeke Mavuso. By 2006 he had recorded *Free Kiba 1, 2, 3, 4, 5* and 6. The last four CDs carried titles *New Modern Classics* and *Sounds of the Diaspora* series, *A Modern Village of Clay*, *Sacred Sounds of Free Kiba 5* and *Echoes of Mapungubwe*, respectively. The last three CDs made history in the industry as they were all recorded in one show and released on the same day in 2006. The releases were accompanied by DVDs. In the same year he founded the Free Kiba Music Development Foundation. Galane has been honoured with two awards, The OT – Onkgopotse Tiro Award, and Smithsonian Institute Recognition for contribution to the diffusion of knowledge and culture that enrich the world. The highlights of his career include theme song of *Mapungubwe* for the Presidential National Orders Awards (2006) and the Nelson Mandela Birthday Celebrations (2007, 2008). Galane sits on the board of the National Arts Council of South Africa (2007–2009) and the NEPAD committee of Culture Education on behalf of the National Department of Education. I hope to live to witness the day he receives both the SAMA and Kora awards.

Another Tshwane multi-instrumentalist is **TLOKWE SEHUME**. Born in Lady Selbourne, his family was later moved to Atteridgeville where he was inspired by the Atteridgeville hostel dancers' dinaka music. He studied music at UNISA but dropped out when he discovered the lack of traditional African music in the content. Tlokwe plays a blend of traditional and western music that has become known as Mmino Wa Thaba (Music of the Mountain). His debut album, *Naga Ya Fsa* (The Land is in Turmoil) was initially released in 1995 but was re-released later in 2001 with additional new tracks.

Having known him first through hard-hitting lyrics like *A re kwe tša gago*, I first met him at the launch of Sello Galane's "200+ years of Kiba Music of South Africa" concert, at the South African State Theatre where I was requested to read a paper on the subject. After our meeting he sent me some of his work for my comment and I was impressed and appreciated his passion for the

origins of the Kiba music styles. Tlokwe, like Galane and Philip Tabane, is a songwriter, composer, singer and multi-instrumentalist who plays guitar, mbira, mvvet, flute and percussion. His 85-piece ensemble of African and western musical instruments, Medu-Nakeng, has been part of workshops sponsored by the Mmino South African–Norwegian Education and Music Programme. The project that continues to swell with new artists from previously disadvantaged communities was in its 3rd year in 2005. Some of the groups in the show included the Northern Sotho traditional music groups like Dihlanhlagane, an all ladies ensemble from Ga-Matlala as well as Magana Go Bušwa, a Dinaka dance group from the rural villages of GaSekhukhune in Limpopo. There was also a Botswana music group, Serampheshane, from Moruleng near Rustenburg, as well as a Basarwa (San) group from Kgalagadi.

Through his Medu Promotions Tlokwe continues to research various aspects of South African indigenous music. He has performed outside the borders of South Africa including the rest of the African continent, Europe and India where he was accompanied by members of his band, Medu, which he founded in 1985. In 2004 it comprised by the following members: Motshepe Kgawane, Lucas Komane, Segopa Sekgobela, Thabo Rapoo and Edwin Nkomo. Sehume, an expert on the Cameroonian chordophone called mvvet, was invited for a presentation on the instrument at the Moses Taiwa Molelekwa Arts Foundation in Tembisa, among other places. His albums include *Naga Ya Fsa* (Gallo, 2001) which won the Best Pedi Music category of SAMA 8, *Ba Utlwile* (Gallo, 2002) which received two SAMA nominations, *Mmino Wa Thaba* (Gallo, 2003), a collection of his live performances as well as *Serunya* (2005).

A 1999 meeting between Collins Chabane and Bezil Makombe in Harari gave birth to the group, **MOVEMENT**. The inspiration behind the band was to integrate the Shona, xiTsonga and tshiVenda cultures and showcase traditional instruments like timbila/mbira and hosho. Bezil Makombe a Shona-speaking Zimbabwean, born in Seke in 1972. He started playing mbira at the age of five. Between 1990 and 1999 he toured extensively as a member of Thomas Mapfumo's Blacks Unlimited. Collins Chabane is a Tsonga-speaking South African, born in Xikundu in 1960. While serving his sentence on Robben Island he played harmonica and co-ordinated a prisoners' jazz band called Collective Sound until his release in 1990. After the 1994 democratic elections he became a Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of the Limpopo Provincial legislature. In 1999 he learned to play timbila. The duo compose, arrange and publish their music. Collins is the band's producer. Their debut album *Seke VS Xikundu* is dedicated to their places of birth. Musicians who were involved in its recording were Percy Mfana, Chidodo Chinembiri and Washington Masango (lead vocals), Erina Wurayayi and Maruwa Chikwatari (backing vocals), John Ngwandangwanda (lead guitar), Washington Masango (bass guitar), Bezil Makombe and Chidodo Chinembiri (mbira), Collins Chabane (harmonica and



timbila), Lawrance Muparutsa (drums), Maruwa Chikwatari (hoshos) and Abraham Makhombe (congas). In 2001 they released *Xai-Xai*, dedicated to the people of Mozambique. New musicians in the line-up were Lazarus Williams (drums), Themba Kaseke (timbila), Thembani Mackauckau (rhythm guitar) and Khizhito Musodza (hoshos and congas).

I recently spent an evening of good music in the company of Meadowlands-born pianist, **SYLVESTER MAZINYANE**. His Church background saw him fall in love with the piano. While busy with his matric, he attended piano lessons at Manu Technical College in Dobsonville. Thereafter, he did a music degree at the UCT College of Music. He has backed many stars in South Africa both as an individual specialist and as member of Loading Zone. This allowed him to mature with time, see faces and places and appreciate many sounds and songs until he felt ready to release his own work. No wonder his debut album *Down South* (2005) is the jewel it is. It is testimony to the wealth of experience the young man from Soweto has accumulated over the years of exposure to the tapestry of the cultural heritage of South Africa. The album features some of the masters of the game: Prince Lengoasa (trumpet), Nkanyezi Cele (drums), Bongani Sokhela (bass), Tlale Makhene (percussion), Sydney Mnisi (saxophone) and a member of Motswako who was also Classic FM's presenter, Kutlwano Masote (cello).

**NGWAKO MANAMELA** was born at Riverside and raised in Mamelodi. While performing with other bands he caught the sharp ear and eye of Hugh Masekela who encouraged him to embark on a solo career. The result was his debut CD, *Ngwako Ramelodi*. The professional vibraphonist and band leader was inspired by the American muso Milt Jackson in the 1970s. By 2007 he had established the Manamela Bokamoso School of Creative Art in Soshanguve. The school was sponsored by UNISA, while studio facilities were provided by Chissa Music.

Young saxophonist **MOSES KHUMALO** was born in Meadowlands, Soweto on 30 January 1979. At the age of five he was already singing in the Seventh Day Adventist Church Choir. After completing his matric at Pace Community College, he enrolled with Manu Technical College in Dobsonville. After his piano and saxophone courses between 1994 and 1998 he left the college equipped with a diploma in music theory. His first big concert was the Grahamstown National Arts Festival, where he performed with the Soweto Youth Jazz Band in 1995. Moses Molelekwa realised his talent and mentored him. Before long he was playing with big names in the industry and billed for the North Sea Jazz Festival in Cape Town. After serving his apprenticeship in the industry, he released his debut album *Mntungwa* (2002), named after his clan. The CD made him the winner of the 2003 SAMA's Best Newcomer category, which said much about the future of the young composer and hornman in the music industry. Perhaps this was confirmation that he had worked with the best in the industry like Sibongile Khumalo, Hugh Masekela, Gloria Bosman, Khaya Mahlangu, Vusi Khumalo, Moses Molelekwa and Prince Lengoasa. He spent



many hours perfecting his act with his live band, Moses Khumalo And Friends. Then followed the CD *Ibuyile* (Sheer Sound, 2005). On Monday, 4 September 2006 he was found dead in his flat in Weltevreden Park, Johannesburg. It was a very sad moment that brought back the memories of the tragic death of his mentor, Taiwa Molelekwa, especially due to the age range. I believe that the most shocked were Xoli Nkosi and the late Prince Kupi with whom he was about to go into the studio for the recording of *The Young Lions* project. Why at the age of 27? Much too soon, Mntungwa! He was laid to rest at the Westpark cemetery on Sunday, 10 September 2006. The tragic unnatural deaths that cut short the lives of music stars like Special Cane Mahlelebe, Moses Molelekwa, Makhendlas, TK Mhinga, Lebo Mathosa, Gito Baloi, Johannes Kerkorrel, Moses Khumalo, Price Kupi and Tiny Siluma always leave me muttering to myself: "How much is enough? How soon is too soon?"

Identifiable by her head scarf trademark **SIMPHIWE DANA**, who was born to a priest in Gcuwa (Butterworth), Eastern Cape, in 1970, has a unique, refreshing and original style. In 1980 the family moved to Lusikisiki where she grew up with her three siblings. In 1997 she matriculated at Vela Private School in Mthatha. She also did Graphic Design at Port Elizabeth Technikon. Her debut album *Zandisile* (1st Years) was released by Gallo Records in 2004. It was arranged and produced by ace producer Thapelo Khomo and engineered by Papi Seretse. It fuses a variety of genres to bring out a refreshingly peculiar product delivered predominantly in her home language, isiXhosa. Presented in the typical new South African lingo, the hit *Ndiredi* (I'm Ready) has turned her into a household name. It features some of the best musicians in the industry like Isaac Mtshali, Jabu Sibumbe, Victor Masondo, Godfrey Mgcina, Ntokozo Zungu, Bheki Khoza and Valentia Ferlito, who did justice to the end product. The simple look of the cover that resembles a school exercise book makes it even more extraordinary. The album went gold in a short space of its release and received four nominations in MTN SAMA 11 winning the Best Jazz Vocal Album as well as the Best Newcomer categories. I can't remember any major concert that did not feature her magic, including the Cape Town International Jazz Festival and the Standard Bank Joy Of Jazz Joburg International Festival. She was nominated in the 10th Kora All Africa Music Awards' Revelation Of The Year and Best African Video categories. In 2006 she released her second album, *The One Love Movement On Bantu Biko Street*, which won SAMA 13's four categories of Best Female Artist, Album of the Year, Best Contemporary Jazz Album and Best Vocal Jazz Album. She started 2008 with a European tour and was nominated for the 2008 BBC Radio 3 Awards for World Music.

When I was invited to an evening of quality music, I could not believe my eyes when the star of the show was the diminutive figure of a young lass of 19. But once she opened her mouth, she took total control of the mainly elite crowd. She introduced herself as Zamajobe. **ZAMAJOBE SITHOLE** was born in 1986 in

Frankfort, Free State, and grew up in Vosloorus, Ekurhuleni. At a young age she sang in choirs led by Pastor Benjamin Dube of the Praise Centre Church. She fell in love with the strings of Eric Clapton and asked her father to buy her a guitar. Her real music break came through M-Net's *Idols* talent search in 2003. The competition revealed her real colours even to herself and inspired her to go for gold. Her debut album *Indawo Yami* (BMG) carries twelve well-written tracks. It was produced by Eric Pilani. Following its release she featured in many major jazz concerts. Her international recognition came in the form of a nomination in the 2005 MTV Europe Music Awards' Best African Video category for *Magic*. However, the award went to Nigeria's 2Face for *African Queen*. As if that was not enough, she was again nominated in the 10th Kora All Africa Music Awards' Best African Video category. The video ended up winning Lara Hollis SAMA 12's Best Music Video category. She's featured in three songs on jazz maestro Lee Ritenour's album *Smoke 'n Mirrors*. Her first award came from the 2006 Channel O Spirit of Africa Music Video Awards. She won the Best Urban Jazz Video for *Indawo Yami*.

**SWAZI DLAMINI** is from Kwa-Mashu in Durban. She is a product of the Joyous Celebration project. She appears on many jazz albums in South Africa as a backing vocalist. When she went solo, she released *My First Love* (2003), an album that won her the 2004 SAMA's Best Female Artist category as well as the Kora All Africa Music Awards' Most Promising Female Artist section. In 2005 she married violinist Tshepo Mngoma and released her second album *Dance With Me*. Her stage performance is out of this world. By 2008 she had moved from Johannesburg to her hometown, Durban from where she launched her own company, Swazitainment Productions.

**LINDIWE MAXOLO** started singing in gospel choirs at the age of 14. This brilliant vocalist in 1998 enrolled with Johannesburg's Fuba School Of Music for a three years course. On completion she continued to the UCT College of Music in 2001 where she did a jazz degree and worked with various bands of note. This was not new to her as she had toured with Joyous Celebration and worked with Geoff Mapaya, Kgaogelo Mailula and Sello Galane while at Fuba. Lindiwe is the winner of the 2002 Old Mutual Jazz Encounters contest.

**PAUL HANMER** was born in 1961 in Cape Town. He is another product of the UCT's College of Music. After three years at UCT he went out to practice what he'd learnt and exposed himself to various music styles. He went to Johannesburg in the late eighties. Paul is a highly polished pianist who has worked with a myriad of musicians including Khaya Mahlangu. He is a founding member of the fusion band Unofficial Language, which was formed in 1987. The other members of the band were Ian Herman and Pete Sklair. Some of the band's albums are *Primal Steps* (1994) and *Move Moves* (1998) featuring the voices of Wendy Oldfield, Waddy Jones and Frank Opperman. In 1997 he shook the music industry with the release of his self-composed masterpiece *Trains To Taung* (Sheer Sound),

which featured Denis Lalouette (electric bass), Jethro Shasha (drums), Louis Mhlanga (electric guitar) and Basi Mahlasela (percussion). The album's three SAMA nominations and continuous good sales are testimony to his amazing musicianship. His self-written/composed and arranged live recording *Window To Elsewhere* is a must for serious collectors. In 2000 he released another self-written/arranged/produced album, *Playola* (Sheer Sound), on which he worked with McCoy Mrubata, Ian Herman, Marcus Wyatt, Kevin Gibson, Mark Duby, Jasper Cooke, Linda Muller, Denis Lalouette and Louis Mhlanga. The album was engineered by Peter Pearlson who also co-produced it. It won the Best Producer section of SAMA 7. SAMA 8 nominated his CD *Naivasha* in the Best Contemporary Jazz Album category pitted against Hilton Schilder's *No Turning Back*. Paul was nominated Best Male Artist by SAMA 2006 for his CD *Accused No.1 Nelson Mandela*. Bands he played with include Wired To The Floor and Sheer All Stars, Damon Forbes's brainchild whose album *Dance With Me* was nominated three times by SAMA 9. Paul's album *Water + Lights* was nominated in MTN SAMA 11's Best Contemporary Jazz Album.

When Lucas Mahlakgane of Sony Music raved about a new jazz band called **FOUR FOURTY** that would change the face of jazz, for some reason I expected it to be a quartet but no, it turned out to be a trio from Daveyton, Benoni in Gauteng Province's Ekurhuleni. The jazz combo was formed by three musicians in 1989. They were Vuyisile "Vee" Sabongo (saxophone), Mvuso Dimba (piano) and Steven Mabona (bass). As a group they were inspired by one of the most powerful jazz bands from the then East Rand (now Ekurhuleni), Jazz Ministers. As an individual musician, Vuyisile was influenced by Ezra Ngcukana. He holds a Performance Jazz Diploma from Natal University's Centre for Jazz and Popular Music where he was guided by jazz giant, Darius Brubeck. He played with established saxophonists like Morris Goldberg, Hotep Galet, Duke Makasi and Mike Mkhalemele in a saxophone extravaganza dubbed "Sax Appeal" at Sun City. While Mvuso is a self-taught pianist and versatile musician who was locally influenced by Abdullah Ibrahim, Steve was inspired by his guitarist stepfather. It took them almost ten years of night club sessions before they could release their 11-track self-written and produced debut album *Messages* (Sony Music, 2000). They guide young jazz students at Johnny Meko's Music Academy Of Gauteng. The flagship of the academy is the Johnny Meko Big Band whose members in 2005 were Malcolm Jiyane (trombone), Nthabiseng Mokoena (alto saxophone), Mapule Tshabalala (saxophone), Xolani Dhlamini (trumpet), Tebogo Nguza (trumpet), Mthunzi Mvubu (piano), Steven Mabona (electric bass) and Walter Kotu (drums).

**JOHNNY MEKO** is a respected jazzman I met when I got involved in promoter Peter Tladi's Standard Bank Jazz. Johnny was workshopping young jazz musicians as part of the show concept. His passion in the development of the music genre was very clear. After all, he's been in the industry for many years

and played with the who's who of jazz. Many people will remember him as part of the Jazz Ministers of the East Rand under the leadership of Metro FM Music Awards Lifetime Achiever, the late saxman Victor Ndlaizilwane. Victor whose cultural roots led me to KwaMlungisi in Queenstown also led the Woody Woodpeckers. He was father to Nomvula, one of the youngest pianists in the eighties. The Jazz Ministers rose to international prominence when they took the Newport Jazz Festival by storm. They had a number of great tunes but I guess most of us will easily remember *Zandile* from the album of the same name in 1981. There is a community centre named after the great Vic in Daveyton, Benoni. It is this passion of "ministering" through jazz that led to Johnny Mekoa's resignation from his day job in 1986 to prepare himself for a bigger mission. He registered for Jazz Studies at the University Of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal). It was at that point that he became a member of the Jazzanians, a university-based jazz band under the leadership of keyboardist Professor Darius Brubeck. The band membership included today's musicians like Zim Ngqawana, Victor Masondo and the late Lulu Gontsana. They toured extensively and ultimately released the album *We Have Waited Too Long* (Umkhonto Records, 1988). In 1992 Johnny was awarded the US Fulbright Scholarship to study towards a masters degree in jazz music at Indiana University in the USA. With the support of his wife Margaret he was able to accomplish all these assignments that equipped him for the historic venture of his life – the Music Academy Of Gauteng. He is the founder and director of this institution that was started in 1994. I remember that it was officially launched in 2005 because Awareness Creation Marketing invited me to the glittering occasion. For all his hard work and commitment to the development of jazz, "Bra Johnny" was invited to Ornskoldsvik in Sweden on 15 May 2005 to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Swedish Jazz Federation. It will not be an exaggeration to say Johnny Mekoa's life is jazz.

Pianist Professor **DARIUS BRUBECK** was born into a musical family. His father, Dave Brubeck is an internationally celebrated jazz icon remembered by many for *Take Five* with the Dave Brubeck Quartet. Darius' brothers Chris and Dan are also into the family culture. The family's album *In Their Own Way* was released in 1997. Darius initiated jazz studies at the then University of Natal (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Durban and today he is Professor of Jazz Studies at the institution as well as director of the Centre For Jazz And Popular Music. Some of his projects as a jazz musician include *Tugela Rail* (Right Track, 1984) featuring Barney Rachabane on saxophone. Other musicians on the project included Sandile Shange (guitar), Gabriel Thobejane (percussion), Marc Duby (bass guitar) and the late Nelson Magwaza (drums). In 1988 he released *We Have Waited Too Long* with his first nationally recognised university-based jazz band, The Jazzanians. The membership of the band was Johnny Mekoa (trumpet/valve trombone), Victor Masondo (bass), Andrew Eagle (guitar),

Zim Ngqawana (alto sax/flute), Nick Paton (tenor and soprano saxes), Melvin Peters (piano/keyboards) and the late Lulu Gontsana (drums/percussion). The band was produced by Darius Brubeck and managed by Catherine Brubeck. It performed at the National Association Of Jazz Educators annual conference held in Detroit in January 1988. In 1989 the music professor formed the Afro Cool Concept with Victor Mhleli Ntoni, a band that undertook a world tour. As an expert in the genre he conducted countless workshops world-wide and performed with university-based bands. Brubeck who also performed with the London Symphony Orchestra later led his band, Gathering Forces at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban in September 2001. His other works include *Chaplin's Back*, *Gathering Forces 1&2*, *African Tributes*, *Better Than Live – Larry Coryell And The Brubeck Brothers* as well as *Darius Brubeck And The Nu Jazz Connection*.

Some of the mature jazzmen credited for mentoring most of today's new breed of musicians include **McCoy MRUBATA**. Young in age, rich with experience, McCoy is considered to be one of the leading figures who helped re-shape the sound of local jazz into what is today called Safro-Jazz. McCoy was born on 1 June 1959 in KwaLanga, Cape Town. As a youngster he used to listen to some of the world's great jazz musicians from his family record collections. He was fascinated by Louis Armstrong's trumpet. His mother noticed the music interest in her son and bought him a flute in 1979. McCoy wasted no time and soon joined a professional band, Fever. While invited to play with Louis and The Jive, he impressed Sipho Mabuse who recruited him to play in his band in Johannesburg. Some of his contributions during his stint with Sipho included his alto sax on the track *Jika Jive*, which was to be released as part of the album *Chant Of The Marching* (1989).

When Sipho went to the US in 1987 McCoy joined PJ Powers. In 1988 he formed his own band, McCoy's Brotherhood, a group for which Jimmy Dlodlu played as a session musician in 1990. Mrubata played for Stimela as a session musician during their 1989 tour of France. His mentors included Winston Mankunku Ngozi, Ezra Ngcukana and Duke Ngcukana. McCoy's debut album *Firebird* was produced by seasoned master musician, Sabata Kolozi Lebona. He has featured on many albums in South Africa including collaborations. He is part of his company's initiative, Sheer All Stars; a member of Vivid Africa with multi-instrumentalist Greg Georgiades, Mlungisi Gegana and others; Kulturation with pianist Wessel van Rensburg whose *Mother's Daughter* was nominated in the Best Producer category of the Standard Bank SAMA 8. Later in his career he worked with the band McCoy And Friends. Between 1994 and 1995 the multi-talented Mrubata directed Wendybrow's *Bloke*, a musical production that paid tribute to literary giant William Bloke Modisane (1924–1986). He also toured the world with the late reggae superstar Lucky Dube, who also featured him on his album *Trinity* (1995). Two years later he released *Tears Of Joy* (Sheer



Sound, 1997), a self-composed/arranged/produced album that featured Vuyisile Sabongo, Prince Lengoasa, Themba Mehlomakhulu, Jasper Cooke, Andre Abrahamse, Bheki Khoza, Paul Hanmer, Barry van Zyl and Basi Mahlasela. His collaboration with Pops Mohamed called Society Vibes released the album *A New Hope*. Mrubata's second album with Sheer Sound was titled *Phosa Ngasemva* (1999), adding Andile Yenana to a line-up he worked with on his previous album. The next CD *Hoelykit?* added Gloria Bosman, Dave Reynolds, Romeu Avelino, Morabo Morojele, Mandla Zikalala, Feya Faku and Isaac Mtshali to his usual line-up. One of the tracks on the album, *Bra Kadudu's Dream*, paid tribute to Mr Kadudu Ndlela, a community leader and businessman who gave McCoy and Victor Ntoni accommodation for their music rehearsals back home in the early days of their careers. Mrubata has won three SAMA's including SAMA 9's South African Traditional Jazz Album for Face The Music, as well as MTN SAMA 11 for his CD *Icamagu Livumile* in the same category. The latter was pitted against Steve Dyer's *Lifecycle* and Peter Nthwane's *Back To Your Roots*. His album *African Baroque* was nominated in the Best Instrumental Album category of the SAMA in 2004. It may also be fair to credit the saxophonist/flutist with another SAMA he won as part of a collective, Sheer All Stars. Beyond the year 2000 the reedman spent some of his time with young music students, especially from Johnny Mekoa's Music Academy Of Gauteng in sessions dubbed "Brasskap". That relationship gave birth to the album *The Brasskap Sessions Volume 1*, which won SAMA 14's Best Traditional Jazz category. We're hoping for more volumes that will promote "brasskap" in music. Later in his career when McCoy Mrubata was disgruntled with and embarrassed by some ill-informed media people with their questions in interviews, he recorded *Compliments And Insults*. A committed family man, he is married to Zola.

**PETER NTHWANE**, the trumpeter from Mangaung (Bloemfontein), launched his career in 2001 with the release of *The Beginning of The Road*. It was followed by *Walk On Fire*. The two CDs were released under his independent label. Peter's next two CDs, *Back to Your Roots* and *Devil In The House* were released through the Sheer Sound label.

In 1968 I was doing my Form 2 (Grade 9) at Matladi High School in Zebediela, Limpopo Province. That was where I first saw a band perform live on stage. It was called Black Gold Band from Mokopane. It never got the opportunity to record music but survived as a dance hall performance band. Some of Mokopane's music stars of the time were Alexandra Thema, Dandy Lebesse, Lasco Molepo, Kid and Chester. My schoolmate Benjamin Tsebe would spend hours giving me the profile of the band as well as the general music scene in Mahwelereng, Mokopane where he came from. His elder brother Boy was a jazz music collector and that would always keep us up to date with new trends in that music genre. Among the local jazz musicians he'd tell me about was a man called Mankunku. Back home at Matome village my family did not have a radio. I would walk to



the Tladi household, about a kilometre of bushy and rocky narrow path in the evenings to listen to Radio Bantu programmes until late in the evening. My cousins would accompany me home at around 22h00. Some of the memorable tunes that still rang in my head as I knocked on the door for my mother to open for me was a signature tune of one of the late night programmes. I knew only later that the title of the signature tune was *Yakhal'Inkomo* by the man my friend would tell me about at high school – Mankunku.

**WINSTON MONWABISI MANKUNKU NGOZI** was born on 21 June 1943 in Retreat, Cape Town. He started playing piano at the age of ten. At the age of 12 he bought a tenor saxophone. In the early sixties he went professional when he joined Alf Herbert's African Jazz Revue And Variety Show. He later met Cape Town bassist, Midge Pike. In 1968 he released an album that would propel him to international fame – *Yakhal'Inkomo*. The album was dedicated to one of his heroes, John Coltrane who had just passed away. The evergreen title-track is about a "bellowing bull" that mourns the loss of another. It is a very deep and painful cry. He recorded the album with The Early Mabuza Trio: Lionel Pillay (piano), Agrippa Magwaza (bass) and Early Mabuza (drums). In 1968 his album *Spring* was recorded with the Chris Schilder Quintet: Philip Schilder (bass), Gilbert Matthews (drums), Gary Kriel (guitar), Chris Schilder (piano) and Ngozi himself on tenor saxophone. Maybe I should remind you that Chris Schilder later changed his name to Ebrahim Khalil Shihab. Ngozi's works include his collaboration with Mike Perry on *Jika* (1986), *Dudula* (1996), *Molo Africa* (1997) and *Abantwana Be Afrika* (2006), which he co-produced with Andile Yenana. The album, which is dedicated to the late saxophonist Duke Makasi, features Mankunku Ngozi (tenor/soprano sax), Prince Lengoasa (flugel horn), Andile Yenana (piano), Herbie Tsoaeli (acoustic bass) and Lulu Gontsana (drums).

Hornman **ROBBIE JANSEN** grew up in Harfield, Cape Town, where as a young man he did "coon carnivals" that the Mother City is known for. His father was a member of the Salvation Army. One of his childhood friends was guitarist Errol Dyers. In 1973 Robert played in Errol's first band, The Work Force. The self-taught musician ended up composing and arranging for himself and other musicians. The tenor saxophonist who started as a singer encouraged originality amongst youngsters. He visited Cuba to fully understand their salsa, but only used it to enrich his goema brand of jazz mostly influenced by the traditional Malay sounds. In the seventies he worked with Ezra Ngcukana and Mankunku Ngozi. He also played with the bands Pacific Express, Spirits Rejoice and Dollar Brand. One of the many young musicians he groomed was Allou April who later released his own albums like *Bringing Joy* and *Colourful World*. On the social front, he started an arts centre called the Community Arts Project with Errol Dyers and Basil Coetzee in 1977. Robbie played alto saxophone and flute for a group called Movement In The City in 1981. He also contributed to the struggle by performing at the political rallies of the eighties with his band. Those were

the days of Music and People's Power. The band, Sabenza, was his brainchild with Basil "Mannenberg" Coetzee. It toured the country extensively. Other members of the band were Ezra Ngcukana and Jack Momple. By 2005 his band was Sons Of Table Mountain. The saxman's albums include *District 6* (1986), *Vastrap Island* (1989), *The Cape Doctor* (2000) and *Nomad Jez* (2005). God be praised for giving him a second chance after his two months in a hospital bed at Tygerberg in April/May 2005 for lung problems. At the time he was 55 years old. Interviewed by Pepsi Diphapang Pokane of Afro Café, Jansen said he was nicknamed "the bad boy of jazz" by his peers because of his "bad" (extremely good) blowing of the horn.

Robbie's long-term musical friend, the late Basil Coetzee earned the name "Mannenberg" for his major role in Abdullah Ibrahim's hit of the same name. Basil's other contributions include *Tshona* (1975), *Did You Tell Your Mother* (1979), *District 6* (1986), *Sabenza* (1987) and *Jazz In Africa Vol. 2* (1992).

The Cape Jazz self-taught guitarist **ERROL DYERS** was inspired by Abdullah Ibrahim. As indicated above, in 1977 he was part of the Community Arts Project. His debut album was *Sonesta* (1997). In 1990 he toured the UK with his childhood friend Robbie Jansen, and Basil Coetzee where he played with Abdullah Ibrahim. Like Robbie, his music was to a large extent influenced by goema. Errol's other albums include *Kou Kou Wa* (1999) and *The Best Of Errol Dyers And Friends* (2003).

Mamelodi location in Tshwane has produced many musicians in various genres, but the most obvious influence was that of traditional music. **MOSES MOGALE** was born in Bolobedu, Ga-Mojadji in the province of Limpopo. He grew up surrounded by traditional music from his Rainmaker's village to the traditional dances of hostel dwellers in Mamelodi. In Mamelodi township, Tshwane he was also inspired by two marabi music troubadours, Frans Maake and Charlie Thobejane. The guitar and penny whistle of the two drove people crazy at wedding ceremonies and Moss just wanted to be like them. At a later stage his scope was widened by the music of Philip Tabane, Ernest Motlhe and Geoff Mphakathi. Moss played with various jazz musicians including Barney Rachabane, Lefifi Tladi, Bheki Mseleku, Stompi Manana, Kippie Moeketsi, Allen Kwela, Duke Makasi as well as the band Four Sounds Plus Three. In the seventies he formed his own band, the Moss Mogale Unit. The quintet consisted of his younger brother, Jesse Mogale (guitar and double bass), Mmabana Cultural Centre product, Albert Brewin (drums), Son of Themba Mkhize, Afrika Mkhize (piano), former Zuzuma Jazzmen flutist/percussionist, Mbulelo Marwanqana and the master guitarist himself, Moss.

Some men are blessed with many talents, some are just adventurous while others are hard workers. When I first heard about the achievements of **LEFIFI TLADI** I did not know where to place him. This great son of the soil was born in Lady Selbourne, Tshwane in 1949. He became a jazz musician, poet,

painter, sculptor and philosopher. Lefifi's contribution to the music fraternity includes the Malombo Jazz Messengers, which later became Dashiki, a band he co-founded in 1969. Together with groups like Medupe they inspired young firebrands like Vusi Mahlasela and Lesego Rampolokeng with their poetry and music performances. Due to his involvement with the Black Consciousness Movement the Ga-Rankuwa activist was targeted by the apartheid regime, arrested and eventually forced out of his land of birth into Botswana. In that country together with his peers they formed the Tuka Cultural Unit with the aim of promoting artistic expression in southern Africa and beyond. At the time of writing this book Lefifi was based in Sweden and was invited to perform during *The Jazz Poets in Conversation with Biko* show in South Africa. The show was staged at the Market Theatre Laboratory in Newtown, Johannesburg on 24 and 25 August 2007 coinciding with other national cultural activities like the Joy of Jazz Concert and the Moshito Conference and Exhibition.

**MADALA KUNENE** is without doubt one of South Africa's ethno-music stars. He was born in Cato Manor (Umkhumbane) in 1951 and grew up in Kwa-Mashu where his parents were forced to move. You see, the place was named after Durban's first mayor, George Cato. After clashes between blacks and Indians the authorities built four-roomed houses for blacks in Kwa-Mashu. Later other housing projects followed in Umlazi for blacks, Chartsworth and Phoenix for Indians while Wentworth was for the coloured community. It was against this background that Madala started playing guitar at a young age and performed in street corners. A soccer player who was a member of African Wanderers, he later bought a guitar in 1963 and focused on his music.

Through Sipho Gumede Kunene went to Johannesburg where among others he played in Doc Mthlane's band, Songamasu. In the eighties he was back in Durban playing soccer with his club. His love for the sport is reflected in his compositions like *Mamgobozi*. He later embarked on a solo career. I was introduced to his music while we were building a new sound for the radio station I was working for. The station's music committee listened to his album's tracks several times without commenting, but it was clear that we were all hooked on one tune. The hauntingly beautiful track was titled *Ubombo* from his album *Kon'Ko Man* (1996), which was produced by Pops Mohamed and Airto Moreira. Some of the musicians featured on the album included Gabriel Thobejane, Busi Mhlono and the late Mandla Masuku. Madala was writing, singing and playing for Woza Afrika in the early nineties. In 1996 he joined the late Doc Mthlane in London and recorded Doc's last album, *Respect*. Kunene's other 1996 project was *King Of Zulu Guitar Live Vol. 1*. He was named "King of Zulu guitar" by his music fans in the UK. Madala's 2002 project was titled *First Double 1 & 2* on which he worked with Baba Mokoena Serakoeng. It was nominated SAMA 9's Best Zulu Music Album in a category also contested by Bambata for *Ukhandampondo* (poll tax). He featured on projects like *Freedom*

*Countdown* (1993), which was produced by Sipho Gumede. One of his most publicised works was his music score for the soundtrack of the international isiZulu language film *Yesterday* featuring Leleti Khumalo. The film is about the touching story of a girl child named Yesterday. Shot in rural KwaZulu-Natal, the movie was part of South Africa's war against HIV/Aids. He was later involved in a collaboration project titled *Mad Max*, which was recorded in Switzerland with Max Lasser.

During the 1950s era of big band great musicians like Kippie Moeketsi, Mackay Davashe, Ntemi Piliso, Peter Rezant and Wilson Silgee believed in music literacy. They spent many hours at Dorkay House in Eloff Street reading and perfecting their skills. To them jazz music was like a religion. In their early glory days jazz fans' voice was an organisation called the Jazz Appreciation Society Of South Africa among whose presidents was the late Ray Nkwe. Those were the days of Ntemi Piliso's Alexandra All Star Band, the days of the African Jazz Pioneers. The marabi sound of Alexandra All Stars was later re-released in 1991 on the Teal Sound label under the logo, Township Jive! All the tracks were composed by the late Ntemi Piliso and produced by the late David Thekwane.

One of the greatest men of the era was **KIPPIE MOEKETSI**. I first saw his name on the jazz album I bought with my first salary as a young teacher in 1975 – *Tshona*. I remember buying it together with Leon Haywood's single *Believe Half Of What You See (And None Of What You Hear)*. It was a Pat Mtshikiza album. Pianist Pat who was groomed by the late Gideon Nxumalo had come to Johannesburg from the Cape and led various combos like the Pat Matshikiza Trio. The album also featured the late Basil "Mannenberg" Coetzee and I unwittingly bought it under the impression that one of the tracks would be the hit *Mannenberg*. Well, I settled for the title track and *Umgababa*. But having said that, my interest in the man was kindled and later when I worked for the SABC I searched the whole record library for his solo albums and got none. He was a great musician who featured on many great works of or with others. Jerry Kippie Moeketsi was born in 1925 and started playing the clarinet at the age of 20 before he could change to saxophone.

The first band he played for was Band In Blue, which played in shebeens. Inspired by Charlie Parker, Kippie played with various bands from the forties including Harlem Swingsters, Mackay Davashe's Jazz Dazzlers and the Shanty Town Sextet, a band in which he played with Dollar Brand who had substituted Todd Matshikiza in 1954. But the band that most people will always associate him with is the Jazz Epistles with Hugh Masekela, Dollar Brand, Jonas Gwangwa, Makhaya Ntshoko and Johnny Gertze. He left a lasting impression on the young Dollar Brand who'd in future be an international figure called Abdullah Ibrahim. Kippie was from the era of musicians whose musical home was the Bantu Men's Social Centre. Those who worked with him say he used to call everybody "Morolong" and in turn the name stuck to him. Of course he was

a Morolong. This jazz maestro of the 20th century passed away in 1983 at the age of 58 after a long battle with the frustrations and depressions caused by the challenges of the industry. He was laid to rest at Croesus Cemetery. The greatest honour bestowed on him by South Africa was to name an international jazz club at Newtown Cultural Precinct after him. Glenn Ujebe Masokoane documented the life of this legend in *Blues For Kippie*. In the documentary various musicians who worked with him were interviewed including Snowy Radebe of The Pitch Black Follies from the 1940s.

One of Moeketsi's peers, pianist and composer, **PAT VUYISILE MATSHIKIZA**, arrived in Johannesburg in 1962 from Queenstown. He first came into prominence as member of Mackay Davashe's Jazz Dazzlers, a band whose membership included Kippie Moeketsi (alto sax), Blythe Mbityana (trombone), Dennis Mpale (trumpet), Makhaya Ntshoko (drums) as well as singers Thandi Klaasen and Letta Mbulu. In the seventies and eighties he was mostly performing at the Amatola Sun in Bisho, former Ciskei (Eastern Cape Province). His works with producer Rashid Vally in that era include Tshona, Sikiza Matshikiza as well as Pat Matshikiza and The Americans. Pat is still very active as a performer in some of Johannesburg's clubs and classy hotels. In 2005 at the age of 63 he shared the stage with Judith Sephuma and Khanyo Maphumulo in the East Comes Alive concert at Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg. He was promoting his recently released CD *Seasons, Masks And Keys*, which featured musicians like trumpeter Feya Faku.

When the big band era faded into the history pages in the sixties, some of the seasoned musicians of the days (pioneers) including Ntemi Piliso, Queeneth Ndaba and Peter Rezant of The Merry Black Birds fame felt that the "old timers" should re-group and keep the spirit alive. Legend has it that jazz singer Queeneth Ndaba was paid a visit by her late brother Zacks Nkosi in a dream. He instructed her to gather family musicians to revive jazz of the 1950s. After a two-hour Sunday meeting in June 1982 at Dorkay House, bringing together musicians who pioneered African jazz in the past, a band was born – **AFRICAN JAZZ PIONEERS (AJP)**. Some of the first members of the band were Wilson Silgee, Tim Ndaba, Kippie Moeketsi, Shep Ntsamai, Stompie Manana and Ntemi Piliso. After a heavy rehearsal schedule, they performed at the legendary Roman Catholic Church in Alexandra Township. When I recently paid a visit to this "heritage site" there was a lot of urban renewal activity around it. Despite their day jobs they kept to their rehearsal routine. Some of the band's memorable tours include the 1986 tour of Botswana and the Amsterdam CASA Festival in 1987. The membership of the band changed over the years and by 2000 the most conspicuous "old timer" of the group was saxophonist Ntemi Edmund Piliso. In 1989 the 11-piece band released their album titled *African Jazz Pioneers* (Gallo Records), produced by Koloi Lebona and engineered by Dave Segal. The album was dedicated to the late Alexandra tenor sax legend, Isaac "Zack" Nkosi.



Their other albums include *Live At Montreux Jazz Festival* (1991), *Sip 'n Fly* (1993) and *Shufflin'* (1995). Ntemi Edmund Piliso passed away on the 18 December 2000. Among the foreign musicians with whom AJP recorded was Jamaican jazzman Ernest Ranglin, in 2002. After the death of the pilot, the group released a 15-track album titled *76 – 3rd Avenue* (Gallo, 2005) in honour of the old meeting place of the who's who of jazz in the 1950s. That address was like the band's headquarters. The album featured some of the new generation's popular singers like Thandiswa Mazwai, Phuzekhemisi and Tsepo Tshola. Also featured was the late great Dolly Rathebe who led Strike Vilakazi's composition, *Meadowlands*. The remaining members of AJP who recorded the album were Albert Khumalo (lead guitar), Filly Tau (bass guitar), Khanya Ceza (vocals), Madoda Gxabeka (drums), Xolani Maseti (keyboards), Sello Manyaka (alto sax), Mpho Sithole (alto sax), Brahms Hlabatau (tenor sax), Levy Kgasi (trumpet) and Makhosonke Mrubata (trumpet).

When I was still a young boy my cousins would always spend their school holidays in Alexandra Township, which they referred to as "Towncheap" or simply "Makgoweng" where their uncle Phineas Matlalepoo owned a coal yard at 15 18th Avenue. When the schools re-opened they would return home and teach me some dance styles and songs from Alex. Most of the songs were Dark City Sisters hits. But the most simple to sing along and dance to was a little song called *Maotwana' Dikgogo*. I discovered only later that the song was composed by one of the great musicians of the time, the late **ISAAC "ZACKS" NKOSI**. This legendary saxophonist had composed many other songs. His popular band was City Jazz Nine, which boasted the talent of former members of the Jazz Maniacs. He had his own way of blowing the horn to create a unique African jazz sound. *Our Kind Of Jazz* (Gallo Records, 1975) was produced by Hamilton Nzimande and is a classic example of his originality. The album was recorded with some of the great musicians of the time: Zacks Nkosi (tenor sax), Barney Rachabane (alto sax), Banza Kgasoane (trumpet), Gilbert Matthews (guitar), Given Sabela (bass), Jackie Schilder (drums) and his son, Jabu Nkosi (keyboards). On other tracks there were also: Themba Mehlomakhulu (trumpet), Enoch Mthlane (guitar), Sipho Gumede (bass), Peter Morake (drums) and Jerry Mtabatsindi (mouth organ). The CD version of the album was released as part of Gallo Record Company's African Classics series in 1991. Other albums that pay tribute to the icon include *Tribute To Zacks Nkosi* as well as his son's salute, *Remembering Bra Zacks*.

*Going West* was the track that introduced me to the late Ratau Mike Makhalemele's music. Alexandra-born **RATAU MIKE MAKHALEMELE** was inspired by the horn of his neighbour, Isaac "Zacks" Nkosi and from there he embarked on a twenty-year music career that took him to various parts of South Africa and the world playing for kings and queens. Mike's first band was The Drive, which he co-founded with Henry Sithole in the seventies. In the band he played with



one man who'd share his dream for a long time – Duke Makasi. The two were part of that Cultural Resistance Festival in Botswana. Some of Mike's albums are *New Dawn*, *Peacemaker*, *Requiem*, *Walking Spirit*, *Soweto Sunrise*, *Peaceful Eyes*, *Searching For The Truth* and his most popular album *Thabang* featuring the hit *Soweto Dawn*. In 1980 Mike arranged and produced Fela Kuti's *Shakara* (off *Africa 70*) for the local market on the RPM label. Another unique project he embarked on was *Mind Games: A Jazz Celebration of John Lennon* (PVB, 1990). It featured former members of the "South African Beatles", Rabbit, to underline the SA-UK connection: Trevor Rabin (guitars and keyboards), Ronnie Robot (bass) and Neil Cloud (drums). The album was produced by Trevor Rabin and Patrick van Blerk featuring Winston Lennon's hits *Mother*, *Mind Games* and one of John's greatest creative works, *Imagine*.

The imaginative John was full of surprises; the welcoming note at the front of his New York house read: This Is Not Here. The album cover shows a photo of the late Beatles superstar in Cape Town with a South African. Among the visiting foreign stars that Mike backed in concert were the late gentle Curtis Mayfield and bluesman Champion Jack Dupree. He also travelled abroad to work with stars like Joe Henderson and Chick Corea, but his heart was always in South Africa despite the daily frustrations. His saxophone can be heard on many of South Africa's music albums including Tu Nokwe's *Inyakanyaka* (Teal Records, 1996). The South African music industry finally recognised Ratau's contribution to the musical heritage of this country by presenting him with a SAMA. His legacy is compiled on an album titled *The Best Of Ratau Mike Makhalemele*.

His daughter, Veronica went into music and even released her own solo works. During our last meeting with "Bra Mike" he told me she was abroad and doing very well. Unfortunately, just as the industry started rating him as one of the best, he passed away on 6 May 2000 at his home in Meadowlands. At the time of his death he was still busy with an album, titled *Pathways Crossing*, collaborating with some of the great musicians in the business. After its release it was dedicated to the great Ratau Mike Makhalemele! You may now be seated.

Saxophonist **BARNEY RACHABANE** was born in Alexandra Township. His early performances were mainly with the late master drummer, Early Mabuza. He has worked with most of our great musicians like Abdullah Ibrahim and Hugh Masekela. Some of the major projects he was involved in include Hugh Masekela's recordings in Botswana, the historic Cultural Resistance Festival, Caiphus Semenya's musical *Buwa*, the *Info Song* as well as Paul Simon's Born At The Right Time tour. He worked bands like Afrozania and Afro Cool Concept. Barney also did collaborations with Bruce Cassidy including the album *Conversations*. Some of the albums credited to him are *Blow Barney Blow* (1985), *Barney's Way* (1989), *Afro Cool Concept In New Orleans* (1990), *Roots* and *Special Mama*. Rachabane is so much in demand as a jazz musician that any major

project is unthinkable without him. An example of that was his hand in Victor Ntoni's *Mzansi Sings a Tribute to OR Tambo*.

Tenor saxophonist **ROGER KLIZANIE XESU** put together a group of musicians to record a blend of music that compliments the Elite Swingsters and African Jazz Pioneers in maintaining the marabi sound. The project Safika released the 1995 album featuring Benny Khafela and Thami Madi (alto sax), Roger Klizanie Xesu (tenor sax), Christian Boyana and Reginald Tempa (trumpet), Samuel Mbatha (trombone), Mac Mathunjwa (keyboard), Victor Masondo (bass), John Dlamini (guitar), Innocent Mathunjwa (drums) and John Hassan (percussion). All the tracks were original material.

In the late seventies two Alexandra musicians, bassist Glen Mafoko and pianist Livy Phahle formed **AFROZANIA**. They were joined by lead guitarist Eckie Eckhart and drummer Tony Mothibi. The band had one of the most flexible arrangements which allowed members to feature on recordings and concerts of other musicians for their expertise and return to the band once the mission was accomplished. One musician they backed regularly was Barney Rachabane who first worked with them in 1978. By the mid-eighties the line-up was Glen Mafoko (bass guitar), Eckie Eckhart (sax/lead guitar), Denzil Weale (piano), Vusi Thusi (guitar) and freelance drummer, the late Lulu Gontsana. The music of the band was written by Vusi, Glen and Denzil who was also the arranger. Though the band's priority was live performances, their recorded work include *Requiem for Alexandra* (1979). By the way, Glen's bass guitar wizardry saw him gather friends to release the CD *Amahlubi* (2004).

Humble and quiet **LULAMA "LULU" GONTSANA**, whose favourite drummers included Art Blakey, died at the age of 45 after a long illness and buried in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth on Wednesday, 21 December 2005. At a young age he had been influenced by local drummer Peter Jackson. Lulu whose grandfather was a church organist and father a trombonist for Banacal Beans started playing drums at the age of 12. After cutting his teeth playing with the local Soul Jazzmen, he left Port Elizabeth for South African musicians' El Dorado, Johannesburg at the age of 21 where he was invited to play with Spirit Rejoice. Some of the jazz musicians he played with include Mankunku Ngozi, Abdullah Ibrahim, Jonas Gwangwa, Ezra Ngcukana, Mike Makhalemele, Duke Makasi and Zim Ngqawana. It was through the Ronnie Madonsela Scholarship that he enrolled at the University Of Natal for the Jazz Studies Programme in 1983. In 1989 the hot drummer joined Afro-Cool Concept, a quartet that consisted of Darius Brubeck (piano), Barney Rachabane (saxophone) and Victor Ntoni (bass guitar). He toured countries like England, Italy, Madagascar, Korea, Greece as well as Thailand where he performed at the Thailand International Jazz Festival with the quartet.

In 2005 the Grahamstown National Arts Festival hosted "Beyond Limitations" (6–8 July), a show that celebrated the courage of jazz and traditional music star,

the late **STOMPIE MAVI**. Born Zakhele Mzingisi Patrick Mavi in rural Ngqamakhwe near Queenstown on 21 April 1955, he started performing at the age of seven. He cut his teeth with the Modern Jazz Sextet at the age of sixteen. In the late 1970s after a tour with reggae star Jimmy Cliff he released his debut album titled *Manyano* (Oneness). After a near-fatal stabbing attack in 1987, the star was left paralysed from the waist down. Though he became wheelchair-bound, he rose against the odds and performed for his many fans standing on crutches. He also continued to use his God-given talent by getting involved in various fund-raising events. Stompie's other albums include *Tribute to Chris Hani*, *Phansi Intonga*, *Mbongo*, *Ithongo* and *Mama Africa*. In October 2007 the media reported that he was to retire from performances due to his deteriorating state of health. Mavi, who was first admitted to Port Elizabeth's Livingstone Hospital with double pneumonia on 29 November 2007, passed away on Thursday, 17 January 2008 aged 52. He was buried in KwaZakhele, Port Elizabeth on Saturday, 26 January 2008. Mavi will be remembered for his classics like *Unomnganga*, *Nozamile* and *Umendo*.

When I recently walked into our local record bar I was pleasantly surprised to see on the shelf a new CD of an artist I admired but never got the chance to talk to, so near yet so far away – **ALLEN KWELA**. My uncle Jimmy used to tell me back in the early seventies that there were two guitarists who played the instrument as if it was an extension of self – Allen Kwela and Philip Tabane. He went on to say that each of them was something of an enigma as they never compromised their creativity and this did not make it any easier for record companies to deal with them. The CD on the shelf read *The Best Of Allen Kwela*. When I read the credit list I couldn't help but nod my head as I saw the names of Barney Rachabane, Darius Brubeck, Pat Matshikiza, Sibongile Khumalo, Denzil Weale, Glen Mafoko, Bongani Sokhela, Vusi Khumalo and Lulu Gontsana. It reflected the respect and admiration of the man by his fellow musicians, peers and the industry as a whole. Though commercial appreciation is expressed in rands and cents, respect for one's artistic expression is mostly reflected in the way one's product is regarded by one's peers.

Allen Kwela was born in Chesterville, Durban on 11 September 1939. After a traditional up-bringing of herding cattle and teaching himself to play a self-made tin-guitar, like most of his peers he moved to Johannesburg for better opportunities in the 1950s. He teamed up with the late Spokes Mashiane to perform kwela music at different venues. He composed most of their songs, but they parted ways when Spokes became big in kwela and Allen branched into jazz. He is the musician who recognised the talent of The Angels in their early days and featured them in his 1984 solo recording, *The Unknown*. His CD *The Broken Strings Of Allen Kwela* was nominated in the Best Contemporary Jazz Performance category of FNB SAMA 5. Sadly, this giant passed away in 2003 at the age of 64. I hope to see some of our bright young film makers take the plunge

and research the life of the genius for the world and the next generations to see. Could any of our multi-millionaires buy his guitar for a cool million rand? If that is how a nation's appreciation for its heritage is expressed, the Americans are leading. Remember what happened to Jimi Hendrix's guitar?

When Sello Galane told me that one of Philip Tabane's admirers had given him a snow white cow as a gift, this again confirmed what my mentor once told me. Philip Tabane has a personal touch on his admirers. **PHILIP NCHIFI TABANE** was born in Tshwane where he started playing music at the age of 12 in 1950. His mother taught him the drumming styles of the Bapedi at a very young age. His kind of music is "malombo" because its source of inspiration is the spirits of the ancestors known as malombo in tshiVenda. His group, Malombo Jazzmakers rose to prominence in 1962 when they won the Castle Lager Jazz Competition in Soweto. Other founder members of the group were Julian Bahula (malombo drums) and Abbey Cindi (flute). However, the Mamelodi combo changed its line-up over the years. Later when Julian Bahula formed his own Malopo Jazzmakers, he was joined by Lucky Ranku in 1965. After Bahula had left the country for London, Lucky followed him in the mid-1970s. Abbey moved to Durban where he worked with various groups. One of his solo projects was *January To December/Teach The Children*, which was produced by Mac Mathunjwa and released on RPM's Right Track label in 1986.

Though Tabane received many attractive offers to play with international bands and stay in foreign countries, he turned them down one by one. The longest he left South Africa was the five years he spent in America working with the likes of Miles Davis in the 1970s. During that time he also played with stars like Herbie Hancock, Herbie Mann, Charles Mingus and the Pointer Sisters. I attended a number of his spectacular shows and I can tell you, it's magic! The man can play a number of flutes simultaneously while humming. The inventor of the guitar would be shocked to see how Phil wants it played. Once in a trance on stage he uses any part of his body to play it including his feet, teeth, fingers and elbows and accompanies it with groans and screams of someone in great pain with a contorted face. His other international performances include the African Arts Festival in Hamburg, Germany. Some of the South African groups at the event were Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Black Usuthu. The latter consisted of self-exiled musicians Dube Mahlobo and Dumisane Mabaso, complimented by Segwagwa Thobejane and Khaya Mahlangu of Sakhile fame.

In 1976 Malombo released *Pele Pele* (Tusk Music) co-produced by Tabane and Peter Davidson with engineer Nino Rivera. At that point it was a two-man band with multi-instrumentalist Philip playing guitar, bass, flute, penny whistle and singing with his nephew Gabriel Segwagwa Thobejane on African percussion. In 1978 when they released *Sangoma* (Atlantic), the band members were Philip Tabane (guitar/vocals), Franz Monareng (drums), Raphudu Phale

(drums), Alpheus Koloti (flute) and Amos Lebombo (bass). All the music was written by Nchipi, produced by Lofty Schultz and engineered by P. Cerronio. It featured one of his all-time greats – *Ke A Bereka*. In 1984 when Hendrick Sabata Lebona launched his record label Kaya, Malombo was amongst the first groups to sign up. They released a self-titled album featuring musicians like Motshile wa Nthodi on the kudu horn and Tabane's late wife, Thuli. My personal favourite on the album is *Ke Kgale*. The album was co-produced by Philip and Sabata and engineered by Philip Audoire. In 1986 Malombo were part of the Montreaux Jazz Festival. Poet and playwright Duma ka Ndlovu produced the 1996 album, *Ke A Bereka* (Tusk Music) with Philip backed by Oupa Monareng (malombo drums) and Raymond Motau (percussion). Some of the members of the band in the mid-eighties included Zimbabwean Thami Mahlambi. By 1998 the combo had released a total of seven albums including *Muvhango*. Some of the recognitions Philip Tabane received include the SABC's Song Contest Award, Woza Afrika Music Award and SAMA's Single Of The Year Award for *Ke A Bereka*. The most prestigious honour he received was from the University Of Venda when it conferred a doctorate on him in September 1998. Yes, Doctor Of Music – Dr Philip Nchipi Tabane! *You may now sit down.*

Let me pay tribute to the culture vulture that knows no boundaries – **DUMA KA NDLOVU**. Duma was born on 12 October 1954 in Orlando West. This is where he fell in love with films at a young age. His oratory was sharpened as he related the films to his peers. His father was a maskandi musician. The young Duma's eloquence saw him occupy the position of Chairman of Debate and Culture Society at school. When he joined *World* as a reporter it was already clear that he would lead from the front. Together with Mothobi Motloatse, Ingoapele Malingoane and Molefe Phetoe they started a writers' organisation known as Medupe in 1975. Through it they spread the poetry gospel within South Africa as well as in neighbouring countries like Lesotho. On his return from one of his missions to Lesotho he was shocked to find his newspapers *World* and *Weekend World* banned. In 1976 he was detained for political activism. He later left for Lesotho where he was already an established poet. While working with the likes of Zakes Mda to promote poetry, he received a scholarship to study in the US. After six months in the southern part of "the belly of the beast", he moved to New York. Before long the Hunter College graduate was a major force in the US theatrical movement. Among the highlights of his career was taking Mbongeni Ngema's *Sarafina* to the US. Based in Harlem, he took care of the musical's public relations affairs. He also produced *Asinamali* on Broadway. After the unbanning of liberation movements by FW de Klerk he returned to his motherland through Lesotho in 1992. Back home he was inspired by a Radio Venda talk show in which callers talked about a fight for a corpse. A story of a Zulu woman who refused with a corpse of a Venda man gave birth to his "radio story made for television", *Muvhango*, in 1996. He wrote plays like *The*



*Journey* as well as *Bergville Stories* inspired by his days of yore in that part of KwaZulu-Natal, which won the 3rd annual FNB SAMA's Best Original Score For A South African Composed Soundtrack Or Musical. He's been SAMA's chairman for ten years. He is Disney World's South African casting director. This prolific prophet is a family man whose projects at the time of writing this book included the book *When the sun is beautiful people* and *How Long?*, based on the life of Mtutuzeli Gibson Kente for whom he also launched a foundation. As if that was not enough, he has also worked on a tribute to Brenda Fassie to be titled *Memeza: The Brenda Fassie Musical*.

As a young deejay, watching master musicians like Mory Kante and Andreas Vollenweider at work always left me with an impression that they were playing foreign instruments that had no place in our South African market. It was even worse when I was exposed to Jean Michel Jarre's *Images*. I hardly knew that someday Jean would work with Mduduzi Masilela, Mory Kante would grace our Kora Awards stages and our very own **POPS MOHAMED ISMAIL** would tour with Andreas Volleweider's band. Ishmael "Pops" Mohamed was brought up in Benoni, East Rand (Ekurhuleni). Inspired by the likes of Kippie Moeketsi and Abdullah Ibrahim, at the age of 14 he already had his own band, The Valiants. The next band, Children's Society, released his first hit, *I'm A Married Man*. Pops collaborated with musicians like Movement In The City whose album was *Black Teardrops* (Gallo, 1981) featuring musicians like Robbie Jansen, Basil Coetzee and Sipho Gumede. Others were Black Disco, Inner City Funk and BM Movement. Besides keyboards and guitar, the widely travelled indigenous instruments specialist also plays the kora, mbira, didgeridoo, birimbau as well as the African mouth bow. As a producer his outstanding project will always be Moses Molelekwa's award winning album, *Finding One's Self*. His collaboration with Sipho Gumede under the name Kalamazoo was nominated Best Traditional Jazz Album for *Kalamazoo 3* in the SAMA. His albums include *Kalamazoo 1, 2, 3* and *4 (New Crossings)*, *Yesterday, Today And Tomorrow* (SAMA 9 nominee) as well as *Ancestral Healing*, a SAMA 3 nomination in Best Jazz Performance: Traditional Jazz, a category also contested by Dr Philip Tabane's album *Ke A Bereka*. That was a battle of the titans of traditional instruments. His collaboration with Bruce Cassidy, *Timeless* (1997), won SAMA 4's Best Instrumental Performance.

One day in the eighties my uncle Jimmy came home so sad and very quiet. Having lived with him for a long time, I knew that usually when he sank into that mood there'd be very sad news from the music industry. Just before bed he said to me "Marks, I'm so shocked". He never called me Max. He then asked me: "Do you know **RONNIE MADONSELA**?" I replied that I had only read about him in the newspapers, whereupon he said "He is no more!" From that discussion I made it my duty to update myself on the musician whose death had left my uncle dumbfounded. Ronnie Madonsela was described as a "true blue" jazz and blues singer in media reports. He was compared to the late Ben Satch Masinga.



Ronnie whose 20-year career as an entertainer took him to Britain, Scandinavian countries, Sweden and the United States. As a cabaret singer he was a member of the “Cape Coons”. In the sixties and seventies the Umlazi star shared the stage with the likes of Durban singer Vivian Kinsley in Fred Langford’s Golden City Dixies. His friend and fellow jazz singer was Donald Tshomela who paid tribute to him by saying “Ronnie was an artist to his fingertips”. The tragic death of the jazz and blues king at the age of 52 left the music industry poorer. Ronnie who was laid to rest in Durban was survived by his wife Sylvia and five children. For many moons to come whenever his fans heard his favourite song, *Birth Of The Blues*. In 1986 Malombo were part of the Montreaux Jazz Festival. They would remember the adorable singer.

**AMAMPONDO** is a Langa township traditional music group of international fame, started in 1979 by seven members led by Dizu Plaatjies. In 1983 they recorded their debut album, *Uyandibiza*. One of their memorable performances was on 16 December 1984 at the Mamelodi stadium when they set the stage on fire with their indigenous sounds. The crowd just fell in love with their sound and regalia. In June 1986 they appeared before the nation in the television series *Izandi Zasekhaya*. After the demise of Sakhile 1, Segwagwa Gabriel Thobejane collaborated with the band. At the time of writing this book the band membership was Dizu Plaatjies (leader), Mzwandile, Simphiwe, Michael, Mandla, Zandisile, Lungiswa, Nondzondelelo, Nonhle, Mantombi and Madosini. They featured on Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s celebration album – *Give Praise Where Praise Is Deserved* (1985). Their international stardom was further enhanced by their performance at Dr Nelson Mandela’s 70th Birthday Celebration in London. In 1994 they joined Robert Trunz’s MELT 2000 and recorded *Drums For Tomorrow* as well as *An Image Of Africa*. After South Africa had been re-admitted into all activities of the world community, the group performed at the opening ceremony of the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. The leader of this band, Dizu is also a tutor at UCT’s College of Music and has released his own solo works like the 2003 CD, *Ibuyambo*.

Soweto group, **AFRIDA MARIMBA BAND**, plays a marimba style that draws inspiration from various township genres like kwela, mbaqanga and African Jazz. Fronted by Mpumi Nhlapi, they rose to prominence when they won the Old Mutual Jazz Encounters Award, an award also won by young vocalist, Lindiwe Maxolo. In 2001 they won SAMA 8’s Best Instrumental Album for Buyela Ekhaya. The respect they command saw them perform at the late ANC stalwart, Walter Sisulu’s 88th birthday party.

**MPUMI DHLAMINI** is a wonder child who took the local music scene by storm towards the end of 2007. The 21-year-old vocalist from the Drakensberg Boys Choir began writing songs and playing musical instruments at the National School of the Arts. Having learnt a lot from Andile Yenana and inspired by the works of Moses Molelekwa, his debut CD was titled *Combined Elements*. The

multi-instrumentalist dedicated the track *Yenana* to his mentor and *A Journey With Taiwa* to his inspiration. Like his mother, who is a member of the Mahotella Queens, Mpumi will surely travel the world and entertain queens and kings!

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# EXILE BLUES

In the early fifties Alf Herbert launched the most revolutionary concept to ever hit the local music industry – African Jazz Revue And Variety Show. It gave local stars a taste of broader exposure, recognition and professionalism preparing them for bigger challenges to come. Thereafter followed the release of a jazz album series titled *Township Jazz*. Later musicals like Todd Matshikiza's *King Kong*, Alan Paton's *Sponono*, Bertha Egnos's *Ipi Tombi* and Welcome Msomi's *Umabatha* played a very important role in both the political and cultural struggles of South Africa. Most of our senior jazz and blues musicians used these shows as springboards from which they launched their international careers. They also used their musical muscle to make the world aware about the evils of apartheid. Thankfully, Welcome Msomi was honoured with a Naledi Lifetime Achievement Award in February 2008.

The first black African woman to win a Grammy Award, **ZENZILE MIRIAM MAKEBA**, was born on 4 March 1932 in Prospect Township, Johannesburg. She grew up in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province and later moved to Riverside near Pretoria. Her father died when she was six years old. Her mother, Christina Nomkomondelo Jele was a traditional healer. Miriam who started singing in church choirs later sang for groups like the Brooklyn Boys and it was while singing for The Cuban Brothers that she was spotted by Alan Silinga who later composed songs for her female group, The Skylarks. Alan was one of South Africa's best composers whose work include Ntyilo Ntyilo and Holilili. Alan was born in Baziya on 9 September 1920. His compositions were registered only in the nineties. The great composer sadly passed away at the age of 86 on Tuesday, 4 September 2007, and buried on Saturday, 15 September at Ekhayeni Bhaziya, Mthata, in the Eastern Cape Province.

Although the line-up changed with times, the other members of *THE SKYLARKS* who were originally called The Sunbeams were Mummy Girl Nketle, Mary Rabotapi and Helen van Rensburg. Later Abigail Khubeka from Jabavu replaced Helen. Their band consisted of Dan Hill (clarinet), General Duze (guitar), Dannyboy Sibanyoni (bass) and Norman Martin (drums). Among the female groups in their league at the time were The Quad Sisters. Miriam was asked by Nathan Dambuza Mdledle to join his Manhattan Brothers, a mbube group originally called the Joburg Boys. Upon filling the position left open by Emily Kwenane, she rose to prominence with the Sophiatown group. Its members were Ronnie Sehume, Joseph Mogotsi, Rufus Khoza and Dambuza Mdledle. In 1956 their hit, *Lovely Lies* composed by Mackay Davashe and led by Miriam entered the Billboard Top 100.

In 1957 Makeba was lead singer in Alfred Herbert's African Jazz Revue And Variety Show, which toured Africa for eighteen months. Later both Mdledle and Miriam played the lead roles in the jazz musical, *King Kong*, which was adapted from a book by lawyer, Harry Bloom. The story is based on the life of that Vryheid-born champion boxer, Mandlenkosi Ezekiel Dlamini. True to his colourful career Dlamini boasted names like the "Spice Smasher", "King Marshal" and "Lightning Marshal", but shocked the nation when he ended his own life by throwing himself into a dam in the Rivonia river. The show's musical director was Sol Klaaste. Members of The King Kong Band included Sylvester 'Skip' Phahlane, Stanley Glasser, Mackay Davashe, Jonas Gwangwa, Hugh Masekela, Gwigwi Mrwebi, General Duze, Kippie Moeketsi and Lemmy Mabaso. Abigail Khubeka, who also played in the opera, replaced Miriam in the leading role when she suddenly fell ill. The musical was composed by Todd Matshikiza. Later following the popularity of Lionel Rogosin's documentary film *Come Back Africa* in which she appeared singing in a shebeen, Makeba left South Africa in November 1959 after the release of her big hit, *Miriam's Goodbye To Africa*. Abigail played her role in *King Kong*.

The music scene of Makeba's era was shown in a Pascale Lamche television documentary *Sophiatown*, which was broadcast by SABC 1 on Heritage Day, 24 September 2005. Most of her early work was under the guidance of US actor, composer and recording artist, Harry Belafonte and she had many concerts and recordings, some of which have been broadcast only recently in the new South Africa as they were previously too hot to handle. One of those is her 1966 Swedish Tour with members of her band: Leopoldo Fleming Jr (congas), William Salter (bass) and Sivuca (guitar/accordion). Among her early international successes was her Jonas Gwangwa-produced/arranged album, *An Evening With Harry Belafonte And Miriam Makeba*, which won her a Grammy Award. It was unbelievable that only six years after she had left her motherland she'd scooped the coveted award in early 1965. The influence of the fiery lady of song was realised by the whole world when she addressed the General Assembly of the

United Nations on 16 July 1963. This revealed that she was not only a singer, but also a human rights campaigner.

Makeba's hits include *Pata Pata*, *Oxgam* (*Click Song No. 2*), *Malaika*, *Welela*, *Hapo Zamani*, *Amampondo*, *West Wind*, *Mas Que Nada*, *Mama Ndiyalila*, *A Promise* and *Gauteng*. In her recordings she worked with many other established compatriots like Morris Goldberg as well as younger ones at home. Her former husbands include fellow musician Hugh Masekela and Stokely Carmichael, a political activist who renamed himself Kwame Toure in honour of two of Africa's great leaders. It may interest some readers to note that though her album *Country Girl* was recorded in Kumasi, it was completed in New York with some members of Ipi Tombi. Some of them like Julia Mathunjwa, Betty Hlela and Nomsa Caluza formed a group called Shikisha. However, some members of Sponono enriched Hugh's newly-formed production company, Oo-Bwana. That's how effective the exile network was.

On her return to South Africa, Mama Afrika who was once hosted by friend and confidante, Sekou Toure of Guinea for years on the continent was appointed by the new government as South Africa's ambassador to the rest of Africa. Her welcome concert at Johannesburg's Standard Bank Arena was testimony of her popularity in the country of her birth. In recognition of her commitment and contribution to music and the liberation struggle she was honoured with a doctorate degree. The continent's premier music awards, the Koras honoured her with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 1996. Her 2000 release *Homeland* produced by Cedric Samson won her SAMA 7's Best Female Artist and Best Adult Contemporary African Album categories. The 2003 CD *Reflections* won SAMA 10's Best Adult Contemporary Album and Best Jazz Vocal Album categories. Makeba also won the awards' Best DVD section for Live at Bern's Salonger, Stockholm, Sweden, 1966. She went on to win the Best African Arrangement category of the Kora All Africa Music Awards. As if that was not enough, it was also nominated in the Grammy Awards.

To honour her life of commitment to the struggle through music, on 29 July 2005 her admirer and producer of her Welela album, Siphso Mabuse organised an event dubbed "Tribute To Miriam Makeba" at Midrand's Gallagher Estate. A well-deserved honour for the lady who once served as Ghanaian delegate to the United Nations and won the Hammarskjöld Peace Prize in 1986. In November 2005 she received the Metro FM Special Award at the national commercial radio station's music awards staged at King's Beach in Port Elizabeth. She also blessed various prestigious functions like the 1999 African Pride Award and the 2002 Woman Of The Year Awards. A true international, she blessed long time admirer and Indian pop singer, Usha Uthup's 1995 show at the Patidar Theatre in Lenasia just before embarking on her European tour. Some of her humanitarian works include the Makeba Centre For Girls in Midrand. The full story of Bongi's mother who has a career spanning over fifty years is in books

like *Makeba, My Story* and Nomsa Mwamuka's *Makeba – The Miriam Makeba Story*. She also featured in *Nightingales And Nice-time Girls*. In 2005 when I learned that the star whose career highlights include performing in front of kings and queens had announced her retirement from public performances at the age of 73, I remembered how the apartheid government once tried to dwarf her by banning her music. Some fires are just too strong, even for the fire-brigade. She went on to release her album *Makeba Forever* and embarked on a world tour of 50 countries as part of her farewell concerts. On 1 September 2006 the Miriam Makeba Centre For Performing Arts was launched in her honour at the University of Fort Hare in Alice, Eastern Cape. The ambassador of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation whose local inspiration remains Dolly Rathebe, says as long as she can breathe she'll continue singing.

Some of Miriam Makeba's albums:

1957–59 <i>Miriam Makeba And The Skylarks</i>	1977 <i>'Live' For My Brothers And Sisters</i>
1960 <i>Miriam Makeba</i>	1979 <i>Sabelani</i>
1962 <i>The World Of Miriam Makeba</i>	1983 <i>Pata Pata</i>
1962 <i>The Many Voices of Miriam Makeba</i>	1988 <i>Sangoma</i>
1963 <i>Makeba</i>	1989 <i>Welela</i>
1964 <i>The Voice Of Africa</i>	1989 <i>Le Monde De Miriam Makeba</i>
1965 <i>Makeba Sings</i>	1991 <i>Eyes On Tomorrow</i>
1965 <i>The Click Song</i>	1991 <i>Africa</i>
1965 <i>An Evening with Harry Belafonte and Miriam Makeba</i>	1993 <i>Sing Me A Song</i>
1966 <i>All About Makeba</i>	1998 <i>Live From Paris and Conakry</i>
1966 <i>Malaisha</i>	2000 <i>Homeland</i>
1966 <i>The Magnificent Miriam Makeba</i>	2001 <i>The Guinea Years</i>
1974 <i>A Promise</i>	2002 <i>Keep Me In Mind</i>
1975 <i>Country Girl</i>	2003 <i>Reflections</i>
1977 <i>Pata Pata</i>	2006 <i>Makeba Forever</i>

In 1960 when King Kong toured England, Abigail Khubeka and Mary Rabotapi were part of its cast. On their return they tried to keep the name of The Skylarks alive by roping in singers like Letta Mbulu, but later the group disbanded.



Let's pause and pay tribute to the genius of **Todd MATSHIKIZA**. He was born into a family of musicians in Queenstown in 1921. Todd who trained as a teacher at Lovedale College became famous as a *Drum!* magazine columnist in the 1950s. Besides the legendary *King Kong* musical his many compositions include *Hamba Kahle Mkhonto*, which was locally "launched" at Chris Hani's funeral. He also worked with Alan Paton in the sixties on the music for the stage play, "Mkhumbane". Todd left the turbulent South Africa with his family in 1960 to settle in London. In 1964 he returned to the continent and settled in Zambia. He died in Lusaka in 1968 and was survived by his wife Esmé, daughter Marian and son, John. The music maestro's son, John who became world-famous for his acting skills in films like *There's a Zulu on My Stoep* is also a journalist who runs a column "With The Lid Off", sharing a title with his father. In 2007 John directed a concert titled "A Retrospective Concert: The Life and Times of Todd T Matshikiza". It premièred at the South African State Theatre on Friday 27 July featuring among others Sibongile Mngoma, Abel Moeng, Denzil Weale, Kutlwano Masote and the Soweto Young Voices. By the way, John's daughter, Lindiwe is a gifted actress who in 2007 took the theatre scene by surprise in that Mike van Graan one-actor-many-characters play, *Bafana Republic*.

Some musicians who toured London's West End with *King Kong* stayed there for quite some time while some did not return. Saxophonist Kippie "Morolong" Moeketsi's health problems forced him to return home. At Johannesburg's Dorkay House together with musicians Dollar Brand, Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, Makhaya Ntshoko and Johnny Gertze they formed The Jazz Epistles, the first black band to record a jazz album in South Africa. The band went on to win the first held Cold Castle Jazz Festival, which was staged in the Johannesburg City Hall in 1961 playing Negro Spirituals in jazz style. This group's impact between 1959 and 1960 is still felt today and their album *Verse One* (Gallo Records) remains one of the collector's rare items.

**HUGH RAMAPOLO MASEKELA's** career will always be associated with these four groups: The Union Of South Africa, Hedzoleh Soundz, OJAH and Kalahari. His ancestral paternal roots are in Botlokwa to the north-east of Polokwane in Limpopo Province. Even today many Masekela's (Bo-Masekela) are found there. The Batlokwa are very proud of their culture, especially their language, Setlokwa. His father, Thomas Selema Masekela was married to Pauline Bowers. Hugh was born on 4 April 1939 at Kwa-Guqa near Witbank (now eMalahleni) where he grew up in his maternal granny's house. He started school in Payneville, Springs and grew up in Alexandra township, Johannesburg. By 1952 he was a student at St Peter's Secondary School (now St Martin's) in Rosettenville. Father Trevor Huddleston and musician schoolmate Stompie Manana motivated him to pay more attention to his music talent. He became one of the founder members of the college band known as the Father Huddleston Jazz Band. Hugh received a trumpet as a gift from Father Huddleston whilst at the college. The FX Huller

trumpet donated by the great Louis Satchmo Armstrong to the school became a subject of media attention both locally and internationally. “If you could say that anybody single-handedly made apartheid a world issue then that person was Trevor Huddleston”, said Archbishop Mpilo Desmond Tutu of the Bedford-born philanthropist who died on 20 April 1998, having witnessed the fruit of his labour – a democratised South Africa. The Huddleston Jazz Band members were George Makhene – drums, Henley Mogobjane (later Ivan Mosia) (piano), Monty Mahobe (double bass), Jonas Gwangwa (trombone), Chips Molopyane (alto saxophone), Prince Moloi (alto saxophone), Hugh Masekela (trumpet) and master of improvisation “Moon” Masemola (tenor saxophone).

Like many of his peers, Hugh joined Alfred Herbert’s African Jazz Revue and Variety Show and later on the jazz musical, *King Kong* both exposing him to big crowds and travelling. These two national projects created a “graduation platform” that would in future lead to an intricate artist networking base both at home and in exile. Though he played for The Merry Makers during his school holidays, it was his membership of the Jazz Epistles that made history in his early days in South Africa. The harsh post-Sharpeville social conditions in the country forced many musicians either to swim or sink. Opportunities for musicians dried up. It was a cruel reminder of the Sophiatown forced removals – you had no chance against the brutality of the state. With the help of Trevor Huddleston and associates Yehud Menuhin and Johnny Dankworth he left the country for England in May 1960 after the Union Of Artists enrolled him at the Guildhall School Of Music in London. He abandoned the idea of schooling in London and was admitted at the Manhattan School Of Music in the US for further music studies. Hugh’s first major hit was Philemon Hou’s composition, *Grazing In The Grass* from the album *The Promise Of A Future* (1968). Together with fellow South African musicians Jonas Gwangwa and Caiphus Semenya they formed the powerful trio, **HUGH MASEKELA AND THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA**. That was in the early seventies when I was introduced to his music by my young high school teachers who were fresh from “varsity”. Those were the days of the hippies when Hugh was huge among the students community.

Unfortunately, most of Hugh’s music was only available from private collectors as it was banned on the airwaves by the powers that be. He also recorded with the great South African reed player Dudu Pukwana in London. With producer Stewart Levine they formed Chisa Records in the late sixties. Some of the musicians he worked closely with was Caiphus Semenya and some former members of Sponono. In 1968 he returned to the African continent and visited Zambia where he drew more Afro inspiration for his future recordings. Later in 1972 he came back to Africa and while in Nigeria he worked with Fela Kuti and Cameroon’s Manu DiBango. A band with which he worked for almost five years was Hedzoleh Soundz from Ghana. After its demise he formed OJAH and released *The Boy’s Doin’ It* through the newly-launched record label, Casablanca

in 1975. In 1984 he shipped a 24-track mobile studio to neighbouring Botswana where he recorded his hot album, *Technobush*, accompanied by members of The Soul Brothers with the help of producer Stewart Levin. The facility at the Woodpecker Inn at the banks of the Notwane River became known as Battery Studios. The project was a partnership with Clive Calder's Jive Records.

A cultural activist at heart, he once told me in a radio interview how he used to miss communicating in his home language, Setswana, to a point of speaking to himself. Some of his fellow South Africans who wrote songs for him include Caiphus Katse Semenya and Victor Mhleli Ntoni. By 1989 he was involved with Mbongeni Ngema's Sarafina on Broadway. Hugh, who returned home with democracy in September 1990 staged a homecoming roadshow dubbed "Sekunjalo" (This is it!) with its Limpopo Province leg at Chuene Resort in February 1991. I attended this highly resourced and professional event, which was unfortunately not well-attended.

My first interview with "Bra Hugh" was telephonic, but he is such an eloquent communicator I would ask him one question and he'd answer almost all of my next questions. Hugh is one musician I still believe demands a lot from an interviewer; if you are not sure of what you want from him, he'll end up interviewing you. He knows what he is about and says it. When I asked him about his place of birth he proudly praised his late granny, *Johanna Mthise WaMandebale a Kwa Nzunza... Mganu-Ganu ka Maghobhoria*. What he meant was that his granny was a descendant of the Mandebales of Nzuza. When he recorded a vibrant programme jingle for Alex Jay's morning show on Radio 5 (now 5FM), I suspected that one of those days he'd be asked to present programmes on radio.

Hugh helped to transform the arts in this new country from his office at that Tshwane labyrinth, the State Theatre as Deputy Director of the Performing Arts Council in the early days of our democracy. Today the centre is called the South African State Theatre. Talented and experienced Ramapolo later co-hosted a radio show with Sibongile Khumalo at a newly established Gauteng station, Kaya FM. Interestingly, Hugh's son Selema became a successful television show host in the United States of America. Like father like son! Ramapolo also established the Musicians and Artists Assistance Programme of South Africa (MAAPSA) to help rehabilitate artists who experience problems of substance addiction. Hugh travelled far and wide, appeared on many albums including collaborations. One of the highlights of his career will always be his involvement in the mammoth and spectacular concert that served as a prelude to the Muhammad Ali and George Foreman World heavyweight championship fight in Zaire.

Like Sibongile, he joined Sony Records under Lazzie Serobe and Lindelani Mkhize. His album *Notes Of Life* (1997) was nominated for Best Contemporary Jazz Performance in the 3rd annual FNB SAMA and *Time* (2002) was the winner of SAMA 9's Best Male Artist and Best Producer categories. He co-produced the album with Blondie Makhene and Khaya Mahlangu. Sony Music digitally

remastered his 1982 album *Home* as part of its Classic Collection series. Some of his hits were *In The Marketplace*, *Nomali*, *African Scrapyrd*, *Motlalepula*, *Stimela*, *Heartbreaker*, *Ha Le Se Le Di Khanna*, *Bring Back Nelson Mandela* and *Thanayi*. He also worked with Mbongeni Ngema on his successful play and film *Sarafina* as well as Paul Simon on his musical phenomenon, *Graceland*.

One trumpeter who has left a lasting impression on Hugh is Elijah Nkwanyane of the Merry Makers of Payneville, Springs. Talking to industry insiders about this legend I discovered two things about him: professionalism and respect for change. In his live shows and recordings he worked with young musicians both as producers, singers and instrumentalists: Joe Nina, Swazi Dlamini, Jahseed, Stoan, Blondie, Thandiswa, Don, Oskido, Vicky Vilakazi, Margaret Motsage, Letoya Makhene and many others. The best example of this is *Revival* (2004), produced by a talented youngster who impressed him while working together on the *Surf Tribute To Dolly Rathebe* project, Zwai Bala as well as the magnificent “Guffy” Godfrey Pilane. No wonder the album was nominated in the Best Contemporary Jazz Album category of SAMA 11. *Almost Like Being In Jazz* was recorded with Stewart Levine, Lorca Hart, Larry Willis and John Heard. After working with many musicians in the USA, the UK, Botswana, Lesotho, Ghana and Nigeria, back home he formed a formidable band consisting of John Selolwane (guitar), Mandla Zikalala (bass guitar), Arthur Tshabalala (piano), Ezbie Moilwa (keyboards) and Dumisane Hlela (drums).

Masekela’s autobiography titled *Still Grazing: The Musical Journey of Hugh Masekela* (Three River Press, 2004) says more about the many countries he toured, his trials, tribulations and triumphs and some of the highlights of his career. The book coincided with the release of the 2004 CD of the same name. In 2006 it was reported that it would be made into a film through his Chissa Pictures. He won the Best Male Artist: southern Africa of the Kora All Africa Music Awards in 2005, but the cherry on top was being crowned Best African Male Artist. In 2006 Hugh wrote the score for a historic theatre production *The Truth In Translation*. His record label, Chissa Entertainment Group became involved in music, film and theatre production as well as artist and event management. Chissa International Group was launched on Tuesday, 31 October 2006 at the Theatre On The Tracks in Kyalami. As already mentioned, he formed Chisa Records in 1966 while in exile in the US. The name was inspired by a dance band from Benoni called Chisa Ramblers. An album was released to commemorate those years titled *The Chisa Years 1965–1975*. By 2007 the company’s artists included Hugh, Tsepo Tshola, Busi Mhlongo, Khaya Mahlangu, Ngwako Manamela and Springs-born multilingual Corlea Botha whose debut CD was *Shades of a Rainbow*. Irfaan Gillan was the managing director of the company.

In May 2007 “Motlokwa”, who spent six years of his exile time in Ghana was invited to the Jubilee Ghana Music Awards Festival. On his arrival he was honoured by the people of Ghana or should I say his in-laws, with a Jubilee

Special Lifetime Award! We must remember that in 2005 he was also honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Channel O Spirit of Africa Music Video Awards, an award he shares with his fellow African greats like Enoch Sontonga, Fela Kuti and Oliver Mtshudzi who was the 2007 recipient on 11 October at the Johannesburg City Hall. Towards the end of that year he was invited to perform with the London Symphony Orchestra at London's Barbican Centre on 28 November 2007. By the way, the schoolmate who motivated him way back, Stompie Manana was still actively involved in music in 2001 as witnessed with the release of his album titled *Art In Rhythm*.

Some of Hugh Masekela's albums:

1963 <i>Trumpet Africaine</i>	1977 <i>You Told Your Mama Not To Worry</i>
1965 <i>The Americanisation Of Ooga-Booga</i> (a live recording)	1978 <i>Herb Alpert/Hugh Masekela</i>
1966 <i>Hugh Masekela's Next Album</i>	1978 <i>Main Event Live</i>
1967 <i>The Emancipation Of Hugh Masekela</i>	1982 <i>Home</i>
1968 <i>Promise Of A Future</i>	1983 <i>Working For A Dollar Bill</i>
1968 <i>Masekela</i>	1984 <i>Technobush</i>
1968 <i>Grrr!</i>	1985 <i>Waiting For The Rain</i>
1969 <i>Hugh Masekela and The Union of</i> <i>South Africa</i>	1987 <i>Tomorrow</i>
1970 <i>Reconstruction</i>	1989 <i>Uptownship</i>
1972 <i>The African Connection</i>	1994 <i>Hope</i>
1972 <i>Home Is Where The Music Is</i>	1994 <i>Stimela</i>
1974 <i>I Am Not Afraid</i>	1997 <i>Notes Of Life</i>
1975 <i>The Boy's Doin It</i>	1998 <i>Black To The Future</i>
1976 <i>Colonial Man</i>	1999 <i>Sixty</i>
1976 <i>Melody Maker</i>	2002 <i>Time</i>
1976 <i>The Last Impression Of Hugh Masekela</i>	2004 <i>Revival</i>
1977 <i>Grazing In The Grass</i>	2004 <i>Still Grazing</i>

Hugh's more than 40 albums include compilations. Some of his projects include *Alive And Well At The Whiskey*, *Hugh Masekela Introducing Hedzoleh Soundz* as

well contributions to theatrical musicals like Mbongeni Ngema's *Sarafina* and Caiphus Semenya's *Buwa*. He was part of the *Graceland* tour and has established the Botswana International School of Music (now National Cultural Centre). Hugh is just an institution himself!

The Semenya people have their roots in Moletji, Polokwane. In fact, talking to **CAIPHUS SEMENYA** he told me that the original title of his composition, *Caution* was *Moletji*, dedicated to his village. His composition *Khando* from the album *Woman Got A Right To Be* (1994) says a lot about his knowledge of the communities around the province of Limpopo. He grew up in Alexandra township where at the age of nine up to 14 he attended church every Sunday with his mother and granny. Their church was the African Methodist known to the locals as "Tonki" in 10th Avenue, Alexandra township. One hymn that made an impact on the young boy was *Ke Dumetse Ho Morena* as he says in his prologue to his track of the same name from the above-mentioned album. His spirituality is revealed in his rendition of another track titled *Mdali Wethu*.

By 1956 Caiphus Katse Semenya was leading the Katzenjammer Kids. They performed mostly in community halls and schools. Those were the days of established groups like the late Victor Ndlazilwane's Woody Woodpeckers. It was at such performances that he met a young trumpeter named Hugh Masekela. He hardly knew he would write him many songs like *Ha Le Se Le Di Khanna* and *Bo-Masekela* and work with him on albums like the *Union Of South Africa* and *Home Is Where The Music Is* in the future. In 1959 he also played for the legendary musical, *King Kong*. In 1964 he toured the USA with the play "Sponono", whose original cast included Matiwane Manana. Matiwane later worked with Miriam Makeba and Letta Mbulu; he was also part of the "Lumumba" performers. When the Sponono shows ended in New York in 1965 Caiphus and Douglas Xaba decided to look for alternatives while the rest of the members formed the group, The Zulus. Caiphus, who'd been locally groomed by composers and master musicians like Kippie Morolong Moeketsi and Victor Ndlazilwane worked with Hugh in his projects and later became a world-class prolific composer, producer, arranger and performer based in the US. Besides his fellow South Africans Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa and Miriam Makeba on whose album *A Promise* he was responsible for horn arrangements, one musician who worked very close to Caiphus is international ace producer, **QUINCY JONES**. Their collaborations led to Caiphus's musical contribution to the film, *Roots*. The two-part Alex Harley film is based on the harsh realities of the enslavement of Africans by westerners. This is illustrated through the tragic story of Kunta Kinte of the Mandinka tribe in Gambia. The film inspired Irish female singer Sinead O'Connor's hit single *Mandinka*, which reached the UK Top 20 in 1988. It was the kind of film you looked forward to watching and yet walked out of the cinema very, very angry. I remember walking out of Astra Cinema in Polokwane and meeting a friend in the street who asked me, "Why do you look so upset? Have you been watching



Roots?" I was later able to play some sound tracks from the movie on radio as Noel Pointer released the tracks *Oluwa* and *Mama Aifambeni* on his album *Hold On* (Liberty, 1978). When Quincy recorded his album *Back On The Block*, Semanya wrote some tracks for the 1995 Grammy Award winning album. Katse also wrote the original music score for the Steven Spielberg-directed film, *The Colour Purple* which was nominated for the 1985 Oscar Awards. The film made history by being the most nominated in various categories of the 58th event of the AMPAS. One thing that set him apart from his fellow musicians in exile was his partnership in music with his former *King Kong* cast member wife, **LETTA MBULU**.

Letta's talent was spotted near her home in Orlando at the age of 13 by Jimmy Mabena, manager of The Swanky Spots. It was while playing the role of a schoolgirl in *King Kong* that she caught the eye of her future hubby. In an interview Semanya revealed to me that he strategically befriended her brother to be closer to her. After touring the country in 1958 and 1959, the musical went to London in 1961. When Caiphus was touring America with the musical Sponono in 1964, he invited Letta to join him. Letta arrived in New York in 1965. After staying with Hugh, Miriam and daughter Bongi, they later stayed in Los Angeles, started a family and returned home after 27 years. During those years they wrote songs together and he produced his wife's albums for as long as I can remember. Though her debut album *Letta Mbulu Sings* was released back in 1967 through Capitol Records, I first heard Letta's music from my friend Moss Matlalepoo's first Sony tape recorder in 1977. It was when her *Maru A Pula* hit these shores and dominated the hit parade of every sober radio station in the country. After a year followed another bombshell, *Buza*. The platinum album, *Sound Of A Rainbow* was released in 1980 and featured hits like *Everybody Sing Along* and *Help Me Somebody*. To fight ethnicity and the divide and rule policy of the white regime in South Africa, they'd fuse African languages in their compositions. An example of that was *Ndi-phendule* containing Sotho and Nguni lyrics cementing unity among blacks in South Africa. With him singing in Sotho and his wife in Nguni, the duet became a monster hit. This was their first work with Munjale Records after leaving A&M Records.

Letta who became a star at a very young age was the youngest member of the historic African Jazz And Variety Show, which was launched in the early fifties. Other groups she worked with include The Skylarks and Jazz Dazzlers. Ever since she mesmerised the Americans with her Village Gate Theatre performance in New York as an opening act for the great Thelonious Monk, the world has embraced her. Some of her awards include an Emmy Award for her performance in the two-part Alex Hayley film, *Roots*, and the Ondo Nueva International Songwriters Competition in Caracas, Venezuela. The super songstress also participated in the soundtrack of *The Colour Purple*. The film was Steven Spielberg's adaptation of Alice Walker's work. In 1970 Letta had a big

international hit, *I Need Your Love* from her Tamla Motown album, *Letta*. Other hits included *Music In The Air*, *Inkedama*, *Kukuchi*, *Jikijela*, *Ha Re Je*, *Sacred Drum*, *Ke Dumetse*, *Nomalizo* and *Kube*.

In 1982 Semanya launched his solo career with the album *Listen To The Wind* featuring hits like *Angelina* and *Ziphinkomo*. From there followed albums like *Streams Today*, *Rivers Tomorrow*. His other hits included *Mamase*, *Nomalanga*, *Play With Fire* as well as the classic, *Matswale*. In the mid-eighties the music couple toured Botswana and Lesotho backed by South African musicians with whom he wanted to share his experiences and also learn from. The musicians were Condry Ziqubu, Siphso Gumede, Enoch Mthalane, Beulah Hashe, Thandi Seoka and Pamela Makhene. They were complemented by David Serame from Germany, Wally Loate who was later based in London and Sounds Of Soweto under the leadership of Josh Sello Makhene, as well as Mac and Madoda Mathunjwa. Semanya is a very bold musician who promoted his culture despite the attitude of the US record bosses then. He told me that in those days it was not easy to record songs like *Maru A Pula* and *Ha Re Je* as record companies wanted the “Baby I Love You” kind of songs for a quick buck.

When the world paid tribute to Dr Rolihlahla Mandela in 1989 as the demand for his release reached its peak, Semanya became one of the musical directors of the “Nelson Mandela Tribute” concert at Wembley Stadium. Like all our exiled brothers and sisters, after the unbanning of liberation movements he returned home. I attended what I always regard as his welcome home party, the “Unity Concert” he headlined at the FNB Stadium. My memory of the concert also brings back David Serame singing Safre’s *Something Inside So Strong*. By the way, Serame left South Africa with the musical *King Kong*.

The singer nicknamed “The Undertaker” by his friends lived in Hamburg, Germany for sixteen years, and even as I write this book, is based in London. Semanya was my first encounter with my musician brothers and sisters from exile. In our first meeting I immediately understood the deep and broad knowledge and experience these creative cultural activists were bringing back home. He is a humble professional whose cultural roots dominate his music. As already alluded to, he is part of the reason why I wrote this book. Back home he released *Woman Got A Right To Be* (1994), produced by himself, Letta and Lebo M. It set the tone for the country’s new culture in relations between men and women. Sony Music re-released the following albums under the ‘Classic Collection’ series: *Listen to The Wind*, *The Very Best Of Caiphus Semanya*, *The Best of Caiphus Semanya and Letta Mbulu* as well as Letta’s *Sound of A Rainbow* and *In The Village The Music Never Ends*. The digitally remastered series’ logo was *Yesterday’s Music Today*. Like Masekela, Semanya also used to invite his favourite local musicians like Condry Ziqubu and Themba Mkhize to tour with him around the world. One of such tours include bringing his 1986 production, *Buwa*, to Africa raising money for the liberation movements. The couple returned to

South Africa in 1991. Shocked by the state of poverty among fellow blacks in the townships and villages she was inspired to release the album, *Not Yet Uhuru* (Munjale, 1992). The album was co-produced by the couple. In April 2002 Letta toured India and performed in New Delhi and Mumbai to strengthen cultural bonds between South Africa and India. No wonder her country of birth honoured her with a doctorate – Dr Letta Mbulu! The CD *The Best Of Letta & Caiphus* (1996) pays tribute to the genius of the two. *Letta Mbulu Sings/Free Soul* was released on CD in 2005. By 2006 the couple was working on Letta's long-awaited album, which was finally released in 2008 under the title *Culani Nami*. Their son, Muntu followed in their footsteps and became a music producer, while his younger brother Mosese is a film producer. Mosese is married to Blondie Makhene's daughter, Pauline. Their elder brother, Sipho who was still in America is a painter. Caiphus Semanya's contribution to local content on television include the music scores for the Molo Fish series, *Vicious Circle* and *Gabo Motho*.

**MOSA JONAS GWANGWA** belongs to the Ndebeles of Mashashane; to be precise, his father was a resident of ga-Maraba, Kalkspruit. I was privileged to be part of the team that organised his historical "Welcome Home" event right in the heart of that village just after the release of his album, *Sounds From Exile* (Sony Music, 2002). Kgošigadi Carnation Maraba expressed her welcome of their son by allocating a stand to him so that he can build his house there when he retires. One of the tracks from his album, *A Temporary Inconvenience* (Sony Music, 1999) titled *Ga-Mashashane* is dedicated to these people he comes from. Jonas was born on 19 October 1937 in Orlando East after his carpenter father had moved to Soweto. His parents were Wilson Johnny Gwangwa and Sophia Mamosima Gwangwa. His late sister, Margaret was a concert pianist and singer. This son of the first carpentry teacher in Orlando was enrolled at the legendary St Peter's Secondary School where he later became trombonist in the Father Trevor Huddleston Jazz Band whose members included Hugh Masekela. The two were to cross roads many times in their careers.

Mosa left South Africa on 7 February 1961 with the musical *King Kong*. After six months in London, like Hugh Masekela he received a scholarship to study at the Manhattan School Of Music in New York, USA. A picture of the young Mosa arriving in New York, Apartment 310, West 87 in 1962 is included on the sleeve of his CD *Sounds From Exile*. He was welcomed by Hugh to the States. As already indicated, together with Masekela and Semanya they formed the trio, Hugh Masekela and The Union Of South Africa for which he composed the flagship track, *Shebeen*. Unfortunately, he was hit by a car crossing a street in the Bronx and lay in hospital for quite some time. Although musos like Dudu Pukwana and Makhaya Ntshoko were roped in to keep the flame, in a way the accident spelt the demise of The Union. His early production work includes the 1965 Grammy winning album, *An Evening With Harry Belafonte And Miriam Makeba*.

In 1978 together with Hugh Masekela and Herb Alpert they embarked on the US “Main Event” tour. One other musician who worked very close to him was Ahmad Jamal (born Frederick Russell Jones) as well as compatriot Churchill Jolobe. Following various youth cultural festivals held at places like Lagos, Cuba and Moscow he was requested by the African National Congress to form the Arts and Culture wing. He formed a 16-piece band, *AMANDLA CULTURAL ENSEMBLE* in Angola. All members of the band were liberation soldiers who became actors, singers, poets, costume designers as well as sound and light technicians during the shows. The ensemble worked hand in hand with groups like the Musicians Union to create awareness of the brutality and injustices of apartheid. This freedom fighter who wielded a trombone as a spear toured the world on this mission. He told me that on 16 June 1976 he was in Botswana when all hell broke loose back home in South Africa. Soweto was on fire!

By 1983 he had formed a band named *SHAKAWE*. It consisted of Steve Dyer, Tony Cedras, Dennis Mpale and Batswana musicians. Shakawe is the name of a village in the north-western corner of Botswana; also the name of the airport serving the village. One of the band members, his homeboy Dennis Mpale was later, after the democratisation of South Africa, to participate in the London recording of his album *Flowers Of The Nation* (Sony Music, 2001). The album was produced by Sabata Lebona who met Jonas through his brother, Miki Lebona. Unlike his other fellow musicians in exile whose music we were able to listen to and buy at home, his was an underground industry marketed in whispers and jargon. Responding to my question on how the release of Dr Nelson Mandela affected their lives as musicians in exile, he said it was always expected to happen. He said the philosophy of ANC president, the late Oliver Reginald Tambo, was that of keeping the name of Mandela alive. He was worried that if they did not create noise and stories about his incarceration on the island, the world could soon forget about him and while everybody was looking elsewhere, faceless agents of the regime could make him disappear. This flame was kept alive with celebrations of Mandela’s birthdays, his speeches, commemorations, as well as campaigns for his release. The freedom fighters were regularly told that victory was only five years away. Keep the faith.

One of the best publicly known achievements of this freedom fighter was his involvement in the Richard Attenborough revolutionary film *Cry Freedom* based on the life of the late Black Consciousness Movement leader, Steve Bantu Biko. He wrote the music score for the film that received various accolades: two Oscar nominations, a BAFTA nomination, Anthony Asquith nomination, Golden Globe Award, Grammy Award, Ivor Novello Award and the Friends Of The Black Emmy Award. With the unbanning of liberation movements he returned home with his wife, Violet. He is a self-confessed family-loving man and the lyrics of his *Moroa* attest to this. They’ve been blessed with two sons and three daughters. One of the daughters, Margaret Ndrithlalele Gwangwa, did

stage directing and is a backing singer in her father's band. Talking to her made me realise how clued-up she was with her dad's showbiz.

"Mothokwa" has written more than 16 musical scores and theme songs including his projects in post-apartheid South Africa like *Soweto Green* starring Dr John Kani; *Ulibambe Lingashoni*, the ANC television documentary; *The South African Love Story*, a television documentary based on the life of the late ANC leaders Walter Sisulu and his wife, Albertina as well as the musical *Sing Africa Dance!* His theme songs include television signature tunes to Dali Tambo's show. He has performed in more than 16 major concerts around the world. His highlights on his return home include a Meritorious Award from President Nelson Mandela. The premier music awards in the country, the SAMA honoured him with a Life Time Achievement Award as well as the Best Adult Contemporary African Jazz Album for *Sounds From Exile* (Sony Music, 2002).

The trombonist composer who defines music as "organised noise for a purpose" and coined sub-genres like "Bluesqanga", blows trombone brands like the "King", but his ideal is the "Bach", which is top of the range. He has the highest regard for players of the "unmarked" musical instruments – trombone and violin. Specialists in those instruments are very scarce in South Africa. His best local trombonist is Jasper Cooke. Mosa's albums are: *A Temporary Inconvenience* (Sony Music, 1999) co-produced with Kenny Mathaba; *Flowers Of The Nation* (Sony Music, 2001) co-produced with Koloi Lebona and *Sounds From Exile* (Sony Music, 2002) co-produced with Kenny Mathaba. On a parting shot I asked him about the philosophy behind the title *A Temporary Inconvenience* and his reply was that even if you may be involved in three major accidents like he was, you will not die as long as you've not fulfilled your Creator's mission. The accidents are just a temporary inconvenience. The "Walk of Fame" legend later released his first DVD titled *Jonas Gwangwa – Live At The Standard Bank International Jazz Festival* (Sony/BMG). By 2007 he and Hugh Masekela had featured on various musicians' albums including Keiko Matsui's *Moyo*.

Another musician who worked with "Mothokwa" Jonas Gwangwa in exile is **STEVE DYER**. Born in Pietermaritzburg, by the age of 11 he was already strumming the guitar. He did his classical music degree at the University of Natal and left South Africa for Botswana in 1982. As already alluded to, he helped Jonas Gwangwa to form Shakawe and started playing flute and saxophone. In 1986 he was in Zimbabwe playing with musicians like Jethro Shasha and the Jazz Survivors. Later he went abroad and played with Gwangwa and Philip Tabane. In Zimbabwe he became involved in various performances including Caiphus and Letta's show, "Buwa". He formed his own band, Southern Freeway in 1989 and together they released a self-titled album. Their other album was *Indlela Yenkululekho*. He toured many countries including Japan with the Gwangwa-led Amandla Cultural Ensemble. In 1992 he returned to South Africa and featured in various performances and television shows. He also produced promos, ads and



campaigns for various media organisations. As a music producer his products include albums of Devera Ngweni, Oliver Mtukudzi, Esta M and Junuthu. He also produced the music for the television documentary on the life of the late ANC stalwart, “Xhamele” Walter Sisulu. As musical director he worked with the Soweto String Orchestra and Mahube, a star-studded show that performed in Germany in 1997 at the “Out Of Africa Festival”. Mahube’s CD *Mahube: Music From Southern Africa* was released on the Sheer Sound label performed very well in the SAMAs. He also worked with Kora 96 Best African Arranger, Denzil Weale on *Ethnic Dream*. Steve’s solo albums include *Down South In Africa* (2000) (featuring my favourite track, *Umkhumbane*), *Son Of The Soil* (2002), *Lifecycle* (2004) and *Native Art* (2007).

Recently as I was playing various versions of the traditional song, *Shosholoza* I was quite impressed with **ABDULLAH IBRAHIM**’s passionate piano playing from his Township One More Time album (SAMA 5 Best Producer nomination). The rendition gives one a vivid picture of the master at work. Born Adolf Johannes Brand on 9 October 1934, jazz pianist Dollar Brand is from a family of six siblings in District Six, Cape Town. I was struck by some similarities between him and Caiphus Semenya: both musicians’ formative spiritual years were influenced by their mothers and grannies, attended the AME Church; love the piano and their wives are successful musicians in their own right.

From the age of four, Dollar was playing the piano like his granny and his mother. At the age of 16 he had had enough of bands that always wanted to tell him what to play because they stifled his creativity and originality. This is another reason why he chose the piano because with it he could be a one-man band. The Manhattan Brothers invited him on their Eastern Cape tour performing mainly traditional songs. He was also invited by a former school teacher, musician and singer Sathima Bea Benjamin to join her band. They married in 1965 and were blessed with a son Tsakwe, and a daughter Tsidi. Dollar was musically motivated by Miles Davis and Duke Ellington as well as the support of his parents and wife Sathima. Other bands he played for include Tuxedo Slickers, the Willie Max Big Band as well as the legendary Jazz Epistles. As early as 1962 the Dollar Brand Trio toured Europe: Dollar (piano), Johnny Gertze (bass) and Makhaya Ntshoko (drums). His 1965 performance in Zurich impressed the legendary Duke Ellington. In 1976 he left South Africa for good to live in various cities like Dakar, Zurich, Copenhagen and New York. The couple was invited to New York by Duke Ellington when they met face to face for the first time in Paris. Duke launched his international career with the recording of *Duke Ellington Presents The Dollar Brand Trio*. With more than 130 albums and 250 compositions to his name, some of his evergreens are: *Mannenberg*, *Blues For A Hip King*, *Tintinyane*, *Bra Timing From Phomolong*, *Anthem For A New Nation*, *The Wedding and Beautiful Love*. In 1968 he converted to Islam and changed his name from Dollar Brand to Abdullah Ibrahim. Abdullah who holds a sixth



dan black belt in Yakami martial arts plays many instruments but his passion remains the piano. By 1986 his song *South African Sunshine* ranked second place on the Anti-Apartheid Top Ten charts of British magazine, *New Musical Express*. He has also written soundtracks for films in the late eighties, which include *Chocolat* and *No Fear, No Die*. His wife Sathima Bea Benjamin used to be known as Bea Benjamin. She has released her own albums, which include *Love Light*, *Sathima Sings Ellington*, *Dedications And Memories*, *Dreams* and *Cape Town Love*. She owns a record label, Ekapa. Son Tsakwe is a musician who plays keyboards and composes songs while he's also into Information Technology. Daughter Tsidi has formed a rap group, Natural Resources, whose debut album was titled *Baseball*.

New York-based Dr Abdullah Ibrahim's passion in the new South Africa became the development of young musicians like the Port Elizabeth trumpeter, Feya Faku just as he too was mentored by seasoned musicians of the sixties. The respect the new South Africa has for this gentle giant is evident in accolades he received and tributes dedicated to him. The UCT conferred on him an honorary doctorate. His local performance highlights include the historic "Rhythms Of Africa" at Sun City with Rebecca Malope, Sibongile Khumalo and Yvonne Chaka Chaka accompanied by the National Symphony Orchestra in 1994. Some of his new projects in the newly-born country include the establishment of the New Cape String Orchestra, the Cape Town Jazz Orchestra, music academies in Cape Town and Johannesburg as well as the release of *Ya Rona* (1996). For more on the life of this king of ivories, there are documentaries on his life. In 1986 Chris Austin put together a documentary film titled *A Brother With Perfect Timing* with recreated scenes of District Six filmed in Zimbabwe, and Sophiatown scenes shot in Harlem, US. Another recent documentary, *Abdullah Ibrahim: A Struggle For Love*, was shown in South Africa in 2005. The guru was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award during the 2006 SAMA. His albums include the following:

1969 <i>African Piano</i>	1988 <i>Windif</i> (Soundtrack for film "Chocolat")
1973 <i>African Space Program</i>	1989 <i>African River</i>
1973 <i>This is Dollar Brand</i>	1990 <i>No Fear No Die</i>
1974 <i>Mannenberg – Is Where It's Happening</i>	1991 <i>Desert Flowers</i>
1976 <i>Banyana- The Children of Africa</i>	1991 <i>Mantra Mode</i>
1976 <i>Black Lightning</i>	1993 <i>Knysna Blue</i>
1978 <i>Buddy Tate Meets Dollar Brand</i>	1995 <i>Yarona</i>
1979 <i>African Marketplace</i>	1997 <i>Cape Town Flowers</i>

1979 <i>Dollar Brand Plays Sphere Jazz</i>	1998 <i>African Suite</i>
1979 <i>African Tears and Laughter</i>	1999 <i>Township One More Time</i>
1979 <i>Echoes From Africa</i>	2000 <i>Cape Town Revisited</i>
1982 <i>African Dawn</i>	2000 <i>Ekapa Lodumo</i>
1983 <i>South Africa</i>	2001 <i>African Symphony</i>
1984 <i>Ekaya</i>	2004 <i>A Struggle for Love</i>
1985 <i>Water From an Ancient Well</i>	

Also found in his long catalogue are: *Tintinyane, Peace, Dollar Brand Duet, African Magic, Journey, Live At Montreaux, African Sun, Natural Rhythm, Ode To Duke, Reflections, Solo, The Dream and The Mountain*.

Another South African New Yorker is band leader, **MORRIS GOLDBERG**. He grew up in Observatory, Cape Town and like Kippie Moeketsi started playing clarinet before he became known for his saxophone. According to his biography his influences include Kippie Moeketsi, Chris Ngcukana and guitarist Harold Jaftha. This multi-instrumentalist also plays the flute and penny whistle. Like most of his peers he moved to England in 1960, but in 1962 settled in the US where he enrolled with the Manhattan School Of Music. Like Gwangwa he was hosted by Hugh in his first days in the States. He later worked with musicians like Harry Belafonte, Miriam Makeba and Letta Mbulu. The versatile Goldberg who can easily switch from jazz to mbaqanga was a music tutor in the seventies. Never forgetting his roots he now and then visited South Africa to record albums like *Mannenberga* (1974) with Abdullah Ibrahim, and *Jazz In Transit* (1983). His contributions include Hugh Masekela's 1989 album, *Uptownship*. Morris was also part of the Paul Simon project, *Graceland* (1985). After performing with Miriam Makeba and touring with Hugh Masekela as part of his band, he returned to sunny SA in 1991. Maybe one could say his homecoming celebration was "Sekunjalo", the Hugh Masekela roadshow. According to the Steve Gordon biography, "Mo Gee" went back to New York where he performs with his band, Ojoyo. His albums include *Sophiatown Society* (with Pops Mohamed), *Ojoyo – Sastrojazz Township* (with Bakithi Khumalo, Tony Cedras and Anton Fig), *African Gold* (2000) and *Forward Motion* (2003).

Born Cecil Barnard in Crawford, Cape Town, on 7 June 1941, **HOTEP IDRIS GALETA** was given piano lessons by his father at a young age. He was later mentored by master pianist Abdullah Ibrahim. In 1961 he left South Africa for the US via London. Once there, he worked with various musicians including his compatriots Hugh Masekela and Letta Mbulu. He was offered a scholarship

to study jazz piano under John Mehegan. Hotep holds a Master's degree in jazz and lectured at the University Of Hartford in Connecticut from 1985 until 1991 when he returned home. Back at home he got involved in various projects and worked as music lecturer at the University Of Fort Hare, Alice in the Eastern Cape. His albums include *Malay Tone Poem*, a SAMA 9 nomination for Best Male Artist and Best South African Traditional Jazz Album.

Trumpeter **ZIGQIBO DENNIS MPALE** was born in Queenstown and grew up in Orlando East, Soweto. His early interest in music dates back to his high school days at Orlando High. Rehearsals of musicians like Gwigwi Mrwebi, Ntemi Piliso and Mackay Davashe at Orlando Communal Hall as well as the DOCC fascinated him so much that he wanted to be like them one day. But one musician who made a lasting impression on him was trumpeter, Kleintjie Rubushe. To achieve his dream, he did piece jobs after school until he had enough money to buy a trumpet. By 1958 he was playing for the Blue Serenaders. Another opportunity opened when Hugh Masekela left the country for London as he was invited to replace him in the Father Huddleston Band.

After realising his shortcomings, he attended music classes at Dorkay House under tutelage of Professor Khabi Mngoma and Kippie Moeketsi. Some of the bands he played for at that stage were African Jazz Revue And Variety Show of Alf Herbert and Mackay Davashe's Jazz Dazzlers. He also toured with his pianist friend, Chris McGregor. As Cape Town has always been the melting pot of jazz activity, in the mid-sixties he was working down there with Dudu Pukwana, Chris McGregor and Nick Moyake. Together with Abdullah Ibrahim and Makhaya Ntshoko they invaded the club circuit of the Cape. Later he joined Barney Rachabane, Tete Mbambisa and Ronnie Beer to do shows around the province. Tete Mbambisa's Soul Jazzmen and Shakes Mgudlwa's Soul Giants are some of the bands he played with in the Eastern Cape. It was during that time that he inspired young trumpeter, Duke Ngcukana who also liked the slower style of Mongezi Feza.

In 1970 Dennis joined Babsy Mlangeni's tours around the country with Winston Mankunku Ngozi. The two later joined Fever, a band whose members included Willie Nettie and Spencer Mbadu. After a stint with the newly-formed African Jazz Pioneers in 1983, he toured Botswana and never came back as he had been tipped by reliable sources that he was on the authorities' hit list. In Botswana he joined MEDU Arts Ensemble, a brainchild of Jonas Gwangwa, Wally Serote and the late George and Lindi Phahle. He also became member of Jonas Gwangwa's group, Shakawe. Dennis travelled the world with the Amandla Cultural Ensemble. By the late eighties he was in London where he worked with Dudu Pukwana's band, Zila; toured with Caiphus Semenya's musical, Buwa and participated in the Free Mandela Concert at Wembley stadium. He was later part of the recording of Jonas Gwangwa's *Flowers Of The Nation*.

When all liberation movements were unbanned, Mpale too returned home to

sunny SA. Some of his first involvements were at Kippie's with Mike Makhalemele on his Thabang project, as well as some projects with Zim Ngqawana. He then formed his band, Return whose members were Sello Montwedi, Wessel van Rensburg, Bushy Seatlholo, Jasper Cooke and Sydney Mnisi. Dennis Mpale's works include *I Remember Nick* (1968); *Soweto (African Herbs)* (1975); *Early Mart For Gallo* (a tribute to the late Early Mabuza, 1970) with Gideon Nxumalo, Allen Kwela and Malindi Blythe Mbityana; *Roots* (with Barney Rachabane, Duke Makasi and Sipho Gumede, 1975); *Black And Brown Cherries* (with Abdullah Ibrahim, 1976); *Our Boys Are Doing It* (with Pat Mtashikiza and Kippie Moeketsi, 1975); *Paying My Bills* (with Peter Moticoe, 1995) and *Nothing But The Jam* (with Mduduzi Masilela, 1997). I met "Bra Dennis" face to face in 1995 just after the release of his album *Paying My Bills*. After our interaction in that interview he remained in the chamber of my heart reserved for gentle giants. After an illustrious career of more than 39 years, he bowed out in August 1997 and was laid to rest at Soweto's Avalon Cemetery. In 2005 a remembrance compilation CD was released titled *Remember Dennis Mpale: The Man Behind The Trumpet*. Needless to say, a must for serious collectors.

A young pianist from Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape called **DUDU PUKWANA** arrived in the Mother City in the early fifties. When he joined Blue Notes under Chris McGregor he was persuaded to play saxophone as Chris himself was playing piano. The full Blue Notes line-up was Chris McGregor (piano), Dudu Pukwana (saxophone), Mongezi Feza (trumpet), Johnny Mbizo Dyani (bass) and Louis Moholo (drums). In 1964 they were invited to the Antibes Jazz Festival in France from which they never returned. Finally they found themselves in London and performed as Brotherhood of Breath continuing with their South African sound. Their 1964 album release was *Live In South Africa*. Chris McGregor who was born in the area that became known as the Transkei (now Eastern Cape) studied music in Cape Town. His early achievements include winning the 1963 Castle Lager Jazz Festival with the band Chris McGregor and The Castle Lager Big Band. Their recordings include *Jazz The African Sound*. When Pukwana met former Malombo drummer, Julian Bahula in 1969 they formed Spear. Later Dudu formed Zila, a band also joined by Dennis Mpale in the eighties. Julian formed Jabula with Terri Quaye, Graham Morgan, Dave Defries, Mike Rose, Steve Scipio, Lucky Ranku and Pinise Saul. South African Pinise Saul is the singer to whom Denise Mpale dedicated the track *Pinise's Dance* on the album *I Remember Nick* and Lucky Ranku is a former member of Malombo Jazz Makers of Mamelodi, Tshwane. Later they played with a band of Capetonians called District Six. The nucleus of the band was three men: former Spirit Rejoice keyboard player Mervyn Africa (piano), Brian Abrahams (drums) and Russel Herman (guitar). The band played a blend of African jazz, township folk music and soul. At some stage the full band was: Dudu Pukwana (saxophone), Julian Bahula (drums), Mervyn Africa (piano), Pinise Saul (vocals), Lucky Ranku

(guitar), Russel Herman (guitar) and Frank Williams (saxophone). In 1972 Dudu's saxophone was roped in to record The Union Of South Africa's second album *Home Is Where The Music Is*, a double album that also featured former Jazz Epistles muso Makhaya Ntshoko who was in Zurich at the time. Pukwana's albums include *Flute Music* (1975), *In The Townships* (1983), *Jazz Fantasia* and *Brotherhood of Breath*. Dudu and Chris McGregor passed away at the dawn of the new South Africa in 1990. In a way, that was the end of an era leaving only one living member of the original Chris McGregor's Blue Notes, drummer Louis Moholo. Who knows, maybe Chris, Mongezi, Johnny and Dudu are blowing a Blue Note storm up there? In a television interview in August 2007 McGregor's widow Maxine, who has written a book on the late musician's life announced that a musical tribute would be staged in his honour in September 2007. In the same month on Friday the 21st the Blue Notes were awarded the Order of Ikhamanga by President Thabo Mbeki.

Master drummer **LOUIS MOHOLO** whose first recording in South Africa was with the Chordettes in 1958 played with many bands in the UK. As part of Brotherhood of Breath he released two albums and also did some live recordings. His collaboration with the late bassist, Harry Miller was dynamic.

Dudu Pukwana's and Johnny Dyani's songwriting skills had together already been showcased when they wrote themes for the 1987 Dyani album, *Witchdoctor's Son*. At the time Dudu was with Freedom Records and Johnny released the album through Steeple Chase Music. The album included South African traditional songs like *Ntyilo Ntyilo* and *Magwaza*. The sextet that recorded the album was Johnny Dyani (bass), Dudu Pukwana (piano), John Tchicai (first saxophone), Alfredo Do Nascimento (guitar), Luez Carlos de Sequaira (drums) and Mohamed Ali-Jabry (percussion). The album was produced by Nils Winther. At the time of writing this work in 2005 bassist Johnny Mbizo Dyani whose recordings include *Grand Mother's Teaching* had died 19 years before while at a concert in Germany.

**JULIAN BAHULA's** Jabula recorded two albums with Virgin Records and the third was an Amsterdam recording for the anti-apartheid movement. They toured the world's continents staging many concerts including the Unity Festival in Harvard Stadium, Boston with Robert Nesta Marley, the Festival For Arts And Culture (Festac) in Lagos, Nigeria (1977), as well as the Youth Festival in Cuba (1978). His next band, Jazz Africa formed at the beginning of the eighties, released the album *Son Of Soil*. The members of the band were Michael Nielson (saxophone), Mervyn Africa (keyboards), Lucky Ranku (guitar), Peter Segona (trumpet), Roberto Bellatalla (bass), Alan Jackson (drums), Dill Katz and Chucho Merchan.

In my early days as a radioman I used to be sentimental towards titles like Moholo's *Morwa Bahula* and Hugh Maekela's *Bo-Masekela*. To me it was an expression of a deep longing for my own people from the wilderness. One of my

all-time favourites is *Tribute To You* from Julian's album, *Wind Of Change*. Some of the music scores he wrote for film include soundtracks for Michael Beazley's *Africa*, a documentary on African history, *South Africa Under The Skin* as well as *The Wasted Land*. He featured in films such as: *Jabula: A Band In Exile*, *Blue Notes And Exiled Voices* as well as *Musicians In Exile*. His Tsafrika Productions organised the first Nelson Mandela Birthday Concert at Alexandra Palace, London. This was on 17 July 1983, Tata's 65th birthday, and Dudu Pukwana led the South African artists group. When political prisoners were released and liberation movements unbanned, the Eersterus son came back home to celebrate with the new nation. But, like Abdullah Ibrahim, Lucky Ranku and others, he comes in and out of the country now and then due to a long-established relationship network with the outside world. To welcome the new democracy, he released *Wind Of Change* (GMP, 1996), an album featuring Chico Freeman on tenor saxophone. His compliments are very clear – "Let The Wind Blow and Bring Peace to All". In appreciation for being given a second chance to live after a near-fatal car accident in 1996, he released *Live Again* in 2007 featuring Philip Tabane, Abe Cindi and younger local musos. The album was released through his Jabula Music and Gallo Records. It was nominated for MTN SAMA 14's Best Contemporary Jazz Album category.

Julian's former band mate, **MADUMETJA LUCKY RANKU**, followed him and arrived in England in the mid-seventies fleeing the dark forces of the regime. Lucky, who was born in Lady Selbourne and grew up in Mamelodi, joined Malombo Jazz Makers in 1965 as a guitarist when Philip Tabane went solo. The other remaining members of the band were Abey Cindi (flute/saxophone) and Julian Bahula (drums). He played for the band until 1975. His band, African Follies staged fundraising concerts for Steve Biko's South African Students' Organisation (SASO). Before long he was on the government's "troublemakers" list. He left the country with the help of Julian. Lucky has released and featured on many albums including his work with Dudu Pukwana and Mike Oldfield, who is famous for *Tubular Bells*. Groups Lucky worked with include The London Gospel Choir, the SA All Stars, Township Express as well as his own band, Mamelodi. By 2005 he was with The African Jazz All Stars, a ten-piece band that included trumpeter Claude Deppa and vocalist Pinise Saul. Lucky is a music tutor at Leeds College of Music and lives in Manchester with his daughter, Onica. My memory was recently refreshed on the life of the master guitarist when I watched a documentary titled TBC on SABC 1 on the evening of 1 November 2006 featuring Pinise Saul's visit to Cape Town. It was an unforgettable experience with Pinise visiting friends and relatives at various spots including Langa Township. Lucky, Mervyn Africa and some local musicians formed her "homecoming" band. Though "home will always be home", the two were honest about the realities of staying in England where they are rooted. Lucky who left South Africa when his son was only 11 sadly remembered how



he had to come home to bury him. However, he said his consolation is his son's children – his grandchildren.

Bassist, composer, arranger and producer **VICTOR MHELELI NTONI** started his music career as a young man in Cape Town's townships. Together with McCoy Mrubata they practiced day and night to perfect their skills and realise their dreams. It was while he was rehearsing with the late drummer Nelson Magwaza that he caught the attention of Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim). Later he featured on Dollar's album, *Peace*. He learned a lot from the master. After playing with various local jazz musicians including his own sextet, he later joined musicians in exile. By 1979 he was playing and writing songs in Hugh Masekela's band in New York. According to "Bra Hugh" Victor wrote many songs, some of which were not easy to record without the assistance of South African indigenous talent. One of the compositions, *Nomalizo*, is included on Hugh Masekela's 1999 album, *Sixty*. I remember seeing his name on Ratau Mike Mkhalemele's album, *Soweto Sunrise* (Masterpiece, 1984) as the arranger of the brass section. This excellent musician produced Abigail Khubeka's album, *Songs of My People* (1983).

During the SABC's first and second Astera Awards he was conductor of the broadcaster's resident band. In 1989 together with pianist Darius Brubeck they formed Afro Cool Concept, a band that toured southern Africa as well as the US, Thailand and Europe. He was later replaced by bassist Bongani Sokhela who joined the other members of the group, Barney Rachabane (sax) and Lulu Gontsana (drums). ACC's recent release was *Still On My Mind* (Sheer Sound). When Dr Nelson Mandela was released, Mhleli co-wrote the welcome song, *The People Want Mandela* for the project, Viva Music For New South Africans. He featured on Ringo Madlingozi's *Buyisa* and released his album *Heritage* (2004), which was nominated in MTN SAMA 11's Best Contemporary Jazz Album category. His other passion is organising, arranging, directing and conducting music as seen with the Music Lab production, *Mzansi Sings a Tribute To OR Tambo*, which fused jazz, choral and traditional music. The production consisted of an 18-piece big band, thirty voices and ten strings. The cherry on top was the narrator, poet Jessica Mbangeni whose oratory was complemented by traditional dancers. Some of the established musicians featured included Barney Rachabane, Lawrance Mtshiza, Sydney Mavundla and Feya Faku. Following a tour of the UK and Europe, they performed at Oliver Tambo's 90th birthday commemoration on 27th October 2007 at Walter Sisulu University's Zamakulungisa Hall in the Eastern Cape's Mthatha.

**DOROTHY MASUKA** became known as "Queen Of Kwela". She earned the title for dominating the kwela music scene with hits like *Notsokolo*. She was born in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) on 3 September 1935 to Wilson Masuku and Liza Mafuyani. Wilson was a descendant of the Lozi people of western Zambia and Liza was Zulu. The fourth in a family of seven, young

Dorothy experienced health problems while a pupil in her country of birth and it was recommended that she be transferred to another mission school, St Thomas in Johannesburg, South Africa. It was at this Catholic school that her talent shone so bright that at the age of 12 she was already singing in the legendary African Jazz And Variety Show in the fifties. While visiting her aunt in Pimville, she met her heroine Dolly Rathebe who inspired her.

Dorothy had first tasted the power of the microphone when agents from Troubadour invited her for studio auditioning sessions and later joined the African Ink Spots of Philemon Mogotsi. After a tour the school authorities threatened her with punishment and next time they heard about her she was singing with the Golden Rhythm Crooners back in Zimbabwe. After negotiations between Troubadour and St Thomas the record company's engineer, Stewart Cook travelled to Bulawayo where he made recordings of Dorothy and her group. After the company had signed guardianship agreements with her mother, she came back to Johannesburg.

Among the songs Cook recorded at Stanley Hall was a composition Dorothy wrote on one of her train trips between Bulawayo and Johannesburg – *Hamba Notsokolo*. It became the biggest hit of her career. On her return she toured with the Harlem Swingsters. From there she followed in the footsteps of her idol, Dolly Rathebe with whom she featured in the legendary 61-cast member African Jazz Revue And Variety Show of Alf Herbert touring the country and beyond. The show exposed black performers to white record companies, theatre and films. Her professional rival at that time was her friend, Miriam Makeba. Some of her backing vocalists were Mabel Mafuya and Mary Thobela. Dorothy's musical stardom caused her the original surname and she became Masuka. Her Troubadour producer, Cuthbert Matumba was on top of his game and the company's marketing and distribution strategies were the best. Her recording of the songs *Dr Malan* and *Lumumba* turned her into an enemy of the South African regime. She stayed in Malawi and Tanzania supporting the political struggles of those countries. She speaks fluent Swahili due to her stay in Kenya. In 1960 "Dotty" went to the UK where she stayed in Kensington, London promoting her African sound. Her first show there was in Scotland organised by Joe Mogotsi's wife, Pearl Corner. After her UK and US tours she returned to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) only to flee again into Zambia this time. Here she spent the next 16 years continuing with her career.

In 1965 Dorothy played in the Caiphus Semenya written and directed musical *Buwa*. By 1968 she was a regular at Zambia's Woodpecker Club. In 1969 she came out tops at the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers. When Robert Mugabe's party toppled Ian Smith's regime in 1981, she returned to the land of her birth where she sang in night-clubs with groups like Job's Combination. This prolific songwriter's other composition, *Kulala* was included on Miriam Makeba's performances recorded on a CD titled *En Public a Paris et Conakry*. In

the mid-eighties she was part of that legendary Botswana solidarity show, the Cultural Resistance Festival.

After the De Klerk government had handed over the reins to the ANC, she was finally allowed to enter the new country of her old days. Her return was facilitated by Gallo Records' Albert Ralulimi and Rob Allingham. Everything that she knew in the industry had drastically changed and her musical home had closed doors in 1969. In 1990 she recorded her album, *Pata Pata*. She also went into the Marco Studios, Bryanston with producers Sello Chicco Twala and Abe Sibiya to re-record her golden hits like *Imali Yami* on a six-track CD titled *Magumede*, engineered by Bheki Twala. In 2001 she featured in a special show with Don Laka in London. Later she again entered the monumental Downtown studios with producer Dumisani Dlamini to record *Mzilikazi* (Gallo Records, 2001) and released it through her former rival record company, Gallo Records. My personal favourite on the album remains *Igoli*. The album was nominated in the Best Producer category of SAMA 8. One man who also played a pivotal role in the recording of the album is a man I had come to call the industry's "walking encyclopaedia", Albert Ralulimi. In my days as a deejay I used to draw a lot of wisdom and knowledge from him. "Bra Kid Mawrongwrong" was one of the few from that era who could still tell yellow from red. When I started writing this book he was one of the first elders I consulted. "Bra Ali" received a Lifetime Achievement Award together with "Gruesome Grash" David Gresham and the late Princess Magogo KaDinizulu from SAMA 8. Albert Ralulimi sadly passed away in 2005 after postponing one of our appointments due to ill-health. May his soul rest in peace.

I guess Mum D's greatest moment was when MTN SAMA 11 honoured her with a Lifetime Achievement Award together with fellow music stars Sipho Mabuse, Brenda Fassie and Margaret Mcingana; or was it the 1999 Lifetime Achievement Award she received with other grand dames of song, Thandi Klaasen, Abigail Khubeka, Sophie Mgcina and Margaret Singana from PSG, Anchor Life and SABC 2? But what I'm sure of is that one of her recent great performances was Bob Mintzer's Melodi International Jazz Festival at Sun City featuring her with Sibongile Khumalo, Gloria Bosman, Thandi Klaasen, Abigail Khubeka and Sylvia Mdunyelwa. In 2002 she was once again in London promoting the compilation CD, *The Definitive Collection*. Another great collection of her music is on *Hamba Notsokolo And Other Hits From the 50s*. Her 2005 release was *Lendaba* (This Matter) featuring tracks like *Into Yami* (*Ngiyayithanda*) and *Yombela Yombela*. Dorothy "Notsokolo" Masuka remains one of South Africa's prolific songwriters. In 2006 President Thabo Mbeki honoured her with the Order of Ikhamanga.

**BUSI MHLONGO** grew up in Inanda, Durban, and started singing at a very young age. She later impressed judges at Gallo's King Kong contest singing *My Boy Lollipop* and won. This high priestess of song who used to be known as

Vicky Mhlongo toured southern Africa with her band, African Jazz. When her ancestors called upon her to become a sangoma, she went for the initiation in Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal in 1981. She was in London in 1972 where she recorded with the likes of Dudu Pukwana, Julian Bahula and George Lee. She also worked with supergroup Osibisa as lead vocalist. It was after her performances in Mozambique that she left for Portugal with the group, Conjunto Juan Paulo. That was the launch of her international career. She stayed abroad and performed in Portugal, Belgium, Canada, US, etc. She worked with some of her compatriots like Caiphus Semenya. Busi was married to jazzman Early Mabuza of the Early Mabuza Trio fame. In 1996 she returned to her motherland in style as she launched her album, *Babhemu* (Munich Records, 1994) locally and shamed the industry's doubting Thomases as the album was well-received by her people. Through Melt 2000 she released her bombshell, *Urban Zulu* (2000) featuring the hit *Yehlisani Umoya*.

In 2003 Busi released *Freedom* and went on to win the Best Female Artist southern Africa of the Koras. Working with her band Twasa, she blends maskandi, mbaqanga, jazz and pop to create a unique sound that captures the mind, heart and soul of her fans. The popularity of *Urban Zulu* necessitated its subsequent remix as *Urban Zulu: The Remixes*. Busi's CD *Indiza* (2002) was nominated SAMA 9's Best Dance Album. In 2005 MELT released Spotlight On Busi Mhlongo. Back in the seventies she was diagnosed with cancer and treated, but once back home the disease re-surfaced. In 2007 attempts were made by her fellow musicians to raise funds towards the treatment of the dreaded breast cancer. It was the SABC's Vuka Sizwe Benefit Concert (Green Project) staged in her honour on Sunday, 28 October 2007 at the Old Joburg Station in the Newtown Precinct, which managed to raise funds for her medical bills. The concert, which was the first of many to follow in honour of different musicians was also attended by President Thabo Mbeki and his wife, Zanele who wished her well on her 60th birthday. The artist line-up included Thandiswa Mazwai, Siphokazi Maraana, Simphiwe Dana, Sibongile Khumalo, Zuluboy, Shana, Shaluza, Somizi Mhlongo, Deborah Frazer, Dorothy Masuka, Leonie Jansen, Gloria Bosman, Ringo Madlingozi, Ray Phiri and others. The DVD of the Busi Mhlongo Benefit Concert titled *Vuka Sizwe* was nominated for MTN SAMA 14 in the Best Traditional/African Adult Contemporary DVD category.

**THOKO MDLALOSE** was born and bred in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Her talent was obvious at a young age and family and friends motivated her to follow her dream. She started her career with mbaqanga music. It was when she was with Izintombi Zentuthuko that she toured extensively. Some of the bands she joined include Mthunzini Girls and the Durban Jazz Sledge. Things started to shine even brighter when she became part of the African Jazz Revue And Variety Show where she met most of South Africa's rising stars. In 1971 she left for the US for better opportunities and growth. She joined Mongo Santamaria's group

as singer and dancer adding some African touch to the shows. Later she formed her own group, *African Vibrations*, which toured the US and Europe. Besides their music, they distinguished themselves through their African regalia. Her recordings include *Brave New Day*, which was recorded in Holland as well as *Let's Have A Good Time* (Teal Records), a Richard Siluma production. Thoko's contributions on other musicians' albums include her translation of Stevie Wonder's *Ngiculela* from his album *Songs In The Key Of Life*.

In 1975 a self-taught young pianist arrived in Johannesburg to work with groups like The Drive. His name was **BHEKI MSELEKU**. He was born in March 1955 to William and Elvira Mseleku of Amanzimtoti, KwaZulu-Natal. He had perfected his piano playing skills at the Nokwe home in Kwa-Mashu, Durban. Some of his early compositions include The Drive's *I Have A Dream*. In the early eighties he left the country for Zimbabwe. In 1985 when Hugh Masekela toured Zimbabwe he invited him to join him in Botswana where he featured on tenor sax and keyboards during the recording of Hugh's second Jive Records album *Waiting For The Rain*. Later the jazz maestro who lost two of his right hand fingers in an accident at a young age moved to London. Mseleku who is spiritually guided in his work sees himself as a medium and regards music as a ritual. He worked with a number of seasoned musicians and toured Europe and the UK extensively. Some of the albums he recently featured on include Jonas Gwangwa's *Flowers Of The Nation* (Sony Music, 2001). The "gentle genius" played piano and saxophone on the album that was recorded at London's Raezor Studios. Mseleku who plays piano, tenor and alto saxophone also released his own albums, which include *Celebration* (1991), nominated in the British Mercury Music Prize for the Album Of The Year category; a live recording, *Meditations* (1992); *Timelessness* (1994); *Star Seedings* (1995); *Beauty Of Sunrise* (1997) and *Home At Last* (2003) featuring fellow South African musicians, Winston Mankunku Ngozi and Feza Faku. This keyboard wizard was crowned Best African Instrumentalist by the first Kora All Africa Music Awards staged in South Africa in 1996. In 2005 a compilation CD, *The Best Of Bheki Mseleku*, was released. By May 2008 when his singer, activist and film guru sister Pinkie was buried in Durban at the age of 67, Bheki was ill. While Pinkie suffered a stroke, he was reported to have been admitted to a hospital in London for complications related to diabetes. Towards the end of June 2008 he was up and ready for a concert scheduled for 11 July at the Royal Festival Hall while also working on a next album.

Among the best jazz bands of the eighties was bassist **CARLO MOMBELLI's** group, The Abstractions. In 1987 he moved to Germany where he performed and taught music in Munich. When he returned to South Africa in 1999 he performed with his group, The Prisoners of Strange. Its members were Siya Makuzeni (trombone/vocals), Jessica Bailey (cello), Marcus Wyatt (trumpet), Sydney Mnisi (soprano/tenor sax) and Lloyd Martin (drums). Some of the albums he featured on locally include Marcus Wyatt's *Gathering* (Sheer Sound,



2000), Sibongile Khumalo's *Immortal Secrets* (Sony, 2000), Tlale Makhene's *The Ascension Of The Enlightened* (Gallo Records, 2004), Simphiwe Dana's *Zandisile* (Gallo Records, 2004) and Tony Cox's *China* (Instinct Africaine, 2002). He also did some recordings: With Abstractions – *On The Other Side* (Shifty Records, 1986) and *Abstractions* (1988); with Charlie Mariano – *Happy Sad* (1992) and his *Dancing In A Museum* (1996). His albums with The Prisoners of Strange include *Bats In The Belfry* (1997), *When Serious Babies Dance* (Instinct Africaine, 2002), *Not So Strange* (2005), *Live At Fort West* (2005) and *I Stared Into My Head* (2007). By 2008 Carlo was promoting his latest album at various live show venues including the House of Ntsako in Brixton where he performed alongside Marcus Wyatt and Louis Mhlanga on Friday, 20 June.

One of the great guitarists who played in Carlo Mombelli's Abstractions in the late eighties was **JOHNNY FOURIE**. He was born Jan Carel Fourie on 18 May 1937 in the Cape, but grew up in Benoni. His mother bought him a guitar and he never looked back. He played in the USA and UK but back home he'll always be remembered for his Johnny Fourie Band. The band was formed in 1979 and its other members included his son Sean Fourie (keyboards), Raymond Boschoff (drums) and Chris Becker (bass). It was after 1985 that he joined Carlo's band. In the new democratic South Africa he became a teacher at the Pretoria Technikon in the Jazz Department. He also formed the Short Attention Span Ensemble whose members were Sean, Trevor don Jeany, Barry van Zyl, Dave O' Higgins and Johnny himself. In 1997 they released *Fingerprints Of The Gods*. Actually, Johnny performed with the who's who of South African jazz. He was from the generation that boasted musicians like The Manhattan Brothers and Spokes Mashiane. He also worked for the South African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO). Johnny passed away in mid-August, 2007 after releasing the CD *Once Upon A Time*.

In the mid-eighties a young man from Sharpeville, South Africa, **VERNON MOLEFE**, was experimenting on sound in the studios of Los Angeles studios. At the age of 20 he had already performed with established musicians like Caiphus Semenya and the Crusaders (Joe Sample, Wayne Henderson, Wilton Felder, and Stix Hooper). Vernon had studied music at the Duke Ellington School Of Performing Arts. He played piano and could write and read music. His talent led to his contribution on the Crusaders album, *Ghetto Blaster*. Though he died at a young age, he had recorded albums like *A Letter To America*, *Banana Lady*, *Free Spirit* and a self-titled album. It is sad that he passed away at such a young age. His close friend in the US was another talented young musician from Soweto, South Africa Lebo M aka Lebohang Morake.

When I was a young deejay in the mid-eighties one of the dynamic groups of the time was **THAMI AND THE M BEES**. It was a family group of the Mbele siblings. One unique aspect of the group was that it operated well despite the fact that the members were in different continents, separated by the sea.



Some members were in South Africa while some were abroad – determination and commitment! Many of us would have had a reason to fold up due to the distances between, but the Mbele siblings saw the bigger picture. They would post a cassette to the other members across the ocean until the project was ripe to record. Thami, Nonkonzo and Mbuso recently joined hands to help their sister Cosbie release her CD, *Let's Unite*. She conceived the title while in New York on 11 September 2001 as the World Trade Centre was attacked “to remind mankind that we’re looking for peace *now* whether we’re in South Africa, America, Pakistan, Palestine, Iraq, etc.” to quote from the sleeve cover of the album. She co-produced the album with her brother, Thami. Cosbie who’s been a lecturer at the University Of New York for over ten years is passionate about choral music. Her other albums include *Mother Of The Nation*.

**LEBO MORAKE** is the pride of African Music who has made it into the world of big-time theatre and films. His involvement with *The Lion King*, which broke all known box office records opened so many doors for local films. This was evidenced when South African films like *Yesterday* starring Leleti Khumalo, *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha* starring Pauline Malefane, Zola Maseko’s *Drum* as well as Gavin Hood’s *Tsotsi*. By 2005 the *Lion King* project had employed more than 80 South Africans. Lebohang Morake was born in Tladi Location, Soweto to a singer and an actress. His talent in music started showing at the age of four singing on street corners. Before long he was playing with established bands in Orlando East’s Pelican. Some of the great names he performed with were Mara Louw and the late Ben “Satch” Masinga. In 1978 he recorded his debut single *Celebration* and to promote it he embarked on a two week tour of Cape Town. Later he toured Lesotho with his friend, the late Vernon Molefe, where they did shows mostly in night clubs. Following their bigger dreams, the two left for the US where they enrolled at the Duke Ellington School Of The Arts in Washington DC as well as the Metropolitan School Of The Arts in Syracuse, New York. They teamed up with Muntu Semanya to form Accent, a group that staged shows in the East Coast. He later went solo using the name Lebo M and settled in Hollywood, California. Among the groups he worked with were The Crusaders on whose album *Ghettoblaster* he featured. In 1985 he released a maxi single *Musukulandela/Can You Believe It?* on the WEA label produced by Vernon Molefe. He composed, arranged and co-produced the songs. Lebo was part of the musicians who recorded Caiphus Semenya’s 1994 album, *Woman Got A Right To Be* at the Bop Recording Studios in Mmabatho. His 1997 release was the album *Deeper Meaning*. Today he is an international celebrity who has won various awards mostly for his music collaboration with Elton John and Tim Rice in *The Lion King* (1994). On 6 June 2007 when the musical opened in South Africa, he co-produced it with Pieter Toerien. Hosted by Teatro at Montecasino in Fourways, Johannesburg for more than six months, its cast included Sello Maake Ka Ncube, Buyisile Zama and Mark Rayment.

Let's round off this superstar's story with some of the nominations and awards he received due to his talent, hard work and passion.

For *The Lion King*:

- Grammy Award – Best Instrumental Arrangement with Accompanying Vocals
- Academy Award
- Ivor Novello Award
- Tony Award nomination

For other projects:

- Academy Award nomination: *A Long Night's Journey Into Today* (2001)
- SABC 2 Tribute Achievers Award (2002)
- FNB SAMA – Best Male Vocal Performance: *Rhythm Of The Pride Lands*

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# TRADING IN TRADITION

Western music instruments like the guitar and the accordion found their way into South African black traditional music to produce what became known as commercial traditional music. This sound was dominated by isiZulu musicians with a brand dubbed “maskanda” music led by guitarists like Phuzushukela aka John Bhengu whose albums include *Sehlul’Umkomazi*, *Iqoma Kandabula*, *Uthando Selungehlule* and others. Later followed a younger generation of masters of the string: Mzikayifani Buthelezi, Mfaz’Omnyama, Inkunzi Emdaka, Mqgashiyo Ndlovu, Amatshitshi A Mhlophe, Wellington Ndwandwe Na Bafana Bengoma, Sukazi Mkhize NaMadube, Mfiliseni Magubane, Thwalofu namaNketshane, Bhekumuzi Luthuli, Ikhangela No JBC, Ihashi Elimhlophe, Phuzekhemisi, Imithente, Amadodakazi, Amageza Amahle, Shwi Nomtekhlala, Izingane Zoma to mention but a few.

**MZIKAYIFANI BUTHELEZI** comes from Nkandla in KwaZulu-Natal. His band is made of family members – his wives, brother and cousins. The star guitarist who’s said to have recorded more than 100 own compositions has many gold awards to his credit. His hits include *Nayintombi Ibaleka*, *Inyanga*, *Umntu*, *Themba*, *Izinkomo Zombango*, *Udlame*, *Amasiko* and *Banamanga*.

The late **MFAZ’OMNYAMA** who was born Mphatheni Khumalo in rural Nongoma, KwaZulu-Natal passed away at the age of 42 after a long illness. This left-handed self-taught master of the string and stage released many top-selling albums in his time including *Sizoshay’ Ingoma*, *Emakhumbini*, *Khula Tshitshi Lami*, *Nginyashisa Bhe*, *Ngisebenzile Mama* and *Ngihlanze Ngedela*. He worked with various musicians including Busi Mhlongo with whom he recorded and toured. In 1996 he won the 2nd SAMA’s Best Traditional Performance (Nguni Music) for *Emazweni Baba*. As Mfaz’Omnyama Nabasindisiwe he was nominated in the

3rd annual FNB SAMA's Best Traditional Performance (Zulu) for *Amagugu* pitted against Bergville Stories (The Cast) for *Bergville Stories* and the category winners Ladysmith Black Mambazo Nenzalabantu for *Ukuzala Ukuzelula*. Mphatheni's peace efforts were realised in the much-publicised Isixaxambiji working with his peers.

**BHEKUMUZI LUTHULI** grew up in Maphumulo village, Stanger, in KwaZulu-Natal as a herdboys who played a one-string tin guitar. In 1975 he came to Johannesburg with his father and worked as a cleaner in the city. It was after his father had bought him a six-stringed guitar that he focused on perfecting his skills on the instrument. In 1976 he went back to KwaZulu-Natal's Umlazi township in Durban and joined a mbaqanga group called Oshomi. After eight years he went solo releasing his debut album *Umthandazo* produced by Roxy Gina in 1984, which was followed by *Somandla*. Tom Mkhize of CTV Music Team invited him and Oshomi to Johannesburg for mbaqanga music recordings. Bhekumuzi switched to maskanda and released *Uzoyidel' Inkani*, followed by *Ubongikhonzel Enhliziyweni*, which went gold. The success of the album saw the release of other gold sellers like *Unembeza*, *Ngizokwala Uzokhala*, *Ubuyile*, *Ngidedele*, *Iphupho*, *Impatha*, *Umaliyavuzza*, *Africa Hlangana*, *Incwadi*, *Phaphiyosi*, *Khokha*, *Igazi Lami*, *Udumo Lwakhe*, *Uyangikoloda*, *Inkinga Ngu R7* and others. He has won the OKTV Music Awards for two years in succession in the Best Nguni Performer category (1991 and 1992). After winning the 3rd FNB SAMA's Best Maskandi Performance category for his album *Impatha*, he never looked back. In that contest he was pitted against Ikhangela No JBC (*Ukubona Kanje Ukubona Kabili*) and Mqgashiyo Ndlovu (*Vala Uzipu*). He continued to prove himself a star in his own right in this genre. In recognition of his stardom in 2005 he was part of the "Jazz Meets Symphony Concert" accompanied by a 45-piece orchestra. The show was taken to the annual MACUFE in Bloemfontein on 28 September. His album *Inkinga Ngu R7* scooped the Best Mbaqanga Album of the SAMA 13.

**PHUZEKHEMISI** was born Zibokwakhe Johnston Mnyandu on 25 March 1963 in Umkhomazi, on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast. The youngest son of Maciliza and Majazana Mnyandu, he grew up a herdboys. Together with brother Khethani they started playing guitar in 1976 under tutelage of their father. In 1979 they went to Johannesburg where in the early 1980s they joined Special 5, a mbaqanga outfit. The two recorded their first album *We Malume* in 1988, but it was only in 1992 that the industry took note of them when they released *Imbizo* as Phuzekhemisi No Khethani. The album sold more than 100 000 units in a short space of time. Their other album together was *Emapalamende*. The duo's success was derailed by the tragic death of Khethani in a car accident in 1993. After mourning the death of his brother, Phuzekhemisi released the West Nkosi-produced *Impimpi* (RPM, 1995), which included a Steve Cook re-mix of *Imbizo*, dedicated to his late brother. He has worked with

various artists including Nothembi Mkhwebane and M'Du Masilela. His first recognition by the industry was when he won the 1st Annual SAMA's Best Traditional Performance category in Nguni Music as Phuzekhemisi No Khethani for *Emapalamende*. By 2005 the then 42-year-old star had already collected the fifth of these deserved awards. The man who performed at the opening ceremony of the 2002 Soccer World Cup in Japan has since released many more hot albums including *Inkunzi Kabhejane*, *Izwe Alithuthuki*, *Uyisipoki*, *We Baba*, *Sthandwa*, *Ngo'94*, *Phans'Imikhonto*, *Nginenkinga* as well as his controversial *Amakhansela*. In 2000 he collaborated with isiNdebele traditional music queen Nothembi Mkhwebane on *Sihlanganis'Izizwe*. His other collaboration was with Ihash'elimhlophe and the late Mfaz'Omnyama in a project dubbed *Isixaxambiji*. To show that he is master of the game, his CD titled *Sthandwa* won SAMA 12's Best Maskandi Album category. The Jacob Zuma saga also added controversy to his lyrics as he included the track *Msholoji* on his album *Sesihlangene* (2007). The album was nominated for MTN SAMA 14's Best Maskandi Album category. The category, which was also contested by Imithente for *Bambezakho*, Ikhangela noJBC for *Ingadlangadla* and Ingane Zoma for *Amazwi kaShaka* was won by GRC's Umgqumeni for *I Juke Box*.

**IHASH' ELIMHLOPHE** who was born Bheki Ngcobo in Evander is a former Soul Brothers family member who rose to fame through his creative compositions, skillful guitar playing, dancing and praise singing. Bheki's wife and children are established musicians. Together with his fellow maskandi musicians they launched the peace campaign, *Isixaxambiji* during the dark violent days in KwaZulu-Natal. His top-selling albums include *Intandane* (1986), *Uqanduqandu* (1989), *Impendulo* (1994), *Inyakanyaka* (1995), *Isiphalaphala* (1997) and *Ithemba* (1998), which contested the 5th SAMA's Best Maskandi category with, among others, Sxaxa Mbij' No. 2 for *Izingqungqulu Zomhlaba*, Mfiliseni Magubane for *Yashimizi* as well as the winner Phuzekhemisi with *Phans'Imikhonto*. Ihashi's talents were also recognised by the first South African Traditional Music Achievement Awards (SATMA) when he won the Best Maskandi Music category. In this section he was pitted against Izingane Zoma, Imithente, Mfiliseni Magubane and Phuzekhemisi. In 2006 he released another hot album titled *100% Ihashi*. Together with his wife Lena in 2007 they were honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award in Embalenhle, Mpumalanga Province for their contribution to African traditional music.

**IKHANSELA No JBC** leadman, the late Mfihleni Rolland Mkhize started his career in 1984 and released the debut album *Ithemba Lami* (Priority Records) which sold 18 000 units. The follow-up, *Inkumbulo* (1985) sold 10 000 units. His real breakthrough came with the release of *Izwi* (2000), which sold 475 000 units. By 2007 the platinum seller had released the albums *Majazi Volume 1*, *2*, *3* as a solo artist using the name Ikhangela. His last album *Ingadlangadla* was released in October 2007 and nominated for SAMA 14's Best Maskanda Music

Album category. Sadly, Mfihleni died at Helen Joseph Hospital after a long illness and was buried on Saturday 5 January 2008 in KwaZulu-Natal.

Sipho Khoza aka **THWALOFU** is leader of the group Thwalofu namaKhetshane. Though he's established himself as a musician in Gauteng, his home is in Obuka, Empangeni in KwaZulu-Natal. His career took off in 1974 and from there with his group, he never looked back. They became a household name as they sold many platinum albums. Some of their well-known albums of the eighties include *Eyami Lenduku*, *Uyabhala Uyacisha*, *Ngicela Impendulo* and others. The maskandi superstar that had recorded about 30 albums at the time of writing this book, released a follow-up titled *Umthetho*.

**SHWI NOMTEKHALA** is a hot maskandi group whose *Wangisiza Baba* (2004) sold in excess of 150 000 copies in 12 months. The album scooped SAMA 12's Best Selling Album of The Year category as well as the first SATMA's Best Selling CD category. It was followed by *Angimazi Ubaba* in 2006, with a DVD recorded at Buyafuthi Hostel in Katlehong, Germiston, Ekurhuleni. The CD won SAMA 13's Best Maskandi Album, as well as Best Selling Album of the Year. Their follow-up was *Kukhulu Engakubona* (2007).

The trio known as **IMITHENTE** is made of Buselaphi Gxowa, Nokwazi Ntuli and Dumisile Manana. The group was put together by Simosakhe Mthalande. Their 1993 debut album was titled *Wafa Washonaphi?* Their other CDs include *Nomkhomba Ngeyithupha*, *Isidikiselo*, *Awusayi Ebhodweni*, *Ngiyakushiya Mawulele* and *Umnyango Ongenasikhiya*. The platinum-selling maskandi group was nominated for the third time in the SAMAs for their 2006 CD *Ake Niyek' Ukukhuluma*.

**BHOJA BHOJA** was inspired by mgqashiyo group Mahlathini and Mahotella Queens way back in 1975. The lady from KwaZulu-Natal whose real name is Hazel Xaba arrived in Johannesburg and joined the mbaqanga groups of the 1970s like Izinkonjane, John Moriri and the Manzini Girls and Indoda Engaziwa. Between 1989 and 1991 she was a member of Ikhangela noJBC. She later went solo as Hazel and released her own album, *Amabhunu Abalekelani?* It was followed by others like *Bhoja Bhoja* and *Uhulumeni*.

Like maskanda music, xiTsonga traditional music is dominated by the lead guitar. Some of the well-known stars of the genre are Obed Ngobeni, General MD Shirinda, Patrick Nkuna, Samuel Nkuna, George Maluleke and Norman Mabaso. But the champion of the genre remains Thomas Hasani Chauke, a man affectionately called "Shinyori". This music is distinguishable as a family affair wherein the main male musician is backed by female singers/dancers, mostly his wives. This is observed in groups like Obed Ngobeni And The Kurhula Sisters, Patrick Mabasa na Shingange Sisters, Nkuku and Jopie Sisters, Samuel Nkuna and The Bankuna Sisters, Richard Maceke na Makhasa Sisters, Lemmy Chauke na Xahumba Sisters, Elias Mathebula and The Chivani Sisters, George Maluleke nava N'wanati Sisters, Thomas Chauke na Shinyori Sisters as well as General MD Shirinda and Gaza Sisters.



**OBED NGOBENI** is one of the musicians who placed xiTsonga traditional music on the international arena with his massive cross-cultural appeal hit, *Kuhluvukile Ka Zete*. Inspired by civilisation in deep rural Limpopo villages, the track caught the attention of Harry Belafonte and inspired his album *Paradise In Gazankulu*. The success of the 1983 hit prompted Obed to include *Kazete No.2* on his other album, *Tshiketa*. His chain of albums include *Gazankulu* (Heads, 1984), *Mchoza* (Jive Wire, 1985), *Tshiketa* (Teal Sound, 1986), *Xikwembu* (Teal Sound, 1989) and many more.

Traditional healer from Giyani, Limpopo Province, **DANIEL “MD” SHIRINDA**’s creativity saw some of his compositions covered, adapted or re-arranged by great musicians who are established master composers themselves. His 1984 composition *Nkata Mina* was included on Paul Simon’s 1985 hit album *Graceland* as *I Know What I Know*. Sello Chicco Twala also did Shirinda’s great composition, *Modjadji*. The musician who is affectionately known as General MD Shirinda has a streamline of albums that include *Music Is The Food Of Love* and SAMA 13’s Best Tsonga Music Album, *Gama Ra Nsele*. In 2008 when I was involved in the filming of a television music show to be named *Moribo*, 72-year-old Shirinda was managed by Dr Hlathikhulu.

The “King From Salema” **HASANI THOMAS CHAUKE**’s “Shimatsatsa” series has recently reached the Volume 27 mark with every album selling beyond gold status even before its official media launch. The humble hit machine of Saselamani village in Limpopo Province won SAMA’s Best Tsonga Music category from day one with Shimatsatsa No. 14 – *Suka Davulose* and owned the crown for longer than I care to count, his championship crossing over into the first SATMA.

I first met the singing guitarist, composer, arranger, producer and band leader in Johannesburg in the eighties at the offices of WEA. He released most of his albums with the company that later traded as Tusk Music: *Shimatsatsa Shamina*, *Don’t Be Afraid*, *Bomba Mhlengwe*, *Xinyeletana*, *Ndzichava Swicele*, *Xibamu Xa Movha*, *Sukalovha Current*, *Ma-Jumble Sale*, *Humelela MK No. 2*, *Hi Hanya Ku Vava*, *Buku Yi Hibyerile*, etc. When the company folded, he joined CCP Records. He welcomed the new millennium with the CD *Magidi-Mambhiri* (The Year 2000), which by the way was Shimatsatsa No. 20. It was followed by albums such as *Shimovana* (Shimatsatsa No. 23). The legend was honoured by his province Limpopo at a gala event held at Meropa Casino dubbed Limpopo Morula Awards in 2004 for his dedication and excellence. He also received other awards from Munghana Lonene FM, SATMA and his record company for his platinum upon platinum sales. Still dominating this category, his 2005 CD *Xidudla Kedibone* scooped SAMA 12’s Best Tsonga Music Album category. However, in 2006 the category award went to MD Shirinda for his *Gama Ra Nsele*. Thomas followed up with albums like *Mavholovholo* (Shimatsatsa No. 26) and *Rejina* (Shimatsatsa No. 27) The king reclaimed his crown when he once again won MTN SAMA 14’s Best Tsonga Music Album category. Looking back to the poor performance

of his debut album *Nyoresh* in 1981, the son of “Sixpence” and Tsatsawani has conquered the odds of illiteracy and claimed his rightful place in history. Since the day his uncle Daniel Chauke Makhoba showed him how to play guitar, the subject of Chief Hasani John Maluleke of Xikundu dedicated his life to xiTsonga traditional music. To this composer, arranger, lead guitarist and singer the music is a family business involving his wives, Shinyori Sisters: Lucia, Florence, Evah, Ethel and Joyce. His band consists of Mzamani Thomas “Skhuvete” Mathonsi – bass guitar; Phaniel Ringani – keyboard, and Adziambei Maphiri – drums. By 2007 his manager was the great Tom Vuma. His daughter Constance (Conny) is an award-winning solo artist who launched her solo career in 1993. His son Themba is a keyboardist, professional sound engineer and award-winning solo musician; besides working behind the desk in the studio, he regularly joins his father’s band on special occasions as seen on the DVDs *The Best of Thomas Chauke Na Shinyori Sisters Vol. 1* as well as *Vol. 2*, which are also available on CDs. What more can I say about Shinyori’s long successful career that he launched in 1964 except – Bomba Mhlengwe!

The Northern Sotho traditional music like that of other indigenous groups is still largely unrecorded. In the 1970s and 1980s the SABC sent talent scouts out into the rural communities to record the talent. These were transferred onto its transcriptions for airplay. The music was dominated by dipela/mbira performers with few “kiba” (male group dance) and mmapadi (female group dance) recordings. The most known traditional music stars included Johannes Mohlala, Johannes Mokgwadi, Ernest Rammutla, Mothemola Motau, Pershua Magampa and Mohlatleho wa Ramaloko. Their music was neither marketed nor sold. It was the sole property of the SABC. This meant that it could only be heard on radio, but not in record bars. The same went for kiba music. It was performed by groups from various Limpopo villages like GaMalebogo, GaMamabolo, GaSekhukhune, GaModjadji, Botlokwa, GaMolepo, GaSeleka, GaMashashane, GaMphahlele, GaMatlala, Moletji, GaDikgale, GaMokopane, GaSekgopo and so on. Later on the groups performed from hostels and mining compounds in the urban areas where the men worked. Though it was ignored by the music industry and stigmatised as barbaric and paganish, it continued to live in the people’s blood. As they say “in the music the village never ends”. You can move the African out of the village, but you can’t move the village out of the African! In the 1980s a new generation of traditional musicians emerged. Among them was a young teacher from Sekhukhuneland by the name of Mathunyane. He was backed by female dancers and his group was known as Mathunyane le Dinakangwedi. Later his protégé Phaladi Lesufi from Mohlaletse, deep in rural Sekhukhuneland, formed his own group, Phaladi Lesufi le Mathumaša blending kiba with praise singing. During my tenure at Thobela FM in the late 1990s we introduced kiba music contests, encouraging the youth to take the art form to another level. The talent search was sponsored by a businessman called

Matome Maponya. Sadly the traditional music fanatic has passed away. Many young boys and girls got the opportunity to show-off their talent and walk away with prizes. One of the undisputed champions of the talent search was a group of young boys from GaMokopane known as CCV Boys. The name was inspired by an erstwhile SABC TV channel called Contemporary Community Values TV. It was around that time that I came to know of a young, talented, eloquent, passionate and prolific prophet of kiba music called Sello Galane. He introduced contemporary elements into kiba music to set it free. He took it to the South African stadiums and theatres and performed it side by side with jazz and Afro-pop bands. Though Dr Philip Tabane had in the past already won some awards for his Northern Sotho work, he was always considered a jazzman just like Sello Galane for the mere fact that they also played other universal sounds. Efforts of groups like Marumo A Ngwato (*Ngwan'a Rena*), Mafołošankwethabeng and the late Lesiba Maja (*Konkoriti*) have added momentum to the genre. In 2002 it was Tlokwe Sehume And Medu who won the category in the 8th SAMA for *Naga Ya Fsa*.

The isiNdebele section has groups like Ingwabo La Langala, Saaiplaas Boys and others but it is dominated by the “Colourful Guitar Queen”, **NOTHEMBI MKHWEBANE**. Born Nothembi Emelina Mkhwebane in Mpumalanga’s Belfast, she was brought up by her grandparents who worked on the farms around Carolina. She worked in the mealie fields and looked after livestock. At the age of 12 her uncle taught her the art of playing guitar and the rest is history. In 1976 she left her home for Tshwane where she was employed as a domestic worker. With the guitar being her only friend, she started composing songs and recording them on a small tape recorder. She struck a deal with David Gresham Records (DGR) to release her debut album. The album was titled *Izintaba Kazihlangani, Amathunzi Ayahlangana*. Nothembi was later invited to perform as a supporting act for Ladysmith Black Mambazo at one of their Pretoria concerts. With her group Nezilemane they impressed the crowd and demand for their live performances grew. She later joined Phoenix Records where she released three albums. After realising the complexities of showbiz, she enrolled for Sub A in her early thirties in 1986 at an adult education centre. In the end she got her matric certificate! To uplift upcoming artists she launched a project called “Kuvuswa Ezivusako South African Association”. In 1987 she won the “Ndebele Traditional Music Concert” contest in Tshwane. This led to her invitation to play in “The Indestructible Beat Of Soweto” show at the New York Lincoln Centre. Her international exposure led to another invitation to perform at London’s Apollo and Fridge Theatres. Besides her music she also designs Ndebele clothes, paints murals and creates bead works. She quit her job in 1994 to focus on her music career. She lives in Mamelodi West, Tshwane with her children who are part of her band. Her passion in developing the isiNdebele traditional music won her the Woza Africa Mthuli Shazi Performance Art Award in America. In

1999 she toured Britain for the Africa Arts Directory. The singer who composes and plays guitar, keyboards, mouth organ and isikhumero also toured Portugal. She cited her inspiration as guitarists like Dr Philip Tabane, Mfaz'Omnyama and Tracy Chapman. Her many albums include *3 Umhlophekazi*, *Ipashi Le Khethu*, *Vukani Bomma*, *Zimami Balibalele* as well as *Kwa Za-Zam*, which she recorded as Nothembi And The Siblings. Her 2000 collaboration with Phuzukhemisi, Sihlanganis' *Izizwe* is a must for collectors of the genre. This undisputed queen of Ndebele strings was also honoured by the 5th SAMA at the Sun City Super Bowl in 1999 and continues to make waves. In 2006 Nothembi who owned a plot in Willows, Tshwane was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the first South African Traditional Music Achievement Awards.

IsiXhosa music also has various representatives in this category but the industry's most recognised are Suthukazi Arosi who won SAMA 8 for *Ubuntu* as well as **GCOBANI MHLABENI**. Gcobani was born in Mtyholo near King William's Town, Eastern Cape. His love for music saw him register with UCT's Music Department in 1996. His career took off after he won the Shell Road To Fame talent search. After signing with BMG he released his debut album *Umhlobo Wenene* (2001), which won the SAMA's Best Xhosa Album that year. In 2005 he was invited to participate in the annual Masala World Beat Festival in Hanover, Germany. Most Xhosa musicians in this genre are also praise singers.

The accordion-dominated Sesotho music boasts stars like Rutlha Masupha, Tau ya Matshekha, Apollo Ntabanyane, Mahosana ya Ka Phamong, Ditshukudu, Makaota A Kalame, Chakela, Soil Water And Sun, Majakathatha, Manka Le Phallang and Hatladi Le Lehlohonolo who won SAMA 9 for *Ha O Cha O Cheche*.

Award-winning group **MANKA LE PHALLANG** has its origins in the Maluti Mountains of Lesotho. Its members Ngaka Thipane, Mohau Mosobela and Teboho Ramakhula came into South Africa to work at the Welkom mines of the Free State. Their debut album *Leseli* went gold in a very short space of time and thereafter they became an unstoppable hit machine. Their chain of hits include *Ea Nyoloha Khanyapa*, *Khutsana* and *Moea O Foke*. When the SAMAs were launched in 1995, they were the first group to win the Best Traditional Performance category (Sesotho Music) for Molleloa. In 1997 they were nominated for Matatiele pitted against Tlou Makgola for *Lefu La Moshoeshoe* and the category winners Matsie No. 7 for *Ho Bohloko*. Manka le Phallang's album *Molimo Ke Waka* won the Standard Bank SAMA 8.

The Setswana Traditional Music category was won by Johnny Mokhali at the 2nd FNB SAMA for *Sediba Sa Mafoko*. Though most groups have not been recorded for commercial purposes, the genre is very rich as it is blended with the sounds of their neighbours, the San. Some of the unique musical instruments played include "serankure". Beyond the borders of South Africa in neighbouring Botswana, one of the most known groups is Culture Spears whose members are Kabelo Mongwe, Thembeni Ramoseteng, Madeline Lesolobe,

Lydia Oile and Jelina Mokgwatlheng. Though they came into prominence with the release of their second album *Kulenyane*, their debut album was released in 2005. In 2008 the award-winning group was working on its forthcoming album to be titled *Khudu*.

Many tshiVenda music groups were recorded by the SABC mainly performing Tshikona (male dance groups) and female styles like dombo. These are still on transcriptions and can be found in the libraries or archives of the national broadcaster. However, later there were groups and individuals who achieved commercial success. The performers included the following: Fhululedzani Tshinyadzo, Thrilling Artists, Alpheus Ramavhea, Elfes And Simba and Zozo. They helped promote the genre, but the section has always been dominated by Adziambeyi Band. The group's earlier albums include *Midzimu Ya Madimoni* (Beat City, 1983), which was produced by Thomas Motshwane who was affectionately known as "Umakhulela Endleleni" and among the most recent were *Dzhatsha* (Gallo, 1992) and *Mutahabvu Vol. 11* which won SAMA 7's Best Venda Music category.

The most pleasing development in this category of music was the launch of the *South African Traditional Music Achievement Awards* (SATMA) held at the International Convention Centre in Durban on 30 September 2006. The awards were organised by Dumisani Goba whose opening speech started with the slogan "My culture, your culture – one nation". The winners in various categories of the event, which was also attended by some traditional leaders, included:

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| • Thomas Chauke               | – Best Shangaan Music                                |
| • Worship House               | – Best Venda Music                                   |
| • Ingwabo La Langala          | – Best Ndebele Music                                 |
| • Chakela                     | – Best Famo  |
| • Lenny Naidoo                | – Best Indian Music                                  |
| • Ihashi'Elimhlophe           | – Best Maskandi Music                                |
| • Oflende                     | – Best Mbaqanga Music                                |
| • Zulu Messengers             | – Best Isicathamiya Music                            |
| • Nico van Rensburg           | – Best Volk Song                                     |
| • Zolani Mkiva                | – Best Praise Singer                                 |
| • Shwi Nomtekhalala           | – Best Selling CD                                    |
| • Khathide Ngobe              | – Best Traditional Music DeeJay<br>(PBS Radio)       |
| • Nkanyiso Zulu               | – Best Traditional Music DeeJay<br>(Community Radio) |
| • Lifetime Achievement Awards | – Miriam Makeba                                      |
|                               | – Ladysmith Black Mambazo                            |
|                               | – Welcome "Bhodloza" Nzimande                        |
|                               | – Nothembi Mkhwebane                                 |

- Lasting Legacy
  - Mahlathini Nkabinde
  - Princess Magogo
  - Hugh Tracey
  - Nofinish Dywili

Initiatives like these give me hope that someday will realise fully representative multilingual music awards in this land of many possibilities.



## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

# VOICE POWER

**L**ong before the introduction of instruments into music the voice has always been the natural tool of expression. Even in today's world of technological sophistication many people are still attracted to choral music. Many producers of commercial recordings now and then include the acappella version of tracks due to their recognition of man's obsession with the natural voice. The formation of groups in this genre is relatively easy as it requires no purchasing of musical instruments. All you need is talent, passion, commitment and marketing skills. Besides natural singing talent, the most demanding aspect of the style is intensive and regular voice exercises. At professional level elements like choreography, song interpretation, voice control and so on come into play. But as in all genres, leadership, team spirit, discipline and dedication determine the survival of groups. In the sixties and seventies South African rural villages and townships experienced a boys choir explosion, which ultimately gave birth to groups like Kingstar Brothers, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Rustenburg Boys, Pietersburg Top 10, Rampheri Rock Messengers, Dwalo Rocks and Chaneng Brothers.

*THE KINGSTAR BROTHERS* was a group of 12 members from KwaZulu-Natal who recorded many gold-selling albums for over 20 years. One of their biggest hits was *Yashimizi*.

*THE RUSTENBURG BOYS* was an eight-member group from the North West Province under the leadership of Jacob Monegi. They stormed onto the music scene with the release of *Dumelang*. Their other albums include *Badisa* (Mpumelelo, 1978) composed by Jacob Monegi and produced by Thomas Masingi of David Gresham Productions. The leader later embarked on a solo career releasing hits like *Mary* (1985).

However, the legends of “isicathamiya” or “cothoza mfana” remain the internationally-acclaimed **LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO** from the Driefontein area in Ladysmith (Emnambithi), KwaZulu-Natal, under the leadership of **JOSEPH BHEKIZIZWE SHABALALA**. Literally translated the name of the group means The Black Axes Of Ladysmith. Maybe we should first focus on the composer, arranger, producer, singer, dancer and leader – Pastor Bhekizizwe Joseph Siphathimandla Bigboy Mxoveni Shabalala. He was born in 1941 at Thukela near Roosboom in the Ladysmith district. His rural cultural upbringing had an impact on many aspects of his life and guided him in his leadership role. He left his home in the fifties to work in Durban where he joined some mbube groups. Some of the choirs he sang with early in his career include Durban Choir, Highlanders and Lova’ Spani. The first isicathamiya group he formed was Ezimnyama in December 1960 in Ladysmith consisting of nine members who included his brother Msongelwa Headman Shabalala, until he sadly passed away in December 1991. Headman’s commitment to the group was celebrated with the release of his last recorded album, *Inkanyezi Nezazi: The Star And The Wiseman* (GMP, 1992).

The first group members were the already-mentioned two plus Moni Hlatswayo, Qambokwakhe Hlatswayo, Doda Mazibuko, Mbangeni Mazibuko, Mshiywa Mlotshwa, Qobinyoni Vilakazi and Sikelemu Vilakazi. In 1964 when the group moved to Durban its membership increased to 15. It should be kept in mind that this was initially a performance group without any recorded material. By the end of 1969 they had become so popular that demand for their music on record led them to the SABC studios in Durban. So sceptic that the microphones would steal their voices, Dr Yvonne Huskisson (Superintendent of Music, SABC) convinced them to sing into the perforated pieces of steel. After the transcriptions were played on radio, record companies became aware of their massive potential. It was only in 1972 that seven members of the group released their debut album *Amabutho* through Gallo Records. It included Joseph Shabalala’s very first composition, *Nomathemba*. The recording was facilitated by the late West Nkosi who drove down to Durban with a letter from the former Radio Zulu’s Senior Announcer Alexius Buthelezi requesting Mambazo to come up to Gallo studios in Johannesburg for the recording. On arrival at the station’s Durban studios West was welcomed by Sokesimbone Kubheka and Mandlenkosi Nene who accompanied him to meet the group. The album unleashed hits like *Nomathemba*, *Isigcino* as well as the title track itself. The rest is an open secret. In 1975 when they started paying attention to Gospel Music some members left the group. In 1981 they toured abroad, a trip that would be followed by many more in years to come. The lineup that toured various overseas countries consisted of Bhekizizwe Joseph Shabalala, Msongelwa Headman Shabalala, Jockey Shabalala, Inos Phungula, Jabulani Mvelase, Ben Shabalala, Russel Mthembu, Albert Mazibuko, Jeffrey Mdletshe and Abednego Mazibuko.

Here follow some of the group's many international highlights:

- The recording of Paul Simon's 1985 historic *Graceland* album, which was followed by the *Born At The Right Time* world tour.
- Winning the coveted Grammy Award in the Best Folk Music Recording category for *Shaka Zulu* in 1987.
- They almost became regulars in the contest and in 2005 upon winning the Traditional World Music category, Premier S'bu Ndebele's provincial government in KwaZulu-Natal staged a huge celebration in their honour.
- Recording the official song, *World In Union* together with PJ Powers as well as *Shosholoza* when South Africa hosted the historic World Rugby Cup in 1995. The *Amabokoboko* (Springboks – South Africa's national rugby team) lifted the trophy and hoisted the Y-shaped new national flag. The black president took to the podium donning the number six captain jersey and stood side by side with the captain of the moment, Francois Pienaar, permanently, and publicly erasing apartheid and sealing the bond between black and white to create one rainbow nation.
- The recording of star-studded international album *Heavenly* (Gallo Records, 1997) in the USA. Since they were recognised as six-time Grammy nominees, respected American producer Alan Abrahams brought them together with stars like Dolly Parton, Phoebe Snow, Nathan East, Bonnie Raitt, Lou Rawls and South African Nana Motijoane, Veli Shabangu and Ntokozo Zungu. The music varied from the group's isicathimiya songs to classics of Bob Dylan and Curtis Mayfield.

Locally, Joseph himself was honoured with SAMA 3's Lifetime Achievement Award in 1997 as his group won the Best Duo/Group category with Nzalabantu for *Ukuzala-Ukuzelula*. They had already won the 1st FNB SAMA's Best Mbube Performace for *Liph'iqiniso* as well as the second SAMA for *Thuthukani Ngoxolo* and continued to dominate the category. In line with digital technology in 2005 they released their DVD, *Ladysmith Black Mambazo Live At Montreaux*, followed by the CD *Long Walk To Freedom*. In 2006 the group was nominated for the International Reggae and World Music Awards. At home their CD *Webafana Bami* was nominated in the Best Traditional Acapella Album category of SAMA 13. However the category went to Colenso Abafana Benkokhelo for their CD *Induku*. In 2007 Ladysmith Black Mambazo performed at the South African State Theatre in Tshwane for more than a week due to popular demand (24 August–2 September). The line-up consisted of the following members: Joseph Shabalala, Msizi Shabalala, Thulani Shabalala, Thami Shabalala, Sibongiseni Shabalala, Albert Mazibuko, Abednego Mazibuko and Russel Mthembu. The group leader, Joseph is currently an Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Halala Mshengu halala!

These are some of their albums:

1973 <i>Amabutho</i>	1988 <i>Journey of Dreams</i>
1976 <i>Amaqhawwe</i>	1990 <i>Izigqi Zendoda</i>
1979 <i>Ezinkulu</i>	1990 <i>Two Worlds, One Heart</i>
1980 <i>Nqonqotha Mfana</i>	1992 <i>Inkanyezi Nezazi</i>
1980 <i>Intokoza</i>	1993 <i>Liph' Iqiniso</i>
1981 <i>Ulwandle Olungcwele</i>	1994 <i>Gift Of The Tortoise</i>
1981 <i>Phansi Emgodini</i>	1995 <i>Thuthukani Ngoxolo</i>
1982 <i>Umthombo Wamanzi</i>	1996 <i>Ukuzala Ukuzelula</i>
1984 <i>Ibhayibheli Liyindlela</i>	1997 <i>Heavenly</i>
1985 <i>Inkazimulo</i>	1999 <i>Shosholoza</i>
1985 <i>Inala</i>	2000 <i>Lihl' Ixhiba Likagogo</i> ( <i>My Grandmother's Kitchen</i> )
1986 <i>Ezulwini Siyakhona</i>	2004 <i>Raise Your Spirit Higher</i>
1986 <i>Zibuyinhhlazane</i>	2005 <i>Wanyukela</i>
1987 <i>Induku Zethu</i>	2006 <i>No Boundaries</i>
1988 <i>Shaka Zulu</i>	2006 <i>Long Walk To Freedom</i>
	2007 <i>I lembe</i>

In addition to the above list, there are still other albums that include the following: *In Harmony, Isitimela, Indlela Yasezulwini, Thandanani, Ukukhanya Kwelanga, Shintsha Sithothobala, Webafana Bami, Imbongi, Phezulu Emafini, Abesizwe, Aint No Sunshine, Amabhushi and Bayazibusa*. Take note that in between the listed albums there are also compilations and recorded live performances like: *Live at the Umthombo Wamanzi, Live at the Playhouse, Friends in Concert, Chillout Sessions, Gospel Hits, Favourites, Zulu Hits, The Best Of...* etc.

The success of Ladysmith Black Mambazo inspired many younger groups like **ABAQONDISI BROTHERS** (Brothers of Understanding). This 12-member isicathamiya group came from Kayamandi township in Stellenbosch near Cape Town. Singing in various South African languages, their albums include *Ezulwini Lami, Umthethi Uyavuma, Isifingo, Ilizwe Lesithembiso* (The Promised Land), *Ilizwe Aliphucuki* and *The Spirit of Healing*. There is also a six-member

female group **AFRIKA MAMAS**: Jabu Dube and Ntombi Lushaba (born in Kwa-Mashu, Durban), Mso Sabela (Empangeni), Bhe Shandu (Eshowe) as well as Sister Zungu and Ntombi Mtshali (Johannesburg). All of them having paid their dues as session musicians and backing vocalists, they released their self-titled debut album through Woema Music in 2000. The CD was produced by seasoned session musician and dancer, Mandisa Dlanga. Their follow-up CD was titled *Bayalibuza*.

There is a young generation of singers on the rise who refuse to leave opera to the likes of Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras. On a cool, rainy evening I was invited to the Makgobaskloof Hotel in the rich, misty and beautiful valleys of Haenertzberg to enjoy a show by South Africa's **THREE TENORS**. The trio was made of Mfanafuthi Hlophe, Edwin Motlhakoane as well as Musa Nkuna whose father "Bra Les" used to be my colleague at the SABC. After that revelation, I continued to learn about more success stories of other youngsters in the genre, including a female trio called **THE VELVET TENORS**. Internationally the genre suffered a severe blow on 6 September 2007 as the legendary tenor from Modena bowed out at the age of 71 after losing his battle against pancreatic cancer. It was a very sad week as we also lost the legendary composer Alan Silinga, former dynamic Radio Tsonga (now Munghana Lonene) announcer Joel Risenga Salane, as well as two of our football heroes in separate road accidents – Mamelodi Sundowns' Gift Mpho Leremi and Black Leopard's Fernando Paulo Matola.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

# WELCOME MADIBA

**O**n 2 February 1990 when President Frederick Willem de Klerk made the most revolutionary statement of his career, he also inspired composers and producers. He announced in parliament that he would unban the ANC, SACP, PAC, AZAPO and thirty other political organisations, and also release all political prisoners.

The musicians started preparing for the eventuality – the release of 71-year-old Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. Yes, the release of the symbol of the hopes and aspirations of the downtrodden masses of South Africa. On 11 February 1990 the world leader walked with dignity, pomp and pride, hand in hand with his wife Winnie through the gates of his last post of incarceration – Victor Verster Prison (now Drakenstein Prison). For me that remains the most vivid picture of the triumph of the human spirit over the forces of darkness – more powerful than any sermon I’ve ever heard. In fact, for me it remains the proverbial frozen picture. The song I will always associate with the event is the African Youth Band’s *Ntate Modise*, which was turned into a signature tune by SABC television as we were patiently waiting for “The Return”. Artists never let a moment pass uncaptured, especially a lifetime one.

One individual who dedicated his life to fighting the injustices of the past through poetry is **MZWAKHE MBULI**. No wonder he earned himself the names, “The People’s Poet” from black South Africans and “Die Lang Man” from the state police. Needless to say, his course put him on the state’s “Must Be Watched” list, which landed him in prison cells many times. He says he became a poet by chance more than choice as he was only trying to fill in the gap left open when two of the country’s top poets left. To most people the son of Katali Elijah Mbuli and Msuthukazi Rosslyn Mbuli came into prominence in August



1989 with his band, The Equals. From there his crusade released album after album shaming his detractors. Some of his powerful songs are: *Change Is Pain*, *Freedom Is Victory*, *Africa Sing* and *Izigi*. He was there when Madiba's release was celebrated, expressing what was going on in the minds of the people and when he was inaugurated as the first black president of South Africa in 1994 he was there with his *Izigi*. Other poets came to the fore like Zolani Mkiva who became Madiba's praise singer. When Mzwakhe was arrested for things unrelated to music or poetry in 1997, one young protégé of his, S'Khathele Khoza known as "The Village Poet" kept the home fires burning. In 1999 he released his album, *Why?* through Bula Music, produced by that white horse of maskandi music, Bheki Ngcobo. However, the "People's Poet" was released in 2003 to the joy of millions of his fans and fellow musicians who had staged massive protests during his trial. Mzwakhe's albums include *Resistance In Defence*, *Izigi* (Footsteps), *Umwakhe Ubonga uJehova*, *The Voice of Reason*, *KwaZulu-Natal*, *Born Free But Always In Chains*, *Afrika*, *Mbulism* and *Thunder – Ladum'izulu*.

The fearless leader championed the anti-piracy protests and raids in order to knock some sense into the heads of ignorant consumers and parasites who deal in fake music at the expense of the musicians. In 2007 it was reported in the media that Mzwakhe was disillusioned with the lack of airplay and general support for local music, especially his products. Together with ace-producer Sello Chicco Twala in 2008, as former president Nelson Mandela was celebrating his 90th birthday, they went into the studio to record *Long Walk to Freedom*. The song dedicated to the statesman was part of a ten-track album. Later the spoken word movement in South Africa gave birth to a whole new generation of young poets like Lebo Mashile, Napo Mashiane, Nontsikelelo Mazwai, Maakomele Manaka, Bandile Gumbi and others.

Blondie Makhene's band **AMAQABANE** celebrated the new South Africa with tracks like *Lomhlaba* and *You Can't Finish Me*. Despite the threats, intimidations and insults hurled at him, he publicly carried the ANC flag and sang, "What am I doing wrong by supporting my hero?"

Viva Music For New South Africans, a project by various artists released a song titled *The People Want Mandela*. Musicians who participated in the project included Ray Phiri, Jennifer Ferguson, Victor Ntoni, Mzwakhe Mbuli, Nana Motijoane, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Tsepo Tshola as well as the late Mahlathini and Brenda Fassie.

Another 1990 celebration project was Famous Explorers who released *Welcome Mandela* composed, produced and engineered by Sam Wingate on the Gallo GRC label. Other individuals involved in the project were Star Mabaso, Peter Cohen, Jo Day, Tom Fox, Scorpion Madondo, Russell Taylor, Tigger Reunert, Andrew Bunker, Sam and Dee Wingate as well as Garth and Joy Deacon.

At Dephon Records the Zabalaza project released "Aluta" composed and produced by William Mthethwa and engineered by David Moloela on the

Midnight Beat label dedicated to the late OR Tambo, former president of the African National Congress in exile.

Choice was another 1990 Mob Music project that recorded *Free At Last* composed by Steve Cooks and Ed Jordan.

Comrades released freedom songs on the album *Bazooka* (RPM).

**MBONGENI NGEMA's** *Sarafina* became an even bigger hit celebrating what it hoped to achieve over the years. One should never lose sight of the role played by theatre and cinema in the struggle for the liberation of South Africa. Mbongeni Ngema, who was inspired by Mtutuzeli Gibson Kente and Athol Fugard, became one of the most successful playwrights to overlap into the music industry. One of the biggest hits in South Africa, *S'timela Sase Zola* flowed from his never-dry pen and was from his debut recording in the mid-1980s. Some of his albums, which include sound tracks, are: *Township Fever* (1991), *Magic At 4am* (1993), *The Best Of Mbongeni Ngema* (1995), *Woza My-Fohloza* (1997), *Jive Madlokovu!!!* (2002), *Sarafina!* (2004) and *My Baby* (2005). *The Best Of Mbongeni Ngema: The Man And His Music* was the celebration of his theatre plays: *Asinamali*, *Sarafina*, *Township Fever* and *Magic at 4am*. The celebration was in the form of a book, a CD and a video cassette. The star from Verulam just keeps on shining! In 2004 as South Africa was celebrating ten years of democracy he released *Libuyile* (Songs Of Freedom). A very strong believer in freedom of speech, he was embroiled in a "racial controversy" through a song he wrote about the relationship between the Zulus and the Indians in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, but after a visit to Madiba the whole saga was put to rest. In 2005 he hit the country's theatre stages with *House Of Shaka*. After discovering young Jumaima Julius who was working on the play *Ambi Sistas* at the South African State Theatre, he signed her on to his Committed Artists Music and produced her CD, *Nikeziwe* (2005). The CD of the Kimberley girl gave birth to a musical collaboration of the same name which featured Kampi Moto, David Chinyanga, Jumaima Julius herself and the group Matshitsh'anolwazi.

This trend continued even when Thabo Mbeki became president, as Gibson Kente's Ezika Kente released *Upresident*, which included the tracks *Thabo Mbeki*, *We Are The Future* and *Amazizi*. It was composed and produced by that "father of township theatre" and released through his GK Productions.

The star of *Sarafina*, **LELETI KHUMALO** also released some albums in her name like *Leleti* and *Sarafina*. She married Mbongeni in 1992 at the age of 22 but they broke up in 2006. Besides her role as Sarafina, the world respects her for *Yesterday*, an Academy Award nomination for the Best Foreign Film. The film that became the first Human Rights Film Award winner at the 61st Venice international film festival was a product of Anant Singh's Videovision Entertainment. Leleti who at the age of 14 was a member of Tu Nokwe's Durban Dance group, Amajika, also featured in *Hotel Rwanda*, *Cry, The Beloved Country* as well as the television series *The African Skies*. April 2005 saw her appear in the

SABC 1 soapie *Generations* amidst reports of her separation with her husband.

The new freedom of expression also encouraged comedians to release music albums: Shonisani Aubrey Muleya aka Ashifa Shabba – *Live @ Club Arena* (Gallo Records, 2002) featuring hits of the past. The pride of South Africa, the Springbok rugby team, which had just won the world cup, inspired comedian Leon Schuster to release the album *Hie Kommie Bokke* (RPM, 1995). It became so popular that it won the 1996 FNB SAMA's Best Selling Album category.

The celebratory climate in the country accompanied by President Thabo Mbeki's national agenda of the African Renaissance inspired some of the most dynamic musicals. Originally called Baobab, the musical *Umoja* was created by Todd Twala and Tembi Nyandeni, while Richard Loring's *African Footprint* (2000) was nominated for SAMA 7's Best Producer category. The producers were Ron Brettell and Dave Pollecutt.

But above all this, the most celebrated musician at the time became the teacher who composed a hymn for his choir at Nancefield School, *ENOCH SONTONGA*. It was in 1897 just before the Anglo-Boer War when this son of the Tembu tribe prayed, "Nkosi Sikelela". When he passed away on 18 April 1905 he hardly suspected that in 1912 the ANC would take a decision to sing it at the end of its meetings. Neither did he dream of it being a national anthem for other African countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Tanzania. Well, it went even beyond that and became the new democratic South Africa's national anthem, *Nkosi Sikelela iAfrika!* In April 2005 the nation celebrated the 100th anniversary of his death and visited his grave at Braamfontein Cemetery.

The celebration of the costly struggle for liberation itself is better served by a CD I bought on my visit to Robben Island in 2000 titled *South African Freedom Songs: Inspiration For Liberation* with narrators Shado Twala and Lucie Page telling the origin of some of the songs. Our tour guide on the island was Ahmed Kathrada whose welcoming words greet visitors already at the V&A Waterfront as they board the boat:

*While we will not forget the brutality of apartheid we will not want Robben Island to be a monument of our hardship and suffering. We would want it to be a triumph of the human spirit against the forces of evil: A triumph of wisdom and largeness of spirit against small minds and pettiness; a triumph of courage and determination over human frailty and weakness.*

– Ahmed Kathrada

The recognition by the new government of the significant contribution to the development of culture and the arts in South Africa is clearly expressed in the street names around the cultural hub of Johannesburg, the Newtown Precinct. After a council decision in 2003 the following streets were renamed:

- Minaar Street to Mahlathini Street
- West Street to Ntemi Piliso Street
- Pim Street to Gwigwi Mrwebi Street
- Wolhuter Street to Margaret Mcingana Street
- Avenue Road to Dolly Rathebe Road
- Bezuidenhout Street to Miriam Makeba Street
- Park Road to Barney Simon Road
- Sydenham Street to Noria Mabasa Street
- Goch Street to Henry Nxumalo Street
- Becker Street to Gerard Sekoto Street

This is not only limited to Johannesburg as other examples include towns like East London where there are streets like Miriam Makeba Crescent and Hugh Masekela Drive.

In 2005 the department of Arts and Culture under Minister Dr Zweledinga Pallo Jordan launched a nation-wide programme through its National Film, Video And Archive to honour South African musical icons decade by decade. The first generation honoured on 25 November 2005 was that of the 1950s. The year of the celebration of women of South Africa, 2006 paid tribute to female artists who recorded in this country. The gala event was scheduled for 23 February 2007. What a celebration! When members of the Manhattan Brothers released an album titled *Inyembezi* through CCP Records in 2006, it was for me the celebration of a musical era. The group was honoured by President Thabo Mbeki on Friday, 21 September 2007 with the Order of Ikhamanga. They shared the glory with erstwhile jazz music band Blue Notes, writers Wally Mongane Serote, Mandla Langa, Henry Segome Ramaila and the late journo, Nathaniel Nat Nakasa. All these at the Union Buildings!

The new culture of freedom and rights inspired some of the most interesting concepts and names. I remember watching SABC 3's showbiz programme, Noted as Azania Ngoro interviewed a young white band. When asked about the kind of music they played, the answer was "punk-kwela!" And your name is? "Desmond and the Tutus!" It can't get better than that – vibrant demo-crazy!

On 19 May 2007, nine South African music legends were immortalised with the unveiling of the "Pioneering Spirits Walk of Fame" in Newtown, Johannesburg. They are Miriam Makeba, Kippie Moeketsi, Jonas Gwangwa, Basil Coetzee, Winston Mankunku Ngozi, Isaac Zacks Nkosi, Ntemi Piliso and Chris McGregor.

While Dr Nelson Mandela's new struggle has involved both local and international musicians in the form of the global 46664 HIV-Aids awareness and fundraising campaign, local musicians have formed the African Musicians Against HIV-Aids (AMAHA) to achieve the same goals on the home front. Later under the leadership of Doc Shebeleza (Victor Bogopane) the kwaito artists

launched Kwaito Nation Against HIV/Aids. Later as AMAHA's chairman Doc organised "the mother of all shows", Ekasi S'vukile Social Responsibility and HIV-Aids National Tour.

The spirit of discovering new talent and awarding excellence did not die within the 1980s but flowed into the new country – the non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. Soft drink champion, Coca-Cola sponsored yet another Taso Stephanou concept, The Coca-Cola Full Blast Music Show, which was radio-driven. The SABC's cultural radio stations aired these programmes. I had the honour of presenting the shows on Thobela FM from 1992 to 1996. That was the talent search that gave exposure to stars like Arthur Mafokate who became one of the early leaders in the new music genre of kwaito. In those five years, five compilation CDs were recorded. They featured the ten finalists of each year. The ones that immediately come to mind are:

ARTIST/GROUP	TRACK	YEAR
Moses Manamela	<i>Sunshine</i>	1992
Out Of Control	<i>Let's Dance</i>	1992
Wanda Xulu	<i>This Is The Way</i>	1993
Heaven	<i>Holy Spirit</i>	1993
Twin Prestige	<i>Forever More</i>	1993
S'Khumbuzo Fassie	<i>Taxi Jam</i>	1994
Helela	<i>Helela</i>	1994
Soul Sista	<i>Ni Ya Ku Penda</i>	1995
Yogan Khandoo	<i>The New South Africa</i>	1995
Sococha Band	<i>Manpower</i>	1996

ASAMI launched the South African Music Awards in 1995. This is the equivalent of the Grammy Awards in America. Ever since that launch they are held annually in April. The event was sponsored by First National Bank in its first years, but later Standard Bank took over, followed by MTN in 2004. The 2004 winners were later celebrated at a free Youth Day concert at Leisure Lake in Midrand to give the broader public an opportunity to enjoy the cultural diversity of South Africa's music. I had the privilege to serve as a judge in the awards up to 2001. During those years I served in various genre panels both under the Association of the South African Music Industry (ASAMI) and later the Recording Industry of South Africa (RISA) including my very last one, that of Best Producer. One can't help but marvel at the wealth of musical talent in South Africa. In my final category there were 32 producers judged for their:

- Originality and Creativity
- Musical Interpretation
- Production Excellence
- Overall Sound and Consistency

Erstwhile music star Peter Vee, Chairman of the 1996 SAMA wrote the following about African music in the awards' booklet:

Without African music, there would be no blues;  
 Without African music, there would be no soul;  
 Without African music, there would be no jazz;  
 Without African music, there would be no rock;  
 Without African music, there would be no rhythm...

The awards grew and developed to a point where members of the public were empowered to vote for Song Of The Year. Radio stations encouraged listeners to dial an allocated telephone line to vote. The first time that happened the listeners of Thobela FM voted in thousands and the SAMA Committee presented the radio station with a certificate of appreciation. The impact of the awards was also noticed when many predominantly young or new artists achieved either gold or platinum sales between the years 1996 and 1997.

Amongst the Gold achievers were:

ARTIST/GROUP	ALBUM/CD
Peta Teanet	<i>Double Pashash</i>
Phuzekhemisi	<i>Impimpi</i>
Amadodana Ase Wesile	<i>Ndikhokhele 'O Jehova</i>
Rina Hugo	<i>Rina Se Treffers</i>
Freddie Gwala	<i>Amadamara 4 Gumba Faya</i>
Platform One	<i>Sizolala-La</i>
Danie Botha	<i>El Shaddai</i>
Steve Hofmeyr	<i>Decade</i>
Joe Mafela	<i>Shebeleza Fela's</i>
Thomas Chauke Na Shinyori Sisters	<i>Shimatsatsa No. 16</i>
Thebe	<i>Tempy Life</i>
Brothers Of Peace	<i>Traffic Cop</i>



M'Du	<i>Ipompe</i>
Skeem	<i>Waar Was Jy...</i>
Mashamplani	<i>Kunjalo Kunjalo</i>
Jurie Els	<i>Vat-Vat</i>
Dan Moyane	<i>Dan Moyane Sings Shosholoza</i>
Trompies	<i>Ma Hoota</i>
Witness Of God	<i>Jesu Ngobekhezela</i>
Amatshitshi Amhlophe	<i>Isisho Sabadala</i>

Some of the platinum achievers were:

ARTIST/GROUP	ALBUM/CD
IPCC	<i>Mehleng Ya Bofelo</i>
Soul Brothers	<i>Umshado</i>
Umlamu Wami	<i>Ukufa</i>
Arthur Mafokate	<i>Die Poppe Sal Dans</i>
Abashante	<i>Girls</i>
Pure Magic	<i>Ikhoni' Mfuyo</i>
Peta Teanet	<i>King Of Shangaan Disco</i>
Tommy Dell	<i>Lag Jou Sopnat</i>
K-TV Kids	<i>Rainbow Song Collection</i>
Die Hervormde Partytjie Op Horings	<i>Maak-Haar-Eina En Ander Dans En Lag Treffers</i>
New School	<i>Hey Pop</i>
M'Du	<i>Y U 4 Me?</i>
Vibe Lezinto	<i>Spikiri</i>
Mashamplani	<i>Hey Kop</i>
Boom Shaka	<i>It's Our Game</i>
Penny Penny	<i>La Phinda I-Shangaane</i>

The highest sales of the year went to Rebecca Malope with her gospel smash album, *Uzube Nam*, which achieved multi-platinum status.

These awards made one thing clear: there are undisputed champions of genres like The Soul Brothers, Thomas Chauke and Rebecca Malope.

Later on the electronic media introduced awards and campaigns like the Duku-Duku Awards, Metro FM Music Awards, Gospel Stars, Backstage EMI Superstars Search, Voice Of Choice, Crux Gospel Competition as well as M-Net's reality show, *Idols*. *Idols'* panel of judges became known for their frank and direct remarks to the contestants. By 2005 the most known of the judges were Gareth Cliff, Mara Louw, Dave Thompson and Randall Abrahams. The 2005 overall winner was former apple packer, Karen Kortje from Grabouw who went on to release her debut album, *Forever And A Day* (2006).

Coca-Cola continued with its relentless support for local music by launching the Coca-Cola Popstars talent search, which produced stars like Leizl Penniken, Mariechan Luiters and Jacqui Carpede collectively called Jamali. In 2005 Jamali was recognised by Kellogg's Star In U Awards as a favourite kwaito music group at the event held at the Coca-Cola Dome in Northgate, Johannesburg on 15 October. Their album went gold and their second release at the end of September 2005 was titled *Yours Fatally*. Other products of the talent search were the kwaito ensemble, Ghetto Lingo – Martin Phike, Phillemon Moikanye, Sibusiso Ntshangase and Bjorn Blignault as well as Adilah whose members were Letang Tlome, Refilwe Motha, Itumeleng Kgosana and Hammersdale-born Thembisile Ntaka, who later released her solo album, *Khelina*. The four girls won SAMA10's Best Newcomer category for *Ses'fikile*. In 2006 they dominated the Metro FM Music Awards nomination list and won the best Group category pitted against another nomination dominator, Electromode's trio Teargas who won Best Hip-Hop, Best Album (*K'Shubile K'Bovu*) as well as Best Song Of The Year for their hit, *Another Chance*. In 2008 they followed up with *Wafa Wafa*.

The national agenda of the African Renaissance was enhanced in music by Benin-born Ernest Coovi Adjovi's Kora All Africa Music Awards. The awards exposed South Africans to stars and superstars like Koffi Olomide, Kanda Bongoman, Papa Wemba, Awilo Longomba, Ziskakan, Sheikh Lo, Ishmael Lo, Kassav, Cesaria Evora, Khaled, Tshala Muana, Angelique Kidjo, Baaba Maal and the Mensa of Mali, Salif Keita from the Djoliba royal family near the capital, Bamako. They allowed the continent to see and know our kwaito generation as well as our young Jazz musos like Jimmy Dlodlu, Ernie Smith and the late Moses Taiwa Molelekwa. The 1997 awards, compèred by Alex Taylor and Basetsana Khumalo (née Makgalemele) presented Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela with a Life Time Achievement Award for his commitment to the liberation of the people of Africa.

The giant whose inauguration I had the honour to broadcast live from the Union Buildings to Thobela FM listeners in 1994 has since received many recognition awards world-wide, and when he turned 86 I could not resist sending his foundation's website this humble and simple tribute:

## THANK YOU TATA

As a child I learned you were a Prisoner  
Your Rivonia Trial became a Protest  
Later History taught me you were a Prince.  
On the island you were Prominent  
To millions of Blacks you were a Prophet.  
On your release you wished us Prosperity  
Reconciliation is what you Preached.  
Through the struggle you became President  
Your inauguration was Prestigious.  
As author your pen is Prolific.  
You chose to be a Premier Pensioner  
You continue to be our Principal  
A globe-trotter who champions Projects.  
You make all South Africans Proud  
Last year you rushed to Paris  
To save humanity from Perish.  
Your 46664 campaign is a Platform  
To fight the HIV/AIDS Plague.  
Arrow, arrow shoot away Prostate  
Arrow, please shoot away Ulcer  
Arrow, kindly shoot away Cancer.  
Mother, Mother, Mother Nature  
Father, Father, Father Future  
Give him more Coffee  
    Not yet a Coffin  
    More wealth  
    More health.

In appreciation of his leadership qualities, I developed a passion of reading anything I could lay my hands on about or by him including books like *Long Walk To Freedom*, *Goodbye Bafana*, *The Miracle Of A Freed Nation*, *Images of Change* and others. I also enjoyed listening to his speeches from the CD *The Voice Of Nelson Mandela: Extracts From Famous Speeches*. I had the honour of being invited to the launch of *Long Walk To Freedom*'s translations into indigenous languages at a function held in Midrand. The Northern Sotho version was translated by that literary giant with a golden voice, Professor Stephen Maje Serudu, who is also my brother-in-law. Thobela FM broadcast the event live. Perhaps the most significant gesture from the western world to Tata was the unveiling of his statue at Parliament Square in London on 29 August 2007, to stand side by side with those of Winston Churchill and Abraham Lincoln. Yes, he is the greatest leader of our generation!

During the Kora All Africa Music Awards 1997 a fitting tribute was also paid to **FELA ANIKULAPO KUTI**, that colourful Nigerian musician cum activist who was once called Ransome. Son of a priest and a social activist, Trinity College of Music graduate, Fela was a saxophonist, keyboardist and guitarist. At the time of his death the king of Afro beat had recorded more than 50 albums and had 27 wives who lived with him in Surulere at his private village, Kalakuta Republic. Born in 1938, Fela died on Saturday, 2 August 1997 and was buried in Lagos, Nigeria. His tribute was read out by his manager Rikki Stein who described him as “that tornado of a man”. In music he is survived by his son, Femi. The climax of the awards evening was the rendition of the song *So Why?* jointly sung by the late Jabu Khanyile (South Africa), Papa Wemba (DRC), Youssou N’Dour (Senegal), Van Dunem (Angola) as well as Lagos-born Lagbadja aka Bisade Ologunde (Nigeria). The song was part of the International Red Cross anti-war campaign dubbed “Music Goes To War”. Its objective was also to provide help towards the thousands of war victims in Africa. Thaninga Msimango’s SABC 2 did a splendid job of the gala, including its music compilation just after the show. Khaled’s *Aicha* still rings in my head as the bridge from the event in Sun City back to the SABC’s Auckland Park studios in Johannesburg. Maybe I should commend the national broadcaster for its contribution towards the development of music in this country. Its Radio Broadcast Facilities (RBF) has made it easier for musicians to record quality music in their studios.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

# PRAISING AND PRAYING

**M**y early memories of South African gospel music date back to the late sixties when I went to Matladi High School in Zebediela for my secondary school education. There were various quartets inspired by *THE KING'S MESSENGERS QUARTET*, the best at the time. Two student singers who left a lasting impression on me were Stephen "Sparks" Madisha and the late Daniel "Tiger" Dikgale. Interestingly, their nicknames were from the soccer field. They excelled with The Messangers' songs, especially *I've Got a Message* and *Never Needed The Lord Before*. My personal favourite of the Messengers was the Gift Makapela arrangement of *Ezekiel Saw The Wheel* (Motella, 1969) as well as *There's No Disappointment In Heaven*. When Sparks and Tiger left the school we formed a group known as The Praise My Lord Quartet consisting of Marcus Lehodu Nakene (bass), the late Daniel Tebogo Molahloa (alto), Thomas Smally Kekana (tenor) and myself as lead vocalist. Our songs varied from Alexander Sandilands's *120 Negro Spirituals*, The King's Messengers Quartet, Salthiel Maake and the Sunray Messengers, Babsy Mlangeni to some international evergreens like The Beatles' *Let It Be* and Brook Benton's *Heaven Help Us*.

It was later in the seventies that other local gospel groups surfaced but like the Messengers, they were church-based.

Some of the groups featured the drum in their music like The Emmanuel Apostolic Church Choir under the leadership of Archbishop Elias Magoai. But most groups like Amadodana Ase Wesile and The Rustenburg Boys led by Jacob Monegi continued without instruments. There were also other boys choirs like Rustenburg Top Ten, Maseru Top 6 and Rampheri Rock Messengers in the early eighties. It was only later that the organ became a common instrument in the music as it was popularised by soul music. A number of priests dominated the

gospel scene with this organ-dominated blend including Rev. Ndlovu, Rev. Shoba and others. Most of their music was recorded on transcriptions by the SABC's Music Production department. Record companies were not interested in recording "hymns" for commercial purposes because there didn't seem to be any profit-making potential.

I was working at Radio Lebowa (now Thobela FM) when **REV. NDLOVU** had a big hit with *Nna Ke Na le Thabo*. At that time Professor Jerry Mawatle Mojalefa was the SABC music producer. Jerry discovered a lot of talent in gospel and traditional music in those days. Later Rev. Ndlovu joined S. Ntyalentyale's record label Number One as private record companies started realising the commercial potential of the music genre. Then emerged stars like Zakes Mnguni. Those were the days of child star Vusi Mabati who released her 1985 album, *Ungenzela Konke* (Okuhle) co-produced by Tom Mkhize and Shamba Lerole on the Mambo Music label. Groups like St Moses Choir, St James Church Choir and Ladysmith Black Mambazo took the music to another level. By 1984 when St Moses Choir released *Jesu Langa Lokulunga*, which was produced by Lucky Monama of Makgonatšohle fame, they had already recorded three other albums: *Ha Lefatshe Le Wetswe*, *Ikhaya Lami* and *Bayahuba Abantwana*. St James Church Choir's earlier albums include *Seding La Jesu* (1984) produced by Archibald Maimani through Decibel Music Company. Ladysmith Black Mambazo's early contributions include their 1984 album *Ibhayibheli Liyindlela* which was produced by Gallo's West Nkosi. Another Gallo group, Mahlathini Nezintombi Zomgqashiyo released *Dithoriso Tsa Morena* (1984), which was produced by the late Marks Mankwane. Bands like Holy Brothers introduced the guitar into the music as witnessed with their albums like *Ngikhokhele O Jehova*, which was produced by Hamilton Nzimande who also produced the Mazana Brothers' *Kulungile E Zion*.

In Venda **ROXLEY FHATUWANI MASEVHE** was making waves. Roxley was born in Thengwe in 1959 to a musician father, Reckson and a dancer mother, Tshinakaho. He was groomed in the Apostolic Zion Church. The guitarist who is known as "Diesel" to his fans for his stamina on the dance floor received guitar lessons from the legendary Albert Mundalama. Some of his first recordings by Radio Venda (now Phalaphala FM) in 1978 were *Thothotho* and *Mutuku Na Delele*. His biggest hit to date remains *Munwe na munwe u do fa*. Roxley who has more than 300 compositions to his name has released 29 albums. Some of his memorable songs are his xiTsonga gospel track, *Siku Rin'wana Hosi Yesu u Ta Vuya* (1983 composition) as well as *Wanga Murena*, a classic he composed with Joe Tshikalange. Vho-Fhatuwani is a founder of Super Records and a cultural activist who led his fellow musicians in Limpopo to speak out against the neglect of the province's own talent by promoters at local festivals.

It was after the success story of Rebecca Malope that most record companies started focusing on gospel music. Like in any commercial music, there are countless groups claiming their share in this genre that even established



musicians from other genres venture with a track or even an album to test their potential. Some say it is an easy terrain because there are so many hymns to choose from, as well as many supporters from churches. Whether that is true or not, there are icons of the genre.

The most successful individual so far is **REBECCA MALOPE**. As seen in the chapter “Ladies Of Song”, she started with disco music but by 1992 it was very clear what she was about – a gospel singer. The title of her early album had already declared, *Rebecca Sings Gospel*. The whole album contained gospel music and she never looked back. The album included one cover version of a modern gospel ballad, Julie Gold’s composition *From A Distance*. Her rendition of the song was so brilliant, even singer Bette Midler would smile to herself listening to it. Let me put it on record that on her albums she only used the name Rebecca, and it is very interesting that even without the surname there was never any confusion as to which Rebecca. She’s been the only Gospel Queen in South Africa so far.

Talking about names, from this album Sizwe dropped the pseudonym and composed as Sizwe Zako. Perhaps he was beginning to feel more comfortable with the new direction.

Some of the awards Rebecca won early in her music career were

1989/90	OKTV Awards	Best SA Female Artist
1993	Coca-Cola Full Blast Music Show	Best Local Established Artist
1994	South African Music Awards	Best Gospel Singer

1994 was not only a watershed for South Africa but also for Rebecca’s career. She released a gospel album that captured the attention of the whole nation and gave it hope for the newly-born country – *Umoya Wam*. Some critics say its release was perfectly timed because the pre-election violence created various prophets of doom and many people were fearing for the worst, while some were preparing themselves for a civil war. It is under such conditions that people look to the Almighty for help, and the song made it so simple because it was even easy to dance to. It literally staged a national spiritual transformation. When her next album was released everybody was waiting for another spiritually uplifting experience. They were not disappointed. *Shwele Baba* offered them the cream of gospel. Rebecca too was not disappointed because the album broke all previous sales records in the history of South Africa. It sold more than 100 000 copies in one week, which made it the fastest selling record in the history of South African music. To date it has sold just below a million copies! This was a paradigm shift from the view of many people even in the industry itself about gospel music. One wouldn’t be wrong to say it was a gospel revolution. She actually pushed the frontiers of gospel music and raised the bar. You see, leaders in any industry are individuals who choose the road less travelled and succeed

beyond expectations! Such people are trend setters and are not many among us. In that same year she won the Best Selling Artist category of the SAMA.

Yes, she was happy with the progress she was making in her music career, but she still had one big dream. She wanted to physically walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ as he was carrying the cross on the long road to Golgotha. Perhaps that would bring a deeper meaning of the blood that was shed by the Lamb on Calvary to her. As if to thank the Lord for the success of *Shwele Baba*, she went on a pilgrimage to Israel. She returned more determined to spread the Word through gospel music. The music related to the pilgrimage was released on the CD *Rebecca Sings Gospel In Israel*. Perhaps this was preparing her for the roughest patch of her life. In 1996 her father, John Malope died; her brother Jonathan died; her sister Cynthia died. The one family member who had been with her through thick and thin in the formative years of her career, Cynthia was no longer by her side. No spouse, no child. All her fans were worried and concerned about her future because she was almost alone in the world except for her mother, Pauline. Her reply to her fans came in the form of the release of her 1997 album *Angingedwa, I am not alone*. In a few weeks' time it sold double platinum. She adopted her sister's children – Noluthando and Thandeka. Together with her band Pure Magic she embarked on a one-month international tour of the UK. That's when the international community crowned her "South Africa's Queen Of Gospel". She also toured one of the most advanced countries in African music, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Towards the festive season of the year 2000 as we were preparing for the millennium celebrations, she gathered her musical friends, went into the studio and recorded the CD *Christmas With Rebecca And Friends*. Some of her friends on the project were Tsepo Tshola (The Village Pope), Ringo Madlingozi, Thembinkosi as well as the late Vuyo Mokoena and Brenda Fassie. CCP's Mike Maswanganyi was promoting the album as if there was no tomorrow.

The role her music had played in so many people's lives convinced the University of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal) that she deserved the conferment of an honorary doctorate. Dr Rebecca Malope. Did I hear someone say "Praise the Lord"? Can I get a witness? Halleluya! As if the doctorate was to strengthen and prepare her for the worst, her mother died. But there was another consolation in the form of an award in the Kora All Africa Music Awards. She won in the category of Best African Gospel Female Artist. She started working very closely with Vuyo Mokoena and their duo always impressed their fans as they danced for the Lord. In 2004 she started hosting a television gospel show on SABC 2 titled *Gospel Time*. The show's brief was primarily to showcase the best in South African gospel music and secondarily to give exposure to new talent. She was always her joyful self, praising today's stars and encouraging the stars of tomorrow. Her determination to succeed saw her register for English classes, the language she mastered through the support of a good friend.

For many years she has been with T. Musicman management of Peter Tladi and was produced by Sizwe Zako. That speaks volumes about her loyalty. Here follow some of her best gospel albums all having sold gold and more than six of them platinum:

1992	<i>Rebecca Sings Gospel</i>
1994	<i>Umoya Wam'</i>
1995	<i>Shwele Baba</i>
1995	<i>Uzube Nam'</i>
1996	<i>Live At The State Theatre</i>
1997	<i>Ngiyekeleni</i>
1997	<i>Free At Last</i>
1998	<i>Somlandela</i>
1998	<i>Angingedwa</i>
1999	<i>Ukholo Lwam'</i>
1999	<i>At Christmas With Rebecca</i>
2000	<i>Siyabonga</i>
2000	<i>Rebecca Sings Gospel In Israel</i>
2000	<i>Christmas With Rebecca And Friends</i>
2001	<i>Sabel'Uyabizwa</i>
2002	<i>Iyahamba Lenqola</i>
2003	<i>Hlala Nami</i>
2004	<i>The Village Pope And The Queen Of Gospel</i>
2005	<i>Qaphelani</i>
2006	<i>Umthombo</i>
2007	<i>Amakholwa</i>

One should remember that like most great musicians, in between all these albums her record companies released compilation CDs including *Rebecca: 6 Of The Best* (MFM, 1998). The most unforgettable experience of her career remains the pilgrimage to Israel where she was baptised in the river Jordan. She also wrote a long letter to Jesus Christ thanking Him for the guidance as well as asking for forgiveness and left it on His grave. The worst moment of her career was the day she was performing in front of her own people in her hometown at Ka-Nyamazane Stadium and she was pushed from the stage to make way for the late Brenda Fassie who had to rush to another festival. The promoter told her to take a break and only continue after Brenda's performance. Before she could even explain to the crowd what was happening, the sound system was switched off. Together with her band they left the stage, got into their combi and headed for the exit point. The security guards had already been instructed to lock all gates. After long negotiations one security guy relented and they left. Just a few minutes after their departure the stadium was on fire. Many music

fans were injured and some died. This was followed by controversial statements on the disaster in the media as well as a strained relationship between the two female singers. This was very sad, especially because she had been inspired by Brenda as a young girl. She once responded to Brenda's invitation of young girls to take the stage and sing like her, whereupon performing *Weekend Special* the "Queen of Township Pop" gave her R50 as a prize. How beautiful! How sad!

Towards the end of 2005 through God's mercy she survived a car crash on her way to Spruitview and won Metro FM Music Awards' Best Gospel category. Don't let her height fool you, her will to survive and serve is as tall as the tallest Massai woman and her heart is just as big as that of Florence Nightingale. She sponsors worthy causes and supports worthy campaigns. She remained the undisputed queen of SAMA's Best African Gospel Album category for many years. However, some of her memorable performances remain the 1994 *Rhythms Of Africa* show at the Sun City Superbowl and her *State Theatre Live* recording in the early days of the facility's transformation under Hugh Masekela. Among the audience was her mother. Her first professional acting role was in a television play *Bayethe Jesu II* as Mama Stardust during the festive season of 2005.

Some of Rebecca's protégés include **THEMBINKOSI** who shot to stardom with his giant hit *Sathane Ujampa Mafence* and followed with albums like *Mbonge* (CCP) where he worked with producers Sipho Mbele, Percy Ingle and Jabu Nkabinde, featuring the talent of his "mama", Rebecca. In August 2005 Rebecca released her CD *Qaphelani*, which went on to win SAMA 12's Best Traditional Gospel category. It was followed by *Umthombo*, which won the Best African Contemporary Gospel Album in 2006. In the Best Traditional African Acapella Gospel Album the award went to Thulani Manana for the CD *Impi Kasathane*. In the same year Rebecca released her DVD, *Live in Soweto*. In 2005 she announced that she was launching her own record label. I hope that answered Thandiswa Mazwai's plea for women to step up to the positions of record company bosses. Mazwai was making a presentation at the second Moshito Conference titled, "A Case for the Empowerment of Women and Artists by the Industry" on 20 July 2005.

The original idea that led to the establishment of Independent African Churches was the desire to worship Christ in an African way. Religious leaders like Lekganyane, Shembe, Modise, Manku and others have spread this practice and today there are many big and small churches across South Africa. This way of worship is reflected in the gospel music of the church-based choirs. These groups include Barorisi Ba Morena, Israel Apostolic Church choir, Phuthego Ya Thapelo and so on.

As already mentioned, churches contribute a bigger percentage of gospel musicians. The ZCC has a number of well-known choirs like ZCC Mokhukhu which had a big hit with *Ka Lefu Laka* (SAMA 5 nomination) as well as Hara Lebitla Laka from their album *Le Madi Matsohong* (1996). The ZCC Female Choir won SAMA 5's Best Traditional Gospel section for *Nantsi Lenqola*. Others are

Mokhukhu Male Choir whose 24-track CD is titled *Jesu Waka Mphe Tumelo* as well as ZCC Mpoho and Brass Band. Sello Twala produced most ZCC choirs and bands. Some of these productions are on a series of compilation album volumes under the title *The Best Of ZCC*. Besides these church-related choirs Sello's other contributions include a young quartet, Children Of God; the young female duo, Maria le Maria, which had a big hit with *O Tla Ntseba Na Ngwanaka?* in 1996, a track always reminding me of Eric Clapton's *Tears In Heaven*. The duo's 2000 *Mbulali Wami* was nominated for SAMA 7's Best Producer category. In 2006 they released another powerful CD titled *Thuma Mina*. There are also many songs Chicco wrote and produced or arranged that were later released on a compilation CD by Universal Music in 2000 entitled *Liyofik' Ilanga: The Great Gospel Hits From Chicco*. In this area he worked closely with gospel stars like Peter Mokoena, Benjamin Dube and Deborah Fraser. This relationship also saw him produce Bafana Ba Kosha Le Mokoena's 2001 CD, *Ho Na Le Ditsotsi*. In the same year he wrote and produced Nokwazi's *Ngixolele*. In 2005 Twala released *Soul City*, a various artists CD, including the music of the late Brenda Fassie.

Kori Moraba's albums include *Raohang Masole* (1999). There is also Steve Boshomane of Steve And Family as well as Michael Mamatlaruma whose style is closer to that of Zionists Solly Moholo and Oleseng Shuping.

But within the churches there are individual musicians like Ndanganeni Daniel Luambo of the ZCC who in 1987 released his album *Mulalo Mazioni* through Black Talent Music. There is also *Thapelo Ya Sione*, which was produced by Enos Aphane.

The International Pentecostal Holiness Church also has a number of choirs headlined by *IPCC*, fronted by Emma Mkhwanazi and Priscilla Lekaba. The choir was formed back in the sixties, but started recording in 1989. Their albums include the following:

1989	<i>Thula Sizwe</i>
1990	<i>O A Halalela</i>
1991	<i>Tumelo</i>
1992	<i>Amadimoni</i>
1993	<i>Isabatha</i>
1995	<i>Mehleng ya Bofelo</i>
1996	<i>Uthembekile</i>
1998	<i>Ummeli Wethu</i>
1999	<i>Hamba Sathane</i>
1999	<i>Sione</i>
2000	<i>Konyana</i>
2001	<i>Ithemba Lami</i>
2002	<i>Lesedi</i>
2003	<i>Mamelang</i>

2004	<i>Baba Ngisize</i>
2005	<i>Siyabonga</i>
2006	<i>Ke Mang?</i>
2007	<i>Ezintsizini</i>
2008	<i>Thapelo</i>

Their earlier albums were produced by John Moriri, an established artist in his own right whose music career dates back to the 1970s in the days of John Moriri and the Manzini Girls. Later he released gospel albums like *Kgosi Ya Rona* (Diamond Music, 1991). After the John Moriri era, producers like William Mthethwa and Tom Vuma took care of IPCC's production work. Later Tusk Music tasked Thami Mdluli aka Professor Rhythm to produce the gospel choir. When the company closed down, IPCC moved to CCP Records with their producer. By 2005 when I met Thami he had already produced 12 of their albums. Their compilation CDs include the volumes *IPCC Hits*, *IPCC Best of*, *Best Live Performance*, *Igolide* as well as the DVD, *IPCC Live in Johannesburg*.

The other church groups include IPC Male Choir whose albums include Thami Mdluli's productions *Jona Jona* (2001) as well as Comforter's Children who dedicated their CD *Morena* (2002) to the Comforter himself. The latter was led by the late Priscilla Malete. Most of the church-based groups in South Africa do not participate in public festivals, but perform within the church and record their music for radio and television, which in turn help promote them. I guess it is partly because they are sure of the support of the loyal church membership. Sadly, on the morning of Tuesday 31 July 2007 I received a call informing me about the passing away of the talented Priscilla Malete. According to the caller, she'd been admitted to the Dr George Mukhari Hospital near Pretoria due to pneumonia. After a funeral service at Odi Stadium she was laid to rest on Friday, 3 August in Mabopane, Tshwane.

**PURE GOLD** is another success story. When Blondie Makhene met the Gwala brothers and cousins at the independent Old Apostolic Church he recruited them to the recording studio where he was helped by Quinton Madlala to produce them. The group was formed by Freddie Gwala in 1973. Their mbube kind of gospel as well as their warrior-like regalia endeared them to the masses. Their debut album was titled *Pure Gold 85* (White Dove, 1985), composed by Freddie Gwala and arranged/produced by Blondie Makhene. It featured the hit *Tsamaya Le Rona*. It was followed by albums like *Elakho Likhona* (1986), *Re Ya Lebaha Ntate* (1987) and *Ke Mang Ya Ho Etellang* (1988). By 1991 when they released the album *Sithethelele Baba* their label was "Re a Aga/Siyakha" under Blondie's KGM Enterprises. They followed up with other albums like *Re Lokise Ntate*. The success of the group reached a climax when they released a CD, *Hamba Sathane* featuring the country's hottest property, Brenda Fassie, in 1996. Most of the group's albums were composed by its leader Freddie Gwala and



Victor Bogopane (Doc Shebeleza), both of whom later joined the pop music market as solo artists as we've already indicated. The group's lead singer, Paul Gwala's solo efforts include *Impendulo* (1997), *Ofana Naye* (2001) and *Vula Maphiko* (2007). By 2007 he had ventured into ministry, focusing on the youth of the Old Apostolic Church.

Pure Gold share their gospel style with groups like Ivangeli Loxolo, an 11-member isiZulu church choir from Kwa Xuma. The group was led by Thomas Maseko who was also its producer.

Grace Music released many gospel albums in South Africa including Themba Masuku And Sound Of Victory's album, *Bhekani Uthando* (1996).

One of the longest running stories of success is that of **AMADODANA ASE WESILE**, a male group that was started in 1986. Their debut album *Nkosi Sihlangene* was the beginning of a long journey that would simplify and popularise Methodist hymns and unite Christians. Their producer at RPM Records was Mac Mathunjwa who mostly worked on their projects with engineer, Tim Kraft. Their *10th Anniversary Album* is a sure collector's item. In 1991 when they released *Siyakudumisa Thixo*, Mongezi Nhose was their manager and PRO. The group's members were Thomas Mokhati, Vincent Maseme, Ntsikelelo Dilata, Victor Mbangi, Sipho Makhubu, Emisang Makamane, Welile Shenxane, Willie Maseko, Mxolisi Makhawula, Philip Mtshali, Fana Sithole, Michael Thonyama, Mandla Mabaso and Mzwandile Mboyana. By 1998 when they released *Morena U Ba Etele*, they had moved to the mother company, Gallo Records. The album was composed and produced by Tom Mokhati. By then they had already recorded 20 albums. As we know, in between the albums their record company released compilations. Their trademark remains the time beating hand-held cushions. Though along the way misfortune befell them losing two members in a car crash, one in a car hijacking tragedy and another through illness, their faith and determination sustained them. They've received so many accolades including SAMA 2's Best Traditional Gospel Performance for *Dumela Fela* and SAMA 3 in the same category for *Ndikhokhele 'O Jehova*, which went gold in a short space of time. SAMA 5 nominated them in the Best Traditional Gospel category, which they would later win in SAMA 8 for *Jesu O Tsohile*. Their albums, *Ngeloxa Lokushiywa* and *Kukh'Induli Eluhlaza* were SAMA 7 and SAMA 9 nominees respectively. Perhaps their greatest achievement to date was when they received the first prize in the "Year 2000 International Gospel Music Festival" in Istanbul, Turkey. By 2005 some of their offerings were *Siyabonga* as well as *Bokang Modimo Wa Kganya*, which saw them nominated for the Best African Spiritual Group In Africa category of the 10th Kora All Africa Music Awards. We look forward to many more CDs from these soldiers of the cross who in 2006 boasted a catalogue of 27 albums.

This male choir's style also inspired the formation of female groups like Mpumalanga's **MASIBUYELE KU JEHOVA**. The Nelspruit-based choir was established

in 1988 and its members were Anna Zulu, Anna Thabethe, Lizzy Khoza, Zodwa Mashego, Belinda Nkosi and Elizabeth Mahlangu. Their debut album was *We All Know Jesus Is Coming* (1995). The sextet that was crowned Best Gospel Group by their provincial government in 1999 boasts five SAMA nominations, four of which they won as well as a string of 11 albums, which include a platinum and a gold disc.

Gallo Records recorded another well-known Methodist church male choir, Abavuseleli Bama Weseli, which among its albums released *Besihamba Ebumnyameni* (1987), produced by the late West Nkosi.

CCP Records released *UMQOKOZ' OBOMVU*'s album, *Mababonakaliswe* (Kaya-Lami, 1989) which was produced by SM Khoza and engineered by Sam Wingate. The choir was formed during the Methodist Church Centenary Celebrations and its members were Daniel Leopeng (lead singer/choir master), George Mogotsi, Samson Mthembu, Mxolisi Dlamini, Sipho Sangoni, Philip Matheza, Richard Ndibongo, Wiseman Somthunzi, Thembi Sikhonde, Nomvula Bidli, Nokuthula Khumalo, Zodwa Sishange, William Motse, Bethwell Ngxabazi, Stephen Sawe and Bekezela Mkhanyiswa.

The company also recorded the music of another powerful group, *WITSIESHOEK PULAMADIBOHO*. Most of their music was composed by Tankiso William Sephula. Their albums include *Mamelang Sione* (Black Music, 1986), produced by Simon Ngwenya as well as *Sinje Ngomthandazo* (1989), produced by SM Khoza and engineered by Richard Mitchell.

CTV Records released one of the great groups of the era, *THE HOLY CROSS CHOIR*'s album *Thulani Nilalele* (Red Label, 1984), produced by Tom "Bishop" Mkhize. The music was composed by the group's lead vocalist, S. Mokhethi and co-arranged by Tom Mkhize and Joseph Dumako. The group's members were (bass) J. Mofutsana, S. Mofutsana, P. Lechalaba; (tenor) M. Makhetha, M. Ntsala, A. Radebe, M. Mokhethi; (alto) L. Mokhethi, M. Mofutsana, E. Ntsula, F. Mokhethi as well as S. Mokhethi (lead vocals and soprano). Their albums include *Yehla Moya*, *Ha Ba Tshela Jordane* and *Ha Re Na Tshabo*.

Perhaps at this point it would be proper to introduce to you one of the great composers and producers of the era, *JOSEPH DUMAKO* aka Joseph Dee. He was born in Kroonstad, Free State. All members of his family were into music. In the mid-seventies Joseph released his first Sesotho composition, *Rebecca*, which sold more than 25 000 copies. He formed The Holy Cross Choir in 1983. Their debut album, *Tholang Le Mamele* (Sotho version) was composed, produced, arranged and conducted by him. He also played all keyboards and percussion. The album sold more than 100 000 copies. In 1984 he started searching for young talent in his Maokeng community and most of his recruits were students who sang at funeral services. In 1985 he was ready to form another choir, The Holy Spirits. Their debut album was in Sesotho titled *Kabelo Yaka Entle* (Teal Records, 1986) and its isiZulu version was titled *Okholwa Ku Jesu*, produced by Joseph Makwela

and West Nkosi. The album sold over 50 000 units within six months. Their other albums include *Sefapanong*, produced by Tsietsi Mafabatho and *Hauhela Moya Rona* (Teal Sound, 1991), produced by William Mthethwa under the name The New Holy Spirits. William also produced other gospel groups like The Moonlight. The music of the Holy Spirits was so popular that in 1988 Tom Mkhize produced and arranged an album by Nelson Reed titled *Holy Spirit In Sax* on CTV Music Team's Spinna label.

In 1987 Joseph Dumako embarked on a solo project releasing *Mercy! Mercy!*, a six-track instrumental album featuring his keyboard prowess. He also produced other choirs like the Forever Mass Choir's album titled *Jesu, Morena* (Spiritual, 1989).

Dumako also encouraged **PAUL LECHALABA** to pursue his music career beyond being just a group member. Son of Pastor Joseph Lechalaba, Paul was also born in Kroonstad. From an early age he was inspired by his father who was a guitarist and vocalist. By 1984 he was a session musician for the Holy Cross Choir as already alluded to above. Later he formed his own gospel group, New Life Singers, which was contracted to Gallo Records. In 1990 Paul embarked on a solo career with debut album *Diketso Tsa Morena*, which went gold within two months of release. His other albums include *Nako Ya Ho Rapela*, *Tloho Le Wena* and *Jwale Ke Nako*.

Maybe before I pass this era of the gospel groups let me pay tribute to some that left a mark at the obvious risk of leaving many out: The Challengers, Elabethela Choir, Bahaufi Le Morena, Masibuyele Ku Jehova, Philadelphia Full Gospel Church Choir, Baromioa Ba Khotso, King David's Messengers, Saints Be Joyful, SOS Choir, Rehauhetswe Choir, The Moonlight, Meadowlands Gospel Choir, The Alexander Rejoice Choir, The Messengers Of God, Lord's Comforters, Hosana Ea Pele, The First United Apostolic Church In Zion, Galathia Bandla Lenkosi, The Bright Catholic Church Of Zion, Bathabisi Ba Morena, Children Of God, Dikonyana Tsa Modimo, Bogolo Ba Sione, Diiteleni Assembly Trumpets, Dwaro Rocks, Leswika La Motheo, People's Gospel Choir, Abathenjwa ba ka Jehova, Balatedi Ba Morena and many more.

Other individual musicians who dominated the gospel music scene of the eighties were Itani Madima, Victor Phume as well as the late Freedom Sengwayo from Zimbabwe. Victor later dedicated his life to serving the Kingdom of God in the House Of Joy. Pastor Victor Phume is brother to former Mr South Africa, Paul Phume. Itani later became a member of Echo Gospel Group.

There were also known individuals who were backed by particular groups like Javas and the Gospel, Margaret and the Gospel Singers and so on. One of these individuals was a talented young man, Sami Malete of Sami and the Revival. This young man who shot to stardom with his 1990 album *Sebe Saka* on Hit City's White Dove label left us in the morning of his career. Other talented composers of the genre were Abram Shabalala and Derrick

Ndzimande. Derrick's albums include *Halala NgoJesu*, *Phenduka Namhlanje*, *Ngikulwile Ukulwa* and *Ujesu Wami Uyaphila*.

From the era of Sami Maletle there emerged a new generation of gospel musicians I choose to call young ambassadors. In 1991 Hit City also recorded Ikaheng Brothers' album, *Le Batla Mang?*, which was produced by Richard Felani Gumbi. Cool Spot recorded the music of Hosana Hosana Hosana starting with their 1988 album *Satane Tlohela Batho*. The music was co-written by Elphus Mkhize and Victor Mbingo and produced/engineered by Mally Watson. Some of their other albums include *Paradeising* (1990) and *Ba Tshetse* (1991). Other such young ambassadors were Soldiers Of The Cross, Ivangeli Loxolo, Ramphela Rainbow Pioneers and Masogana A Jamela.

Some of today's most successful ambassadors of God also include Benjamin Dube, Solly Moholo, Sipho Makhabane, Oleseng Shuping, Winnie Mashaba, Hlengiwe Mhlaba, Lundi Tyamara, Deobah Fraser, Jabu Hlongwane, Lusanda Mcinga, Matlakala, Jay Hlungwani, the late Vuyo Mokoena, Khuphuka, Imvuselelo yase Natali, Masibuyela Ku Jehova, Umyalezo Wesikhathi, Joyous Celebration, Ithemba Lamakhatholika, Igalatiya, U-Turn, Singing For Joy, Elias Shongwe and The Old Time Religion Quartet. Let's follow the careers of some of them.

In later years there emerged a new school of young musicians who have proven themselves to be stars in their own right like **SOLLY MOHOLO**. Solly joined Mathibestad Agents in 1992. Thereafter he produced Masole A Kgotso as a member of the ZCC choir. His ZCC blend of gospel took the industry by storm as he released albums like: *Mohlang Ke Kolobetswa 'Die Poppe Sal Dans'* (2000 SAMA nominee); *Ba Mmitsa Tsotsi* (2002); *Ranta E Wele* (2003); *Tsoha Jonase* (2004); *Mandela O Llela Bana*, which was nominated in the Best African Gospel Album category of MTN SAMA 11; *Moruti Nthapelele*; *Ba Mo Kobile Kerekeng* and *Sedi Laka Mpontshe Tsela*. In 2005 together with wife Lebo Marishane they announced their wedding ceremony held in Mathibestad, Hammanskraal where he was raised. Solly is one gospel singer who is not afraid of taking a stand as seen in the Piet Matloga ritual murder case. He was President Thabo Mbeki's favourite political rally performer. His protégés include Sinky Mathe and Fassie who also have their own solo careers.

**OLESENG SHUPING's** style is not very different from Solly's. His albums include the popular *Se Gopole*. In 2000 he released *O A Le Bona Naa?*, which was nominated in SAMA 7. He sometimes sang with his home boys, Atteridgeville Happy Boys as on their 1999 album, *Marumo Fase*. His CD *Ha Di Tshwane* was SAMA 9's Best African Gospel Album nominee. During the 2004 SAMA his album *Hareatla Ka Boikhantsho* was nominated as Best African Gospel Album. In 2005 he released *Afrika*. Oleseng's stage performance like that of Solly Moholo is an energetic foot stomping marathon known by fellow Zionists as "Mokhukhu". It is a marvel to watch. In 2006 he was involved in a near-fatal car accident between Christiana

and Bloemhof in the North West Province. While lying in hospital, his album with Atteridgeville Happy Boys, *Ke Fodile* turned platinum within the first week of release. God be praised! In October his record company, Cool Spot released the album he had recorded a week before the accident titled *Thoriso Di Ye Go Ntate*. In July 2007 Cool Spot and God Is Good organised a fundraising festival in his name at the Saulsville Arena, Atteridgeville. The aim of the event was to assist him in financing his treatment towards full recovery as the star was bound to a wheelchair.

**WINNIE MASHABA** was introduced to the music industry by Solly Moholo. This staunch ZCC member's debut album was *Exodus 20* (2000), which sold in excess of 25 000 units to receive a gold disc award. She was nominated in the Kora All Africa Music Awards' Best African Spiritual Female category for her album *O Tla Ya Kae?* (2005). The male section nomination went to Jay Hlungwani for *Ke Tsamaya Jwale Ka Bohle*. Winnie's album was also nominated for the Best Gospel category of the Munghana Lonene FM Music Awards. Her other albums include *Thola Ngwaneso* (2006), *Ke A Le Tšhaba Lefase* (2007) and *Ke Rata Wena* (2008). By 2008 she had become one of the music promoters' most sought-after live performers.

**SIPHO "BIG FISH" MAKHABANE** from Mpumalanga Province left school at Standard 3 level (Grade 5) to follow his heart and release his debut album, *Yekintokoza*. From there he never looked back and exposed many new gospel artists like Ncandweni Christ Ambassadors, Frans Dlamini, Khuzizono, as well as Shongwe and Khuphuka Saved Group. Together with Hlengiwe Mhlaba they travelled the African continent and beyond performing and striking new deals for their record label, Amanxusa Productions. His albums include the following: *Ngikhululiwe, Makadunyiswe* (1999), *Moya Wami* (2003), *Nkosi Ngibheke* (2004), *Yekintokoza, Intokoza, Instrumental Album, The Instrumentals, Indawo* (2006). By 2007 he was riding on the crest of success with his CD *Ngiyamemeza*, which was nominated for the 13th SAMA. However, it was his duo project with Jabu Hlongwane titled *Send Your Fire*, which won the Best African Traditional Gospel Album category. His 2008 offering was titled *Hamba Nami*. His other albums feature Amanxusa ka Kristu: *Injabulo* (2000), *Calvary* and *Akukhalwa*.

**HLENGIWE MHLABA** was born and bred in Kwa-Mashu, Durban, in KwaZulu-Natal. Though she never regarded herself as star material, she loved singing. While teaching Maths and Science at Ndesheni High School in Empangeni, she sang with a group called Pongola Gospel Wagon. The choir performed at weddings and parties around Durban. During these performances she was spotted by gospel star, Siphosiphiso Makhubane, who asked her to join him in his project. Amazed by her talent, Siphosiphiso gave her the opportunity to record her own debut CD, *Dwala Lami* (2005). Subsequently, Siphosiphiso asked her to join him as co-owner of his Johannesburg-based company, Amanxusa Productions. In 2006 she followed up with *Jesu Uyahalalela*, which was nominated for SAMA's



Best Contemporary Gospel Album. By 2007 both CDs had already achieved double platinum sales. Her success story gives many orphans hope as she herself lost her mother in 2000. Surely the support she got thereafter from Pastor Vusi Dube of the Ethekewini Community Church went a long way in shaping a superstar! Isn't God great? Yes, her CD *Blessings* (Izibusiso) says it all. The blessings were again showered upon her as the CD won MTN SAMA 14's Best African Contemporary Gospel section.

**NCANDWENI CHRIST AMBASSADORS** is a group from Swaziland whose leader and founder is Pastor Timothy Myeni. The group's CDs include *uJehova Ungumalusi*, *Buya Nkosi Jesu* (2005) and *Izithembiso Zenkosi* (2007). Their 2007 release won MTN SAMA's Best Selling Album and Best Selling DVD. In 2008 I met the marketing and promotions team of the NCA Music Productions at the SABC Building in Limpopo Province doing their field work. In our conversation I was quite impressed by their hunger and determination in the promotion of their products.

Meadowlands-born **BONANI BENJAMIN DUBE** is the last-born son of evangelists Mrs Grace Dube and the late Mr Benjamin Dube Snr. I interviewed him in the mid-1980s long before he responded to his calling. At the age of 14 he was shocked by the tragic death of his father, but had to continue from where Benjamin senior had left off to complete the race. He did his music diploma in piano at FUBA Academy in Newtown in the mid-eighties. Later with his family as The Dube Family released the album *We Are What We Are* (GalloGRC, 1989) produced and written by him. The album featured some of today's big names on instruments like Mthunzi Namba, Victor Masondo, Sandile Ngema, Isaac Mtshali, Veli Shabangu, John Hassan, Lawrance Matshiza, Thapelo Khomo and Don Laka. Benny who was a member of Image started his solo career with his debut single *I Live Joyfully*. In 1986 he released *Holy Spirit* as Benjamin And The Youth Choir. It was produced by Sello Chicco Twala at Dephon Records on the Roy B label. The title-track which was written by Chicco Twala became a monster hit. In 1988 when Benjamin released *Ebenezer* he was already a household name who was invited to be a supporting act for the US gospel star, James Cleveland, when he toured South Africa. He later toured America where he shared the stage with greats like the Mighty Clouds Of Joy and Andre Crouche. After releasing *Celebration* in 1994 he took a few years' break to start his own ministry, the Praise Centre Church. Pastor Dube's church extended into various branches across the country and inspired new musicians like Family Factory, Well, Avante and Zamajobe Sithole. In 1999 he released *I Feel Like Going On*, which was recorded live featuring musicians like Twins, Lulama, his mother Grace Dube and the late Vuyo Mokoena. Benjamin Dube presents the *High Explosion* (2002) was the beginning of a dynamic concept, which thrilled gospel lovers all over South Africa and beyond. Some of the products of the concept are *Oh! Bless Our God* (2004), an album nominated in SAMA 11's Best



Contemporary Album category, as well as *Eh Yaweh, Live* (2006) nominated for SAMA's Best Urban Gospel Album category. The category was won by the group Redeemed for their album *Live In Soweto*. Pastor Dube's other albums include *You Blessed Me Still* (2005), *All Time Favourites* (2006), *Looking Back* and *In His Presence* (2007), winner of SAMA 14's Best Urban Gospel category. God be praised for allowing him and his wife to survive a terrible car crash in July 2005 on the N3 highway near Alberton on their way from Yolanda Adams' concert in Randburg. Praise His mighty name!

**DEBORAH FRASER** was born in Kwa-Mashu, Durban, in KwaZulu-Natal as the sixth child of Catherine and Roy Fraser in a family of eight. Her love for music saw her go through Tu Nokwe's Durban-based Amajika Youth And Children's Art Project. In the 1980s she moved to Johannesburg for better career opportunities. Only a few artists can claim to have served the session musicians' circle the way Deborah did. Among the musicians she worked very close with are Sello Twala and the late Brenda Fassie. While she was Brenda's backing vocalist at festivals in the eighties, I had the honour of hosting her at my house in Lebowakgomo. In 1990 she released *Doctor's Prescription*, which included a title she would revisit later, *Abanye Bayombona*, co-written with the late Dumisani Ngubeni. Her 2001 gospel album *Abanye Bayombona*, which was produced by Siphso Mbele became a huge success and was nominated in SAMA 8's Best Producer category. Even this second time around she co-wrote this title track with the producer. One of the tracks was dedicated to "my late sisters and brothers": Jean Madubane, Wendy Mseleku, Moses Molelekwa, Mfazomnyama, Dumisani Ngubeni, Immogane Khoza, Mamsie Zwane, Wings Segale, son Mbuso Fraser, sister Promise Fraser and elder brother Daram Fraser. She also paid tribute to the session musicians who groomed her as a backing vocalist. *Udlalile Ngabantu* (2002) was nominated for Best Female Artist in SAMA 9. This SAMA 11 winner of the Best Gospel Album category for her *Ngikuxolele* (2004) features the voice of David Masondo of The Soul Brothers on one track. These kind of collaborations can only enrich our music. In that very year she scooped Kora's Best Gospel Female Artist. Her follow-up offering was *Gloria* (2005). At the end of 2006 she announced her engagement to Pastor Soki Okeke of Mercy Chapel from Nigeria while working on her forthcoming CD *Isililo*, which was released in 2007. On the international front maybe it would be proper to indicate that her CD *Born Again* was released in the United Kingdom. By 2008 Deborah was running a chicken farm near Eikenhof, south of Johannesburg while working on her next album to be released at the end of July 2008.

**LUSANDA SPIRITUAL GROUP** is led by **LUSANDA MCINGA** who's also the composer, arranger and lead singer. She grew up in Umtata (now correctly spelled Mtata) in the Eastern Cape. At a very young age she taught herself to play the guitar. After recording her first album, she sold it "from the boot", but her third album was released by Gallo Records. The Spiritual Group consists of (alto) Ntomboxolo

Bulana, Nomzie Mcinga and Phindiswa Rulashe; (soprano) Abongile Mcinga, Nomveliso Ngenelo and Qhamisa Mpayipheli; (tenor) Betusile Mcinga, Sinalo Mcinga, Uvile Sihele and Lonwabo Nkonzo; (bass) Mlandeli Giyama, Sivule Ndikinda and Luvuyo Tyekela. By 2004 they had released eight albums, some having sold beyond the platinum status. Their albums include *Akekho Onje Ngawe*, *Mandihambe Nawe Jesu*, *Ngifun' Izulu* (SAMA 9's Best Traditional Gospel Album) and *Abanye Bayawela*. When they recorded their 2004 album, *Bathi Bayamazi*, they invited members of another powerful group, Eskin Adult Choir, to join on tenor and bass. In 2005 they released *Umoya Wenkosi* as well as a video of their 11 hit tracks. In the same year the group was nominated in the 10th Kora All Africa Music Awards' Best African Spiritual Group In Africa category. Their follow-up was *Ndiphakathi*. Lusanda's son, Betusile followed in his mother's footsteps and released his debut CD *Mandibengowakho* in 2007.

Lusanda's success story reminds me of another young Eastern Cape songstress who writes her own lyrics, **KHOLEKA DABULA**, who by 2000 had recorded three albums: *Khilikhithi-Yakhalintsimbi*, *Seliyadumizulu* and *Bambelela*. She was born in Wollowvale in a family of seven girls. At the age of 20 she sang in the choir Masizakhe Christian Soldiers where she caught the attention of KK Music Productions. In 1999 she signed with Bula Music and the result was her third album, *Bambelela*.

**VELISWA SKEYI** from the same province started her singing career in 1992 with a gospel group from King William's Town known as Lord Comforters. When she went solo she released a self-titled debut album in 2004. It was to be followed by *Dwala Lam* (2005), *Mandilive Ilizwi* (2006) and *Umhlobo* (2008).

A member of Masole A Kgotso, **MATLAKALA RAMATHOKA** displayed so much talent as she led the group in hits like *Sello Sa Lesea*. She later ventured into a solo career without severing ties with the group. By 2006 she was releasing her 7th solo album, *Ba Mpitsa Tsotsi*. "Tlaki" as she is affectionately known, holds a diploma in Theology. She is backed by her group, The Comforters.

The first time I heard Lundi sing I mistook him for Rebecca, but when I listened attentively, I discovered that a new gospel star was born. "Prince Of Gospel Music", **LUNDI TYAMARA** grew up in Worcester, Western Cape. He started singing in choirs at a young age, and at the age of 15 followed his dream to Johannesburg. After working with Rebecca and her producer, Sizwe Zako Lundi joined Bula Music under the supervision of former television star, Tshepo Nzimande. His 1998 album *Mphefumlo Wam* sold more than 350 000 copies. By 2005 he had seven albums to his credit including *Ubuhlungu* (2000 SAMA nominee) all of which sold beyond the 100 000 mark. It came as no surprise when Kora All Africa Music Awards crowned him Best Male Gospel Artist in 2004. His CD *Jeremiah* was nominated for Metro FM Music Awards 2005 in the Best Gospel category. Some of his hits are: *Ngapha Nangapha* and *Phaphamani*. Bula Music has also released a DVD, *The Very Best Of Lundi*. His other platinum

seller CDs include *Umthandazo*, *Ngiyabonga*, *The Prince Of Gospel's Messages (Live)*, *Mvuleleni Angene* and *Umthandazo*, which were produced by Tshepo Ndzimande. The self-produced CD *Impilo* (2007) surprised many people as it won the hotly contested Best African Traditional Gospel category of SAMA 14. In that year, 2007 the Best Traditional African Acapella Gospel section went to MaCecilia at St Paul for their CD *Moshe Mohlanka wa Modimo*. Still true to his roots, Lundi took a break to go through the traditional passage to manhood. His mother, Nobantu Francis Tyamara passed away in 2007 aged 57 and was buried on 12 May 2007 at the Zwelethemba cemetery, Worcester, in the Boland, Western Cape Province.

Another young Bula Music gospel star was **S'FISO NCWANE**. The talented composer and keyboardist's albums include *Makadunyiswe*, *Inombolo*, *Umkhuleko* and *S'fiso*. His first DVD was simply titled *Best Of S'fiso*. In 2006 he signed a record deal with EMI Records to release his next CD, *Baba Ngiya Bonga*.

**JABU HLONGWANE** was born in Dlamini, Soweto, and grew up in Esikhawini, KwaZulu-Natal. As a youngster he was inspired by musicians like Al Jarreau and other jazz musos. Like many of us he sang in school choirs, but it was at tertiary level at the University Of Zululand (now KwaZulu-Natal) in the late eighties that he picked up interest in gospel music. With his friend, Mthunzi Namba they formed a gospel group called Treasured Voices. In 1995 Tusk Records offered him a recording contract and his debut album was *Nkosi Yokuthula* co-written and produced by friend, Mthunzi Namba. Since then, he never looked back. His album *Keep Me True* was nominated in the Best African Album category of SAMA 11. His other works include *Iyeza* and *The Crosspower Experience*. His collaboration with Sipho Makhabane produced a jewel titled *Send Your Fire*, winner of SAMA 13's Best African Traditional Gospel Album.

I hope you never confuse the above musician with the Limpopo gospel star, **JAY HLUNGWANI**. A product of Risinga High School in Giyani, he led his group as they contested in the Shell Road To Fame talent search. That experience changed his life for the better and today he has a string of hits including *Avulekile Amasango*, which was later covered by Ishmael.

**VUYO MOKOENA** was born Vuyisile Templeton Mokoena on 30 June 1968 in Duduza, Nigel, in the former East Rand (now Ekurhuleni). He was brought up by his devout Christian grandmother. He said the deep-voiced granny used to drag him to church even on the "women only" Thursdays. He ended up loving it. The former pupil of Mmuso Primary School in Duduza was influenced by the music of groups like Sankomota at an early age. In 1984 he became a member of a young KwaThema, Springs group called Melodi. In 1991 he met Rebecca Malope and Peter Tladi when he won the Best Male Vocalist category of the Super Curl Talent Search singing The Village Pope's *Papa*. The two judges of the contest asked him to come work with them. He's been part of that team for ten years during which he replaced Peter Mokoena as lead vocalist of the group

Pure Magic. He went solo in 2001, joined Sony Music and released albums which include *Sakhiwe* (2000), *Ngosabela Nkosi* (2001), *Sish'udumo* (2003), *The Psalmist* (2005) and *Avuleka Amazulu* (2007). His publishing company was known as Vuyote. Some of the albums were nominated for the SAMAs. Vuyo's flexibility saw him collaborate with popular maskandi group, Izingane Zoma as well as Deborah Fraser. One of the memorable moments of his career was when he did a duet with Jabu Hlongwane during the 1998 Joyous Celebration concert in Durban. He said it was fireworks! The relationship between the two grew to a point of releasing a collaboration album, *Iculo Elisha* (2002). They did a sterling performance at the launch of Thobela FM's festive season road safety campaign, "Thari Ya Tsela" in December 2001 promoting their massive hit *Ntate Nthuse* from their forthcoming album. Interestingly, the track became popularly known as "Koloi ya Eliya" due to the chorus line.

On 4 May 2008 Vuyo was diagnosed with a brain tumour and booked into the Linksfield Clinic. After being discharged, his health deteriorated and he passed away at home in Sonneveld in the early hours of Friday, 23 May 2008. The gospel star's departure was mourned in the midst of that socio-economic tornado that was clothed in the dark cloud of xenophobia. As most foreign nationals crossed the Limpopo river going back home, he crossed the proverbial river Jordan going back home. He was laid to rest on Friday, 30 May 2008 at the Nigel cemetery, leaving behind his wife Tebogo and son Karabo. Beyond the grave Vuyo Mokoena was nominated for two categories of the SABC Crown Gospel Music Awards – Best Male Artist and Best Song. A tribute to the legend formed part of a 2008 roadshow by Joyous Celebration.

The masterminds behind the *JOYOUS CELEBRATION* concept are three talented visionaries from KwaZulu-Natal – Jabu Hlongwane, Mthunzi Namba and Lindelani Mkhize. The initial concept saw the formation of gospel group Family Factory, an 18-member group whose debut album was titled *The Journey*. The group's nucleus was friends Jabu Hlongwane, Margaret Thozama Motsage and Wendy Mseleku. Mthunzi Namba became its Musical Director and Lindelani Mkhize, the Executive Producer. They worked with young producers like Godfrey Pilane and Eugene Mthethwa. The line-up of the Factory were (soprano) Vicky Vilakazi, S'dumo Sithole, Nokukhanya Dlamini, and Priscilla Ngqumeya; (alto) Thozama Motsage, Wendy Mseleku, S'bongile Motsage and Gift Vilakazi; (tenor) Neyi Zimu, Innocent Modiba, Stephen Molakeng and Thabang Moshoeshoe; (baritone) Jabu Hlongwane, Sihle Kunene, Langa Dube and Sipho Mnguni. On musical instruments were Ntuthuko Sibisi (organ), Sihle Kunene and Concord Nkabinde (bass). Later the dream grew bigger as they discovered the need for an incubator of latent talent. The talent search grew in leaps and bounds and became an annual event. The show has received a number of accolades including a SAMA 5 nomination in the Best Contemporary Gospel Album for *Joyous Celebration 2*. They Won SAMA 10's Best Contemporary Gospel Album for

*Live in Cape Town*. There was also a SAMA 11 nomination in the same category for *Joyous Celebration* 8. That year the category was also contested by groups like Tree 63 and Worship House. The group's 2000 album titled *Connecting The Nation* co-produced by Mthunzi and Lindelani was nominated in the Best Producer category of SAMA 7 while *Joyous Celebration* 5 and 6 won SAMA 8 and 9's Best Contemporary Album categories respectively. 2005 was the project's ninth year and that says a lot about the producers' passion and commitment if one takes into account the fact that every year had its own album released. The idea of the project was to unearth and showcase new talent every year, but there are icons like Jabu Hlongwane, Vuyo Mokoena and Margaret Motsage from whom the newly discovered would learn. Every year the established musicians are invited as guest artists to bring more variety to the show. The most acclaimed concert of the group to date was the historical Durban One World show, "Kirk Franklin And Joyous Celebration". Joyous Celebration 11's DVD titled *Joyous 11: Live at The Sun City Superbowl* won SAMA 14's Best Traditional/African Adult Contemporary DVD category. By 2008 the project had released the 12th volume and as usual, undertook a national tour sponsored by Old Mutual.

The keyboard master and musical director of the show is **MTHUNZI NAMBA**. A former member of gospel duo Sweetwater Amanzimtoti he has his own solo career. His album *Let It Rain* (2000) won Contemporary SAMA 7's Gospel section while *Send Your Glory* (2002) was nominated in the same category in 2002. I met him for the first time in 1992 while member of Sweetwater with Felicia Marion of group Joy fame promoting the CD *Greater Is He – Singabangqobi* (Friends In Fellowship). The CD also included Joy's evergreen track, *Paradise Road*. We would later meet when he worked for the then Radio Zulu (now Ukhozi FM). Almost every conversation we had ended being about music. It was in the glory days of gospel outfit, Friends First whose bass guitarist was Victor Masondo of The Jazzanians fame. That is why when we later wanted to transform the music sound of Thobela FM he was the first musician I believed could create transformational jingles, and he did that with flying colours. He later became A&R and Artists Development Manager Of Sony Music Entertainment S.A. By 2007 the pastor of His Tabernacle Church was married to Thabile and had two children, Awethu and Asanda who inspired the name of his recording studio, Asawe. He has also released other CDs like *Restoration Hour* (2005) and *The Collection* (2006).

Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to one of the music industry's humblest, creative and knowledgeable leaders – **LINDELANI MKHIZE**. Lindelani grew up singing in school choirs in Umlazi, Durban. His passion for music was fuelled by his music teachers, the Majolas. At a young age he was already in charge of school choirs at Mthwalume and Indukwenhle high schools. Though he was dreaming of taking his interest in music to another level, his mother, former teacher JB Mkhize wanted her son to be an academic "professional". After



completing matric he did Chemical Engineering at Mangosuthu Technikon. This route met with a cul-de-sac and he turned to a national diploma in music with the Natal Technikon to prepare himself for a career in the music industry. In 1992 he joined Teal Records. He introduced kwaito artists to the record company. This resulted in big hits like *Tsiki Tsiki* (M'du), *Ding Dong* (Joe Nina), *Korobela* (Kamazu) and others. In 1994 he was recruited by Guy Henderson of Sony International to join the group. The company needed a visionary who could bring it local artists of substance who could match their international image. After joining Sony, Lindelani with the help of former Wits University law student, Lazarus Serobe revolutionised the music industry. Respected musicians like Hugh Masekela were signed on. They created the kind of environment that made the likes of Sibongile Khumalo decide to record music after years of many performances.

I met Lindelani Mkhize for the first time in his Dunkeld West office for mutual projects as I realised through his PR, Lucas Mahlakgane, that he was a visionary. At the time he was General Manager of Sony Music Entertainment SA Local Repertoire Division. Out of that meeting followed a number of successful projects of mutual benefit to Sony Music and Thobela FM. One of his remarkable concepts was the “Sony Summer Sounds” which gave exposure to many young artists. But the project he'll go down the corridors of history with is Joyous Celebration. While he was managing the local music division at Sony, he also became Joyous Celebration's composer, producer, artist and conductor. I had the honour of attending most of the annual launches of the show and it was always evident that a lot of planning, rehearsal and co-ordination was the backbone of the show's success. Most of today's talented young ambassadors of gospel music are products of the show: Nokukhanya Dlamini, Andile Bhebhula, Swazi Dlamini, Sabatha Masoka, Xoli Nkosi, Nokwazi Dlamini, Thozama Margaret Motsage, Vicky Vilakazi, Innocent Modiba, Steven Molakeng, Thabo Mdluli, Brian Makiwane, Keke Phoofolo, the late Sihle Kunene, Sechaba Pali, Avis and many more. Unlike the independent African church groups, Joyous Celebration's product is a global, schooled and refined approach that is accompanied by music score sheets but still maintain mass appeal. This approach is also realised in the music of groups like Christian Explainers and Winds Of Change. When Sony joined hands with BMG in 2004 he started his own company, Lindelani Mkhize Entertainment (LME), but still continued to consult for Sony-BMG. In my last discussion with the late Jabu Khanyile he was up-beat about being one of the first musicians to join LME. Lindelani was part of the panel of judges for SABC 2's Gospel Stars talent search which produced Collin Damans. In 2008 he created another SABC 2 television talent search, *I Want to Sing Gospel*. It was hosted by former Joyous Celebration star, Thabo Mdluli. The greatest honour he received for his excellence was from the 2004 Metro FM Music Awards which presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award in his hometown, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.



One of the most successful gospel choirs of our time is **THE SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR** who classify their music as “gospel with deep soul”. The formation of the choir involved people like brother and sister Nkululeko and Gift Vilakazi as well as David Mulovedzi and Beverly Bryer in 2002. They took the best of David’s Holy Jerusalem Choir, Vicky Vilakazi’s backing singers and added other choristers from various Soweto churches and groups to form a mighty choir. Bev became the producer, while Dave became the musical director. Beverly roped in fellow Australians, Andrew Sommerville Kay and David Ellis Vigo of Universal Australia as underwriters of the choir, which they registered as Soweto Gospel Choir Pty Ltd. In 2005 the choir embarked on a hectic tour of the US taking them to 39 cities. It was reported that their Carnegie Hall shows were already sold out six months before the performances. Other countries they had already toured by 2005 include Singapore, Spain, Germany, England and Australia. Among the accolades they received were The Australian Helpmann Award for Best Contemporary Music Concert, the American Gospel Music Award for Best Choir as well as the Gospel Music Award for Best International Choir. Locally they had only received a SAMA nomination at that stage. The choir’s contribution to the upliftment of fellow South Africans was reflected in its founding of the AIDS orphans’ Vukani Foundation in 2003. It also raises funds for another HIV/Aids orphans sanctuary, Nkosi’s Haven. The choir’s CD, *Voices From Heaven* made it to the international gospel music scene. Under choirmaster Lucas Bok they participated in the November 2005 Unite Of The Stars concert raising funds for the Unite Against Hunger project sharing the stage with the likes of Diana Ross and Christina Aguilera. Their second album, *Blessed* made history by winning the coveted Grammy Award (49th) in the Best Traditional World Music category on 11 February 2007. Back home their DVD *Blessed Live In Concert* scooped the Best Live DVD category of SAMA 13. Their follow-up CD *African Spirit* was released in the same year and won Metro FM’s Best Gospel Album category. At the beginning of 2008 it won them another Grammy Award. The success of this group has given hope to other local acts like the Vaal Sound Chorus whose 2006 CD was titled *Siyakhothama*. Did I say and the Soweto Young Voices?

**AVANTE** is a gospel outfit from KwaZulu-Natal in Durban’s Kwa-Mashu township. Having been friends from their early school years at Kwasethu High School, they put their voices to test in the Shell Road To Fame talent search in the early nineties and never looked back. Besides their albums, which include *Hlalani Ethembeni* (2005), they collaborated with a number of musicians including Rebecca, Brenda, Vuyo, Mandoza and Ringo who featured them on his massive hit *Iyeza Lemini*.

There is also **SHALO VINE**, a young female trio from Dube, Soweto whose debut album was titled *Never Give Up*. The church-based group, which was started in 2004, is an offshoot of the famous Dube Choir.

Among the young generation of gospel musicians there are performers like Moshe Wa Msholi from GaKgapanne near Tzaneen in Limpopo province. He took the music scene by storm with his Afrikaans hit, *Trap Die Duiwel*, which was followed by *Dankie Na Die Here* in 2006. Other musicians include M'Zet, Mojeremane, Nontando, Nyaka, Kenny Makweng, Donny, Siyabonga, Mthembeni, Ntokozo Mbambo, Thabo Lebeko, Pascaline, Ndumiso, Sabata Masoka, Vision, Happy Sisters, S'nethemba, Vuka Afrika, Ntokozo, Vuyokazi, Gospel Divas and many more.

I was shocked to learn that promising young gospel musician, Zolile Ndyawe was shot dead on Wednesday, 31 October 2007 in Kwa Zakhele, Port Elizabeth, in the Eastern Cape Province. The budding star had just finished recording his second CD. His killers were reported to have taken his cellphone and some documents from him. Have our lives become that cheap?

At the beginning of 2008 it was reported that Mojeremane aka Lucas Xale took his life on 3 February and was buried on Sunday, 17 February 2008 in Mabopane, near Tshwane. How sad!

There are musicians who are not necessarily gospel artists but made some impact with either some tracks or CDs: Babsy Mlangeni, Tsepo Tshola, Steve Kekana, William Mthethwa, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Soshanguve Black Tycoons, Don Gumbo and Tshisalanga, Bhekumuzi Luthuli, Ntombinkulu (Rev. Sam Zondi), Johnny Mokhali, Ikhangela No JBC, Sharon Dee, Molemo Jub Jub Maarohanye and others.

By 2007 this genre was the most popular on the local scene that it deserved its own awards ceremony. Organised by Zanele Mbokazi, the launch of the Crown Gospel Music Awards on Sunday, 11 November 2007 at the International Convention Centre in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, would surely elevate it to even greater heights. The first event sponsored by Cell C would be staged at the same venue on 24 August 2008.

As we pause on the long journey in this first edition, let us refresh our memories and go back to the packed Vosloorus Community Hall, where a final memorial service was staged for Simon Mahlathini Nkabinde on Saturday, 7 August 1999. In response to the public outcry about our stars that fade like flowers to be buried like paupers, the former Arts and Culture Minister Ben Ngubane promised to investigate and correct the wrongs in the local music industry. Indeed, in March 2000 a Task Team comprising members from government, music industry and civil society, as well as two international experts sat in Johannesburg. Provincial hearings were also conducted. A document called the Music Industry Task Team Report was compiled. Following the MITT recommendations, the newly-formed CWUSA set in motion a process which culminated in the birth of the Seriti Social Security Scheme for Creatives. Members of the scheme/union would enjoy short-term insurance and medical aid cover. Some of the midwives in the scheme to be in full operation by 2007

were the SABC, SAMRO and the Department of Arts and Culture.

Judging by the number of institutions offering music diplomas and degrees, the growing number of independent labels, the mushrooming of new radio stations and television channels, the various music projects and workshops; judging by the growing number of music and cultural festivals, the variety of collaborations, the number and growth of the music awards; judging by the UNESCO Convention on cultural diversity as well as government intervention programmes in South Africa, the future looks bright. Sing Africa Sing!

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# NAME INDEX

## A

Abafana Bamagoduka 59  
 Abafana Base Qhudeneni 54, 55, 58  
 Abafana Besishingishane 59  
 Abafana Bomoya 55, 60  
 Abaqondisi Brothers 306  
 Abakhwenyana 64  
 Abangani 64, 104  
 Abashante 108, 175–176, 179, 181, 315  
 Abathakathi 59, 158  
 Abavuseleli Bama Wesile 328  
 Abstractions 289–290  
 Adaye 138  
 Additions, The 36, 40, 148, 155, 205  
 Adjovi Ernest Coovi 316  
 Africa Patience 42, 55, 88  
 Africa Oye 230  
 African Inkspots 85  
 African Jazz 288  
 African Jazz All Stars 284  
 African Jazz Pioneers 14, 17, 52, 252–253, 256, 281  
 African Jazz Revue and Variety 85, 249, 263–264, 268, 281, 286, 288  
 African Youth Band 34, 308  
 Afrida Marimba Band 261  
 Afrika Mamas 306  
 Afro Cool Concept 257, 255, 285  
 Afrotensors 135  
 Afrozania 255–256  
 AFUBI 16, 36, 100, 104  
 Akasia 181  
 Alaska 15, 176, 187  
 Alexandra Black Mambazo 51  
 Alexandra Brass Band 41  
 Ali Katt and Biggs 19  
 All Nighters, The 154  
 All Rounders, The 15, 16, 21, 27, 36, 118, 162, 220  
 Almon Jazz Eight 36  
 Amadodana Ase Wesile 314, 319, 327

Amaqabane 34, 309  
 Amampondo 4, 141, 211, 227, 261, 265  
 Amandla Cultural Ensemble 16, 277, 281  
 Amaponi 104  
 Amaswazi Emvelo 51, 55, 59  
 Amaxhosa 52  
 Anchors, The 1, 6, 7, 38  
 Angels, The 78, 116–118, 139, 141, 257  
 Angola and The Groaners 159, 162  
 Apple Seed 179, 180, 181  
 Arosi Buli 41, 107, 118, 153  
 Arosi Suthukazi 107, 120, 222, 233, 235, 236, 300  
 Arrigone Jorge 10, 169  
 Ashiko 153  
 Atteridgeville Happy Boys 330, 331  
 Audoire Philip 259  
 Auld Robin 67  
 Avante 332, 339  
 Ayobayo Band 76

## B

Bala Brothers 198  
 Band In Blue 252  
 Banjo 34, 149  
 Basadi ba Kgapana Ensemble 239  
 Bashanyana 193  
 Bayete 16, 75, 88, 113, 205–207, 211,  
 Beaters, The 1, 8, 210  
 Beggars, The 49, 52, 154  
 Belafonte Harry 7, 53, 64, 74, 75, 264, 266, 275, 280, 297  
 Bembeya Jazz 54  
 Benjamin Roy Julian 183  
 Benton Brook 3, 319  
 Bhengu Sammyboy 57  
 Bhoja Bhoja 296  
 Big Cats, The 103, 142  
 Big Dudes, The 35, 36, 80, 92, 94, 96, 100, 120, 151, 209  
 Biko Bantu Steve 77, 237, 243, 276

Black Cat Trio 32  
 Black Diamonds, The 37  
 Black Five 19, 141  
 Black Gold Band 248  
 Black Hawks 10, 35, 39, 130  
 Black Jack 172  
 Black People's Choice 66, 159, 163  
 Blondy Alpha 159  
 Blood, Sweat and Tears 1  
 Blue Notes 18, 282–284, 312  
 Blues Broers 230  
 Bob Marley and The Wailers 5, 118, 157, 202  
 Bojo Mujo 193  
 Bongo Maffin 15, 133, 176, 179, 180, 181, 191, 230  
 Boom Shaka 15, 176, 177, 179 181, 315  
 Bopape Rupert 50, 51, 52, 54, 55  
 Boshomane Steve 325  
 Bosman Gloria 87, 132, 223, 231, 232, 236, 242, 248, 287, 288  
 Bow and Arrow 25, 220  
 Boy Masaka 54, 56, 58  
 Boyoyo Boys 40, 58, 60, 205  
 Bra Sello 57, 58, 61  
 Brasse Vannie Kaap 69  
 Brenda and The Big Dudes 35, 92, 120  
 Brettell Bones 68, 101, 102, 125, 126, 129, 311  
 Brickz 96, 179, 188,  
 Bridgens Danny 76, 96, 97, 100, 167  
 Bright Blue 67, 128, 129, 197  
 Brightman Sarah 188  
 Brooklyn Boys 263  
 Brotherhood 224  
 Brotherhood of Breath 282, 283  
 Brothers of Peace 14, 175, 314  
 Brown Dash 186, 188  
 Buthelezi Mzikayifani 293  
 Butler Jonathan 17, 68, 69, 234

## C

Calder Clive 67, 70, 269  
 Californian Kids 59  
 Canaries 200  
 Cannibals, The 40, 48, 137, 154  
 Cape Town Jazz Orchestra 230, 279  
 Casino 126  
 Casino Brothers 88  
 C–Base Collective 228, 230  
 CCV Boys 299  
 Chabangu Orrack 34  
 Chaka Chaka Yvonne 8, 11, 12, 70, 78, 97, 98–100, 164, 169, 207, 209, 279, 309  
 Chauke Richard 112  
 Chauke Ronald 36  
 Chauke Hasani Thomas 28, 226, 296–298, 301, 314, 316  
 Cheek to Cheek 107, 120, 149, 154, 161  
 Children's Society 260  
 Chimora 11, 12, 119, 160  
 Chinyanga David 310  
 Chiskop 175, 182  
 Choice 310  
 Choppa 220  
 Chounyane Sankie 39, 40, 47, 63, 223  
 Chris McGregor and The Castle Lager Big Band 281–283, 312  
 Chukucha 121  
 Circus 127  
 City People 154  
 CJB 41, 81, 106, 107, 112, 118, 148, 149  
 Clegg Johnny 7, 23, 75, 103, 120, 122–125, 183, 236  
 Clout 68, 127, 129  
 Comforters, The 150, 162, 329, 334  
 Comforter's Children 326  
 Comrades 310  
 Condry Ziqubu Brass Band 3, 6, 7, 31, 38, 39, 91, 107, 118, 127, 155, 274  
 Cooks Steve 43, 109, 155, 310  
 Core, The 236



Cream 187  
 Crocodiles, The 36, 61  
 Cronje Pikes 100  
 Cuban Brothers 263  
 Culture Spears 300  
 Cy-Zaah 44, 113

## D

Dabula Kholeka 334  
 Daffodils, The 37, 148, 205  
 Dalom Kids 105, 106, 119, 152, 153  
 Dana Simphiwe 135, 140, 222, 223, 237, 243, 288, 290  
 Dani Labella 226, 237  
 Danny K 110, 128, 172, 182, 183  
 Dark City Sisters 51, 58, 136, 254  
 Dee Sharon 15, 80, 214, 340  
 Denim 200  
 Dennis Gumede and The Teenagers 64, 155  
 Devera Ngweni Jazz Band 147, 278  
 Dhlamini Mpumi 225, 261, 262  
 DiBango Manu 230, 268  
 Dima Sisters 52  
 DJ Cleo 168, 188  
 Djedje Carlos 158, 159, 161  
 Dlamini Swazi 244, 270, 338  
 Dlamini Walter 49, 52, 154  
 Dlathu Christopher Mlungisi 208, 209  
 Dlodlu Jimmy 142, 192, 211, 223–225, 227, 229–230, 232, 247, 316  
 Doc Shebeleza 35, 185, 188, 312, 327  
 Dollar Brand Trio 278  
 Dozi 129, 205  
 Drive, The 36–37, 213, 254, 289  
 Drums For Peace Orchestra 231  
 Dr Victor 100, 164, 170, 228  
 Dube Bonani Benjamin 5, 244, 325, 330, 332, 333  
 Dube Philip Lucky 22, 65, 75, 79, 120, 157–162, 214, 220, 247  
 Dudu and The Big Time Boys 104, 105

Duke Ngcukana Quintet 235  
 Dumako Joseph 112, 328, 329  
 Durban City Queens 52  
 Durban's Finest 192  
 Dyer Steve 25, 202, 233, 236, 248, 276–277, 292  
 Dyers Errol 212, 249–250

## E

Eagles, The 37, 40  
 Early Mabuza Trio 249, 288  
 Ebony 4, 77, 78, 81, 101, 102, 104–105, 137, 139–141, 145  
 Ecstasy 17, 121, 138  
 Ecstasy, Passion and Pain 126  
 Egnos Bertha 87, 106, 263  
 Elations, The 37  
 Elegance 10, 119, 154  
 Elias Mathebula and The Chivani Sisters 296  
 Elite Swingsters 84–85, 256  
 Elle 113  
 Emmanuel Apostolic Church Choir 319  
 Equals, The 161, 309  
 Esta M 112, 148, 278  
 e'Void 129  
 Exit 37, 151, 209

## F

Faku Alexis 22, 109, 134, 163, 183  
 Faku Fezile "Feya" 26, 235–236, 248, 253, 279, 285, 289  
 Family Factory 133, 189, 236, 332, 336  
 Family, The 33, 92, 189  
 Famous Explorers, The 309  
 Fassie Bongani 185  
 Fassie Brenda 5, 11, 12, 17, 30, 32, 33, 36, 45, 49, 68, 69, 74, 92–93, 97, 101, 120, 133, 174, 175, 176, 177, 189, 197, 209, 214, 227, 233, 260, 287, 309, 322, 323, 325, 326, 330, 333  
 Fassie Lindiwe 28, 30

Fassie Sarah 92  
 Fassie Themba 95  
 Father Huddleston Band 89, 281  
 Fever 247, 281  
 Fire and Flame 35  
 First Adelle 113  
 Flaming Souls 6, 7, 39–40, 55, 146  
 Flood, The 13  
 Flying Jazz Queens 52  
 Forbes Damon 212, 235, 245  
 Forsyth Keith 155, 206  
 Four Fourty 245  
 Fourie Johnny 290  
 Fox Herman 15, 38–39, 136, 220  
 Fraser Deborah 64, 78, 91, 109, 117, 195,  
 325, 333 336  
 Freeway 155  
 Freshlyground 127, 129, 190  
 Frisch Eric 41, 47, 107, 153, 155

## G

Gaeleshewe Andile 6, 108  
 Gaieties 86  
 Galanakis John 34, 106, 148–151  
 Galane Sello 152, 173, 211, 223, 225,  
 231, 233, 237–241, 244, 258, 299  
 Galeta Hotep Idris 230–231, 280  
 Gallo Eric 2, 77  
 Gang Of Instrumentals 193  
 Gathering Forces 247  
 Gegana Mlungisi 209, 223, 234–235, 247  
 Geldof Bob 73, 74, 75, 207  
 General M.D. Shirinda and Gaza Sisters  
 296  
 George Maluleke nava N’wanati Sisters  
 296  
 Gereformeerde Blues Band 70  
 Ghelakis Chris 167–169  
 Ghetto Luv 187  
 Gilfillan Graeme 25, 82  
 Gilfillan Graham 24  
 Goba Dumisani 301

Goldberg Morris 245, 265, 280  
 Gontsana Lulama “Lulu” 213, 236, 246–  
 247, 249, 256, 257, 285  
 Goreoang Lawrance 47, 231  
 Grant Eddy 161, 164  
 Groban Josh 186  
 Grosso Fab 42, 43, 91, 96, 106, 121, 151  
 Gumbi Richard Felani 113, 153, 200, 330  
 Gumede Dennis 64, 155  
 Gumede Sipho 9, 39, 70, 87, 91, 127,  
 141, 175, 209–210, 212–213, 251–252,  
 254, 260, 274, 282  
 Gunguluza Men 57  
 Gwala Freddie 35, 314, 326  
 Gwala Paul 327  
 Gwangwa Jonas 8, 17, 26, 56, 113, 131,  
 133, 209, 223, 238, 252, 256, 264, 267,  
 268, 272, 275–277, 280–281, 289, 312  
 Gymslip 125

## H

Hagonya 203  
 Hanmer Paul 140, 212, 223, 232, 244,  
 248  
 Harari 2–13, 31, 39, 112, 136  
 Hard Workers, The 76  
 Harlem Swingsters 85, 86, 252, 286  
 Harley and The Rasta Family 159, 162–  
 163  
 Harrison George 125  
 Hassan John 138, 206, 227–228, 256, 332  
 Hawk 88, 125  
 Heavy Spirits 230, 238  
 Hedzoleh Soundz 267–268, 271  
 Herbert Alfred 264, 268  
 Heroes, The 37, 208  
 Hot Soul Singers, The 41, 47, 111, 116,  
 148, 155  
 Hunters 27  
 Hurricanes, The 42  
 Hip–Hop Pantsula 190  
 Hlongwane Jabu 80, 330, 331, 335–337

Hlongwane Norman 39  
 Hlongwane Oupa 39  
 Hlungwani Jay 330, 331, 335  
 Hlungwani Peter 161  
 Hollis Lara 110, 244  
 Hollis Phil 10, 41, 66, 97, 150, 155, 156  
 Hollywood Jazz Band 54, 88  
 Holy Brothers 320  
 Holy Cross Choir 328, 329  
 Holy Spirits, The 55, 328, 329  
 Hotline 8, 68, 81, 88, 105, 125–127, 129  
 Huddleston Trevor, Father 267, 268, 275  
 Hugh Masekela and The Union of South  
   Africa 2, 11, 14, 22, 35, 56, 57, 64, 73,  
   90, 91, 115, 132, 133, 151–153, 189,  
   197, 201, 203, 209, 210, 211, 213, 214,  
   217, 223, 228, 236, 242, 252, 255, 264,  
   265, 267, 268, 270–272, 275–277,  
   280, 281, 285, 289, 312, 324, 338  
 Hutchinson Keith 123

## I

Ibrahim Abdullah 73, 91, 98, 210, 223,  
   236, 245, 250, 252, 255, 256, 260,  
   278–282, 284, 285  
 Ikaheng Brothers 330  
 Ikhsanella No JBC 293–296, 340  
 Image/ Ymage 5, 10, 13, 220, 332  
 Imilonji Kantu Choral Society 9, 134, 140  
 Imithente 293, 295, 296  
 Imitshotshovu 64  
 Impact 37, 209  
 Ingle Percy 324  
 Ingwabo la Langala 299, 301  
 In-Laws, The 36  
 IPCC 41, 315, 325, 326  
 IPC Male Choir 326  
 Ismail Pops Mohamed 192, 212, 223–224,  
   227, 248, 251, 260, 280  
 Ivory 121  
 Izakka 162  
 Izindlovu 162

Izintombi Zentuthuko 52, 288  
 Izintombi Zesi Manjemanje 52, 58  
 Izintombi Zomoya 52  
 Izinyoka 186

## J

Jabavu Queens 52, 136  
 Jabula 282–284  
 Jacobs Priscilla 35, 39  
 Jamani Hope 40  
 Jambo 162  
 Jansen Robbie 25, 212, 249, 250, 260  
 Jarre Jean Michel 170, 260  
 Jarrod Aston 8, 9  
 Jaws 28, 205, 208, 209  
 Jaziel Brothers 221  
 Jazz Epistles, The 252, 267, 268, 278, 283  
 Jazz Maniacs, The 55, 56, 254  
 Jazz Ministers, The 245–246  
 Jazz Revellers, The 55  
 Jazz Sledge 88, 288  
 Jazzanians, The 231, 246, 337  
 Jazz Dazzlers, The 86, 252–253, 273, 281  
 J E Movement 167  
 Job's Combination 286  
 Joe Nina 29, 30, 36, 94, 109, 141, 174,  
   195–197, 199, 202, 270, 338  
 Johnny Fourie Band 290  
 Johnny Mekoah Big Band, The 245  
 Johnston Claire 127  
 Jones Jennifer 70, 238  
 Jones Quincy 75, 272  
 Jordan Pallo 82, 312  
 Joy 17, 18, 92, 104, 115, 337  
 Joyco 47  
 Joyous Celebration 142, 181, 192, 200,  
   244, 330, 336–338  
 Jozi 96, 128, 185, 221  
 Julius Jumaima 310  
 Juluka 75, 81, 120, 123–125, 145, 148  
 Junema 193

## K

- Kabasa 8  
Kakai 18  
Kallenbach Robbie 24  
Kappa Nomuntu 11, 12, 112, 119, 140, 176  
KARAMO 4, 167  
Kataki 154  
Kathrada Ahmed 311  
Katt Ali 19, 102  
Katzenjammer Kids 272  
Kaya 17, 205, 217, 259  
Kekana Linda 152, 211, 223–234, 236  
Kekana Steve Tebogo 4, 13, 22, 23, 27–32, 75, 126, 129, 137, 141, 158, 197, 340  
Kente Gibson 10, 17, 30, 54, 81, 87, 89, 90, 92, 107, 111–112, 120, 152, 260, 310  
Kente Mzwandile 3, 10  
Kerkorrel Johannes 70–71, 243  
Kgagudi Lazarus 27, 32, 94, 112, 114  
Kgalala 222, 233  
Kgasoane Banza 3, 7, 38, 127, 254  
Kgosinkwe Theo 217–218  
Khama Lena 16, 102–103, 105, 140, 145  
Khanyile Jabu 16–17, 36, 40, 75, 94, 109, 113, 117, 133, 139–140, 205–206, 208, 217, 318, 338  
Khanyo 22, 108–109, 140, 183, 189, 197, 206, 219, 253  
Khaoli Alec “Om” 1, 3, 5–6, 13, 23, 108, 137, 168  
Khasumba Lee 194  
Kheswa Sipho 66  
Khomothapelo 13, 33, 104, 112, 117, 135, 138, 140, 206–207, 219, 235, 243, 332  
Khowana Peter 26, 67, 97, 156  
Khoza Bheki 26, 117, 212, 221, 237, 240, 243, 248  
Khoza Rubber 106  
Khubeka Abigail 23, 80, 84, 87–89, 132, 179, 232, 264, 266, 285, 287  
Khumalo Kelly 114, 221  
Khumalo Leleti 117, 252, 291, 310  
Khumalo Moses 118, 212, 242, 243  
Khumalo Sibongile 87, 98, 131–133, 210–211, 224, 227, 229, 232, 238, 242, 257, 269, 279, 287–288, 290, 338  
Khumalo Winnie 12, 108  
Khumbula 220  
Kid Margo 56–58  
King Force and His Forces 56  
King Kandi 113  
King’s Messengers Quartet 319  
Kingstar Brothers 303  
Klaasen Thandi 84, 86–88, 132, 209, 232, 253, 287  
Knox Donovan 5  
Kombuis Koos 70  
Kommissie van Ondersoek 70  
Kongo Zizi 106  
Kool and The Gang 76  
Kramer David 70  
Kramer Russell 9, 93, 155  
Kubheka Banzi 32, 148–149, 195  
Kulturation 247  
Kumasi 138  
Kunene Madala 8, 211, 227, 251  
Kupi Prince 229, 243  
Kuti Fela Anikulapo 145, 192, 255, 268, 271, 318  
Kutu 109, 140, 218  
Kwani Experience 187, 217  
Kwela Allen 116, 223, 250, 257, 282  
Kwela Tebza 56  
Kyllex 183, 186

## L

- Ladysmith Black Mambazo 25, 55, 60, 63, 73, 86, 138, 139, 207, 258, 299, 301, 303, 305, 306, 320, 340, 342  
Lady Thuli 112

Laka Donald Mahwetsa 5, 10, 13–15,  
 80, 103, 134, 175, 209, 221, 223, 227,  
 237, 287, 332  
 Lakier Gail 87  
 Langa Thokozani 63  
 Lebona Hendrick Koloi 15–18, 21–23, 30,  
 45, 68, 92, 121, 151, 205, 209, 247,  
 253, 259, 276–277  
 Lebona Japie 121  
 Lebona Miki 16, 276  
 Lechalaba Paul 328, 329  
 Lekaba Priscilla 325  
 Lekgoa 129  
 Lemmy Chauke na Xahumba Sisters 296  
 Lena and Sunshine 103  
 Lennon John 2, 255  
 Lerole Aaron 50, 51  
 Lerole Elias “Shamba” 50, 320  
 Lerole Jack “Big Voice” 8, 50, 51, 56, 127  
 Lerole Tebogo 56  
 Le Roux Gabi 99, 109, 129, 182, 186–  
 187, 189  
 Lesotho Sisters 52  
 Lesufi Phaladi 298  
 Les Vibros 42  
 Linda Solomon 25  
 Lister Keith 226  
 Loading Zone 15, 92, 94, 187, 227–228,  
 242  
 Lord Comforters 334  
 Louis and The Jive 69, 247  
 Louw Mara 90, 101, 141, 154, 175, 197,  
 291, 316  
 Love Brothers, The 65–66  
 Lumumba 6–8, 77, 272  
 Lusanda Spiritual Group 333  
 Luthuli Bhekumuzi 211, 219, 293–294,  
 340  
 Luvelo Lamaswati 100  
 L’Vovo Derrango 193

## M

Maake Ali 112, 155  
 Mabalane Kabelo 171–172, 224  
 Mabaso David 92, 96  
 Mabaso Dumisane 258  
 Mabaso Lemmy 38, 50, 56–57, 62, 264  
 Mabaso Mandla 327  
 Mabaso Nombuso 116  
 Mabaso Norman 296  
 Mabaso Ntombifuthi 111, 116, 154  
 Mabaso Star 5, 109, 195, 309  
 Mabena Jimmy 273  
 Mabika Julia 112  
 Mabote Humphrey 12, 42, 105, 113, 140,  
 153, 163, 195, 219  
 Mabunda Arnold 82  
 Mabunda Mgodlagodla 59  
 Mabuse Sipho 1–4, 23, 30, 36, 69, 112,  
 116, 129, 137, 158, 164, 168, 183,  
 228, 247, 265, 287  
 Mabaya Camagu Siyabulela 220  
 McCartney Paul 2, 36  
 Madibane Spencerman 166  
 Madima Itani 192, 329  
 Madingoane Tebogo 175, 218  
 Madlala Quinton 35, 106, 326  
 Madlingozi Sandile Ringo 78, 80, 99, 108,  
 133, 167, 189, 201–202, 218, 238, 285,  
 288, 322  
 Madonna 92  
 Madonsela Ronnie 256, 260  
 Maduna Phumi 120, 161  
 Mafika 155  
 Mafikizolo 15, 128, 176, 181, 192, 217–  
 218  
 Mafokate Sello Arthur 43, 95–96, 173,  
 180, 182, 185, 194, 196, 203, 313, 315  
 Mafokate Oupa “Makhendlas” 174–175,  
 243  
 Mafološankwethabeng 32, 299  
 Mafura Girlie 16, 102, 104–105, 145  
 Magampa Pershua 298

- Magubane Cyril 212
- Magubane Gift "Maggz" 193
- Magubane Mfiliseni 293, 295
- Mahlangu Khaya 3, 10, 23, 35, 68, 70, 127, 152, 195, 206, 209–210, 213–214, 242, 244, 258, 269–270
- Mahube 107, 133, 204, 236, 278
- Mahlasela Vusi 9, 134, 199, 203–204, 215, 234, 251
- Mahlasela Basi 232, 235, 245, 248
- Mahlathini and Mahotella Queens 52–55, 63, 206, 296
- Mahlathini and The Queens 52
- Mahlathini Nezintombi Zomgqashiyo 52, 320
- Mahlatsi Teboho 156, 183–184
- Mahlelebe Special Cane 17, 243
- Mahola Zolani 127
- Maila Miranda 113
- Mailula Kgaogelo 222, 233, 244
- Maja Lesiba 299
- Majalisa Patricia 105, 152–153
- Makasi Duke 37, 87, 210, 213, 245, 249–250, 255–256, 282
- Makeba Zandi 113
- Makeba Zenzile Miriam 4, 8, 71, 73, 84, 86, 89, 91, 100, 115, 180, 195, 210, 223, 227, 230, 263–266, 272, 275, 280, 286, 301, 312
- Makgonatsohle Band 16, 51–55, 59, 206, 209
- Makhabane Sipho 330, 331, 335
- Makhalemele Ratau Mike 37, 117, 197, 227, 254–256, 282
- Makhene Blondie 10–11, 22, 33–34, 40, 44, 150, 167, 214, 220, 269, 275, 309, 326
- Makhene Clifford 35
- Makhene Motsumi 23, 81, 132
- Makhene Pappa 34, 140
- Makhene Tlale 187, 202, 223, 229, 238, 242, 290
- Makhubela Oupa "Poy–Poy" 234, 236–237
- Makhubela William "MaWillies" 169
- Makhufe 187
- Makwela Joseph 51, 53, 55, 209, 223, 328
- Malaika 12, 75, 128, 176, 179, 181, 189, 217
- Malela Philip 38–40, 49
- Malete Carlton 17, 209
- Malete Priscilla 326
- Malete Sami 329–330
- Malewa Danny "Kamazuzi" 3, 12, 140
- Malinga Robbie 80, 141, 186, 188, 218
- Malini 25, 221
- Maloi Dorcas 113
- Malombo 197, 258–259, 261, 282
- Malombo Jazz Makers 258, 282, 284
- Malope Rebecca 16, 26, 80, 98, 100–101, 104, 214, 221, 279, 315, 316, 320–322, 335
- Maluleke Jeff 203
- Malume 151
- Mamatlaruma Michael 45, 325
- Manaka Maakomele 309
- Manaka Matsemela 81, 132, 204
- Manaka Moss 72
- Manaka Nomsa 77, 229
- Manamela Ngwako 242, 270
- Manana Stompie 26, 250, 253, 267, 271
- Mandela Nelson, Dr 11, 34, 53, 62, 73–74, 94, 99, 102, 111, 123, 124, 126, 132, 134, 142, 159, 161, 182, 205, 231, 233, 261, 274, 276, 277, 281, 284–285, 308, 309, 312, 316, 317
- Mandela Winnie 73, 98, 308
- Mandoza 99, 110, 129, 170, 182–184, 189, 207, 339
- Manganyi Herman "Fox" 15, 221
- Mangena Loyiso "Chippa" 190
- Mango Groove 8, 12, 118, 127, 129
- Manhattan Brothers 264, 278, 290, 312



Manka le Phallang 58, 300  
 Mankwane Marks 21, 49, 51–54, 59, 155, 164, 206, 320  
 Manzini Girls 52, 58, 296, 326  
 Manzini Musa 209, 223, 228–229  
 Mapaputsi 96, 184, 188  
 Mapaya Geoff 81, 224, 230–231, 244  
 Mapefane Bhudaza 214  
 Maphaka Neo 5, 106, 148–149  
 Maponya Maishe 204  
 Maponya Matome 299  
 Maraqaana Siphokazi 152, 221, 288  
 Marcalex 12, 34, 131, 227  
 Marcus Wyatt Quartet 26, 211, 230, 234, 236, 245, 289–290  
 Margino 112  
 Maringa Peter 148  
 Marley Bob 5, 118, 157, 202, 283  
 Martin and Shimane 27, 33  
 Marula Boom Stars 52  
 Marumo a Ngwato 299  
 Masekela Hugh Ramapolo 2, 11, 14, 22, 35, 56–57, 64, 73, 90–91, 115, 132–133, 151–153, 189, 197, 201, 203, 209–211, 213, 214, 217, 223, 228, 236, 242, 252, 255, 264–265, 267–268, 270–272, 274–277, 280–281, 283, 285, 289, 312, 324, 338, 342  
 Maseko Zola 184, 211, 291  
 Masevhe Roxley Fhatuwani 163, 320  
 Mashaba Dumisani Alton 201  
 Mashaba Herman 77  
 Mashaba Winnie 330, 331  
 Mashamplani 169, 171, 189, 197, 315  
 Mashego Billy 37, 125  
 Mashego Collins 6, 38–39, 125  
 Mashego Mohapi 11, 119  
 Mashego Vinolia 6, 104, 108  
 Mashiane Spokes 50, 54, 56, 57, 127, 257, 290  
 Mashinini Danny 155  
 Masibuyeke Ku Jehova 327, 329  
 Masilela Lulu 37, 45, 58–59  
 Masilela Mathapelo 222  
 Masilela Mduduzi “M’Du” 15, 45, 80, 167, 169, 182, 185, 186, 260, 282, 295  
 Masinga Ntokozo 109  
 Masizakhe Christian Soldiers 334  
 Masondo David 22, 36, 61–64, 333  
 Masondo Victor 126, 128, 138, 140, 187, 209, 243, 246, 256, 332, 337  
 Masuka Dorothy 5, 12, 84, 86–87, 132, 222, 232, 285, 288  
 Masuku Mandla 91, 138, 140, 154, 251  
 Mathaba Kenneth 13, 35, 72, 130, 219, 277  
 Mathosa Lebo 160, 176–178, 208, 243  
 Mathunjwa Mac 28, 42, 69, 116–118, 141, 154, 256, 258, 274, 327  
 Mathunjwa Madoda 42, 209–210, 274  
 Mathunyane le Dinakangwedi 298  
 Matonto 198  
 Matshikiza Pat Vuyisile 2, 221–222, 252–253, 257  
 Matshikiza Todd 235, 252, 263–264, 267  
 Matshikos 105–106, 152  
 Matthews Melvyn 69  
 Mawelela Themba 112, 149, 155  
 Maxolo Lindiwe 244, 261  
 Maxy 12, 135  
 Mavi Stompie 235, 257  
 Mazana Brothers 320  
 Mazinyane Sylvester 210, 225–227, 236, 238, 239, 242  
 Mazwai Ntsiki 180  
 Mazwai Thandiswa 140, 179, 180, 254, 288, 324  
 Mbatha Dinah 38, 40  
 Mbatha Lucky 38, 39  
 Mbatha Sibusiso 64  
 Mbau Khanyi 96  
 Mbele Cosbie 291  
 Mbele Qunta 91, 154  
 Mbele Siphon 91, 140, 218, 324, 333

Mbele Thami 291  
 Mbele Vukuzenzele "Vuka" 35  
 Mbongiseni 162, 180  
 Mbuthuma Marks 33  
 Mbuli Mzwakhe 11, 12, 26, 78, 95, 167, 308, 309  
 Mbulu Letta 7, 89, 113, 133, 179, 223, 226, 229, 237, 253, 266, 272–275, 280  
 Mbuyisa Ace 111, 155, 205  
 Mchunu Cyril "Kansas City" 20  
 Mchunu Sipho 120, 122, 125, 145  
 Mchunu Zenzele "Zakes" 61, 62  
 Mcinga Lusanda 330, 333  
 MacNamara Steve 34, 150  
 Mcondobi Nobathembu 142  
 Mdlalose Thoko 65, 288  
 Mdluli Thami 7, 41, 42, 47, 107, 118, 148, 154, 326,  
 Mdunyelwa Sylvia Ncediwe 87, 132, 232, 287  
 Mekoa Johnny 80, 81, 245, 246, 248  
 Memela Almon Sandisa 36, 195  
 Memela Thokoza 19, 195  
 Merry Black Birds 55, 56, 116, 253  
 Metswako 181  
 Mfaz'Omnyama 293, 295, 300  
 Mgarimbe 194  
 Mgina Godfrey 5, 42, 219, 226, 232, 234, 235, 243  
 Mgcina Sophie Thoko 84, 86, 88, 89, 132, 287  
 Mhangwani Sam 7, 25–27, 120  
 Mhinga Tsakani 110, 243  
 Mhlaba Hlengiwe 330, 331  
 Mhlabeni Gcobani 300  
 Mhlanga Jerry 61, 206  
 Mhlanga Louis Soyaphi 3, 9, 22, 117, 129, 140, 204, 206, 216, 229, 235, 245, 290  
 Mhlongo Busi 8, 35, 107, 113, 189, 207, 208, 210, 211, 217, 221, 222, 251, 270, 287, 288, 293  
 Mhlongo Nno 155  
 Mhlongo Somizi 77, 117, 181, 288  
 Mholo Matshediso 217  
 Midnight Express 78, 100  
 Mija Abram 146, 147  
 Mike and Peter 155  
 Minerals, The 8, 18, 19, 103, 121  
 Miracles, The 67  
 Mitchell Richard 94, 98, 104, 106, 107, 117, 119, 120, 129, 134, 139, 142, 151, 154, 206, 214, 328  
 Mkhize Lindelani 80, 109, 133, 207, 269, 336–338  
 Mkhize Themba 91, 132, 134, 206, 209, 210, 211, 223, 225, 228, 234, 250, 274  
 Mkhwebane Nothembi 295, 299, 301  
 Mkiva Zolani 202, 301, 309  
 Mkwaiwa Prosper 26, 114  
 Mkhwanazi Emma 325  
 Mkwanzazi Seipati 113  
 Mlangeni Bernard Babsy 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 27, 31, 130, 211, 281, 319, 340  
 Mlangeni Fats 36, 65, 92  
 Mlangeni M'du 64  
 Mlangeni Oscar 189  
 MM Deluxe 169, 170  
 Mnculwane Cyril (Nkosi) 34, 42, 148, 149, 195  
 Mngoma Sibongile 131, 135, 267  
 Mngwandi Jimmy 5, 10, 220, 237  
 Mnisi Jacob 190  
 Mnisi Sydney "Ace" 235, 242, 282, 289  
 Mnisi Paul "Rudeboy" 111  
 Mnisi Velaphi 120  
 Mntambo "Shaluza" Max 82, 83, 225  
 Modern Jazz Sextet 257  
 Modjadji Charmaine 141  
 Moeketsi Kippie 2, 86, 151, 223, 235, 250, 252, 253, 260, 264, 267, 280–282, 312  
 Mofokeng Alpheus 153  
 Mofokeng Isaac 155

Mofokeng Mandla 13, 109, 155, 169, 170, 172, 176, 189  
 Mogale Moses 250  
 Mogane Thebe 173  
 Mogopodi Sydney 167, 198  
 Mohapi Masike "Funky" 3, 6, 9  
 Mohlala Archie 40, 60  
 Mohlala Johannes 55, 298  
 Mohlala Willie 32  
 Mojalefa Thebe 218  
 Mojapelo Athanas Jimmy 8, 15, 17–21, 23, 33, 224  
 Mokgwadi Johannes 298  
 Mokhali Johnny 42, 79, 144, 148, 198, 219, 300, 340  
 Mokoena John 44  
 Mokoena Matshidiso 112  
 Mokoena Peter 18, 22, 325, 335  
 Mokoena Sisco 18, 139  
 Mokoena Themba 42, 214, 223, 228  
 Mokoena Vuyo 19, 221, 322, 330, 332, 335–337  
 Mokonotela Peter 85, 86  
 Molapo Lerato "Lira" 110  
 Molefe Vernon 290, 291  
 Molelekwa Moses Taiwa 81, 140, 172, 223–225, 228, 231, 241–243, 260, 261, 316, 333  
 Moloele David 41, 46, 109, 120, 128  
 Moloi Nana 41, 106  
 Mombelli Carlo 290  
 Monama Lucky 51, 55  
 Monks, The  
 Monwa and Sun 168  
 Moon Brothers, The  
 Moonlight, The 329  
 Moraba Kori 18, 21, 22, 103, 148, 165, 325  
 Morabe Ishmael 176, 184–185  
 Morafe 191  
 Morake Lebo M 210, 290–291  
 Mordillo 121, 143–144  
 Moriri John 41, 58, 296, 326  
 Mosa Dan 155  
 Moss Mogale Unit 255  
 Motale Phiri 32  
 Motau Mothemola 298  
 Moticoe Peter 21, 46, 104, 112, 141, 143–144, 148, 150–151, 195, 219, 282  
 Motijoane Tsietsi Daniel 19, 130  
 Moto Kampi 310  
 Motsatse Nicholas 24  
 Motsieloa Grifiths 77  
 Motsilenyane Keabetswe "KB" 110  
 Motswako String Quartet 134  
 Movement 241  
 Movement In The City 212, 249, 260  
 Movers, The 31, 33, 39–40, 49, 58, 63, 137, 193, 205  
 Mpale Ziqqibo Dennis 16, 169, 236, 253, 276, 281–282  
 Mpharanyana 9, 22, 40, 48–49, 55, 137  
 Mpobole Lindiwe "Ashante" 111, 145  
 Mpotle Tshepiso 214  
 Mr Selwyn 190, 192  
 Mrubata McCoy 9–10, 17, 69, 140, 192, 202, 212, 235, 245, 247–248, 254, 285  
 Msawawa 190  
 Mseleku Bheki 37, 117, 230, 236–237, 250, 289  
 Mseleku Wendy 133, 140, 333, 336  
 Mshoza 63, 105, 189  
 Msomi Bibi 127, 144, 149–150, 195  
 Msomi Reggy 54, 56  
 Msomi Welcome 91, 263  
 Mthalane Doc Robert 3, 8, 211, 251  
 Mthalane Enoch 254, 274  
 Mthembu Hansford 57  
 Mthembu Princess 80, 91, 101  
 Mthembu Queens 52, 103  
 Mthembu Sam 26, 41, 47, 115–116  
 Mthembu Tshepiso 112  
 Mthethwa William 45–47, 112, 215, 309, 326, 329, 320

- Mthunzini Girls 52, 137, 288  
 Mtshali Isaac "Mnca" 40, 48, 65, 73,  
     106–107, 332  
 Mtshali Thembi 87, 90, 211–212  
 Mtukudzi Oliver 147, 202, 233, 271, 278  
 Mtya Phinda 233, 236  
 Mudie Benjy 70  
 Mukwevho Colbert 79, 162  
 Musical Roots 162, 237  
 Musik ye Afrika 9  
 Muyanga Neo 220  
 Mvula Amon 146  
 MXO 219  
 Mzambiya 189–190  
 Mzekezeke 185–186, 188  
 Mzila Charlie 122
- N**
- Namba Mthunzi 80, 109, 133, 181, 332,  
     335–336  
 Nash Neville 67, 141, 219  
 Ncandweni Christ Ambassadors 331  
 Nchang Bongani 217  
 Nciza Nhlanhla 192, 218  
 Nciza TK 186, 217  
 Ncwane S'fiso 335  
 Ndaba David 80  
 Ndaba Jabulani 186, 217  
 Ndaba Ntombi 106  
 Ndaba Queeneth 253  
 Ndaba Tim 253  
 Ndimande Monty "Saitana" 1, 3, 10, 17  
 Ndlela Enoch 92  
 Ndlovu Bonisile 153  
 Ndlovu Charlie "Babas" 3, 7, 10, 35–36  
 Ndlovu Duma 95, 175, 204, 228, 259  
 Ndlovu Kelly 119  
 Ndlovu Linda "Babe" Majika 111  
 Ndlovu Marcus 167  
 Ndlovu Mgqashiyo 293 – 294  
 Ndlovu Paul 11, 103–104, 138, 142–144,  
     160  
 Ndlovu Rev. 320  
 Ndlovu Tebogo "Zombo" 178–179  
 Ndlovu Wilson 19  
 Neighbours, The 32, 300  
 Neo Saka 111  
 Nestum 175, 178  
 New Age Kids 167, 174  
 New Holy Spirits, The 329  
 New School 22, 166, 175, 179, 183, 188,  
     194, 315, 330  
 Ngcobo "Ihash' Elimhlophe" Bheki 103,  
     121, 177, 200, 295, 309  
 Ngcobo Keith 35, 36, 80  
 Ngema Daniel 85  
 Ngema Mbongeni 64, 76, 91, 109, 111,  
     113, 133, 140, 183, 237, 259, 269–270,  
     272, 310, 342  
 Ngema Sandile 138, 332  
 Ngobeni Obed 4, 74, 296–297  
 Ngozi Winston Mankunku 230, 232,  
     235–236, 247–249, 256, 281, 289, 312  
 Ngubane Ben, Minister 340  
 Ngubane Bongani 64  
 Ngubane Vivienne 51  
 Ngubani Bongani 142  
 Ngwenya Amos 36  
 Ngwenya Moses 58, 62, 64, 91  
 Ngwenya Simon 33, 64, 328  
 Ngwenya Sipho "Psyfo" 168  
 Ngwenya Themba 36, 64, 189  
 Nhlabathi Rachel 238  
 Nhlengethwa Theo 176  
 Nkabinde Concord 216, 232, 234, 236,  
     336  
 Nkabinde Simon Mahlathini 39, 51, 53,  
     59, 302, 340  
 Nkayi Unathi 111  
 Nkosi Dan 100, 106, 114, 150  
 Nkosi Isaac "Zacks" 38–39, 210, 254  
 Nkosi Jabu 38–39, 210, 212, 254  
 Nkosi Nimrod 108, 189–190  
 Nkosi Stanley 23, 62

Nkosi West 4, 16, 18, 39, 48, 51, 53–55,  
57, 59, 85, 88, 113, 137, 153–154, 163,  
204, 209, 294, 304, 320, 328–329  
Nkosi Xoli 212, 243, 338  
Nkosi Zamo 181  
Nkuku and Jopie Sisters 296  
Nkutha Pamela 109  
Nkutha Solly 26  
Nokwe Alfred 25  
Nokwe Marilyn 114, 116–117, 127, 138  
Nokwe Papi 117  
Nokwe Tu 65, 101, 116–117, 195, 207,  
222, 255, 289, 310, 333  
Nqawana Zim 231  
Nthwane Peter 248  
Ntjapedi 128  
Ntombi Yomsuthu 113  
Nyandeni Thembi 9, 311  
Nyathela Freddy 26  
Nzimande All Stars 59  
Nzuza Godfrey 19, 102–104, 113, 126,  
154, 269

## O

Obed Ngobeni and The Kurhula Sisters 4,  
74, 296, 297  
Oda Meester 187  
Oflende 64, 301  
OJAH 267, 268  
Ojoyo 280  
Oliphant Linda 16  
Oliver Mtukudzi and The Black Spirits  
147, 202, 233, 236, 271, 278  
One People Band 161  
IVU 200  
Orchestra Baobab 75  
Oshakati 107, 120  
Oshomi 294  
Osibisa 31, 139, 288  
Osrin Ian 109, 112, 117, 143, 144, 206  
Ozila 130, 140

## P

Pacific Express 249  
Pages, The 27, 28, 30,  
Pappa and Blondie 33, 35, 77, 92  
Pat Matshikiza Trio 252  
Patrick Mabasa Na Shingange Sisters 296  
Peace 39, 91, 210, 212, 213  
Pedlars, The 42  
Perdigao Fernando 9, 14, 46, 86, 98, 119,  
126, 151, 232  
Penhale Dave 8  
Penny Penny 147, 148, 315  
Peta Emma 144–146  
Petersen Lionel 9, 22, 68  
Phaladi Lesufi le Mathumaša 298  
Phala Theo 27, 33  
Phale Thomas 37, 58, 60, 62  
Phiri George 117, 236  
Phiri Raymond Chikapa 48, 104, 136,  
137  
Phume Paul 329  
Phume Tebogo 222  
Phume Victor, Pastor 329  
Phuzekhemisi 254, 293–295, 314  
Phuzekhemisi No Khethani 294, 295  
Pickett Wilson 1, 3  
Pilane Godfrey “Guffy” 66, 80, 94, 113,  
172, 181, 182, 186, 189, 207, 217,  
270, 336  
Pitch Black Afro 96, 188, 191  
Pitch Black Follies 253  
Plaatjies Lungiswa 8, 227,  
Pleasure Invaders, The 204  
Powers, PJ 12, 28, 70, 79, 125, 126, 129,  
131, 141, 214, 247, 305  
Prince and The Buffaloes 162  
Prisoners of Strange 289, 290  
ProKid 192  
Prophets of The City 69  
Proud People’s Band 204  
Proverb 191, 192  
PT House 167

Pukwana Dudu 56, 74, 235, 268, 275,  
281–284, 288  
Pure Gold 12, 34, 35, 326, 327  
Pure Magic 16, 19, 98, 102, 315, 322, 336  
PVP 120

## Q

Quad Sisters 264

## R

Rabanye Rex 47, 63  
Rabbit 2, 88, 255  
Rabin Trevor 2, 255  
Rachabane Barney 26, 246, 250, 254,  
257, 281, 282, 285  
Ralulimi Albert 57, 287  
Ramaloko Mohlatleho 298  
Ramathoka Matlakala 334  
Rammutla Ernest 298  
Ramolefe Richard “Wadada” 162, 237  
Rampolokeng Lesego 204, 251  
Ranku Madumetja Lucky 258, 282–284  
Raseroka Godfrey 76  
Rasmataz 37, 209  
Rastaman Nkhushu 163, 164  
Rathebe Dolly 84–88, 175, 223, 254, 266,  
270, 286, 312  
Redeemed 333  
Reetsang Lesego 221  
Return 282  
Revolution 18, 178, 192  
Rhikoto Lefty 105, 112, 121, 143, 144,  
155  
Rhythm Shots 56  
Ricardo 12, 68  
Richard Maceke na Makhasa Sisters 296  
Robot Ronnie 2, 80, 149, 155, 255  
Rockets, The 9, 12, 25, 67  
Rogodin Lionel 264  
Rose Larry 125  
Rosenthal Hilton 123  
Ruby Roepsie 168

Rufaro 10, 119, 154  
Rustenburg Boys 303, 319

## S

Sabani Monwabisi 155  
Safika 100, 256  
Sakhile 10, 13, 35, 71, 138, 154, 206,  
209–212, 258, 261  
Sami and The Revival 329  
Sampson Vicky 70, 131, 133, 142  
Samuel Nkuna and The Bankuna Sisters  
296  
Sandilands Alexander 319  
Sankomota 16, 116, 144, 207, 213, 214,  
335  
Saul Pinise 282, 284  
Savuka 123  
Seate Stoan 179, 181, 191  
Sechele Master 98  
Sedibe Nelcy 18, 55, 107, 154  
Seed 181  
Seete Thembi 176  
Segal Dave 65, 105, 138, 139, 152, 153,  
158, 159, 161, 253  
Segale Wings 36, 91, 151, 209, 333  
Segoai Oupa 3, 8  
Segona Peter 283  
Segona Thelma “Ndo” 3, 9, 18  
Sehume Ronnie 264  
Sehume Tlokwe 240, 299  
Sejeng Charles 80, 155  
Selota Selaelo 189, 199, 223, 225, 226,  
228, 229, 233, 237, 238, 239  
Semenya Caiphus 7, 38, 103, 107, 113,  
206, 207, 209, 211, 223, 226, 229,  
255, 268, 272, 274, 275, 278, 281,  
286, 288, 290, 291  
Semenya Muntu 291  
Sengwayo Freedom 329  
Sensation 167  
Senyaka 45  
Senyaka Kekana 12, 13, 95



Senyatso Lucas 232, 236  
 Sephuma Judith 142, 152, 173, 223, 226,  
 228, 232, 236–239, 253  
 Sesoko Queen 178  
 Serudu Stephen Maje, Prof. 317  
 Shabalala Bhekisizwe Joseph 63, 86, 304,  
 305, 342  
 Shabangu Lucky 199  
 Shabangu Nhlanhla 199  
 Shabangu Veli 138, 140, 305, 332  
 Shadiii 16, 115, 118  
 Shakawe 276, 277, 281  
 Shalo Vine 339  
 Shandel Selwyn 9, 10, 18, 29, 70, 91, 94,  
 120, 147, 154, 162, 168, 169, 198  
 Shange Kwazi 234, 240  
 Shange Pat 43, 66, 97, 114, 155, 163, 169  
 Shange Sandile 246  
 Shange Vusi 11, 34, 40, 106  
 Shanty Town Sextet 252  
 Sheer All Stars 9, 212, 245, 247, 248  
 Shirinda M.D 11, 145, 150, 296, 297  
 Shongwe and Khuphuka Saved Group  
 331  
 Short Lee 117, 144, 148, 152, 154, 195  
 Shuping Oleseng 325, 330  
 Shwi nomtekhalala 25, 293, 296, 301  
 Sibiya Abe 15, 80, 129, 216, 287  
 Sibiya Mandla 58  
 Sibumbe Jabu 19, 28, 40, 104, 119, 137–  
 139, 144, 161, 209, 243  
 Silgee Wilson 56252, 253  
 Silinga Alan 85, 237, 263, 307  
 Siluma Richard 45, 64–66, 72, 106, 107,  
 109, 117, 139, 158, 159, 161, 162,  
 164, 195, 289  
 Siluma Tiny 109, 183, 243  
 Simelane David 151  
 Simon Paul 23, 60, 73, 138, 151, 255,  
 270, 280, 297, 305  
 Sinah Dombolo and The Derricans 106  
 Sinakho Dance Band 65  
 Singana Margaret 5, 17, 18, 84, 87, 88,  
 235, 287  
 Siphon Johnson 159, 162  
 Sister Blaze 112  
 Sister H 112  
 Sithatho Lesley 199  
 Sithatho Percy 199  
 Sithole Chris 155  
 Sithole Henry 37, 213, 254  
 Sithole Jabu 168  
 Sithole Josh 56  
 Sithole Khululiwe 113, 140, 206, 207  
 Sithole Leonard 26, 77  
 Sithole Mabutho “Kid” 23  
 Sithole Siphon 194, 207, 222  
 Sithole Vasco 143  
 Sithole Zamajobe 223, 243, 332  
 Skeem 69, 184, 185, 315  
 Skeyi Veliswa 334  
 Skwatta Kamp 69, 191  
 Sky Blazers, The 164  
 Skylarks 89, 115, 263, 264, 266, 273  
 Skyway Band 157  
 Slaves 34, 65, 139, 158, 159, 161, 170  
 Sledge Percy 3, 48  
 Sliq Angel 219  
 Smith Colin 108, 168  
 Smith Ernie 69, 228, 234, 236, 316  
 Smith Jimmy 63  
 Smith Richard Jon 67  
 Smith Will 110  
 Smoedern Girls 52  
 Snyman Barry 140  
 Snyman Peter 94, 167, 169  
 Sokhela Junior 176, 179  
 Solly and The Soul Hearts 155  
 Songamasu 8, 251  
 Sons of Selassie 162  
 Sontonga Enoch 271, 311  
 Soshanguve Black Tycoons 80, 340  
 Soul Brothers, The 28, 31, 36, 58, 61–64,  
 66, 74, 120, 220, 269, 316, 333

- Soul Crusaders, The 42  
 Soul'd Out 181  
 Soul Fingers 42  
 Soul Jazzmen 236, 256, 281  
 Sound Busters 41, 118, 148  
 Sounds, The 37, 208, 209  
 South African Naval Band 230  
 South of Sahara 81  
 Soweto Gospel Choir 339  
 Soweto Youth Jazz Band 242  
 Soweto Soul Orchestra 3  
 Soweto Stars 52  
 Soweto String Quartet, The 134, 215, 228  
 Sox 36, 41, 47, 116, 150, 192  
 Spankk 33, 34  
 Spear 282  
 Special 5 64, 294  
 Speedy 175, 179, 180, 188  
 Spike and Steel 81  
 Spirits Rejoice 210, 213, 249  
 Splash 81, 105, 119, 152, 153  
 Spokes H 25, 43, 44, 113  
 Springbok Nude Girls 123, 128  
 Square Souls, The 37, 208  
 Staple Lorraine 79, 91, 106  
 Stargo Man 155  
 Starlite 126  
 Starr Ringo 36, 73, 202  
 Stax 69, 140, 154  
 Stehr Lance 185  
 Step Ahead 32, 92, 94  
 Stephanou Taso 81, 196, 313  
 Stevenson Dane 112, 162  
 Stimela 3, 4, 10, 13, 16, 19, 28, 31, 36,  
     40, 48, 76, 77, 80, 81, 91, 104, 117,  
     119, 127, 136–142, 152, 171, 221, 224,  
     227, 247, 270, 271  
 St James Church Choir 320  
 St Moses Choir 320  
 Stouters, The 217  
 Street Kids 4, 75, 77, 104, 138, 141, 142  
 Sunbeams 89, 264  
 Supa Frika 18  
 Super Soul 65, 158  
 Survival 106  
 Survivals, The 106  
 Survivors, The 164  
 Swanky Spots 273  
 Sweet Chocolate 67  
 Sweet Desire 120  
 Syndicate Sisters 167  
 System Enemy 159, 164
- T**
- Tabane Nchipi Philip, Dr 192, 211, 223,  
     238, 240, 241, 250, 257–260, 277, 284,  
     299, 300  
 Taboo 7, 41, 107, 118, 148, 174  
 Tladi Moss 19, 144  
 Tananas 212, 215, 216  
 Taola 225, 239  
 Tau Bokoda 16, 45  
 Teanet Forsta 145, 146  
 Teanet Peta 104, 105, 112, 139, 144–147,  
     159, 163, 314, 315  
 Teenage Lovers, The 47, 63  
 Tembisa Happy Queens 41, 115  
 Thami and The M Bees 290  
 Thema Derrick 23  
 Thembinkosi 183, 186, 217, 322  
 Thetha 13, 36, 81, 138, 151, 209, 233  
 Third Wave, The 156  
 Thisha 64  
 Thiza 44  
 Thobejane Gabriel Segwagwa 8, 209, 211,  
     223, 238, 246, 251, 258, 261  
 Thomas Chauke na Shinyori Sisters 296,  
     298, 314  
 Thomas Mapfumo and Blacks Unlimited  
     146, 241  
 Thomas Timmy 3, 76  
 Three Tenors, The 307  
 Thrilling Artists 150, 162, 301  
 Thwalofu 293, 296

Thwalofu namaKhentshane 293, 296  
 Tidal Waves 164  
 Tiny Tots 17, 92, 121  
 TKZee 169, 171, 173, 182, 183, 198, 224  
 Tladi Joeman 116, 143  
 Tladi Lefifi 204, 250  
 Tladi Peter 25, 26, 52, 82, 101, 102, 104,  
     245, 323, 335  
 Tlokwe Sehume and Medu 299  
 Tloubatla Hildah 51, 53, 55, 79  
 TNT's, The 21  
 Tortoise 37  
 Tou 201  
 Toure Kwame 265  
 Travolta John 76  
 Treasured Voices 335  
 Tribe 230  
 Trio, The 29, 141, 197  
 Trompies 13–15, 170–172, 176, 315  
 Trully Fully Hey Wow Band 230  
 Trybe 187, 189  
 Tshabalala Arthur 270  
 Tshabalala Peter Chilly 45, 81  
 Tshabalala Pirate "Pi" 16, 18, 35  
 Tshabalala Tokollo 169, 171, 182  
 Tshanda Daniel 105, 119, 152, 153  
 Tshola Tsepo 11, 95, 99, 126, 151, 204,  
     213, 214, 221, 254, 270, 309, 322, 340  
 Tsoaeli Motlatsi Herbie 26, 107, 118, 209,  
     232, 234, 236, 249  
 Tuks Senganga 191  
 Tuxedo Slickers 278  
 Twala Sello "Chicco" 3, 5, 45, 98, 119,  
     167, 174, 227, 325, 333  
 Twala Todd 8, 311  
 Twasa 8, 108, 288  
 Twins 197, 199, 200, 332  
 2 Black 2 Strong 168  
 Tyamara Lundi 330, 334  
 Tyte 193  
 T'Zozo and Professor 186, 217

## U

UB40 157, 202  
 Uhuru 141, 213, 214, 275  
 Uju 188  
 Ukhamba Lo Mvaleliso 65  
 Umanji 199  
 Umbongo 224  
 Umqokoz' Obomvu 328  
 Umoja 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 114, 148,  
 Unofficial Language 244  
 Usual, The 129

## V

Vaal Express 45  
 Valiants, The 260  
 Van Graan Mike 267  
 Van Niekerk 43, 44  
 Van Wyk Attie 67, 68, 97  
 Vardas George 167  
 Varikweru 36  
 Velvet Tenors, The 307  
 Venda Kids 34, 150  
 Victor and The Rasta Rebels 164  
 Victor Mhleli 90, 147, 169, 185  
 VIP's, The 36  
 Virtual Jazz Reality 230  
 Viva Music for New South Africans 285,  
     309  
 Vivid Africa 247  
 Volcano 55, 107, 153  
 Vuma Tom 16, 18, 27–29, 32, 154, 168,  
     298, 326  
 Vundla Mfundi 180, 198, 229  
 Vundla Philip 93

## W

Wa'De 154  
 Walter and The Beggars 52, 154  
 WATAJA 140  
 Watson Mally 29, 33, 90, 93, 94, 96, 108,  
     112, 120, 151, 162, 168, 169, 330  
 Watson Rob 232

Wavelets, The 48, 137  
 Whiplashes 163  
 White Joy 78, 138, 141  
 Whoosha 155  
 Wikid 40, 193  
 Wilbur Music Group 90  
 Wildeman Tshidi 119, 160  
 Willie and Paul 27, 32  
 Willie Max Big Band, The 278  
 Wingate Sam 107, 116, 117, 154, 219, 309, 328  
 Witsieshoek Pulamadiboho 328  
 Wonder Stevie 15, 21, 73, 131, 221  
 Woody Woodpeckers, The 246, 272  
 Work Force, The 249  
 Worship House 301, 337  
 Woza Africa 81, 299  
 Wyatt Marcus 26, 211, 230, 234, 236, 245, 289, 290

## **X**

Xarila 11  
 Xesu Roger Klizanie 256  
 Ximba Vusi 58  
 Xulu Hebert 98, 100, 106  
 Xulu Wanda 313

## **Y**

Yenana Andile 26, 107, 118, 234–236, 248, 249, 261  
 Yende Queen 112

Young Brothers, The 61  
 Young Five 4, 45, 46, 215  
 Young Lovers, The 35, 209  
 Young Masters, The 225  
 Young Ones, The 148

## **Z**

Zabalaza 46, 309  
 Zaiko Langa Langa 54  
 Zako Sizwe 16, 19, 45, 100–102, 104, 105, 118, 321, 323, 334  
 Zasha 65, 154, 159  
 ZCC Female Choir 324  
 ZCC Mokhukhu 324  
 Zia 111, 129  
 Zikalala Mandla 248, 270  
 Ziqubu Condry 3, 6, 7, 31, 38, 39, 91, 107, 118, 127, 155, 274  
 Zila 281, 282  
 Zipp 34  
 Zoghby Emil 32, 33  
 Zola 75, 96, 183, 184  
 Zulu American 62  
 Zulu Messengers 301  
 Zulu Thandi 112  
 Zungu Ntokozo 28, 138, 140, 141, 189, 234, 243, 305  
 Zuthai Soulman 156