

CHATRADARI DEVROOP & CHRIS WALTON



UNSUNG

*South African Jazz Musicians
under Apartheid*

Umsung

South African Jazz Musicians under Apartheid

EDITORS

Chatradari Devroop & Chris Walton



UNSUNG: South African Jazz Musicians under Apartheid

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Chatradari Devroop

LISTENING TO THE GREY SCALES

We acquired our first television set in 1976, just after the first broadcasts had begun in South Africa. It was a black-and-white one, bought for us by my grandmother with her pension money. Her justification for acquiring this new technology was the growing political violence that surrounded us. She felt sure that the broadcasts on television would not only entertain her grandchildren, but keep them off the streets and out of trouble. She was not wrong in her assumption that it would change the life of our household. For now our schedule ran as follows: homework in the afternoon, supper at six, the news on television at eight, and whatever programmes followed thereafter. Television broadcasts at the time were limited, beginning only at six in the evening on weekdays, and at three in the afternoon over weekends.

The late arrival of television in South Africa was the result of a decision at the highest level of government. The apartheid régime had until then resisted its introduction on account of its supposedly ‘hypnotic’ and corrupting effect on an unsuspecting populace. Its prime opponent was Dr Albert Hertzog, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs in the 1960s, who likened this ‘miniature bioscope’ to ‘spiritual opium’. He painted a grim picture of it bringing communism, sex, murder and torture into the family home, and predicted a wave of violence among ‘the Bantu’ if they were allowed access to it.¹ As it happened, TV came to South Africa at the very time of the Soweto riots, when over five hundred of our fellow citizens were slain. There was murder and torture enough on our streets, but the perpetrator was of course the same government whose censors endeavoured to keep objective reporting of it off our TV sets.

My father was a bandleader, so our household was full of music of all genres – except Western art music. Tuesday and Thursday nights were band practice nights, and our entertainment at home alternated between this and watching television. The government was right in fearing that we would be ‘hypnotized’, but what actually hypnotized me were the gaps between programmes. These were usually three to five minutes long, and they were not filled by commercials but by short, pre-recorded music performances. Afrikaner folk and popular music, some Country and Western, and a large dosage of Western art

¹ See Hertzog’s comments in the National Assembly of 22 May 1963 and 2 May 1967, in *Debatte van die Volksraad (Hansard)*, 18 January – 28 June 1963, cols. 6851-6858, and 20 January – 15 June 1967, cols. 5489-5490 respectively. Elsie River: Nasionale Handelsdrukkery Beperk.

music formed the bulk of these mini-broadcasts in those years. Occasionally, however, the music performed would comprise easy-listening tunes, jazz standards, hits from musicals, and ballroom dance or Latin numbers, interspersed with the odd solo over a chorus. This was also the kind of music that I played and listened to at home.

During these intermezzi, I occasionally observed a very fine jazz pianist. Sadly, though, his face was never shown; we only saw his hands. He had an exemplary technique and a fine feel for swing, combined with a comprehensive understanding of harmony and style. But we were never told who he was. All I could see, and all I can remember now, were those chubby fingers that ‘tickled’ the keys with great ease and accuracy. Some three years later, on a list of credits following one such intermezzo, the name of the pianist was revealed as being ‘Lionel Martin’. The name had a nice, Western, English, liberal ring to it, and confirmed my suspicion that he had to be from overseas, because to my knowledge no one local was capable of giving such performances.

Back in the year 2000, over a cup of coffee with my music mentor, Noel Stockton, I brought up the subject of Lionel Martin, as I wanted to meet him. Noel told me that they had worked together as session musicians at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). In his opinion, Martin was one of the finest jazz pianists that our country had ever produced. But not only was he thoroughly South African, born and bred here, he was in fact of Indian descent, and his real name was Lionel Pillay. ‘Lionel Martin’ was a stage name that he had been forced to adopt in order to conform to the political agenda at the SABC, where a non-white face could not be shown playing what non-white men were officially deemed incapable of.

Although television was broadcast in colour, most television owners – especially the non-white ones, like us – could only afford black-and-white sets, as they were less than half the price. So the only colours on our TV were varying shades on the greyscale. ‘Lionel Martin’s’ enforced pseudonym, coupled with the greyness of his hands, created an ambiguity that suited the apartheid government’s political agenda. The whiteness of his name washed away any doubts one might have had that his hands were perhaps a little darker than they ‘should’ have been.

I was now more curious than ever to meet Lionel Pillay, and even hoped I might perform with him at some stage. I certainly wanted to document his contribution to jazz in South Africa. But he had disappeared. In 2003, during a conversation with Melvin Peters – another fine South African jazz pianist of Indian descent – I learnt that he had spotted Lionel outside a fancy hotel in

Durban. He was dressed like a tramp – so poorly that Melvin barely recognized him. I subsequently managed to establish contact with Lionel, but he passed away in September 2003, just two weeks before I was due to interview him. Evidence that I gathered after his death revealed that he had suffered from ill health; during his last years, he had apparently been committed to the Fort Napier Forensic and Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Hospital in my own home town of Pietermaritzburg, though the extant information on this is both scanty and self-contradictory. These few lines here are probably the only written record of what a great musician South Africa lost when he died. Sadly, the bulk of his contribution to South African jazz remains as yet undocumented. And Lionel's fate mirrors that of several other South African jazz musicians, both at home and abroad.

As it happens, Lionel's gradual retreat from public performance coincided with my appearance on the music circuit. Commercial popular music, ballroom and Latin dance music, Afro-jazz, Indian Film Music and Western art music – these formed the repertoire of my musical engagements. As for my exposure to art music: as 'non-whites', we were never allowed into the concert halls of my home town, Pietermaritzburg – except, of course, as cleaners, errand boys or to do other menial jobs. But my grandmother was an accomplished cook, and when I was a boy, I was allowed to assist her with the catering for orchestra members during the intervals. This allowed me the opportunity to sneak into concerts in order to catch a glimpse of what they were all about. When I later began to perform, I was not formally employed, for this was very difficult for musicians 'of colour' at the time. I had to be content with regular dance band gigs at local hotels and restaurants. Most of the entertainment venues, however, employed exclusively 'white' musicians, and in order to get work, one had to find a way of joining one of the bands that performed there. This was not impossible, but our 'unofficial' band membership brought with it a host of problems. We were never treated as equal to our white counterparts, regardless of whether or not we happened to be the better players. Travel was also a problem, since most forms of public transport that serviced these venues were for 'whites only'. We 'non-white' musicians therefore had to procure a lift with a friend, or – more often – walk the long distances to the venue.

Even the venues that allowed such 'grey' activities had restrictive regulations with regard to access, dress code and the use of facilities. I was never allowed to be seen entering or leaving through the main doors. Non-white musicians had to enter and leave through either the fire exit, the kitchen, or the exit by the toilets. There were no changing rooms for us, no shower facilities, and – in some instances – no toilets either. Sometimes I would arrive at a gig in my

performance outfit, having just walked up to five kilometres with my saxophone case in my hand. During the breaks between sets, I was never allowed to drink at the bar, to eat with my white musician colleagues, or to talk to the patrons. I was to be heard, but not seen.

Most of the repertoire that we performed comprised watered-down versions of the jazz standards of the time, with little scope for improvisation. The 'non-white' venues where we played, on the other hand, did allow us to play our jazz repertoire. But most of them just wanted ballroom dance music. At those places, drugs (mostly dagga), cigarettes, sex and alcohol were the order of the day. This fact, coupled with the intense political climate, led to some musicians becoming addicted, with several of them later dying from substance abuse. It was under these circumstances and conditions that my jazz and popular music education took place; it was thus largely an oral tradition.

All these events shaped my musical life, and have prompted me, too, to put together this book. The individuals chosen for interview here all made an immense contribution to jazz in South Africa. This book is thus my attempt both to preserve their legacy, and to highlight the plight of such musicians during the years of apartheid. Since 1994, there has been a surge of books, magazine articles and accolades of all kinds for the South African musicians who went into exile. For me and for my contemporaries, sadly, several of these 'exiles' remained just names during our formative years. We neither saw nor heard them perform 'live'. The musicians who remained in South Africa during the years of oppression are the ones to whom I more easily relate. While I experienced some of them only through the media – such as the late Lionel Pillay – there were others whom I saw at live gigs, with whom I took private lessons, or with whom I simply would 'hang out' in the hope that I might get a lucky break, or pick up a few pointers. These, together, are the ones who really shaped the careers of musicians like myself.

The impact of these men who stayed behind, who fought the struggle from within the borders of South Africa, was vital, especially since jazz and popular music were not offered for study at any major tertiary institution in South Africa during my youth. Western art music curricula dominated formal music study at these state institutions – and, in many instances, they still do. This was itself a result of the apartheid policies of the day, which had long declared only Western art music to be worthy of study, and also insisted that it was a domain for whites alone. Even today, despite being one of very few non-white graduates in art music from Pietermaritzburg, and despite having been privileged to perform in Europe and the USA with some of the leading

exponents of my art, I have never been asked to perform art music in my home town. Instead, I am known and accepted there for my activities in jazz, Indian and popular music – genres long regarded as ‘non-white’ activities.

Not until the 1980s did formal studies in jazz emerge at the predominantly white, tertiary institutions in South Africa. In the absence of such programmes in jazz education, any interested students had to learn from some mentor or individual in the community. Invariably, most of these individuals were self-taught, having acquired their skills from listening either to radio broadcasts, or to vinyl recordings (many of them smuggled into the country), and then copying what they heard. The musicians who remained in South Africa were thus pivotal in ensuring the survival of jazz as an art form here. In recent years, several texts have been published on South African jazz by various authors – the relevant titles are given in the literature list at the end of this book. But attention has been focussed largely on the musicians who went into exile. Given my personal experiences on the South African music scene, and the current international interest in South African music, I too felt a need to write a book on jazz in our country, but from the performer’s perspective. The musicians featured in it would be musicians who stayed: musicians to whom I myself can relate, or to whom I have a connection of some kind. These men have had rich, enriching lives, and I felt that the best way to explore their story would be to give them the opportunity to tell it themselves.

What is particularly gratifying is that all of the musicians featured in this book are still making a valuable contribution to South African jazz. Sadly, though, still only a few of them now receive the recognition they deserve from the music industry itself. And many of the major institutions in music education still do not acknowledge the contribution that these jazz masters have made to our art form in South Africa. They remain ‘unsung’; heard but still not ‘seen’. This book is a first attempt to change that, by telling their story and by documenting their legacy.

Chatradari Devroop

TRANSCRIBING HISTORY

Our pool of interviewees for the present book was initially kept as wide as possible, though the criteria for selecting them, of course, were specific. Diversity was important: of background, of place and of instrument, and so was a balance between pedagogues and pure practitioners. They were all, however, to be musicians who had not gone into exile. As anticipated, the final number of completed interviews was much smaller than the original pool – there are ten published here. Several people simply never arrived for their interviews. Some of those who did keep their appointments were either drunk, high on pot, or suffering from such a hangover that they were simply incomprehensible. To spare the interviewees, the editors and the reader any unnecessary embarrassment, those interviews have not been included here. Several people rejected our request to participate. The reasons that they cited were diverse, ranging from contractual obligations with their management and/or record label, to our refusal to meet their demands for exorbitant payment, to trepidation in some cases regarding our intentions, on account of our association with a historically racist university that had long endeavoured to keep out of its curriculum whatever was not deemed ‘Western art music’. No interviewees were paid; all participation took place on a voluntary basis.

The interviews were based on a set of predetermined questions, and were recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Allowances were naturally made for diversions from the original questions. Chatradari Devroop conducted most of the interviews. However, due to coordination problems with interviewees from the Cape Town area, we were forced to seek the assistance of a third party in conducting the interviews with Robbie Jansen, Anthony Schilder and Tete Mbambisa. This was Gareth Crawford, a jazz musician with a great knowledge of his field who was personally acquainted with the musicians in question. Gareth immediately agreed to carry out the interviews, and the editors wish to record their gratitude to him for his kind assistance. The introduction to each interview, including those by Gareth, is in each case by Chatradari Devroop.

The footnotes offer brief background information on people, institutions and places wherever possible, though for reasons of space this information is given only once, not at each and every recurrence of the name. All names are included in the index, both those in the main body of the text and in the notes. Every attempt was made to acquire accurate data: names and facts were cross-checked with the musicians themselves, their friends and families, with the

current literature, and with the archives of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, the South African Music Rights Organization and the Musicians' Union of South Africa. Internet searches in Google, JSTOR and elsewhere also proved useful. We even had to resort to Yvonne Huskisson's *Bantu Composers of South Africa*, an apartheid-era instrument of encyclopaedic segregation, for some names and dates were only to be found there. However, in some cases, places, dates and references could not be validated at all, while in others, the written sources and the musicians themselves could not even agree on matters as basic as dates of birth and the orthography of names. Where names mentioned in the interviews could not be found in any extant records, these have been spelt phonetically. We have thus on occasion had to choose what seemed the most reliable of several unreliable sources. Nor are we alone in encountering these problems; in the course of our work, we have discovered that even the most recent, most reliable literature on South African jazz teems with minor factual inaccuracies. While the editors of the present volume have endeavoured to avoid such errors, we naturally assume full responsibility for any that might remain.

Given that our interviewees naturally did not refer to literature either current or past while talking into the microphone, to offer a large 'bibliography' at the close of this book would have been somewhat inappropriate. We have naturally had recourse to consult a vast array of sources during the editing process, but primarily – as intimated above – in order to ascertain the most basic facts, names and dates. We therefore, in place of a bibliography, offer a selective list of the more recent literature on our topic.

We have here retained intentionally a certain rawness in the text, in order to reflect the interviewee's personal modes of expression and to maintain his original flow of thought. However, a firm editorial hand was also often necessary. Ideally, any editorial alterations to a text should always be identified in the punctuation (e.g. with square brackets and the like). But to have identified every intervention, both large and small, would on the one hand have disturbed unduly the momentum of the text, while on the other it would have risked a charge of condescension against the editors by implicitly placing them 'above' their informants in an artificially constructed, authorial hierarchy. Nothing was further from our intention; and besides, no one speaks in perfectly formed sentences and paragraphs replete with perfect punctuation (though Theodor Adorno is said by some sources to have been an exception). We have therefore, without comment, added occasional prepositions, conjunctions and the like where they were necessary in order to clarify the content. Furthermore, we have excised many repetitions, in particular of those brief

colloquial phrases with which we all pepper our speech, but that we would not normally commit to paper ('you know', 'I think', 'I mean', etc.). The content of the interviews remained otherwise unaltered. All the interviewees were shown a copy of their edited text, and given the opportunity to emend it where they saw fit.

Chatradari Devroop & Chris Walton
University of Pretoria
November 2006

JOHNNY MEKOA (b. 1945)

The Milton Academy Jazz Band from Boston was touring South Africa, and I volunteered to escort them to a few jazz destinations I knew of. One such venue was the Gauteng Music Academy, situated in Daveyton, Benoni. On arriving in Daveyton on this blistering hot day, we were confronted with a dilapidated building with most windowpanes broken, toilet facilities that barely worked, and no air conditioning. But what I heard coming from this building amazed me. Jazz standards were being played as if this were the lifeblood of the musicians performing. Upon entering, we were welcomed by its director and founder – Johnny Mekoa. This was the Johnny I had heard so much about, back in my native KwaZulu-Natal, the guy who in his forties had quit his job to go and study jazz as an undergraduate, and who went on to study at Indiana University under the legendary David Baker. This experience moved me to such a degree that I had to find out more from Johnny how this project was realized. What evolved from this initial contact was a friendship that I today cherish dearly.

Chats Devroop: *Is there any one defining moment in your career that you'd like to talk about?*

Johnny Mekoa: *Ja, in 1986, you know, when I decided to leave my full-time optical dispensing job. I decided to quit, because my love for music was very strong. It was something that had been bugging me for many years. As you know, in 1967 I was playing with Barney Rachabane¹, Pat Matshikiza,² Ernest Mothle,³ the late Early Mabuza⁴ and Vicky Mhlongo,⁵ who was married to Early, the leader of the Early Mabuza Big Five. We got banned from white licensed places and white night clubs, and we were playing the only five-star*

For reasons of space, biographical information is offered in the footnotes only at the first mention of names. Where the nationality of a person is not given below, then the reader may assume that he or she is South African.

¹ Barney Rachabane – saxophonist, interviewed later in this book.

² Pat Matshikiza – pianist and composer, born 1938. Nephew of Todd (1922-68).

³ Ernest Mothle – jazz bassist and composer from Pretoria, born 1941, today a part-time lecturer at the Tshwane University of Technology.

⁴ Early Mabuza – born in Sophiatown; died in 1969. Jazz drummer; played with Abdullah Ibrahim in the 1950s, later was leader of the 'Early Mabuza Big Five'. Married the vocalist Vicky (Busi) Mhlongo.

⁵ Vicky (Busi) Mhlongo – jazz/Afro-jazz vocalist, born in Inanda in KwaZulu-Natal.

hotel on the beachfront then, which was the Casuarie, you know, the Edward Hotel.



Johnny Mekoa (left) teaching

CD: The Edward in Durban?

JM: *Ja*, in Durban. I formed the Jazz Ministers; the late Bra Vic Ndlazilwane⁶ came on as music director, and gave the group a very strong positive musical direction, with his brilliant compositional skills. He was gifted. In 1972 we were invited to the prestigious New York Jazz Festival. All the rest of the band members got their passports, but I did not, they refused. In 1973 we were invited, and they refused me a passport; in 1974 they refused me a passport; in 1975 they refused me a passport. Until 1976. That was when the Soweto riots happened. They relented and gave me some sort of special three-month passport to go to New York, and I went. It was the Bicentennial Celebrations of the USA. They wanted us to play on the Paul Kruger Battleship that sank off the Cape Coast afterwards. There were two hundred battleships from all over the world shooting twenty-one gun salutes as part of the USA Bicentennial Celebrations. I refused. I said: 'No, I am not going to play on the oppressors' ship, no ways'. And we played on a replica of a slave boat, the *Amistad* (the one that became a big film).

⁶ Victor Ndlazilwane – born in Benoni in 1933, died in Boksburg Benoni Hospital in 1978. Composer, bandleader of the Jazz Ministers.

We played on that boat replica along the Hudson and East River. *Ja*, for me it was symbolic to play on that boat. And of course, I came back home. It was like it was one's destiny. I mean: here I got the opportunity to stay in America. Frank Foster and the others said: 'Man, stick around, we will organize a scholarship for you, don't go back', but I said: 'No'. Bra Vic said: 'Let's go back, Johnny', and I respected him very much. I came back home.

The defining moment in my career was when I told my wife that I would love to go to school and study for a music degree at the University of Natal. That happened in 1986, as I told you. I started working, you know, apprenticed as an optical dispenser from 1967. And after having worked for almost twenty years in optical dispensing, I gave up my job. I was in a secure job earning a lot of bucks, but I just left it. I went and taught at Fuba⁷ for most of the year. Then in 1987, I went to the University.

CD: *How old were you then?*

JM: 41 years of age.

CD: *At 41 years of age you started studying for your degree?*

JM: *Ja*, 41 years of age. You know, when we were seated in the lecture rooms, the students would look round at me. And I said: 'No, no, listen to the lecturer in front'. They were saying: 'Excuse me Sir, excuse me Prof, which University do you come from?' They thought I was a visiting professor, you know. So I said: 'No, I am a student, I am a first-year BMus student'. They said: 'What!', I said: 'Yes, I have come to learn'. I said: 'Can you guess my age?' and most of them would say '34/35 years'. So I said: 'Oh, wow, that is the best compliment I ever got, I have looked after myself very well!', and in the meantime I was 41.

You know, just after one year we formed the Jazzanians, with all young energetic players. Zim Ngqawana,⁸ Victor Masondo,⁹ Melvin Peters,¹⁰ Andrew Eagle¹¹ on guitar and the late Alan Paton's grandson, Nick Paton¹² playing tenor

⁷ Fuba – music school in Soweto, Johannesburg.

⁸ Zim Ngqawana – Xhosa saxophonist, flautist, clarinettist, keyboard player and composer, born 1959.

⁹ Victor Masondo – Johannesburg bassist, composer, arranger and producer for artists such as Miriam Makeba.

¹⁰ Melvin Peters – jazz pianist, born 1963 in Natal, taught jazz at the University of Durban-Westville.

¹¹ Andrew Eagle – guitarist, composer and bandleader, relocated to London.

¹² Nick Paton – saxophonist and composer, now lives in London as a computer programmer.

saxophone, and we also had Rick van Heerden,¹³ who lectures at the DSG [Diocesan School for Girls] in Grahamstown. After a year, the Jazzanians were invited to go to the International Association for Jazz Education Conference in the USA. In January 1988, we went to Detroit, Michigan and we had a USA tour. We even went to Darius [Brubeck]'s¹⁴ home, you know, in Wilton in Connecticut. It was a great honour, playing in church with the legendary Dave Brubeck, his dad. You would be aware that, in my first year of study, part of my University fees was paid by a donation from Darius' father, Dave Brubeck.

CD: *Oh! I wasn't aware of this.*

JM: *Ja*, and in my hometown, a lot of people were not aware that I had gone back to school. The late Elliot Makaye, the Entertainment Editor for the *Sowetan*, wanted to do a major story on it. But I said: 'Man, please, I just want to keep this very low, don't write about it'. The only time people realized, you know, that's when Sandile Memela,¹⁵ – I think it was Sandile Memela, *ja*, or one of the big reporters for *City Press* – when they did a centre-spread report about me leading the Jazzanians at this prestigious Jazz Education Conference in the USA. That's when my home country realized why I had been scarce in Daveyton.

You know, even when the Jazzanians had to leave for New York, I had problems in getting my passport, because of my previous political background. I came from Kilnerton, we were the last batch that was chucked out by the apartheid regime. Dikgang Moseneke, a famous judge today, was also at the Kilnerton training institution. Tommy Mohajana, Prof. Sam Shakong and Johnny Nchabeleng too, these are all brothers of mine and we grew up together. They went into exile. In 1962, I nearly went into exile too, but just in the nick of time Caiphus Semenya¹⁶ from Benoni took me to Dorkay House,¹⁷ and I got that musical link with Barney Rachabane and Pat Matshikiza.

¹³ Rick van Heerden – saxophonist and music teacher.

¹⁴ Darius Brubeck – American jazz musician (son of Dave), set up the first tertiary jazz programme in South Africa, established at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the 1980s.

¹⁵ Sandile Memela – Soweto-raised, award-winning journalist and media critic.

¹⁶ Caiphus Semenya – composer and musician, went into exile in the 1960s together with his wife, Letta Mbulu. Semenya wrote the music for the film of Alex Haley's *Roots*, and was nominated for an Oscar for his music to Steven Spielberg's film *The Color Purple*. Returned from exile in 1990.

¹⁷ Dorkay House – home to the Union of South African Artists (USAA) at 5B Eloff Street Extension, Johannesburg, which was created in order 'to protect the interests of black performers'.



Dorkay House today

And when I was supposed to go for my graduation ceremony [at Natal], Abdullah [Ibrahim¹⁸] heard me play with the University of Natal Jazz Orchestra. It was when he came back from exile in 1990. He loved my playing. In January 1991, he invited me to the Baxter Theatre, and it was a great two weeks. We recorded the award-winning *Mantra Mode*, then he invited me to join Robbie Jansen, Errol Dyers,¹⁹ the late Basil Coetzee²⁰ and Monty Weber²¹ on this big European tour. We even played the new Jazz Café in London, in Camden. And then I did an Italian tour with Abdullah. It was stunning.

Then I applied for a Fulbright Scholarship. Mostly [the applicants were] people in economics, the medical and scientific disciplines. Now they wanted to know who is this old geyser that wants us to give him thousands of dollars to go and study music. But in 1991, I got a Fulbright. I started out at the University of Texas in Austin. There was a pre-orientation course there. There were over 80 Fulbright Scholars and they had to be taught how to use a computer. But I only found that out when I got there. Because I came from the University of Natal, I was computer literate. And so the next thing, I was on a free holiday in Texas. I met a whole lot of great musicians, from the University of South Western Texas

¹⁸ Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) – Cape Town jazz pianist, born 1934, exiled in the 1960s, one of South Africa’s most celebrated jazz musicians.

¹⁹ Errol Charles Dyers – Cape Town jazz guitarist, born 1952.

²⁰ Basil ‘Mannenburg’ Coetzee – Cape Town tenor saxophonist, 1944-1998; worked with Abdullah Ibrahim, later a member of ‘Sabenza’ with Robbie Jansen.

²¹ Monty Weber – percussionist, worked with Abdullah Ibrahim, Basil Coetzee and others.

and also the University of Texas, Austin. They have a great jazz department there. I stayed there for about 2 to 3 weeks, then I flew to Indiana to take up my scholarship at the Indiana University School of Music.

CD: *Now a little bit about your previous jazz. How did you actually acquire your jazz knowledge before your studies at the University of Natal?*

JM: Well, we learned from records. That is the best education: the ear. There were no books. They were hard to come by in those days.

CD: *Who would you say were the key influences in your life?*

JM: Oh, my brother, my late brother, Fred Mbuza,²² a brilliant trumpet player. And Clifford Brown,²³ he was a swingster and played beautifully.

CD: *Any other musicians of that time that influenced you?*

JM: Oh, yes, the late Elijah Nkwanyana.²⁴ I grew up in Etwatwa where we were being forcibly removed by the apartheid government. There were a lot of dance bands there. I played my first gig with a very big dance band called the No Name Swingsters.

CD: *No Name Swingsters?*

JM: *Ja*, The leader was Shadow Raphiri,²⁵ a great tenor player. He played like Lester Young,²⁶ man. Oh, he knew all those solos by ear. He played Lester's solos, Lester leaps, Lester jumps, he played all those. He could also play like Ben Webster²⁷ and Coleman Hawkins.²⁸ In that band, we had people like Mario de Conceição,²⁹ who is very much alive today, an alto saxophone player. The Conceição family was a very, very famous Mozambican music family. His father was a bandmaster and a multi-instrumentalist.

CD: *What were some of the difficulties you experienced in learning and executing your art?*

JM: We loved jazz so much that it became a vehicle of self-expression. With playing jazz, we were stating our dislikes against the racist regime. You would

²² Fred 'Mbuza' Mekoa – trumpeter, brother to Johnny.

²³ Clifford Brown – American jazz trumpeter, 1930-1956.

²⁴ Elijah Nkwanyana – trumpeter and member of the 'Johannesburg All-Stars', died in 1969 aged 40.

²⁵ Shadow Raphiri – tenor saxophonist and bandleader.

²⁶ Lester Young – American jazz tenor saxophonist, 1909-1959.

²⁷ Benjamin Francis Webster – American jazz tenor saxophonist, 1909-1973.

²⁸ Coleman Hawkins – American saxophonist and bandleader, 1904-1969.

²⁹ Mario de Conceição – Mozambican alto saxophonist.

be amazed at the bands in those years. Those bands we played in kept the hopes and dreams of the masses alive. As you know, inside the country we were gagged. The music tradition was so rich in the townships, because we had our own jazz festivals in the stadiums. They kept on destroying that slowly, you know. The claws just kept on scratching, removing people to new townships, where people were being divided according to their ethnic groups so that Zulu stayed Zulu, Xhosa stayed Xhosa. Do you get me? Divide and rule them, oppressively.

CD: *mmm, Ja*.

JM: But they just could not destroy that culture. I'd leave the Sotho section and go to the Xhosa section where Bra Vic lived, and practise the music there. We kept on playing the festivals and playing the halls in the townships. It was a very vibrant culture, very vibrant. And we kept on going, we kept on going. The bands at that time were Sakhile,³⁰ you know, and new bands were coming up. The Jazz Ministers were right up there, and there was the late Henry Sithole,³¹ the late Mike Makhalemele,³² and the late Tony Saoli.³³ Then there were bands with the late Duke Makasi,³⁴ Gilbert Matthews,³⁵ Mervyn Africa³⁶, Spirits Rejoice, and of course there was Winston Mankunku Ngozi³⁷ with the Schilder Brothers,³⁸ the famous *Spring* album, and then Winston Mankunku was coming out with *Yakhal' inkomo*,³⁹ then there was the Durban band with the late Dalton Khanyile,⁴⁰ Theo Bopela,⁴¹ the late Agrippa Magwaza⁴² and James Mbambo, and you had the Soul Jazzmen in Port Elizabeth also coming in

³⁰ 'Sakhile' – contemporary jazz band.

³¹ Henry Sithole – born in 1941 in Dannhauser, Natal, died in a car crash in Tzaneen in 1977, while on tour. Saxophonist, flautist and bandleader, played with 'Drive', 'Heshoo Beshoo' and the 'Jazz Dazzlers'.

³² Ratau Mike Makhalemele (also 'Makgalemele') – saxophonist, died 2000.

³³ Tony Saoli – percussionist with the group 'Drive'.

³⁴ Duke Makasi – Johannesburg saxophonist and bandleader of 'Spirits Rejoice'.

³⁵ Gilbert Matthews – drummer, born in Cape Town in 1943, went into exile in 1968, later worked with Ray Charles, Sarah Vaughan and others.

³⁶ Mervyn Africa – Cape Town-born pianist and composer, member of 'Spirits Rejoice'.

³⁷ Winston Mankunku Ngozi – Cape Town-born tenor and soprano saxophonist and composer.

³⁸ Tony and Chris Schilder (Ebrahim Khalil Shihab), possibly also Richard and Phillip. Family of jazz musicians from Cape Town. See the interview with Tony Schilder in the present volume.

³⁹ Composed by Winston Mankunku Ngozi; it appeared on the album of the same name, the best-selling South African jazz album to date.

⁴⁰ Dalton Khanyile – tenor saxophonist from Durban.

⁴¹ Theo Bopela – pianist and composer from Durban.

⁴² Agrippa Magwaza – bassist and band member of the 'Early Mabuza Trio'.

to Johannesburg, working with the late Bra Dennis Mpale.⁴³ You had great piano players like Tete Mbambisa,⁴⁴ and the late Shakes Mgodlwa.⁴⁵ You know, that was the period after Chris McGregor⁴⁶ left with the Blue Notes. There was the late Bra Mac – Makay Davashe⁴⁷ – and Blythe Mbityana,⁴⁸ those were all people who inspired me. I grew up under their tutelage. There was a great trumpet player from Springs, Banzi Bangani.⁴⁹ He's very much alive, you know. And of course the Maestro himself, Pat Matshikiza the piano player. I worked with him two weeks ago, featuring him with the school big band. Oh, when you see the video, oh, it would kill you, man!

CD: *Which centres would you say were pivotal in sustaining jazz as an art form?*

JM: Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg and Soweto. There were places like The Jabulani Amphitheatre [in Soweto], the Moroka-Jabavu Stadium [in Soweto], very famous for jazz festivals.⁵⁰ You know, even in 1964, at the Cold Castle Jazz Festival at Orlando Stadium, there were groups like the Malombo Jazz Men [comprising] Julian Bahula,⁵¹ Philip Tabane⁵² and Abe Cindi.⁵³

CD: *Around when would you say you started to receive national acclaim, and how did this happen?*

⁴³ Dennis Mpale – trumpeter, flugelhornist and composer, returned to South Africa after being exiled for 8 years. Died in 1998.

⁴⁴ Tete Mbambisa – Cape Town pianist and bandleader; see the interview in the present volume.

⁴⁵ Shakes Mgodlwa – pianist, composer and band member of the 'Soul Giants'. Born in the Eastern Cape in the 1930s; died in Swaziland in the 1980s, allegedly of alcohol-induced liver failure.

⁴⁶ Chris McGregor – pioneering South African jazz pianist, born in Somerset West in 1936, died in France in 1990. Formed the multiracial group 'The Blue Notes', with whom he emigrated to Europe. He then formed 'The Brotherhood of Breath' in London in 1969, which group made a major impact on the British and European jazz scenes.

⁴⁷ Makay (also 'Mackay') Davashe – born in East London in 1920, died 1972 in Soweto. Prominent bandleader of the 1950s and '60s in Johannesburg, leader of the 'Jazz Dazzlers'.

⁴⁸ Blythe Mbityana – jazz trombonist.

⁴⁹ Banzi Bangani – born in Springs in 1930. Influential jazz trumpeter, double-bassist, guitarist and composer.

⁵⁰ Moroka and Jabavu Townships form part of Soweto.

⁵¹ Julian Bahula – percussionist, traditional drummer and vocalist, went into exile in the mid-1970s, forming 'Jabula' in London in 1974, together with Lucky Ranku, Ernest Mthle and Eddie Tatane; also active there in the ANC.

⁵² Philip Tabane – guitarist, vocalist and composer, interviewed later in this book.

⁵³ Abe Cindi – penny whistle and flute player, formerly of the 'Lullaby-Landers', then the 'Malombo Jazz Men'.

JM: During the time of the Jazz Ministers. They were like an icon, people would say ‘this is a flugelhorn player or a trumpet player for the Jazz Ministers’.

CD: *When was this, roughly?*

JM: From the late sixties to the late seventies, because the late Bra Vic passed away in 1977. We carried on until 1979, until it sort of fizzled out because Bheki Mseleku⁵⁴ left. He had come to play tenor [sax]. I bought him his first tenor. He was a genius – I mean, in two weeks he was playing John Coltrane’s⁵⁵ ‘Giant Steps’ solo. Then he left; and of course Nomvula Ndlazilwane,⁵⁶ the late Bra Vic’s daughter, who was playing with the Jazz Ministers. She had an affair with Bheki and followed him to Europe. Then I was left alone, because the drummer, the late Shepstone Sothoane,⁵⁷ went into business. And that was it. I kept on working as an optical dispenser. I was gigging around, you know, in the township, with young musicians. I was with Fakes Sehloho the bass player, and then we started teaching from our homes. You know, that love of teaching had always been there – even that dream of wanting to start a music school. But during apartheid, you could not do that. Because the minute you started having a lot of kids around, man, oh, the SB [security branch] would be on top of you like a pack of wolves, ‘Ja, now you are teaching the children communism’. There were no schools like this during the time of apartheid. The Afrikaner brothers would have long closed this school. And you see how much talent we are producing.

You know, one had to go back to school. We knew that Mandela was going to be released. I knew it, so I said to myself: go back to school Johnny, get yourself ready, so that when we take over we can be qualified. We have to take our destiny into our own hands. You had to prepare yourself educationally, spiritually and otherwise, to position yourself in such a way to shape the direction of young musical talent in our country.

CD: *On a more personal note: Many of your colleagues and friends went into exile. And you chose not to go. What prompted this decision?*

JM: People who were around me, great musicians like Bra Vic and my brother Fred, they had a very strong influence on me. My mother also. And my eldest brother Peter, who was a very good trombone player but went into business too – he was also a very strong influence on me, and asked me not to leave. They

⁵⁴ Bheki Mseleku – pianist, vocalist, saxophonist, guitarist and composer, left South Africa in the late 1970s.

⁵⁵ John Coltrane – American jazz saxophonist and composer, 1926-1967.

⁵⁶ Nomvula Ndlazilwane – pianist, daughter to the bandleader Vic.

⁵⁷ Shepstone Sothoane – jazz drummer.

were guiding me because they knew that I could easily go into exile. But they gave me the whole picture: look, if we all go, who is going to keep the home fires burning? And I looked at it from that angle, and I realized what they meant and decided to stay at home, under very difficult conditions.

CD: Do you have any regrets now of not having gone into exile, when you look back?

JM: No, I don't have any regrets.

CD: How did apartheid impact on jazz performance and jazz education in South Africa?

JM: It was destructive. Venues started getting fewer and fewer, and the academic institutions were so Eurocentric, you know. Wits [the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg] was so upfront during that time; there were jazz sessions every week, you know, in the lecture theatres, there was so much happening. Today it is just the opposite, there is no jazz happening at Wits. But during the apartheid time, Wits kept jazz alive inside the Campus. A whole lot of us musicians used to go there. People like Dave Marks⁵⁸ used to help promote jazz sessions there, right inside the Wits Campus.

It was a dream to be able get into Pretoria University like we do now. To play in the Musaion there, with eighty black kids – you would never dream of that in those years, no way. No, you had to go and play at the so-called 'Bundu'⁵⁹ University, 'ja, jy moet daar gaan speel' ['you've got to go and play there']. Apartheid could not destroy the music because it was very strong, very strong. You cannot destroy it: jazz is a democratic force, man.

CD: What are your views of those who went into exile and enjoy a lot of recognition in the music industry today?

JM: Look, they went into exile because they had their reasons. The majority of them revealed to the world the atrocities of the apartheid regime, which was a good thing. But some of them went there on a gravy train. Not all of them were really involved in the struggle, some of them just felt: 'Hey, it is nicer here, why must I go back home?', because politically, some of them were not clear.

⁵⁸ David Marks – South African composer, musician and music producer; played at the Woodstock Festival and elsewhere; co-founder of Third Ear Music. See www.3rdear.com (accessed 22 August 2006).

⁵⁹ A 'third-rate' university, one of those created under apartheid for 'non-whites'.

There were people who were clear politically, like Mama Miriam Makeba,⁶⁰ she went and faced the world and spoke about what we were suffering, people like us who remained behind here. She brought it into the open. But what is sad today is that only the exiles are getting the recognition: 'Oh, they did this and that', and in the meantime they forget that we contributed immensely inside the country. I mean, you look at it. Who are the people who are contributing to the development of the youth of this country?

CD: *It is us who remained.*

JM: It is mostly us who remained.

CD: *How were you received by musicians who were performing in music genres other than jazz, both before and after 1994?*

JM: The classical people, oh, when they chatted to you, 'Oh, you play jazz...', they were looking at you like: 'Oh, that piece of shit'. They taught like the Haydn Trumpet Concerto was the end of the world, you know. And I used to challenge them and say: 'No, what you are playing is only written on the paper; I can play that thing on the paper and embellish it and improvise on it, which is more challenging'. It is funny, but with democracy a lot of people are beginning to open up to other art forms. They are beginning to learn.

CD: *Do you see a change since 1994?*

JM: I see a change. Today, I conduct a youth symphony orchestra, we take *mbaqanga*⁶¹ and arrange it, we take any great classical tune and play it, and then they marvel: 'We thought you were only a jazz trumpet player'. No, I am not just a jazz trumpet player; I am a well-rounded musician. I listen to Mozart, I listen to Ladysmith Black Mambazo, I listen to Satchmo – Louis Armstrong –, I listen to Paganini, I listen to Debussy, I listen to Beethoven, Bach, you name it. It is all part of the art form.

CD: *Do you believe that a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' for music would have been necessary to address the inequalities and injustices of the past music system?*

JM: Yes, a TRC is definitely needed. Some record companies have got corpses, my brother. Do you know how many musicians in this country were cheated of millions and millions of rands by record companies that today have storeys and storeys of buildings? Those owners, where are they? They've got bank accounts

⁶⁰ Miriam Makeba – jazz vocalist, born 1932. Exiled for thirty years. Briefly married to Hugh Masekela while they were in the USA.

⁶¹ *Mbaqanga* – an indigenous form of jazz that evolved out of 'kwela' and 'marabi'.

in Switzerland, they've got holiday homes in Paris, in Spain and all over, and yet some of those poor musicians died, and their children, their families, their grandchildren are living in poverty.



Johnny's Music Academy of Gauteng (initial site)

CD: *Do you believe that you now get adequate recognition for your contribution to the music industry?*

JM: *Ja*, I'm getting the recognition, both at home and outside the country. For the University of Pretoria to bestow on me an honorary doctorate is a sign. There are people who are acknowledging our contribution to society. It gives you a new lease of life, it energizes you. Right now, against all the odds, I'm building this music school [in Daveyton].

CD: *What are your perceptions of jazz and jazz education today?*

JM: It has grown, but it should grow more and be introduced in schools, it is very important.

CD: *Do you think it is sad that it is not yet on the school curriculum, ten years into democracy?*

JM: The whole initiative depends entirely on the Head of the school. Now if you're the Head of school and you are not a progressive brother or sister, you are going to be left behind. I am inundated with schools that want to start bands or wind bands, you know. Those wind bands can be a platform to start small jazz ensembles. We are embarking on that next year, because we will be operating from a much better facility and we will use our new school as a springboard into other areas. Look at the amount of talent that is in this country. I mean: tell me, if there was a music school like this one in each and

every city, and each and every township, what would the standard of music be at university level in this country? It would be very high.

CD: *Finally, are there any other comments you would like to make today?*

JM: Music needs to be put into schools in South Africa. It is an art form that is a vital part of the educational cycle. They say that mathematics and science are important. Who do you think Pythagoras was? – he was a muso, man! What enabled him to calculate? It was because of his musical brain. You know I have proven it, all young kids that take music do very well at school in mathematics and science. Oh, they get As and Bs. One principal last year said: ‘Man, what does music do?’ I said: ‘Man, look. A lot of people are not aware that music education for any child helps it a lot. It helps the brain to develop in a very balanced and synchronized manner. And it is all through music’. But do you think they see it that way? They need some spray to clean their ears out so that they can hear all these beautiful sounds!

JOHNNY FOURIE (1937-2007)

Johnny Fourie is a household name in South African jazz circles. Like many others, however, I had heard of Johnny long before I ever saw or met him. Then, in 1996, I moved up from Pietermaritzburg to Pretoria. On my first Thursday afternoon here, I was attending a lunch hour concert by some touring American jazz educators at the Pretoria Technikon (today the 'Tshwane University of Technology'). The band was simply awesome, polished and highly organized. What caught my attention was the oldest member in this band – the guitarist. His sound was unique, fresh and highly innovative. His solos were effortless, and he seemed very comfortable with the ensemble. I was keen to meet him, so after the performance I asked a colleague to introduce me – to which my colleague, rather amazed, responded: 'That is Johnny Fourie, he teaches here and he is the only one in the ensemble not from the US'.

Chats Devroop: *What were your earliest influences in jazz, when you started out?*

Johnny Fourie: I became aware of jazz at about the age of 13. I heard a recording on the radio one day of the George Shearing Quintet.¹ I did not know any jazz, I don't know why not, but then I just heard this thing on the radio and it really made a huge impression. I loved what I heard. They announced the title of the song – it was called 'Little white lies' – so I promptly went out to the local bicycle store who also sold 78 shellac records. And yes, he had some George Shearing: 'Little white lies'; I bought it, went home that same afternoon and proceeded to try and learn what the guitar player was playing, a guy called Chuck Wayne.² He was one of the great American jazz guitar players, but maybe a little unsung, you know. I don't think that he really got all the recognition that he could have. Anyway, I was very impressed with that. I learned his bit, and played along with the record. And then I got some more George Shearing records, and from there on, things just snowballed.

Then I discovered a guy called Barney Kessel,³ who became my main early 'teacher' of jazz. I loved the sounds from Shearing, but now I heard this guy playing the guitar and it had beautiful chords. He had some beautiful albums out at the time, and he made me aware of the harmonic side of what the guitar

¹ George Shearing – American jazz pianist and composer, born in London in 1919.

² Chuck Wayne – American jazz guitarist, 1923-1997.

³ Barney Kessel – American jazz guitarist, 1924-2004.

is capable of. So I started ripping off what I heard him play, and when I was beginning to get that right, another guy came on the scene, a guy called Tal Farlow.⁴ That blew me sideways, because he was twenty years ahead of Barney and the other guys in his harmonic concepts. Yeah, he was outrageous, and he became like a god to me. He was not so easy to rip off! So I got a beautiful, basic grounding from Barney, and Tal Farlow put my head in the clouds. I knew there was more to come.



Johnny Fourie (photo courtesy of Val Fourie)

What prepared me for this was the move from my birthplace, which was a place called Postmasburg in the North-Western Cape, where I grew up on a farm. We came up to Benoni when I was about 9 years old, and I discovered the

⁴ Tal Farlow – American jazz guitarist, 1921-1998.

movies. You know, the Saturday afternoon movies, and then I heard some country swing and stuff like that, and already it was jazzy. I liked it, you know.

I enjoyed musicals, particularly musicals that had Doris Day in them. She handled some nice standards, like ‘Tea for two’ and other stuff. So I was being made ready for when I heard Shearing and Kessel. I was self-taught up to this stage. My ears were very finely tuned, you know, and I just learned by: put the record on, memorize it, put it on, play it, memorize it. And that was how I learned, and I learned plenty. From Barney, from Tal Farlow, from George Shearing the piano player, and from Nat ‘King’ Cole – from his piano playing and his trio. These stand out as mentors to me.

CD: *Was there anybody that you took lessons from?*

JF: No, there was nobody, nobody that could play jazz. There were a few guys that played a little bit of swing, but my ears heard immediately the standard of Barney Kessel, and those guys were just in another league. I went for one or two lessons to a guy in Jo’burg, but he could not teach me anything. And then I just never even thought about it. Then later on, I bought a few books like Ivor Mairants.⁵ I opened the books, and I did not know what the hell they were trying to get at. I actually started playing professionally at the age of about 14½, but I was playing only once a week in an Afrikaans band.

CD: *A dance band?*

JF: *Ja.* One was a weekend gig, my first one, and when I was 15, I got a gig in Port Elizabeth with a very well-known Afrikaans band leader. It was a great honour for me to get a gig with him. I would not name him, but he was big. But he fired me after two weeks because I played too much jazz – and that was due to Barney! So I thought: OK, that’s it. From between the ages of 14 to 16, I played in the nightclubs. I was playing with the guys that were like a generation ahead of me – guys like Bez Martin,⁶ Dougie Finch,⁷ Dan Hill,⁸ Art Heatley,⁹ Noel Stockton,¹⁰ they were the kind of guys I played with and learned from. George Hayden¹¹ was a big beacon in my life. I just developed from there, you know. I played around in the clubs in Joburg until I was 22.

⁵ Ivor Mairants – Polish-born English guitarist and writer (1908-1998), author of several guitar text books.

⁶ Bez Martin: Martinus Jacobus Bezuidenhout – jazz woodwind specialist in Johannesburg.

⁷ Dougie Finch – jazz pianist.

⁸ Dan Hill – Johannesburg bandleader and keyboard player.

⁹ Art Heatley – South African bandleader, arranger and film composer.

¹⁰ Noel Stockton – South African jazz pianist and composer, interviewed later in this book.

¹¹ George Hayden – South African bandleader.

CD: *Which year was this, roughly?*

JF: It was about 1961. Yeah, I was sort of ten years in the business. Then in 1961/1962 I went to London, I thought I was pretty ready for it. I got married at 19, had a wife and a little baby girl, she was 3. I think she turned 4 on the ship going over. I did not know anybody in London; I had about R200 in my back pocket. But I had been to London for a weekend, playing on a ship over. What I saw in Soho and what I heard, I said: 'This is it, baby', you know.

The money was gone in two or three days. My wife was crying – it was a bit scary. Anyway, I got a gig in a club in Leicester Square playing with a Gypsy violin player, just playing rhythm guitar with him. He was playing Monti's Czardas and Zigeuner stuff and so on, you know, a little dinner music and going to the Blue Boar Inn. It was awful, I hated it. But I'd done that for about three weeks when, through a South African pianist friend of mine who was playing in the Ray Ellington¹² Quartet, I got asked to do an audition for the Ellington Quartet, which was possibly the number one job for a guitar player to get in England, you know.

So I went along for the audition, and they put music in front of me. But I could not read music. I could not play with this stuff in front of me, and he realized that I could not read music. So he said, anyway, why don't we just fill the time and play a little? So we just jammed and played jazz, and then he could hear that I could actually play. I could not read, but I could play. He really enjoyed my playing tremendously, but he said that the gig was written, everything was orchestrated, like the Nat 'King' Cole Trio, fancy arrangements.

It was a band with about 70 pieces. A very high profile gig Ray Ellington was. He did not see how I could possibly do it. But the guitar player that had been with him for quite a long time had developed a serious drinking problem. They were on the verge of doing a three or four-week engagement in Monte Carlo at the Sporting Club, and this guy was beginning to embarrass them. They were playing Bournemouth when the guy crashed down, and they had a month or two to go before this thing. So the piano player persuaded Ray to give me a go at seeing if they could teach me in the band. I could read a little bit, you know, but not at sight. So he agreed and gave me the music pad for two weeks. I struggled through it every day. A pad of 75 pieces. It was hard for me. You know, if I heard it, I would learn it much quicker. But I got to a stage where we could start rehearsing the pieces. It was a tough assignment.

¹² Ray Ellington – British singer and bandleader, 1916-1985.

And what I was doing was playing more like a lead player as a saxophone player would. I was leading the voicing, we were making up the sound of a big band between the piano and the guitar. The piano playing the voicings and the guitar playing on top, you know. We played Count Basie¹³ things and all that. It was beautiful, but hard. Two weeks: I mean, they swore at me, they cajoled me, they drove me but I was ready to do the opening gig in Taunton [in Devon]. I got through the night, and a week later we went to Monte Carlo and were there for a month. By the time I came back from Monte Carlo, I knew the music backwards. Right time, right place. Funny life!

I was with Ray for about two years. Because he was a high profile gig, we did quite a lot of TV and BBC broadcasts, and I was known all over England. Maybe even better known there than I am here, you know. So I came to the attention of Ronnie Scott.¹⁴ He called me one day and said: 'Would you like to come and play at my club one Friday night?'. I lived in Ronnie's. That was of the one of the first things that I heard in London, Ronnie's. I could not believe it. I said: *Ja*, I would like to. So he invited me to come on a Friday, with my own people. I took a piano player and a bass player. So we played, and he liked it. He asked me if I would like to play at the club as relief to the American and European people who the Club was really there for. I was overjoyed. And he said: 'OK, but I want you to play with this bass player and this drummer, no piano'. He gave me a bass player and a drummer. They were the best you could get in England. So I played at Ronnie's for the next four to five years, with the trio. I went through lots of bass players and drummers and was also playing with top guys like Ronnie himself and Tubby Hayes.¹⁵ I played a lot with Tubby, most of the top British players and quite a lot of the American players, because now I was exposed every week to the best that there was in the world. Stan Getz,¹⁶ Freddie Hubbard,¹⁷ Sonny Rollins,¹⁸ you name them; Bill Evans,¹⁹ eventually they just did not mean anything to me anymore, you know: 'We've got Bill Evans next week' – 'Oh, OK'. They were just coming all the time at me, and I had to absorb all the time. I learned like at university. I really learned something vital there.

¹³ 'Count' Basie – American jazz pianist, organist and bandleader, 1904-1984.

¹⁴ Ronnie Scott – British saxophonist, 1927-1996. Ran London's most famous jazz club.

¹⁵ Tubby Hayes – English tenor saxophonist, 1935-1973.

¹⁶ Stan Getz – American tenor saxophonist, 1927-1991.

¹⁷ Freddie Hubbard – American jazz trumpeter, born 1938.

¹⁸ Theodore Walter 'Sonny' Rollins – American jazz tenor saxophonist, born 1930.

¹⁹ Bill Evans – American jazz pianist, 1929-1980.

By this time, things were changing around me. John Coltrane and Gary Burton²⁰ and the guys were starting to play another kind of music, you know, and I was pressed about this thing. John McLaughlin²¹ took over from me when I wanted to leave for Ronnie's – I got him to replace me. I spent two weeks teaching him the pad because he could not read either. He was beginning to play some amazing things because he was very influenced by Coltrane – he started doing all that modal stuff. He was beginning to be interested in eastern music. It just came to a point where I felt: I have got to stop playing this bebop, jazzy stuff, now I have also got to play the new thing. And that eventually forced me to come back to South Africa.

CD: *Which year was that?*

JF: That was now roughly 1967/1968. So I came back here, and started playing with Hennie Bekker's²² band at Brett's (a Jo'burg club), with a guitar with thin strings on and overdrive pedal. We were playing pop music now, you know. On Sundays, they played jazz there, but of the more experimental kind. So that was good for me. I did that for two years, and after that I went to New York. That was when I thought: Now I'm ready for this new thing. By now, the new focus in my life was Miles Davis.²³ 'The Bitches Brew' and 'Silent Way', that generation of Miles Davis, that style of music.

So I went to New York. I was ready to go and play that music. What I should have done in New York was to go and play standards. I might have got a gig with Ella Fitzgerald²⁴ or someone; that was what I could really play. Mr McLaughlin was then making waves, you know, with his Mahavishnu things.²⁵ I was very interested in that, I was practising it and learning it. But unfortunately, I could not get a legal permit to stay in New York. After three months of holiday, they did not want me to stay. But I stayed anyway, and I worked 'under the counter', you know. Things were going pretty good for two and a half years.

What brought things to a head was when, one afternoon, I got a call from Chick Corea.²⁶ He was changing his band, he was doing that *Light as a Feather* band²⁷

²⁰ Gary Burton – American vibraphonist, born 1943.

²¹ John McLaughlin – British guitarist and jazz/fusion composer, born 1942. Moved to the USA in 1969, now resident in Monte Carlo.

²² Hennie Bekker – pianist and bandleader.

²³ Miles Davis – American jazz trumpeter, 1926-1991.

²⁴ Ella Fitzgerald – American jazz vocalist, 1917-1996.

²⁵ The Indian/jazz/rock fusion 'Mahavishnu Orchestra' was founded by John McLaughlin in 1970.

²⁶ Chick Corea – American jazz pianist and bandleader, born 1941.

– he was going into an electric band. He was auditioning. I think he auditioned about eight or nine guitar players. No way did I think that I was ready for that. I had no equipment, all rubbish, you know. But I went for the audition and it was pretty good. It was not what he was looking for, sound-wise, because my sound was a bit rough then, still. The drummer was Steve Gadd.²⁸ Steve was very nice to me at that audition. He came, took me inside. The other guys were nerve-racking. Chick Corea was like a chicken with his head cut off, it was all nervous energy. The bass player, Stanley Clarke,²⁹ he was hostile, maybe because I was a white South African. I felt this hostility, but Gadd came to me and said: ‘Man, I like the way you play, we must be in touch and play some more’. That decided for me that I’d better get some legal status. And then I went to Canada to try and get legal status. But I never got it right, I had an accident in Canada and I came home, with my New York experience, and studied for the next thirty years.

CD: *You say you studied – was this all self-study?*

JF: *Ja*, but it was formal stuff now, I was not taking it off records. Now I knew what I was doing. I came back to find the ‘Lydian Chromatic Concept’ of George Russell.³⁰ I played Lydian for the next three years, and from the Lydian thing I got involved in some very good techniques from Frank Gambale.³¹ Everybody studied Gambale to play fast things, you know, but he had a very clever musical concept of the use of a scale in its totality. The scale harmonized in all its diatonic possibilities; all the pentatonics came out. He really opened up my eyes theoretically. Then I studied Ted Greene.³² He was amazing, and then I got involved in the Pat Martino³³ concept.

Through all the years, one of the main musicians who touched my heart and my brain was Bill Evans. He is in my playing, with his piano and all. He was the biggest influence on what I play now. What I play now, South African people really do not know, because it is not what they hear in the clubs. But there are one or two of my pupils who know about it, and there’s a CD on the way that demonstrates it.

²⁷ Corea and his band ‘Return to forever’ recorded the album *Light as a Feather* in 1972.

²⁸ Steve Gadd – American drummer, born 1945.

²⁹ Stanley Clarke – American double bass and bass guitar player, born 1951.

³⁰ George Russell – American jazz composer and theorist, born 1923; author of *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*.

³¹ Frank Gambale – Australian electric guitarist, born 1958.

³² Ted Greene – American guitarist and guitar teacher, 1946-2005; author of the tutor *Chord Chemistry*.

³³ Pat Martino – Italian-American jazz guitarist and composer, born in 1944.



Johnny plays at Ronnie Scott's

CD: *Where would you say were the big jazz centres when you returned?*

JF: There were never any big centres, it was one big struggle. I played with the Hennie Bekker band because the branch office was very famous, very popular

and very vibey. By now I could not go overseas anymore because we were boycotted completely. I could not go back – not that I wanted to go back, because I really loved my country. I wanted to be home and just to put things in perspective.

Through the years, people asked me: what did you come back for? Everything was happening for you! But everybody will see why I came back here. I loved my country, I love being here, and it was great to escape the influence of everybody else and become my own person. That was so important to me.

CD: *So when did you start getting recognition for what you were doing?*

JF: I got recognition right from the beginning. All that does not mean anything, because it would not help for somebody to tell me that I am playing great, when I know myself how I have played. I was never satisfied until about two years ago. Now I am satisfied with how I play; I'm not searching anymore. I just play now what I play. I have been through the mill, I have played all kinds of music, I was the victim of all the political bullshit, which is now as big as ever, but I went through all that and I feel that I have transcended the whole thing.

CD: *I was going to ask you about that. On the one hand we had both white and black musicians, but on the other hand the music they really loved was suppressed by the government.*

JF: Well, there are fantastic people around, you know. On the black side, they learnt it the same way I did on the white side. We all had the same problem and I became aware very early on of the fact that there were some lovely black and coloured musicians – not just guitar players, but all kinds, you know. And I started playing with them, right away. There were people that we jammed through the night with. Guitar players like Allen Kwela,³⁴ Sandile [Shange],³⁵ Cyril Magubane,³⁶ those guys just came and slept in my lounge, man, and the next day there were more guitars. I played with the Schilder brothers in Cape Town. This is how I learned to play. Nobody stopped me, I never even gave it a thought that I might not be allowed to do it. I just did it anyway. I played with whomever I wanted to play with.

CD: *Did you receive any animosity from any of the other players?*

JF: I had lots of that. There is plenty of that, you know. As I said, I was fired from my first gig because I played too much jazz. And then when I came back

³⁴ Allen Kwela – jazz guitarist from Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, 1939-2003.

³⁵ Sandile Shange – guitarist from KwaZulu-Natal.

³⁶ Cyril Magubane – Johannesburg-based guitarist.

from England, there was a lot of prejudice because they expected me now to be a big time Afrikaans boy. They expected me to have an attitude – and I did. I knew what was good and what was bad, so there was a lot of animosity – strangely, from some of my best friends from before. I was always totally honest. I battled to find work for some time, you know. But across the colour line there was no real prejudice, my friends were my friends; we played. Now, with the new dispensation, I am on the wrong side again. Now it is a different kettle of fish, you see. Now I am really discriminated against. A lot of black musicians love me and see me as a father figure, but the reality of the situation is that you do not see me on many festivals. I am now separated anew.

CD: *What are your views about those who went into exile?*

JF: I never was a political animal, because I love music. And music made me colour blind. But now, suddenly, I discover that through the years, people use this as a political football. You cannot do that with music. Music is music. It is not a political tool. They are now trying to make it a very political thing. As for the exile thing: What contribution did they make? Did they make a contribution by going there and studying hard and becoming really good master musicians, coming back and giving it to our people here? No, they did not. I went overseas – not as an exile, I just went there to further my dream of music. I have been home for twenty years, imparting my knowledge to everybody that wants to know. And my legacy is already alive. That is my contribution. What I have learned, I've given. Then things changed for us around here, and they had a chance to come back and cash in on the fact that they have played overseas with big-name-so-and-so, with great publicity and great marketing, but for me it is not true. I could really get hung for this, but for me they are not true.

There is the contribution to the music and the political contribution. I will not deny that they had to fight in which every way. But musically, I do not see a big contribution. Maybe they are justified because they went there and they made the world aware of the bad shit, and they maybe caused some demos and all that. I grant them that. Cool, but now it's a different time. Now they can cash in on it. But I found a lot of dishonesty, because ultimately we are in the business of making music, and the music should be the determining factor. Now they are busy dividing the whole nation again with their insistence on not playing Eurocentric music or American music. Now they want me to play township music, because it is patriotic. But music is an apolitical thing. You cannot make politics with music. Music makes its own statement.



Johnny Fourie

A lot of kids, white and black, now listen to stuff that should only make you nervous. But that's life. Ultimately, the beauty of music is the art, not the business of it. The real music just lives on and on, which is the action that God gave us: action in space, action in time – notes and time. That is the art of music. The business of music is another ball game. That is where politics comes into it. But I have never been in that game.

CD: *What are your thoughts on music education today in South Africa – particularly jazz education?*

JF: Well, it took me 40 years what they can get in 10 years now.

CD: *Do you think that the music students of today are better off than those in the past?*

JF: Oh yes, the opportunities are beautiful, because there is some really good tuition around. All the information is available. The bad thing about it is: it comes a bit too easy, maybe. A hunger is needed to light the fire, you know, and a lot of the young people seem to me to be lazy. I learned from a record faster than the guys in school seem to learn in three, four or five years. But it was an absolute hunger. Now the guys are very relaxed, because it is given to them on a plate. It does not matter: you will always find hungry ones. I have been teaching formally at the Technikon for more than 10 years, and even if there were just five that were hungry, it works with them. There are one or two guys that I can think of who have just done amazing things for me in the space of four or five years. They are ready to fly. It is there; it can work. It is working.

CD: *Is there any final comment you would like to make?*

JF: No. As I see it, I think the music itself will sort out the problem in the end. When everybody is tired of this and that, they will come back to making the best music they can. And that will make the thing right.

PHILIP TABANE (b. 1947)

It was a cold Wednesday afternoon, and I was following Philip Tabane's manager into Mamelodi to conduct this interview. I had never met Philip before, but had heard some wonderful recordings of his, some years earlier. Most of what I learnt of him was from fellow musicians. I was quite nervous of simply being in what is known to be a dangerous township, and constantly looked around to ensure that the neighbourhood was safe. As I approached Philip's house, his manager just left me at the front entrance. In the driveway stood two elderly gentlemen, both of whom looked at me rather suspiciously. One of them did the talking, and asked me what the interview was about, and who it was for. The other, clad in a sort of Russian military attire, looked on and said almost nothing. When I was taken to the back yard of the house to 'meet and interview Philip Tabane', the gentleman in military garb introduced himself, and said in a very soft, gentle voice: 'Welcome my brother, I am Philip Tabane'.

Chats Devroop: *When you were learning music, was there any one defining moment for you – a moment that changed your life?*

Philip Tabane: Oh, really, to tell you the truth, I have never studied music. At home, all the people were playing music: my brothers, my mother, we loved music. I have never studied music: it was in me. I had my three brothers playing guitars. When I was born, I just found them playing guitars. It was really just life in my home.

CD: *It was part of your home environment.*

PT: *Ja, really. I never really took music as a profession. It was in me.*

CD: *Was there any one clear moment in your life that was very special to you? Maybe somebody you liked to play with?*

PT: No, not really. Like I say, I never knew about musicians. The word 'musician' is something new to me. Music is just life to me. When I realized that people really take it seriously, like a profession, it was 1955, it was a place called Dorkay House: the Union of South African Artists in Eloff Street [in Johannesburg]. This place was managed by an old man called Ian Bernhardt.¹ I remember when Ian was with an old man called Dan Poho² – they are all dead

¹ Ian Bernhardt – one of the founders of the Union of South African Artists.

² Dan Poho – political activist.

now – they came to my place and asked my mother (she was still alive then) for a young guy called Philip Tabane. They said: he is playing beautiful music. My mother was upset about it because she could not understand why the people came all the way from Johannesburg for Philip Tabane. So my mother said to them: No, we do not know a guy like that. But they made an appointment with my mother to come the following day.



Philip Tabane

I was practising at the Mamelodi Community Centre, it was not far from here. When I came from the practice, my mother told me that there was some old man who said he wanted to hear my playing. So the following day I disappeared, you know. She said: 'No, I do not want you to meet these people'.

CD: *Why would you disappear? Why would you not want to talk to these people?*

PT: *Ja*, it was some kind of fear because I did not know that it meant such a lot, playing music. That people should come especially from Johannesburg and want to meet me, I could not understand it.

CD: *How would you say that you got your knowledge about jazz?*

PT: In 1960 there was a Jazz Competition in City Hall in Johannesburg. Yes, 1960. There was a helluva competition there – people like Dollar Brand. The people that I was talking about, Ian Bernhardt and those others, finally got me right and persuaded me to come and play this competition.

CD: *What sort of competition?*

PT: It was a Jazz Festival, in City Hall. Nowadays, when there is a jazz festival, it's in a stadium or the open air; but that was an indoor thing. I was attending school, but then this guy Ian Bernhardt said to me: 'You are still young and you must not be afraid. Go and compete'. I was competing against people like Dollar Brand, Chris McGregor's Orchestra, Christopher Columbus Ngcukana³ from Cape Town: big people that I used to read about, so I did not know how to handle this. I remember when they came to pick me up to go and perform, I ran away. They found me somewhere, around here. They said: 'Come'. I went, and I was still wearing my black and white uniform from school. I told the people who brought me there: 'I don't want to hear the results, I want to go back home', and they took me back home. I said: 'I will read about it tomorrow'. It was in the *Post*. Do you remember the *Post*? The front page of the *Post* said: 'Philip Tabane'.

CD: *How did you learn your music in your younger days?*

PT: Not really from records. It was my brothers. All over in the house, wherever you went you would just find a guitar there.

CD: *What sort of music were your brothers playing?*

³ Christopher Columbus Ngcukana – baritone saxophonist and bandleader, father of Duke and Ezra, 1927-1993.

PT: They were playing really original music. My mother was some kind of sangoma,⁴ you know. My brothers used to imitate my mother. When my mother sang, she used to sing sangoma songs and they used to play it with guitars – that is how I got into it, ja.

CD: *And who were the big influences in your life, the people who left an impact on you?*

PT: There was a guy, an old man, a crippled guy, he was called the ‘Soul’. He was my influence really.

CD: *The Soul?*

PT: That was his name: Soul.

CD: *And who would you say are your big influences today?*

PT: *Ag*, Miles Davis.

CD: *I think for most of us, Miles Davis has become the major influence. Can you tell me a little about some of the difficulties you had when learning your music?*

PT: No, I cannot say. Even now, I’ve got some difficulties, because I never worked with any white man in my life. Today I am 60.

CD: *So you took life as it came?*

PT: Exactly.

CD: *Around when did you start to get recognition across the country?*

PT: At the 1964 Jazz Festival in Orlando Stadium.

CD: *I’d like to know why you didn’t go into exile?*

PT: I did not even know the word exile then, because I was happy at home. I never thought about politics, never, really.

CD: *So there was no need to leave the country?*

PT: No, not really. But my first trip overseas was to New York. I played in a place called ‘Rafiki’, it was a big place, where I played with Charles Mingus,⁵ Stanley Turrentine.⁶

⁴ *Sangoma* – name given to a traditional healer amongst the indigenous peoples of South Africa; usually one whose healing processes involve communicating with the ancestors.

⁵ Charles (Charlie) Mingus – American jazz bassist, composer, bandleader and pianist, 1922-1979.

⁶ Stanley Turrentine – American fusion and soul jazz tenor saxophonist, 1934-2000.

CD: *And in your opinion, how did apartheid itself impact on jazz performance and your jazz education? How did the whole system affect you?*

PT: I do not really think apartheid affected me, because I was living in my own world. I did not understand why people were suffering. It is only now that I think that people were suffering, but I never thought about it.

CD: *So you grew up all along here in Pretoria, in Mamelodi?*

PT: No, I was born in a place called Haramutserwa, it is about an hour's drive from here.

CD: *How do you find that you are received by musicians, playing in other musical styles, like pop, mbaqanga or other African music styles?*

PT: I told you before, I am not a musician, I am just a person who loves music. I do not want to be labelled a musician. No, No, No.

CD: *Are there any other comments you would like to make about the music scene in South Africa?*

PT: I think that South Africa is very rich with music. But when I played, I did not know that music could make money for you. I did not think about it, it was only music. But now what discourages me is people are making music to make money, you know.

CD: *You did it for the love of the art.*

PT: Yes, thank you, my brother.

ROBBIE JANSEN (b. 1949)

It was the late 1980s, and I was playing at Eddel's Club House, a local jazz venue in my hometown of Pietermaritzburg. This afternoon was quite different, for my band was used as the supporting act to Basil Coetzee's band Sabenza from Cape Town. Towards the end of Basil's final set, he played a number that had the audience chanting 'more! more! more'. The tune was an Abdullah Ibrahim number called 'Mannenburg'.¹ The next day, I managed to lay my hands on a copy of the LP that had 'Mannenburg' as one of its tracks. Featured on the album, soloing over 'Mannenburg' were Basil Coetzee and Robbie Jansen. Being an alto sax player at the time, I had a natural affinity for Robbie's sound, which was a mixture of Cape goema music, some fusion, and pop. I subsequently followed Robbie's musical paths, copied most of his solos, and became an even greater fan of his playing when he joined the band Pacific Express. Sadly, though, I never got to meet Robbie – I only saw him from a distance, at performances in and around the Cape Town area.

Gareth Crawford: *Robbie, how did you get started in music? Do you come from a musical family?*

Robbie Jansen: My dad used to play in the Salvation Army, in Cape Town. He used to play and teach brass instruments. My mother used to sing a bit. My grandfather was also a musician in a dance band, but I don't know if that's got anything to do with me!

GC: *What area was this in, Cape Town?*

RJ: I grew up half in Claremont, and the other half in Elsie's River. Because of the forced removals of the time, we were moved from Claremont to Elsie's River. Claremont became a white area. But while I was living there, I was in Rossmead Primary, and then Livingstone High.

GC: *Did you have formal music lessons?*

RJ: No, my aunt gave me a few piano lessons, but that was when I was still very young. I don't remember very much about that. I'm self-taught.

GC: *I know you've also got a brilliant voice. Did you sing before you played sax?*

RJ: It's a long story! You know, I could speak English because I grew up in Claremont – Elsie's River is basically an Afrikaans area. So when I moved

¹ Famous South African jazz standard, composed by Abdullah Ibrahim.

around with the bands in Elsie, they would ask me to copy the English lyrics from the radio or the records. These were the pop bands of the time – I was about 12. You know, for example, Stevie Wonder lyrics are hard to catch off the record. These guys were Afrikaans, they would copy the words, but not know what they meant. So when they met up with me, I could interpret the words for them. My dad was also a shoemaker. So when there was a little tear in the drums or amps, he could repair it. That's how I got involved with the bands, writing the words. Then one day they said, 'Hey man, you wrote down the lyrics of that song, why don't you sing it!' That was on the Monday night. I sang it, and I won the first prize in the battle of the bands. I've been a musician ever since! I had to learn everything as I went along. I started off in pop, a band called The Rockets, but I first played in a lot of bubblegum bands: the Bismarcks, the Larks. The Bismarck sank you know! Then we formed The Rockets in 1968. This was the time of the Sputnik. We wanted to go up, and we formed The Rockets, playing pop music.



Robbie Jansen

(Photo courtesy of Steve Gordon)

I was playing guitar and singing at the time. I could play a little bit of trumpet at that stage, from my dad and the Salvation Army – there were always instruments lying around. I traded my guitar in for a saxophone. When I first introduced this on stage, people used to laugh at me and say, 'hey man, this isn't a "langarm"² band, this is a dance band!' Shiny instruments weren't in electric bands. It was the Shadows at that time, the Beatles, Cliff Richard,³ the Rolling Stones. So when they saw the sax they said 'This is old music, you know'. But I

² *Langarm* – Afrikaans for 'long arm', referring to popular dance styles of the Cape that combined folk and ballroom dance and used the extended arm.

³ Sir Cliff Richard – British pop singer, born 1940.

threw the mike into the sax so that it had an electronic effect like an electric guitar.

In 1969, we won a battle of the bands. We realized that we would have to do something different in order to win this competition, because all the bands sounded the same. Anyway, we won a trip overseas. I come from a little sand road in Elsie with a wooden bungalow. So that was a real carrot: I was going to go overseas and become famous. And so I went overseas with The Rockets.

GC: *Who were in the Rockets?*

RJ: Georgie Karelse, a lovely guitar player, and Molly Barron, the drummer. None of them are playing in a band at the moment. Molly, the drummer, is now involved with church music, gospel. He is in the recording business, he's got his own studio. Most of the guys came out really well there. The Rockets are still in existence today, they travel the world as well.

GC: *Did you do well on this trip, did you do gigs and stuff?*

RJ: Yes, it was a free trip overseas. We played in Paris and London, and visited some other places in Europe. It was good. Then our record company gave us some presents, which were double albums of Chicago. So I listened to that music, where the saxophone was going from. And I started to copy more of the jazz/rock music.

GC: *So you did all that stuff on your own, and learned all your scales and riffs yourself?*

RJ: Yes, yes. Listening to records. There were no tape recorders. Reel to reels were there, but they were out of reach, pocket-wise.

GC: *So the Rockets had a record deal?*

RJ: We had a record deal with the Gramophone Record Company, GRC, which was the South African version of CBS. We had two number one hits on Springbok Radio. 'Itchy Fingers', an instrumental, and 'Argie'. This was related to the Cape Argus [newspaper], you know – 'City Late, City Late', and then the song starts. That was in 1968. At the end of 1968, we got the competition sorted out and then we recorded in London, but nothing happened to the recording. We also recorded the 'Sounds Wild Four' album, which was copies – cover versions – of hit parade songs. We did 'Sounds Wild', four, five and six.

We did what they call fusion today, that was jazz-rock. Electric guitar, electric bass, and the brass – trumpets, trombones – and the saxophones, which were more jazzy. And there were vocals as well. So it suited me well. I was a singer

and a saxophone player, and I played the flute and the trumpet. Then I joined up with a group called the Pacific Express, where Basil Coetzee was playing. Vic Higgins⁴ also played with the Pacific Express at a later stage. That was 1974, I think, when I joined them, and we did an album called Pacific Express. And then I met Abdullah Ibrahim. Basil 'Mannenburg' Coetzee wasn't called 'Mannenburg' then, only Basil Coetzee. He introduced me to Abdullah. And then we recorded that song in 1975.

GC: To come back to that earlier question, is there one defining moment in your career that you would like to comment on?

RJ: The defining moment would be when I was introduced to Abdullah. Then I was actually introduced to more or less where I wanted to be musically. You know, telling our story, telling the South African story.

GC: So were you playing South African music?

RJ: No, not then. That was when I was introduced to it, through Abdullah.

GC: So how did you acquire your knowledge about jazz? Was it just through playing, or through books?

RJ: No, I was meeting up with many people. Basil first of all gave me a couple of jazz albums to listen to. Obviously, to learn more about the sax I needed to get some saxophone albums. I started listening to James Moody,⁵ Charlie Parker,⁶ Eric Dolphy,⁷ Ornette Coleman,⁸ John Coltrane. I started on the tenor sax, but because Basil was playing the tenor sax, I had to move to the alto. I am shorter than Basil [laughs], very simple reasons! And I got an alto sax to buy for R 25. I play all the saxes. That's why I actually went to join the Pacifics, because Basil was a good saxophone player, a jazz sax player. And I thought: 'Here I am going to learn all I need to learn'. Basil could read music as well. He was also self-taught.

GC: Were you reading music at this stage?

RJ: No, I was just doing it by ear. I still do most of it by ear. But I studied by myself, buying books and getting the information as I went along. But this is very interesting: there was a guy, a singer, Clarence Carter,⁹ and he had a band

⁴ Vic Higgins – drummer in the group 'Sabenza'.

⁵ James Moody – American saxophonist and flautist, born 1925.

⁶ Charlie 'Bird' Parker – American saxophonist, 1920-1955.

⁷ Eric Dolphy – American alto saxophonist, flautist and clarinetist, 1928-1964.

⁸ Ornette Coleman – American tenor and alto saxophonist and composer, born 1930.

⁹ Clarence Carter – American singer and arranger, born 1936.

with him. There was Wes Montgomery's¹⁰ brother – Monk Montgomery,¹¹ the bass player. They were here in Cape Town. At that stage I was involved with Russell Herman,¹² the guitar player, Tony Cedras,¹³ Louis Wald,¹⁴ Qadir Khan.¹⁵ We had a group called Estudio, you know, meaning 'to study'. At that time we were studying classical music, jazz music, all the finer stuff.

GC: *What year was this?*

RJ: Roughly, still in the seventies, from 1975 onwards. We also had a band called 'Onswetie'. That was before Estudio. It means 'We don't know' [in Afrikaans], 'ons weet nie'. When people asked us what was the name of the band, we said: 'Onswetie'. And we also did not know a lot about the theory of music, and technique and stuff like that, so we needed to study. And then we had Estudio. Estudio was a great thing because it was very intricate musically, all Russell's compositions, Russell Herman. All original stuff, but there wasn't a great demand for that. We would play at the Market Theatre in Jo'burg, at the Joseph Stone Auditorium here in Cape Town, and we would have a select few for an audience, you know. It was great. There was no real enthusiasm, but we learned a lot.

Anyway, we went to meet these people at a hotel in Sea Point, the backing band for Clarence Carter. We weren't allowed to go into the hotel, that was the days of apartheid, but they were black guys, Americans. We thought: 'Americans seem to be different to us, American blacks', so we had to stand outside by the fence and sort of [whistles] you know, 'Hey guys, come out', and they would come out to meet us, and we spoke to Monk Montgomery, and we explained to him the difficulty we had, not having books on jazz patterns and exercises. And he actually went back to the States and got some publishers to send some stuff over here, so after that we had enough information. Someone would have a little book, I forget the name of it, Otto Langey,¹⁶ and this would be handed around, and people would make copies and everybody would do those patterns and exercises. All the saxophone players. I once played with a big

¹⁰ John Leslie 'Wes' Montgomery – African-American jazz guitarist, 1925-1968.

¹¹ Monk Montgomery – brother of Wes, jazz bassist and founder of the Las Vegas Jazz Society, 1921-1982.

¹² Russell Herman – guitarist from District Six in Cape Town, 1953-1998, bandleader of 'Estudio'.

¹³ Tony Cedras – pianist of 'Estudio', born 1952, later settled in the USA.

¹⁴ Louis Wald – violinist and band member of 'Estudio'.

¹⁵ Qadir Khan (also spelt 'Kader Khan') – flautist, drummer and band member of 'Estudio'.

¹⁶ Otto Langey – German-American author of instrumental tutors, 1851-1922.

band, to back American singers, Adam Wade,¹⁷ who bought trumpeter Dennis Mpale a new trumpet, when he saw the condition of his trumpet.



Robbie Jansen (photo by Gary Crawford)

GC: What were some of the difficulties you experienced in learning and executing your art?

RJ: Well, it was difficult. You had to learn, but your instrument was not in a proper condition, and you didn't know the instrument was not in a playable condition. And you would be forced to get a sound out of it, and it may be a croaky sound, it may be leaking somewhere. There was an old man, Mr McGrath in Sea Point, and I used to go to him, and he used to repair my instruments. And when they came from him, they would be easy to play. So I learned that craft from him, to repair my own instruments.

GC: How did apartheid affect you? I know you were not allowed to go into hotels. Did that affect your gigs?

¹⁷ Adam Wade – American singer, actor and drummer, born 1937.

RJ: *Ja*, we were not allowed to play in the white clubs, even though we did it. We always had to run when the cops came. There was always a back door open.

GC: *Were there certain places you would play?*

RJ: *Ja*, Ronnie Singer had a club in town, in Cape Town, called ‘The Colony’, where we played; the Otis Waygood Blues Band¹⁸ played there. And Selwyn Miller had a club, the Apple, in Sea Point. We would take a gamble, you know, they would book us to play there, but they would have a white band on standby in case the cops came – they would move in, you know.

GC: *What kind of music would you play at these clubs?*

RJ: Covers. We weren’t so much into jazz. It was mostly black musicians, and then those whites who played jazz. And there were the Schilder brothers: Tony, Chris¹⁹ and Richard,²⁰ and the Four Sounds. Those people were all playing jazz at that stage. I was still in the pop world, and did not know very much about that. I was never really a jazz musician, I was a pop musician. There were people who put the term ‘jazz’ to it because we played the more modern pop music, which was jazzy. There were more complicated sounds, more sophisticated compared to the easy, bubblegum pop. I did the soul thing as well; my music was all those things. I used to work on the fish cart also, blowing the trumpet there [laughs]. I played all kinds of music, from the Shadows, Beatles, to the Rolling Stones. And with the Rockets, we played the song ‘Sugar, Sugar’. There was mostly European music on the radio here; there was not so much American music. So we were copying all those overseas groups, like the Who, and the Hollies, and later on Deep Purple and Uriah Heep and Pink Floyd, you know what I mean? We got into rock, and then into rock jazz.

GC: *So when did that transition come from rock to jazz rock?*

RJ: There was Frank Zappa,²¹ and he had some of the greatest jazz musicians playing with him. So our interest was aroused. He was also mixing things. We loved Zappa, I was a Zappa freak. And of course there was Jethro Tull,²² and on flute Ian Andersen,²³ so we took a lot from the records. There were no cassette

¹⁸ Otis Waygood – South African/Rhodesian band, active ca 1970, whose first producer was Clive Calder.

¹⁹ Chris Schilder (Ebrahim Khalil Shihab) – pianist and band-member of ‘Estudio’, brother to Tony and Richard.

²⁰ Richard Schilder – pianist, arranger and composer, brother to Tony and Chris.

²¹ Frank Zappa – American composer, guitarist, singer, producer and satirist, 1940-1993.

²² Jethro Tull – progressive rock band formed in England in the 1960s.

²³ Ian Anderson – (British) flautist with Jethro Tull.

players then. We had to tune into LM Radio²⁴ and catch a little snatch of a song, and learn it. Tomorrow, maybe, we would hear the other half, and by the weekend we could play the song, before it was on the hit parade, you know. So we were always in advance with the stuff.

GC: Around when would you say you started to receive national acclaim, and how did this happen?

RJ: Well, you know, in the struggle, we played a lot of struggle music, a lot of freedom songs, stuff like that. Reggae had a big influence on that: to say that, to be involved in the revolution actively, you don't have to have a gun. You don't have to go and fight a violent war, and stuff like that. You can get the people involved in changing their attitude to life, their approach to life.

GC: Why didn't you go into exile like many of your fellow music musicians?

RJ: No, I never went into exile. We were needed here. The people here needed us to educate them, to tell them the reason why we had to change the system. And one of the reasons, my father always used to say: 'Don't go sweep at other people's back doors, sweep at your own back door first'. So I wasn't going overseas like some of my other friends, to go struggle in London, or go struggle in America. I wanted to struggle and finish here and get recognition. I went overseas, but came back. I would never live there, I don't belong there, I am from here.

GC: What do you think of people who did?

RJ: Well, there was a need for that. It was necessary to spread the word that we are in a situation here, and we want to attract attention. We wanted people to see what's happening here so that we can change it. There were people doing that, but that was a bit before my time. You know, Hugh Masekela,²⁵ Abdullah Ibrahim, Miriam Makeba, those kinds of people, they all went away. But I was locked in the pop world. We knew apartheid, but we were the Cape Coloureds, so we weren't really in the foreground of things. We thought we were still OK. Until we grew up and said: 'Hey man, what's going on?' There was a time when the so-called Coloured folk thought that they were okay. But then we realised we had to go out and tell the people, explain to the people that we've got to bring about change.

GC: So did you have mixed bands?

²⁴ LM – Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) in Mozambique.

²⁵ Hugh Masekela – trumpeter, flugelhornist, vocalist and composer, born 1939 in Witbank. Took part in *King Kong*, then went into exile, returning to South Africa after the end of apartheid. Briefly married to Miriam Makeba.

RJ: Yes, it would always be mixed: black, white and coloured.

GC: *And was that how you got into South African music?*

RJ: Like I was saying, I played South African music since 1975. But the club owners wouldn't always give us jobs, and we had to fill the clubs in order to put food onto the table. At the universities, the student representative councils used to invite me to come and play, because we used to play freedom songs. And that's how we came to play South African music as such. There were people like Winston Mankunku Ngozi, Cyril Magubane and Ezra Ngcukana²⁶ – he was young, he was my age. They all played. Winston also never went into exile, he stayed here. I also played with other guys; Duke Makasi was a great star in his own right, he was a tenor and soprano player. I was with a group called 'Spirits Rejoice', with Gilbert Matthews, the late Sipho Gumede,²⁷ Mervyn Africa, Bheki Mseleku, Russell Herman. That group also [raised my consciousness] very much, because they were four Cape Coloureds and the others were African, from the Xhosa and Zulu, so it was quite a mixed band. That was in the seventies, '76 to '81, when I played with that band. Russell became quite a famous producer. He died about three years ago. *Ja*, he became a famous producer in London, he became Bheki Mseleku's manager.

GC: *To get back to when you started to receive national acclaim. Was that with Spirits Rejoice?*

RJ: National acclaim? No, not at that time. No, we played for five rand a gig. We came to Cape Town and we got a job in a night club. We could earn something like five hundred rand, or something to that effect, full time. I got twenty-five rand a week with Pacific Express when I got married, and that was playing every night, seven nights a week. That was a hundred rand a month. That was good money.

GC: *But what could you buy for R100?*

RJ: [Laughs] You could at least pay R80 a month for a room somewhere, so you had twenty bucks left for some food. Which wasn't too bad, because bread at that time was 50c, a packet of cigarettes was 25c. You could survive on very little. We would buy kaiings and bread, 1c for a pack of kaiings – the crumbs of the fish – and chips. *Gooi* [throw] that on bread, and a coke. Hey, it's lekker.

GC: *So when did you become famous?*

²⁶ Ezra Ngcukana – saxophonist, son of Christopher Columbus, born in Port Elizabeth in 1954.

²⁷ Sipho Gumede – Durban-born electric bassist, member of 'Spirits Rejoice' and founder of 'Sakhile'. Died 2004.

RJ: With the song ‘Mannenburg’ I recorded with Abdullah. That song sold very well internationally, it was almost like a second national anthem. ‘Mannenburg’ became very famous, and through my appearing on that song, it made people acknowledge me and other people like Basil Coetzee as major South African players. I think it was mainly through that. That was in 1975, but the recognition came much later – in the eighties, probably. It was only in the early ’90s that we were really recognised, when we could represent South Africa in a different way. Cape Town musicians missed out a lot. Jo’burg was always more internationally connected.

GC: *Do you think you get adequate recognition today for the work you’ve done?*

RJ: Well, you know one doesn’t do these things for recognition. Sometimes I get cheesed off for being too recognised, when I am not playing.

GC: *I saw you in the news. You’ve been ill recently?*

RJ: Yes, I was a goner; they said I had a few hours to live. I made a miraculous recovery. And I am here once again, I am playing, I am back. On Saturday we had a Cell-C²⁸ thing at the Convention Centre, and then I got an award, me and Mankunku and Sylvia Mdunyelwa.²⁹ They gave us an award at Manenberg’s Jazz Café, Clarence Ford³⁰ and them. The ANC has also been very supportive. I had two awards from them. The one was from Arts and Culture, a lifetime achievement award for my contribution to the arts, and then I got an Order of the Disa award, it is the highest provincial award that you can get. I appreciate these gestures. The greatest gesture for me was when I was in hospital. I wasn’t given any special favours, I was left to rot. And then they got hold of the ministers. And Pallo Jordan³¹ came, and the premier,³² and then they changed things. So I was privileged to go into another ward, and get other doctors, and that saved my life. If all of us were treated like that, maybe the world would be a better place.

GC: *Do you believe a Truth and Reconciliation Committee for music would have been necessary to address the inequalities and injustices of the past music system, and prevent these from recurring today?*

²⁸ Private cellular telephone company in South Africa.

²⁹ Sylvia Mdunyelwa – Cape Town jazz singer, actress and broadcaster; studied at the University of California, Los Angeles, in the early 1990s.

³⁰ Clarence Ford – owner of ‘Manenberg’s [*sic*] Jazz Café’, which opened in Cape Town in 1994.

³¹ Zweledinga Pallo Jordan – currently the Minister of Arts and Culture.

³² Premier Ebrahim Rasool.

RJ: I think that would be too drastic, as long as the people who weren't recognised are being recognised today. But instead of just being recognised, we need to get some things in place for them. We don't have any benefits, like sickness benefits, pensions, and stuff like that. I would like something to be in place like that, and maybe some type of union that gives the artist the legal right to do this and that and the other. There is still a lot of exploitation, still the music industry is in the hands of a special few who control it so that others can't get in easily.

GC: *I suppose we are talking about what happened during apartheid, with the record companies, the SABC?*

RJ: If they went to a TRC, I suppose they would get a lot of money back, but that wouldn't change anything. Like the guy who wrote 'Meadowlands' [Strike Vilakazi].³³ At least they caught up with the people. But most of the people are dead who wrote historical works. To go back is not always good, because you can't live in the past. So long as we know the future, we must prepare for it. The youngsters who come out now, the fresh musicians and artists, are treated with respect.

GC: *So what are your perceptions of jazz and jazz education today?*

RJ: The word 'jazz' has been thrown around very loosely. You get specialist jazz, you know. I listen to John Coltrane, I listen to Miles Davis, I listen to Joshua Redman,³⁴ and there's Kenny Garrett³⁵ and it's specialist music. It's American music, but the Europeans have also come through very strongly, so there's European jazz. Jazz, as far as I'm concerned, would be an extension or expression of the self. You know, you get all the information, you learn how to paint a picture, and then you paint a picture of your environment. So to tell your story, you learn your craft, and then tell the story in your own words. It's all very well to get a jazz education. But if you are going to study jazz in a jazz college, you come out, you can play all the standards, but you don't find work, because there are no jobs for jazz musicians. There is no work for jazz musicians. Who wants to go out and listen to jazz? Only the chosen few. What I discovered in Cuba is, they teach you music, they teach you the theory, and technique. They give you a good instrument. They teach you everything you need to know about music, they give you a blank canvas, and you can paint the

³³ 'Meadowlands' was written by Vilakazi to commemorate the forced removals from Sophiatown to Meadowlands Township in 1956.

³⁴ Joshua Redman – American saxophonist, born 1969, and winner of the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Saxophone Competition.

³⁵ Kenny Garrett – American alto/soprano saxophonist, born 1960.

picture you want to paint, you can make whatever music you want to make. I feel that at school, they should give you all that information so that you can weigh up your own possibilities, and see where you want to go. That will create a wider approach for artists, instead of this cocoon niche that we have formed.

GC: *Maybe 'jazz' is the wrong word; but there seems to be a Cape Town sound.*

RJ: That's why my new album is called 'Nomad Jez'.³⁶ You know, the Cape Town people call jazz 'jez'. Because jazz is a marketing tool. They use the label 'jazz', you sell records, put it into a certain category. But jazz is so wide. You get jazz dancing, that is more a Latin-American type of music. The double beat that people dance to, they call that jazz. 'I'm going to jazz tonight', that's got nothing to do with real jazz. You know, it is a popular form of music which is not the same form of music that we refer to when we talk about specialist jazz. The word 'jazz' has lots of connotations.

GC: *Tell me about your latest album. Who is on it?*

RJ: We have Allou April,³⁷ the guitarist, on there. Hilton Schilder³⁸ has been with me for ever, he wrote a lot of the stuff on there. He plays keyboard. Allou April also wrote one or two songs. I worked with him a lot. He sings as well, he just launched his second album. We made an album with Hilton as well, *No Turning Back*, which he has just launched, with Steven Erasmus³⁹ on bass. We are a huge group of musicians who embraced the music after the pop world and all that. Like Mac McKenzie,⁴⁰ Alvin Dyers,⁴¹ the Schilders, it's one big group of people. That's also where the whole Cape jazz thing comes in. We call it 'Cape jazz' as a marketing tool. There is no such thing as Cape jazz music. But now they've come close to saying that Cape jazz is different from other African jazz music. The new album is Goema⁴² music, Goema is the Klopse beat of the Cape Town Coons Carnival [he sings the beat], which is close to the Brazilian Samba. It's a Cape Town music, the heads are very traditional, very traditional Cape Town melodies, you know [sings], you know, like basic melodies, nothing too complicated. The only thing 'jazz' about it is the improvisation. With jazz you do a simple head, to attract attention, and once they listen you go into your solo, and here you give your own interpretation of what's going on there. It's

³⁶ On Mountain Records, MOU 4484.

³⁷ Allou April – guitarist, started off as a session musician in Cape Town, later a soloist with jazz bands.

³⁸ Hilton Schilder – son of pianist and bandleader Tony Schilder.

³⁹ Steven Erasmus – Cape Town bassist and member of 'Sons of Table Mountain'.

⁴⁰ Mac McKenzie – Cape Town composer, guitarist and leader of the 'Goema Captains'.

⁴¹ Alvin Dyers – Cape Town guitarist, brother of Errol Dyers.

⁴² A style of syncopated Cape folk music.

just a popular music form, it's for dancing. I also sing a Bob Marley⁴³ song on that album, 'Redemption Song', and I do a cover version of 'What's going on?' by Marvin Gaye.⁴⁴ That was before I went to hospital. It was like a demo tape, and Paddy [Thorpe]⁴⁵ put it on record, and it is out now.

GC: *Any final comments you would like to make about South African music?*

RJ: Like I said, this Cuban thing is great, sharing the music, and now we need to get the earning thing right. The little bands who are learning things, they must be treated like learners, and the professional musicians, they must be treated professionally. They must be paid like real doctors get paid, that's what it is about. People must know who is who. Sometimes people are not so good, but they have a certain energy to attract an audience, so they are worth money. You know, overseas they have unions and they have a grading system, which we don't have at all, we don't have any grading, so you can come and you charge cheaper than me so you get the jobs. The best musician may not always get the best job.

GC: *How many albums have you made in your career?*

RJ: I played on many, many. More than fifty, but only three of my own. The others are Sabenza; Steve Newman,⁴⁶ – I made a nice album with him, which I like very much, 'Una Munakwa'. I played on two Juluka,⁴⁷ and of course the Spirits Rejoice, Pacific Express, the Rockets and Abdullah Ibrahim. It is endless, I made many, many records. I am still busy now; in fact, I am just starting to record now! We just did a little tour of Europe, France and Switzerland, which we did very well, and we got some future bookings there for next summer and for 2007 as well. The band is called 'Sons of Table Mountain'. In there I can change members as I want to.

GC: *Robbie, thanks so much.*

RJ: What a pleasure, *my bra*.

⁴³ Bob Marley – Jamaican reggae singer, guitarist, songwriter and activist, 1945-1981.

⁴⁴ Marvin Gaye – singer, arranger, instrumentalist, songwriter and record producer, 1939-1984.

⁴⁵ Paddy Lee Thorpe – founded Mountain Records in Cape Town in 1980.

⁴⁶ Steve Newman – South African guitar virtuoso and member of the trio 'Tananas'.

⁴⁷ Juluka – Johnny Clegg's band, founded in 1979.

JASPER COOK (b. 1945)

The Johannesburg Bowling Club was abuzz with its local members having their after-game drinks, so Jasper suggested we do the interview in my car to ensure a good quality recording. As Jasper began his story, it felt as if I was reliving my childhood. Here was a guy born in my home town, Pietermaritzburg, who grew up on the music of the penny whistle player Spokes Mashiyane¹ and was interested in jazz. What puzzled me, though, was why a 'white' musician like Jasper, now in post-apartheid South Africa, is still being regularly booked for gigs with some of South Africa's finest black jazz musicians. Johnny Meko explains it simply, saying of Jasper: 'He is one of us – his soul is black'.

Chats Devroop: *Is there any one defining moment in your career that you would like to comment on?*

Jasper Cook: There are too many. I do not know if you want me to mention them?

CD: *Yes, please do.*

JC: OK, just to start out with. I was in High School in Pietermaritzburg.

CD: *That's my home town, incidentally.*

JC: I had a half a feeling that it was. Anyway: I already started playing, mostly in Edendale.² I started off with a band at the University – the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg – it was called 'Swing Inc.'. That had a front line of saxophones. They were all African. My brother and I and the drummer and piano player were white, there was a coloured bassist, you may have heard of him, called Lawrence Kleinhans.³ One of the better bassists I have played with anywhere, ever. Now, we played a mixture of swing and *marabi*,⁴ already in

¹ Spokes Mashiyane – born in Mamelodi in 1933, died in Johannesburg in 1972. Leading penny whistler and saxophonist, famous for his 'kwela' music. Made his first recording in 1949; also played in the musical *King Kong*.

² Township in Pietermaritzburg.

³ Lawrence Kleinhans – bassist from Pietermaritzburg, 1921-1979.

⁴ 'Marabi' – an indigenous South African popular music (the name perhaps derived from the 'Marabastad' district in central Pretoria), primarily for keyboard. It emerged in the second quarter of the twentieth century, was based on a four-bar chord sequence, and influenced by American ragtime and early jazz. Later merged with the penny-whistle-based 'kwela' music to form 'mbaqanga'.

those days. I think I was 15 by the time that band started, or maybe even 14. That was in 1959.



Jasper Cook today

I had heard black choral music in churches since I was a kid. I'd heard the *maskhanda*⁵ guitarist passing by my house. The rhythm was the thing that got me, and that kind of endless chord set sequence of I, IV, V⁷. You know, that fascinated me, but it was not a mental thing, it completely involved my whole body and my whole spirit. I could not stop dancing when I heard that stuff – I had to move, and when I became a musician the first thing I did was persuade my father to buy me a penny whistle. I ripped off everything by Spokes; I stood next to the radio, there were no tape recordings. That was how I started.

Then I went onto trumpet and basically translated everything that I did on penny whistle onto the trumpet. Then, in this band, you could say that the solos that I took were just penny whistle solos put down on trumpet. Later on, this became true of the trombone as well. I played with them quite a lot, and then I was also booked by the Shange Brothers from Durban a few times. But the band was already dead by the end of 1961.

CD: *Sandile Shange?*

JC: It was not Sandile, it was Lionel, Patrick and Cecil Shange.⁶ I think they were uncles or something like that. But anyway, they are long gone. They came

⁵ *Maskhanda* – guitar-based popular music of Zulu folk origin.

⁶ Lionel, Patrick and Cecil Shange – played in a Durban-based band.

to fetch me in Pietermaritzburg. The first time a guy knocked on my house, he just said: 'Come, kid' and he was older than me, and I just felt I could not argue. I got into this great big De Soto or Dodge, with big wings, 1957. We went down and played in a place that at that stage I only knew as Mkhumbane,⁷ and I never realized until twenty-seven years later that Cato Ridge and Mkhumbane were the same place. That gig turned into a mess. There was a riot of some kind and everybody fled, and I was left with my trumpet. I walked along the highway and hitched home.

That is another story. But what everybody has to realize is that I am not trying to say I have suffered, that is not what I am trying to say. But it is a fact that, if there had been no such thing as apartheid, I would have just left school and joined a band like that. And that would have been my life. I would have played the same music as Hugh Masekela and [Jonas] Gwangwa and then Ntemi Piliso,⁸ and it would have been a continuum throughout my life.

That band was already dead in 1961 because with the last two gigs that we did with the Shange Brothers, a cop stopped us on the road. It was the usual thing: 'Wat maak julle met die wit seun?' ['What are you doing with that white boy?']. I was the white boy, you know. They'd take us to Pressislaer,⁹ to the nearest police station, just keep us there until midnight, and then they said 'alright, you can go now'. And the gig, of course, was messed up, although gigs used to carry on until four in the morning because of the curfew. Nobody could get back into the streets, we were always in trouble. Eventually, the guys just said to me: 'Look, kid, we love your playing, we love you, but every time that you are with us there is trouble'. The Swing Inc. band died for the same reason. The Shanges did not book me for the same reason. So really, I was kind of fired from my first gigs because of apartheid.

I do not want to talk too much about the rest of the musical life that I had. It was a matter of just being patient and waiting until I could get a chance to play that music again. That chance came along in 1986, when I went to Jameson's one night. I noticed that the Pioneers¹⁰ did not have a trombonist, I approached Ntemi Piliso, and after 30 years, I was back. Although it was not technically legal for mixed bands to play in so-called white areas at that stage, we just did it

⁷ A black township in KwaZulu-Natal.

⁸ Ntemi Piliso – alto saxophonist and composer, toured internationally but settled in Alexandra (Johannesburg). Died in 2001.

⁹ Township in Pietermaritzburg.

¹⁰ African Jazz Pioneers.

anyway. It could have been 1987, I honestly cannot remember. My mind says 1986.



Jasper Cook (left) and ‘Swing Inc.’ at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg
(Photo by Morgan Naidoo, courtesy of James Lund)

In the middle of 1985 I actually got to the stage of gigging with a dance band. I thought: if I play ‘Tie the yellow ribbon round the old oak tree’ once more, I would become a serial killer and *moor* [kill] some people. So I just stopped for a year. Then, of course, that opportunity came up. I spoke with Queeneth Ndaba¹¹ and Ntemi and they said: ‘Hell, you know, we will have you, if you will have us’, sort of thing. That is where that started.

CD: *How did you acquire your early knowledge about jazz?*

JC: I do not regard myself as too knowledgeable about jazz. But my brother was a keen jazz fan and had this huge record collection which I used to listen to. I have big ears, you know, so I just listened to everything. I heard a live band when I was walking out with my brother once, when I was 11 years of age, they were playing jazz. It was actually the first live band of any kind that I ever heard. After that – I had kind of disassociated in a way – I had just thought that music was something that came over the brown box that my dad listened to the cricket on. I really did not realize that it was made by human beings, you know. Apart from the guitarist coming past, I just thought that is just guitars, you do not hear them on the radio. *Maskhandi* guys were never on the radio in those days, you know. But that is how I started, listening to my brother’s records. He showed me what to listen for. And it must have made itself felt in my musical make-up, because it comes out. Whatever comes in comes out, you know.

CD: *Who were the pivotal influences in your career?*

¹¹ Queeneth Ndaba – saxophonist and sometime administrator of Dorkay House.

JC: When I was in JC,¹² I heard African Jazz and Variety in town again. My mom used to help with transport for African Jazz and Variety. The strange thing was that we actually had the 11 or 13-year-old Lemmy Special¹³ in our car. He became a band member with me in the Pioneers, years later. I heard that they were in town the night before my arithmetic exam, and I went down to – you will remember this place – the Taj Mahal. A big blue hotel. And there were all these guys, about twenty guys. When I walked in they were playing Charlie Parker's 'Au Privave', a standard, which I could barely play. It was kind of a muscular band, because there were about twenty guys all playing at the same time. Some Pietermaritzburg guys, but people from everywhere, you know. From all race groups in 'Maritzburg. I was a 15-year-old doing Junior Certificate exams, and I joined them. I was a bit shy; I did not do any solos, I hung around on the outskirts. But they were very loving and very encouraging, 'Come, kid', and I stayed there until far too late. But I walked on air for probably two weeks after that. That was probably the thing that said to me: 'Ja, you could play with these guys'. At that stage, I had already heard quite a lot of Masekela and some Gwangwa. Somebody had played me it; I think a tape or two of them. I certainly do not think that they were on any records; I think the Jazz Epistles just started in 1961/1962. But I heard about them and I heard some of their playing and was really impressed by them as well.

CD: *And what were the problems you experienced when executing your art form – playing the music itself?*

JC: In those early years, the cops just wanted to know what the guys were doing with a white boy in the vehicle. Then they would basically arrest us, but not jail us. I cannot say that I experienced too many problems. Once I restarted with the Pioneers there were problems. They were basically problems that you would find in any band anywhere in the world, but worse and too many – it was just an accumulative thing. I mean, we were playing out of Dorkay House. In those days, it was difficult for me to fit in with the way the Pioneers did things. Because Queeneth would just say to the guys: 'Well, just come to Dorkay House'. That was your one instruction, and you would say 'what time?' and she would say: 'Two o'clock in the afternoon'. That is because most of the guys were out of work. But I was working for myself, and I had kids to support, and so in my naivety I would go along and find all of the guys, or most of them, sitting there at two o'clock, and nothing would happen until seven. You

¹² 'Junior certificate', i.e. Grade 10.

¹³ Lemmy 'Special' Mabaso – penny-whistler and jazz saxophonist, born in Alexandra Township; starred in the musical *King Kong* when only ten years old.

would ask her; she was very skilled at saying nothing. She knew when to say things and when not to say things.

But eventually we got to know each other, and I had my own car and said: 'Look, I will find the gig, so just tell me what time the first note is being played'. So then it became the other way. Once, she phoned me and said 'There is a gig at Vosloorus tonight'. I said: 'Where?' It was a very bad time, cos all the Thokoza¹⁴ battles were happening in between there, the 'Rooi doeke' and 'Wit doeke' and all that.¹⁵ All the vigilantes were fighting. And Vosloorus looked like a concentration camp in those days. And I said: 'Where in Vosloorus?', and she said: 'You are clever, you will find the gig'. So that was another kind of problem. I had no directions, nothing like that. But I found the gig.

There's another story. I got stopped by cops in *Casspirs* [police riot trucks]. That was all fairly typical: you cannot cross the lines, no matter if you're white or black, there are certain boundaries that you have to observe. And if you have a gig you cannot observe them, you cannot be nice. So I found myself fighting with a lot of people just for the privilege of playing a little bit of music, you know.

CD: *Which centres would you say were pivotal in sustaining jazz as an art form here?*

JC: I think Johannesburg and Cape Town have always been the main ones. Port Elizabeth had some very useful guys as well. Dudu Pukwana came from Port Elizabeth – I don't know if he originated from there, but that was where he came from when he joined Chris McGregor. Eric Nomvete¹⁶ was there; so there were well-known Port Elizabeth guys. East London was a bit quiet; Pietermaritzburg has produced some good musicians but not really big names. Jabu Magubane¹⁷ went on tour with Gwangwa and 'Amandla';¹⁸ he's from Pietermaritzburg, a trombonist, a very nice trombonist. I am not sure where Allen Kwela came from originally. Was he in Durban or what?

CD: *I am not sure.*

¹⁴ Township outside Johannesburg.

¹⁵ These were two different groups during the years of political violence who identified themselves by carrying a 'rooi doek' (red scarf) or a 'wit doek' (white scarf).

¹⁶ Eric Nomvete – bandleader and composer, born in Engcobo in the Eastern Cape in 1920.

¹⁷ Jabu Magubane – trombonist, today a member of the entertainment unit of the National Ceremonial Guard.

¹⁸ 'Amandla' was an ANC cultural group formed during the apartheid years, directed by Gwangwa; also the title of a recent award-winning documentary on the role of music in the struggle against apartheid.

JC: But the Cape Town and Johannesburg guys were the ones that really made it. Johannesburg was the pivotal place. Gwangwa came, he was playing up here; Dollar Brand really became very well known on the Reef¹⁹ and as well as in Cape Town before he changed his name to Abdullah Ibrahim. There were the Matshikizas²⁰ operating on the Reef; the big bands, you know. The Merry Blackbirds²¹ were more than a vocal group, the Harlem Swingsters,²² Zakes Nkosi²³ – they were all operating on the Reef. You have to say, numerically speaking, the biggest number of influential people were around here.

CD: *Around when would you say you started to receive national acclaim, and how did this happen?*

JC: I have not noticed it yet, in any way.

CD: *Why not?*

JC: I do not know. I am self-taught, and I was playing for many years before I joined the Pioneers. We used to cut our teeth on dancing, which basically the early *mbaqanga* and *marabi* guys did too. If you played out of time in any way, you got some very mean looks from the dancers. So you learned to play properly, and it was a good school. But also you learnt that you only got one chance to strut your stuff. You cannot go onto stage and play what you've done in rehearsal, you have to go out there to play as if your life and your next meal depended on it. And, usually, they did. So I just picked that up through the years, I do not know and basically it was more true of African music than in white musicians. They played, in my estimation, with that intensity, as if that was possibly the last time they were going to play. I must have just picked it up. When I went into the Pioneers I just went in boots and all, and I did what I did. It was a very happy thing for me; you must understand that for thirty years I had to come back for it, so I did not want to waste that opportunity.

CD: *Why didn't you go into exile like some of your fellow white musicians?*

JC: I actually did exile myself in 1967, but I came back in 1971. That is another story. I met a guy who was in the ANC in England, and I came back thinking

¹⁹ The 'Reef' refers to the Witwatersrand, i.e. the Johannesburg region.

²⁰ Todd and Pat Matshikiza (uncle and nephew) – pianists. Todd (1922-68) was also a prominent journalist for *Drum Magazine*, and wrote the music for the musical *King Kong* that brought Miriam Makeba international fame; he later moved to Lusaka in Zambia, where he died an alcoholic.

²¹ Merry Blackbirds – popular band in Johannesburg from the 1930s to the '50s.

²² Harlem Swingsters – band in Alexandra Township, with whom Todd Matshikiza had been a pianist.

²³ Zakes Nkosi – saxophonist and bandleader.

that I would do some good, only I never heard from him again. And I went back to England. My brother was a very important person in the Liberation Movements by then. He was in the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa – IDAF, he was in charge of security for IDAF by then. He had always thought that the things that I was doing were ill-advised, but I was actually not doing anything.

But when I got back in 1980 I found out that that particular bloke who had, you could say, ‘recruited me’ was actually an ANC dissident and had been booted out of the party just after I had left England. So no wonder I had never heard from him. I had sat around and waited. There were several other things that I did in my life that he was influential in me doing. But it did not come to anything in any way. So, you know, after I found out that he was nowhere, I gave up all plans of being any kind of an activist. But by then, of course, I had been back in South Africa for 9 or 10 years, and I decided that there were other things that I could do. I did not see that exile was necessary, for there were other things I could do here. And I did them.

CD: *In your opinion, how did apartheid affect jazz education in South Africa?*

JC: For a start, you have got that element where it is like class. For example, I was thrown out of the Junior Philharmonic in Pietermaritzburg because the leader of it heard me playing some Louis Armstrong²⁴ licks. In those days, classical people were very, very intolerant of jazz. Of course, they were the cream of society, they all had education, and us self-taught *boitjies* [‘little boys’] that wanted to swing and play, you know, a raw kind of gut sound, were really looked down upon. I was just *skopped* [kicked] out of the Philharmonic, on the spot – that was it. There wasn’t a lot of jazz education anywhere in the world at that stage. Berklee was there, and the Juilliard School of Music. Hugh [Masekela] and Jonas [Gwangwa] got scholarships, I think, in 1962 or thereabouts. I know that, because a guy from the Consulate actually promised *me* a scholarship. You know what young boys are like, I went around Pietermaritzburg telling everybody that I’d got a scholarship. Then I went down to see him in Durban and he was quite shamefaced, I remember him coming down the stairs and he just said to me: ‘Look, I am sorry I spoke out of turn, our scholarships are actually for disadvantaged people’. So I said: ‘That is right’, you know, and he turned round and told me that Hugh and Jonas had got it. I was actually happy about that. It made me feel OK about the whole thing.

²⁴ Louis Armstrong – American jazz trumpeter, 1901-1971.

And of course, I told Hugh about that a few years ago, when we recorded his CD called *Sixty* at Bop Studios,²⁵ and he laughed: ‘Never mind, you are still playing with us, anyway’. You know, ‘you did not go to University, but we’re all together again’, so it really did not make a lot of difference. There were very few opportunities to get any kind of music education anywhere in South Africa, and even less for jazz. So, I would say in a way that the classical boys, the mainstream of white musical society, looked down upon jazz. And that must have held it back. Secondly, of course, jazz was liked by black people far more than by white people. So, what were they going to do about that? *Ja*, they had to hold it back, you know.

There were of course important people, like the *Drum* [magazine] figures – Schadeberg,²⁶ Jim Bailey,²⁷ they were all important, you know.

CD: *What are your views on those who went into exile?*

JC: Well, there are two basic kinds of exiles there; people who chose to go and people who had no choice in it. For example, my brother had his passport taken away while he was in Zambia, he could not come back. There were many like him who had their travel documents taken away. Clem Goodfellow is a good example. He was in Lesotho and had his passport taken away. He was a historian at Rhodes University and all of his research was in the Eastern Cape. Now he was stuck in Lesotho. His whole life’s research was centred on something that he could not study satisfactorily in Lesotho. He eventually fell off a cliff and died in Lesotho. I think in the TRC there may have been some input about that. I am not sure whether he was pushed or not; we were all sure that he was pushed. There were people like that, it was thrust upon them and they coped in whichever way they could. Then there were those that chose to go. I have to say: those people, whatever they achieved, you cannot judge them. To choose something like that, especially when you are an African – to choose to go to cold countries, to choose to go to no money, to choose to go into the unknown, you have to be driven by a tremendous rage or purpose or both. Every one of them is my hero in some or other way. I went into exile myself in 1967, but I am a white. I was relatively privileged, and my ancestors came from England. I had no relatives there, but I was going to something relatively safe, I suppose. I spoke the language; nobody could tell the difference between me and anybody else.

²⁵ Recording studio, set up in the former ‘Bantustan’ homeland of Bophutatswana.

²⁶ Jürgen Schadeberg – *Drum* Magazine photographer.

²⁷ Jim Bailey, owner/editor of *Drum* Magazine.

You take an African guy who is going off to a place like Moscow or Cuba. Cuba at least has African and mulatto people, but Moscow must have been the most forbidding place to land up in. And then, of course, knowing that one day you are going to get a uniform and come and fight in the bush for a packet of cigarettes a day or something like that. Just the fact that they decided to make the move, I think you have to admire each and every one of them. Then there were people that just succumbed to drink and depression, but you cannot blame them, you cannot blame them at all.

CD: How were you received by musicians performing in music genres other than jazz? Both then and now, before and after 1994?

JC: Well, classical musicians made their change many years before 1994. They started to find that there were jazz musicians who could play things that they could not play. For a long time, classical musicians have been curious and admiring of jazz musicians and their accomplishment. For example, with the trombone, I mean, no classical trombonist could do what Jack Teagarten²⁸ could do already in 1950, you know.

Today, there are very few classical trombonists that can do what Bill Watrous²⁹ can do, and there are none that can do what Frank Rosolino did.³⁰ So that has changed steadily over the years. There was no real sudden change. It was Miles Davis who changed classical people more than anything else. And Stan Getz – people with immense technique but with prettiness, with style and taste. They just could not maintain that we were still all a bunch of savages.

CD: Do you believe that a TRC for music would be necessary?

JC: Well, you have to say: ‘Was the TRC necessary for anything?’ It is a big question. I think that there were musical issues that should have been raised in the TRC. Music as an industry is known for trickery and chicanery. One of my bandleaders, George Hayden,³¹ was a higher-up man at a record company many years ago. He was an unusual man, an admirable guy, and he said, you know, a lot of those people that claim that they were not paid for their compositions were talking the truth. But the whole thing was a minefield.

If you take the fact that all of our music was basically three-chord music, then you cannot proclaim a number to be unique because of the chord sequence.

²⁸ Jack Teagarten – American jazz trombonist, 1905-1964.

²⁹ Bill Watrous – American trombonist, born 1939.

³⁰ Frank Rosolino – American trombonist, 1926-1978.

³¹ George Hayden – South African band leader, pianist, clarinetist, and alto and tenor saxophonist, born in Doornfontein, Johannesburg, but spent part of his life in the USA.

Everybody is sharing the same chord sequence. I also found out with the Pioneers that a lot of composing in South Africa is a collective effort in a band. One guy would come with one theme, and another would come with an answering theme. There are tremendous grievances going back many years, because a guy would say that *he* composed this. And another one said *he* composed it – they all contributed to it, and it is very hard sometimes to sort out whose melody was originally whose. You know, Ntemi was telling me: I forget which tune it was, but for many years he was not credited as a composer of a certain melody. He gave that melody to somebody else in exchange for a drink or some favour – I think that was what the price was. So now that guy was entitled to it and claimed that as his own, but it was actually Ntemi's number. That was just an example, you know. But at the end he got tired of it and said: 'No, this is *my* number', and went off and saw SAMRO and the family of the bloke who had been using it, they agreed on it, and that was all sorted out. But there were many numbers like this in South Africa. I mean, I have heard people say that 'Mannenburg' was not original, I have heard people say that 'Mannenburg' was a Zulu song about beer – it was a beer in Natal, better than any other beer in the fifties and forties, you know. But the fact is that we have got this body of law of intellectual property and it's like a patent. If you register it first, then it is yours, and that can cause trouble. You know what I think will be good about [a TRC in music] is that we at least will find out where a lot of the tunes come from. At the very least, it might redress some wrongs and get some royalty money paid back to the families, because many of them are very poor. That would be nice. But not as a witch hunt. The problem is that it's not to do with the haves and have-nots. There are cheats in every area. There were poor *marabi* cheats and there were rich classical cheats and there were pop cheats. It's across the board, you know. So it would be very difficult, you would have to do it with a racial emphasis to redress those wrongs, at least.

I'll give you an example. The late Ricardo Bornman³² maintained that a composition that was made famous by either James Last³³ or Bert Kaempfert,³⁴ called 'Afrikaan Beat', was his composition. When that particular band was touring the country, you know, they would have a few drinks and [Ricardo] says, 'I've got this nice tune', and the next thing, you found it's coming out on an LP in Germany. You know, it's everywhere, not only in South Africa. It's the dirtiest thing. In the swing days there was the Gene Krupa Band. If you look at their credits for 'Tuxedo Junction', there are four composers. It was actually

³² Ricardo Bornman – South African guitarist.

³³ James Last – German composer and big band leader, born 1929.

³⁴ Bert Kaempfert (also Kämpfert) – German band leader and songwriter, 1923-1980.

Erskine Hawkins's³⁵ composition, but the band leader always asked for a percentage, because they were in his band and they wouldn't get recorded otherwise. That was a done thing: if I'm making this record with my band, I take 25 percent. It's been everywhere. I wouldn't be surprised, if one delves into it, to find that it was happening in the classical world in Europe in the seventeen and eighteen hundreds as well. I think here in South Africa it needs to be looked at to see whether the recording companies really were caring. I have my doubts about it. I think they took what they did very blithely and easily and didn't go and lose sleep over it.



Jasper Cook and 'Swing Inc.' at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg

(Photo by Morgan Naidoo, courtesy of James Lund)

CD: *What are your perceptions of jazz and jazz education today? Do you think that it has changed somewhat?*

JC: It has changed a lot. There is a lot more acceptance of jazz. In fact, jazz is becoming sort of classical, with a share of the market where classical music was. But there is a lot of ignorance about it. I often meet young people – 16, 17 and 18 – who hear some jazz, and to them it is like a rare treasure. We are being consigned in a way to a 'classical' past.

CD: *You've brought to light so much historical evidence that for me wasn't there before. Even rummaging through the archives at the SABC, I didn't get the picture you give.*

JC: I played quite a few sessions at the SABC in the seventies. It seems to me like some organizations have a life of their own. It seems to be the same place, whoever you put at the top. Maybe there is a whole lot of people that have got to leave us, and then it would change. I heard somebody saying that in Barcelona after Franco died, there was crime like there is in South Africa now. But twenty years afterwards, you could leave your front door open and go to a

³⁵ Erskine Hawkins – American high-note trumpeter and bandleader, 1914-1993.

restaurant. They said that that particular generation had died out, and the next generation was educated.

Perhaps we will go through something similar here. It's the same with the SABC. I do not like to be unkind, but once that current generation has completely disappeared, and with it any remnants of that legacy of the SABC, maybe we can start expecting it to be a broadcasting company 'for the people by the people'. It still to me has the flavour of an autocracy. You could feel it when you walked in. I do not like saying this, but there had been a couple of incidents, for example: when we played with Bra Jonas [Gwangwa's] big band in the Civic [Theatre in Johannesburg], that was about in 1988, it was probably another defining moment. It was one of the best concerts that I have ever been in at the Civic, and probably the most wonderful big band that I ever played for. That was just the most wonderful two weeks of music that I have been involved in. Now, the staging of that concert in the Civic and the whole budget were inextricably tied up with the SABC deal. The Civic was going to pay the musicians this, and the broadcaster was going to pay that, but in the end it just didn't suit the broadcasters and they pulled out. There was a monopoly in broadcasting in those days, and they could do that. So it was a terrible disaster, in a sense. We did not suffer in terms of the fee that we were promised, for we got paid. Bra J[onas] G[wangwa] was totally honourable. But you have to imagine what the potential was for Bra Jonas if that had been staged on TV. Perhaps he would have made twice the living he has done. Perhaps it would have doubled or tripled his potential.

You don't make money from playing live music, nobody does. The recording industry killed that off years ago, so now you are forced to record. You were forced to be on TV, and when you get abandoned like that, by a big corporation that won't starve, that will not miss a meal: those are things that I will carry to my grave not ever feeling happy about.

CD: *If you think back on South African music, on South African jazz, would you say it has become largely diluted with American jazz, or does it still maintain its own?*

JC: No, it is definitely diluted. Music is melody, harmony and rhythm. Classical music is very strong in harmony, very strong in melody, but just about the weakest thing, without rhythm. Western African music is very strong on drum patterns but very weak on harmony; so there you have got no harmony, some melody and plenty rhythm. Jazz to me is an ideal mixture of rhythm, melody and harmony. Take any of the jazz genres, it could be New Orleans, Swing or West Coast: they've all got great melody, they've got great rhythm, they've got

great harmony, intricate chords and strange tensions and lovely sounds. Now in *marabi* we play with three chords only, so you have to say that there is less interest in the harmony. But the rhythm is as throbbing as you can get. You know, there is nothing more rhythmic to me than South African *marabi* and *mbaqanga* type rhythms. And even if you take an *isicathamiya* group like Ladysmith Black Mambazo,³⁶ they do not even have drums or bass, and yet the rhythm is powerful.

I am not a musicologist, but there is no harm in being simple in this and that. Ntemi said: you know, we basically have to hand it to the Americans or to the Western or Northern hemisphere. We borrowed all the instruments from them; but the content comes from choral music, the harmonic conventions that we apply come from harmony that was sung by Africans, probably since the beginning of time. It was adapted to church music, then to *marabi* – which is slightly different, for as you know, we only use triads, but the way we use them is very attractive, using the seventh of the subdominant, the blue note, when you go from one to four, you know, that kind of thing. It does not happen in the North, it does not happen in the West and it does not happen in America, where they use much more square harmonies. So there is a more soulful use of triads that is tremendous, even though we do not use a sixth or a seventh – we do these days, traditionally we didn't. It has got tremendous charm. You know, it can be made complex by someone like poor Molelekwa;³⁷ his was wonderful harmony, it wasn't only triads, he did all sorts of voices with flat thirteenth and so on. It was too wonderful for words. Abdullah Ibrahim is like that too, you can get very complex, but there is always the driving rhythm to centre it and hold it together. So, I think we owe a lot to the West, but not so much in rhythm. We have a wonderful heritage of rhythm in this country. Not borrowed from the West and, you know, our guys can play anything.

³⁶ Ladysmith Black Mambazo – male vocal group from KwaZulu-Natal, noted for singing a cappella *isicathamiya* and *mbube* music.

³⁷ Moses Molelekwa – pianist from Tembisa Township, 1973-2001. Not to be confused with the jazz musician Moses Molelekoa, born in Ndabeni, a Cape Town suburb, in 1918.

BARNEY RACHABANE (b. 1946)

It was an overcast Tuesday morning on 28 June 2004, and I was slowly moving through peak traffic – a common feature these days on the M1 between Pretoria and Johannesburg. I was on my way to the South African Music Rights Organization in Braamfontein to meet my boyhood idol Barney Rachabane. Arriving at the foyer in SAMRO House, it was quite easy to recognize Barney – he was clad in his typical leather cap and black leather jacket. Here stood the man renowned for his jazz pursuits during the 1970s and 1980s, a time when jazz was arguably in decline in South Africa.

Chats Devroop: *Is there any one defining moment in your career that you would like to comment on?*

Barney Rachabane: *Ja, I would say in 1987. I played a very big gig with Paul Simon.¹ He came into South Africa during the cultural boycott, he sneaked into the country and he made this album *Graceland*.² He went back to the States, did the mastering of the album at the Hit Factory and it came out, it sold billions. Then they asked me, a year later, to come back to London to join the show, and there were Hugh Masekela, Miriam Makeba, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Ray Phiri,³ and the drummer from Stimela and Bakithi Khumalo.⁴ Of course, the rest were mostly American musicians. So I went to London to join the show. We did a world tour for about three years, on the road. That was the biggest of my career. We were flying on private jets, flying around the world. That was a big time, a really big time.*

CD: *When you were growing up, was there any particular moment that really inspired you to go and study jazz?*

BR: *Actually, I was mixing with the best in the country: Bra Zakes Nkosi, Ntemi Piliso, they were the guys. I was living in Alexandra [a township on the outskirts of Johannesburg] at that time. As a youngster I was playing the penny whistle, but they influenced me to such a great deal that I also started to play the alto sax and the clarinet. It was Kippie Moeketsi⁵ and Makay Davashe who*

¹ Paul Simon – American singer/songwriter, born 1941.

² The famous Paul Simon album of 1986, featuring many musicians from South Africa.

³ Ray Phiri – vocalist and guitarist, leader of the band Stimela.

⁴ Bakithi Khumalo – bassist and cousin of Vusi Khumalo (jazz drummer), moved to the USA.

⁵ Kippie Moeketsi – clarinetist and saxophonist, born in Johannesburg. Joined the musical *King Kong*, but returned to South Africa after its London run; died in 1983. The well-known jazz club 'Kippies' in Johannesburg was named after him.

were a great influence on me. I was also listening to a lot of American music, you know: Johnny Hodges,⁶ Sonny Stitt⁷ and Jackie McLean.⁸ Even now, I still have piles and piles of records that I have learnt from, copying solos – it took me a great deal of time. All the American standards. And, of course, I mixed that with our local *mbaqanga*. Yeah, I put those American phrases on top of our *mbaqanga*. I still do it now, I have a good time doing that. It is such a pleasure.



Barney Rachabane

(Photo Courtesy of Steve Gordon)

CD: *Tell me: how did you get these recordings?*

BR: These records were around in the *shebeens*,⁹ in Soweto – I mean in Alexandra. You'd go to a *shebeen*, sit down and have a drink; we were playing the best jazz in the world. That was how I came across them, I was in love with the music. I started buying my own as well.

CD: *How did you acquire your knowledge about jazz?*

BR: From listening to records, basically just records. And, like I say, the people I was mixing with. There was another gentleman, who died in Boston: Gwigwi

⁶ Johnny Hodges – American saxophonist, member of the Duke Ellington band.

⁷ Sonny Stitt – American alto and tenor saxophonist, 1924-1982.

⁸ Jackie McLean – American alto saxophonist and educator, 1932-2006.

⁹ *Shebeen* – an illicit bar or club in the township where alcoholic beverages were sold without a license.

Mwrebi,¹⁰ an alto player and clarinet player. He was working at the office of Union Artists. He went into exile, and ended up studying at Berklee.

CD: *Did you have any formal training on the saxophone, or did you just pick it up?*

BR: No, if you play the penny whistle [you can] just pick up the saxophone and play it. I can play a song immediately. All the penny whistlers can play saxophone. Spokes Mashiyane just took the saxophone and played it. Ntemi, [Lemmy 'Special'] Mabaso, the late Jake Lerole,¹¹ he also played the saxophone. From the penny whistle to the saxophone it was very easy – you don't need anybody to show you. Just grab it and play it.

CD: *What were some of the difficulties you experienced in learning jazz?*

BR: I would say, the difficulty was the apartheid thing. It really disturbed you, because you could not mix freely. Now if you were mixing with the white guys, if you were playing in a white area, you know there would be problems unless they had a permit. You had to apply for a permit to go and do a gig in the suburbs. Even in the night clubs we could not play. They stopped us playing in the white night clubs, they said no: go play in the townships. But where are the night clubs in the townships? There is nothing. So it was a bit of a problem. It was bad. That is why most of the guys went into exile. Like Masekela. He was not actually afraid in the country, but he felt very bad. That was why he had to get out of the country. He was self-exiled.

CD: *Which centres would you say were pivotal in sustaining jazz as an art form when you were growing up?*

BR: The Dorkay House. It was where all the musicians were, they all came to the Dorkay House. Miriam [Makeba], [Hugh] Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, the other guy I just mentioned now – Gwigwi Mwrebi – Dennis Mpale, Dennis Nene.¹² There were so many musicians that came out of that place. That was the place that actually influenced me a great deal. I was playing the penny whistle, and I could hear everything really, you know.

CD: *Which cities were big on jazz?*

¹⁰ Gwigwi Mwrebi (also in some sources 'Mrebi' and 'Mrwebi') – alto saxophonist of the 1950s who achieved international fame.

¹¹ Jake Lerole – South African penny-whistler.

¹² Dennis Nene – flautist, saxophonist and percussionist, played in the band for *King Kong*.



Barney Rachabane (right)

BR: Cape Town. Actually, I went to stay there for some time. You know, it's a very laid-back town. I still know a guy there in District Six: Howard Lawrence,¹³ he was a journalist for the *Golden City Post*, also freelancing as well. He was with the ANC, so I stayed at his house. He was a Muslim guy, a nice guy, had a wife and a little son. Oh, they loved me like part of the family. I was practising with a guy, Ronnie Beer;¹⁴ after Chris McGregor and The Blue Notes left, after the recording of the big band *African Sound* album, they formed another group in Cape Town, with Ronnie Beer, Dennis Mpale on bass, Martin Mgijima,¹⁵ Max Diamond¹⁶ the drummer and Tete Mbambisa. We had a nice quartet there. We also had Bob Tizzard¹⁷ on trombone. Ronnie Beer was on tenor sax. After that, he left and went to France.

CD: *I am going to ask you a very personal question now. Why didn't you go into exile? Many of your contemporaries did, but you didn't. Why was this?*

BR: I do not know really, I cannot tell you. I just did not think about getting out of the country. No.

CD: *In spite of apartheid?*

¹³ Howard Lawrence – a poet and journalist in Cape Town.

¹⁴ Ronnie Beer – tenor saxophonist and later a band member of 'Brotherhood of Breath'.

¹⁵ Martin 'Lilly' Mgijima – bassist with the Chris McGregor septet, 1939-1996.

¹⁶ Max Diamond – jazz drummer based in Cape Town.

¹⁷ Bob Tizzard – trombonist who later settled as a piano tuner in Saint James, False Bay, where he died in January 2000.

BR: I mean, I felt the pain through apartheid but did not want to run away from it. I was also not a threat somehow, though I was very militant as well, you know. I loved to be here. I met my wife when I was 14. I was so in love with my wife, and we have four children and five grandchildren. I am always on the road. I was visiting Scandinavia, London and Memphis and just last Monday, I just came back from Australia. I went straight to Durban and this weekend I am going back to Cape Town to join the Brubecks [Cathy and Darius].

CD: *What were your experiences during apartheid?*

BR: When I was doing the penny whistle in the fifties, they used to arrest us a great deal. But they could not really put us into jail, so they just put us into the *kwela-kwela*,¹⁸ and took us to John Vorster.¹⁹ They would say: come and play, so we played and then they let us go again. Then we started playing again in the streets. We were making money at that time, busking, in the fifties.

CD: *In your opinion, how did apartheid impact on jazz performance and education in South Africa?*

BR: It was very tough, because the guys could not really make money. But we still used to play, we practised, because when you have a vision in life, nothing can stop you. You can already see the other side. It was tough, but when you have a vision it is a very godly thing, nothing can stop that. So I never stopped playing, from when I was ten, and I am fifty-eight now. I have never turned back, no way.

CD: *What are your views on those who went into exile and enjoy a lot of recognition in the music industry today?*

BR: I think that they were brave to do that. I think it was very good for them. They had a vision that they could make it outside South Africa, because of the oppression in this country. Look, it was a great adventure for them. I am happy for them. During the time when Masekela came to live in exile in Botswana, he used to fly me to Botswana all the time. I used to go there to do records with him, and we did some tours and went to Europe, America, etc. Then I came back to South Africa and he went back to Botswana. I had a great time with those guys.

CD: *How were you received by musicians performing kinds of music other than jazz? Both then (pre-1994) and now (post-1994)?*

¹⁸ *Kwela-kwela* – a street name for the large police vans.

¹⁹ 'John Vorster' – a police station and holding cell for prisoners in central Johannesburg, named after the South African Prime Minister.

BR: People received me very well, because I am quite versatile, I could play anything. I also played in the *Buddy Holly Story*, that was a rock-and-roll oriented musical. I could play *mbaqanga*, and I did a lot of sessions with all kinds of music: classics, soundtracks, whatever. I played flute, soprano and alto sax, tenor sax. So I do a lot of work in different spheres of music.

CD: *Do you believe that you now, at fifty-eight, get adequate recognition for your contribution to South African jazz?*

BR: I do not know. I do not think so. No, I think I need to put on more pressure, make more records. I have been all over the world. You know, even when I went to Australia, I found that I was invited all over the place. I was travelling with Paul Simon when we were doing *Graceland*, and when we were doing *Born at the right time*.²⁰ I have played with the best musicians, like Michael Brecker,²¹ Steve Gadd, Richard T²² and Don Gronick.²³

CD: *What are your perceptions of jazz and jazz education today?*

BR: I think that there is a big future for the music. I have had opportunities to travel with the National Youth Band and teach them my music. I did all the festivals: the festival in Durban, the Joy of Jazz in Johannesburg. The last one was the North Sea Jazz Festival [in Cape Town]. I played there with the National Youth Band doing my music, a ten-piece band, sponsored by Standard Bank.

CD: *Do you feel that music in South Africa is very diluted with American jazz, or do we still have an African identity?*

BR: Yes, we do have an African identity, but the American influence has been too strong. It is too strong in this country. You hear the African music, you hear the American solos on top of it, all the time, if you like it or not. It is just natural, you know. That influence has been there for years. We cannot dodge that.

²⁰ *Born at the right time* – 1991 album by Paul Simon.

²¹ Michael Brecker – American saxophonist and composer, 1949-2007.

²² Richard T – a freelance keyboardist in New York.

²³ Don Gronick – American pianist, composer and record producer, 1947-1996.

ANTHONY (TONY) SCHILDER (b. 1937)

In 1983, I was invited to compete at the Oude Meester Music Competition in Stellenbosch. Despite the invitation, the apartheid legislation meant that I could not get accommodation in Stellenbosch itself, and so I was forced to stay with a friend's family in Walmer Estate in Cape Town. They were staunch jazz fans, and insisted that since I played jazz, I should join them on a night out in Cape Town. We arrived at the Club Montreal in Mannenburg, a suburb in Cape Town. All I can recall is that I heard the most amazing jazz being performed by Tony Schilder, Leslie Kleinsmith and their band. During one of the sets I got to meet Tony, who was full of encouragement and showed a keen interest in sharing his knowledge.

It was not possible for me to interview Tony, due to his tight working schedule, so Gary Crawford undertook to do it on my behalf.

Gareth Crawford: *Tony, I know your family is quite a dynasty in music, but just tell me how you got into the piano?*

Tony Schilder: Well, I started when I was about five years old. And I had talent on both sides of the family, Africas and Schilders. We are all, I say, great musicians – both families, fantastic musicians. My mother was a super musician. Of course, not recognized. My father was a classical fan. He loved classical music, that is why I can appreciate classical music as well as jazz. I had a built-in gene, it was inevitable that I would become a musician. The jazz influence came. I cannot read music, until this day. I never have taken a lesson. My mother tried that, but it was too expensive.

GC: *Did your parents read music?*

TS: My father read. My eldest brother, Richard, was an accomplished pianist and a good reader, you know.

GC: *How old were you then?*

TS: About six years old. And it came naturally because most of the people in my family were musicians. They used to dominate the piano, so I had to wait for certain times. That is the way I developed. I composed in my head. I do not sit at the piano because, you know, to me, to be driving along somewhere or lying in bed, that is how I compose. And I can remember everything that I've played; if I have ever played a number I will never forget it, never. You can hum a bar,

and I'll have the whole tune. I can remember every song that I have ever played.



Tony Schilder

GC: So, Tony, you were totally self-taught. Did anyone show you stuff, or did you listen to records?

TS: Before we got a piano, I used to practise with the keyboard in my mind. That is how I used to practise. When I got to a piano I played it perfectly without a mistake. So I never sit at the piano and take a chord of B and go and try to play it. I have it in my head – the harmony, everything.

GC: That goes for the harmony as well?

TS: The harmony, everything. No, I do not know what the different chords are. Someone said to me: ‘You are playing a flattened fifth’. I say: ‘What!’ That is how I developed.

GC: *What kind of records were you listening to, what year was this?*

TS: The 1940s. I was born in 1937. I listened to everything that I could. If I liked a tune I picked it up immediately and it would stay there until I am called upon to play it. You could request a tune that I’d heard but never played and I would play it perfectly.

GC: *Then obviously keys or transposing means nothing to you?*

TS: Transposing is easy – I can go from one key to another.

GC: *Till today you will not pick up sheet music and learn it?*

TS: No. I just listen to it, the music.

GC: *So tell me the influences you had in your life.*

TS: My dad was in classical music. Whatever music [was] playing, I [would] listen to, including jazz. My mother was the jazz side of the family, and I was a natural jazz player. When you learn to read, you will play what’s in front of you unless you are a natural. You can help yourself with whatever you want, use your innovations, make your own diversions. So, it was not difficult for me. Everybody said to me: ‘How the hell do you do that?’ I do not know – it is just there, you know. It is a gift from God.

GC: *You started when you were very young – when did you start gigging?*

TS: I was 13 years old when I did my first gig. In fact I was younger, about 11 when I played at the roller skating rink, playing for the people going round and round. In Cape Town, in Wynberg. Not a whole band, just me and a drummer. On an upright old piano.

The people I listened to were like Erroll Garner.¹ He was good; he was the greatest stride left hand player. That is how I learned to play solo piano for a dance. To have a beat going on in your left while playing a melody in your right. I played once (I remember) for two hundred people, ballroom dancing, and all I played was solo piano. Well, that is not an easy thing to do, I can hardly do it today.

¹ Erroll Garner – American jazz pianist and composer, born 1921.

GC: *Erroll Garner as well, his 'Concert by the Sea'? My dad was Nigel Crawford,² so I grew up on Erroll Garner and Oscar Peterson.³*

TS: I used to do every track on that album [*Concert by the Sea*]. Oscar Peterson – I could not believe that anyone could play this way. Of course he was also a schooled musician, a teacher.

GC: *What are some of the difficulties you experienced in learning and executing your art?*

TS: I did not experience any musical difficulties. The only difficulty was trying to play somewhere I wasn't allowed to. For example: I could not play in a restaurant if they had a license. It was like a colour bar. If they did not have a license I could play there. That didn't help the management because they made their money with the booze you drank.

GC: *Is there any one defining moment in your career that you would like to comment on?*

TS: When I met and became friendly with Quincy Jones,⁴ the greatest musician in the world. He came to South Africa after 1994. I was at Sun City, doing a gig when Quincy Jones came walking down the stairs. I was playing a certain tune that was one of my favourites, and he came to me and said: 'That is my favourite, how do you know?' 'How do I know what?' 'How do you know that is my favourite tune?' He thought that I was playing it for him. The tune was called 'Nuages'. It was by the French guitar player Django Reinhardt.⁵ He was over the moon. He says: 'Beautiful chords you were using.' I did not know what chords I was using, those are the chords I hear in my head and I play them. He was very impressed, and we took photographs together. He sat down and he played that particular song, his way. It was wonderful, but he said: 'I prefer your way'. He gave me one of his CDs and signed it there.

GC: *Did you stay in Cape Town all your life?*

TS: Yes.

GC: *Who were the people you most enjoyed listening to and playing with?*

² Nigel Crawford – jazz pianist from Johannesburg, 1924-1999.

³ Oscar Peterson – Canadian jazz pianist and composer, born 1925.

⁴ Quincy Jones – American composer, impresario, producer and social activist, born 1933.

⁵ Django Reinhardt – French jazz guitarist, 1910-1953, founder of 'The Quintet of the Hot Club of France'.

TS: Every musician was special to me. People who accompanied me because they respected what I was doing. You can take the late Cecil Ricca,⁶ he was the most amazing drummer I ever had. I made a recording with him in the '80s. It was amazing, the things that he did.

GC: *You did an album with Cecil?*

TS: Yes, with Cecil and big names in Cape Town. I've got it on vinyl, it was called *Jazz in Transit*, with Morris Goldberg.⁷ Morris still plays, he is living in New York. He was here for the jazz festival. He did this recording, I would love you to hear it, it was great stuff. Cecil was part of the trio. Then there was Gary Kriel⁸ the bass player. We were working together for, say, 40 years. That was the trio. Then there were other musicians like Ivan Bell,⁹ we have worked together several times. He was a young boy then. He is younger than you! I met Eddie¹⁰ as well (the late Eddie Jooste). In fact I've got a photograph there, I just took it out last night when we were talking about it. He had a fabulous smile.

GC: *Some famous South African names, who did you work with?*

TS: I very seldom used horn players, because I am a leader as far as melody playing goes. I had guitarists, like Gerry Bosman¹¹ – Gerry gave me a lot of work, he was incredible. Then there were people like Stan Davis.¹² Your father would have known him. He is a great guitar player. These guys were drinking, it destroyed most of the musicians, it is a great pity.

GC: *You never got to be a big drinker yourself?*

TS: No, if I have a drink while I play I mess up – I would rather not drink. When I come home from a gig I am absolutely dead sober. And that's for drugs too, that is a no-no for me.

GC: *A lot of musicians went that way?*

TS: Well listen, I smoked pot, once, when I was 17 years old – it was the worst experience of my life. What does a guy get out of it, you know? I could not understand this. Why have such a bad experience every day of the week?

GC: *What tours did you do?*

⁶ Cecil Ricca – Cape Town drummer and member of Tony Schilder's Trio.

⁷ Morris Goldberg – New York-based saxophonist, flautist and bandleader, born 1936 in Cape Town.

⁸ Gary Kriel – South African bassist, a regular member of Tony Schilder's Trio.

⁹ Ivan Bell – drummer from Cape Town.

¹⁰ Eddie Jooste – Cape Town bassist who died in 2004, aged 36.

¹¹ Gerry Bosman – guitarist, big band arranger and conductor.

¹² Stan Davis – jazz guitarist.

TS: Well, people would come over here from overseas. I tried to avoid them – Americans – because they were against what we believed in. They came here to make money. [Many] could not care less about the situation in South Africa. But I had a conscience, I mean I could have made a lot of money. Instead I was forced to take a job, and I became an apprentice diamond setter. That is how I made my living. So I did not have to depend on gigs to make a living.

GC: *When did the one start to out-play the other one?*

TS: Well, I used to work for a manufacturing jeweller. Sitting all day looking at the tiny little diamonds, killing my hand. And one day I decided that I should open my own business – diamond setting – and that gave me flexibility. So if I had to do a wedding for instance, I did not have to work, I could just get up and go, whenever. That gave me freedom, starting my own business. There were the chicks to be had out there. What am I sitting there for? But I neglected the business, I gave it to somebody to run for me. The shop does not exist anymore. I went overseas. When I came back after three months, all my tools were gone, everything I had, there was just the bills and three months' rent, and I thought: 'What the hell'. I lost a lot of money, there.

GC: *So were you gigging overseas?*

TS: No, I wanted to take my family overseas, for them to experience going abroad. What soured the whole thing was, they wanted to give me an exit visa: in other words, I can go over but cannot come back again. Then when I got there they told me: it's all right, you can come back. I nearly went berserk.

GC: *When would you say you got recognition as a famous South African jazz pianist?*

TS: It took me thirty years to make my first album. I always had this talent, but it was ignored, you know.

GC: *What was the album called?*

TS: My first album was called 'Introducing the Music of Tony Schilder'. It was with Leslie Kleinsmith,¹³ Cecil Ricca, Gary Kriel, you know. My compositions had been lying dormant. This was all original material. We decided on Paddy Lee Thorpe¹⁴ from Mountain Records. My writing only came to the fore in the early '80s when I decided to record – that was a breakthrough for me. But by that time I was well known already in Cape Town.

¹³ Leslie Kleinsmith – jazz & contemporary music vocalist.

¹⁴ Paddy Lee Thorpe – founded Mountain Records in Cape Town in 1980.

GC: *You were well known through your live gigs, but this album put you on the map?*



Club Montreal today

TS: That is right. I got more publicity than I ever had in my life. But the thing that really bugs me is that I had to go through my life proving that I can play the piano – which was unbelievably tough. I went on a boat – it was a big ocean liner called the ‘Oceanus’, and it sank at the Wild Coast. Let me tell you something: the only people doing rescuing were the musicians and performers, because the crew had all gone away. The Captain and his officers said they were going to direct operations from the land! Unbelievable. Then of course they had to get other people to come in because they heard that I couldn’t read music. I said: ‘I can learn that song, as fast as you can read it’.

GC: *How did you get the job on the ship?*

TS: That was through an agent. They made me sign the contract because I was very popular in Cape Town. The contract was just for three months, but the agent only paid me for one month, the month before the ship sank.

GC: *How many albums did you make?*

TS: There is the live album, then there is another live album with only solo piano. It was called: ‘The music of Tony Schilder’. And, of course, on that particular record I played a lot of standards, on solo piano.

GC: *What is your style?*

TS: I cannot define it because my style is jazz. People would say: 'Hey, you sound a bit like the Boston Boys, but now you sound like someone else'. But that was how I learned, by listening to music.

GC: *Who influenced you, what were your South African influences, what compositions?*

TS: There isn't an influence, really. The compositions do not come out of African music, they come out pseudo-American because I like a particular melody. Then, of course, there is one particular song that is famous throughout Cape Town, it is called 'Montreal'. I heard that song in 1983, after I went to Brazil. I was always interested in Latin American music, that is my forte. When I came back, I decided I was going to open a club and call it 'Montreal'. So we opened this club and it became the most popular club that Cape Town had ever seen. Mannenburg was where it all happened. It was the most amazing club. The first day we opened, we played that number and it took off as if people had known it for years. We struck a chord because it had a sort of Cape feeling, you know, with a Latin beat. And I have been doing that ever since.

GC: *All the albums started in the 1980s?*

TS: Yes, all the albums started in the early '80s. Thirty years of playing in gigs. No record company came up and asked me why I had not made a record yet. Take Gallo for instance. I had won a competition for the best pianist in Cape Town and I was supposed to get a record contract. 1960-65. I was a young man; I thought: here is an opportunity. But there were other people who were already recording.

GC: *How many albums?*

TS: About four albums. The most recent one was the one that I recorded last week. That is called *B Positive*. I wrote that when I was in hospital and I had a blood transfusion – it's my blood group, you know, B+. It is also my attitude. I wrote some of the stuff while I was there. As I say: when I go and compose, I do not take a pen and write it down – it is all in my head. I had to get registered so that I could earn royalties. I eventually called up SAMRO and said: 'I must get some royalties because I have been going a long time, with radio broadcasts'. They said: 'Well, you must become a member of SAMRO'. I distinctly remember filling in a form, and this guy said: 'OK, we will work out something.' Because I said: 'If you owe me money it is going to cost you and it is going to cost you the interest that grew over the years'. And he quickly gave me a check of nine thousand bucks. But anyway, I was grateful to get the money. They gave me the money and then somebody called me and asked: 'Listen, are

you sure that you are a member?’ But it all worked out in the end, we have a good relationship.

GC: *Why did you not go into exile like many of your fellow musicians?*

TS: Let me tell you something. I was involved as an activist, I went to protest meetings, I did the whole protest thing, and that is when they decided that they would put me in jail. They arrested me because I was an ‘agitator’. Yes, the late 1970s. I was scared, and I had a family; two babies. I could not take a chance. Because if they had banned me, what would I do? Ask permission to do gigs? I would not be able to speak to friends. I had a quartet; that was more than three people, so I would be arrested.¹⁵

GC: *These bands – were they mixed bands?*

TS: Yes, I always believe in mixing them. It created problems. I was playing in some club in Cape Town. The police walked in and said that the band was mixed. They said: ‘Well, the drummer must go and sit on the dance floor, take his drums, sit on the dance floor’. That is where he had to play – that was ludicrous. I used to laugh with them. If you did not laugh with them, it would have been very serious indeed. Those years I spent being a diamond setter, looking after my family. And of course when the threat to my family came, I decided not to be that much of an activist anymore, I had to cool it down. I could have gone overseas since then, I could have gone into exile, because I had plenty of offers from people. ‘Come to New York’, ‘come to Rio’, ‘come to – you will make a fortune’. My family was here, and then I was not interested in going away.

GC: *Do you know friends who went into exile?*

TS: Oh, yes, plenty of musician friends, close friends and family also opted to go over. There was one period where I did not want to start any nonsense, because my family would have been in trouble. My son, of course, became an activist as well, you know, his name is Hilton. I only had two children, Hilton and Daleen – she passed away four to five years ago. She was also a great songwriter; I wrote the songs, and she wrote some of the lyrics. She was not a singer, she played the piano. She was manic-depressive, with bi-polar disease.

You see the problem was, we had to be very careful not to become too vocal, because then they watched you. They could easily push you away, you do not know. I could take my singers home, and they used to grab me out of the motor

¹⁵ A typical ‘banning order’ from the apartheid government prevented one from meeting more than two people at a time, and also meant that one could not visit public institutions.

car and take me to jail. Yes, in Cape Town, which is supposed to be more tolerant. I would not go into exile because I was having a wonderful time as a musician, you know. But a lot of the people said: 'Why don't you go play in your homelands?' Every other musician went to their homelands, because it was tax free. Who would pay for their taxes? And a lot of musicians opted for that.

GC: Would you say that the whole apartheid thing affected your musical education?

TS: No, that was my choice. I played music, but I had the option of going to college and learning to play. I had to make a living; I left this lucrative trade and pursued music. I even toyed with the idea of becoming a chef – I am a very good cook. If I was not a musician, maybe I could become a chef.

GC: What do you think about people that went into exile?

TS: Well, as far as I am concerned, it was the easy way out for them. But they have come back now, making a fortune; they say 'this man was a hero of the struggle'. Where was he a hero of the struggle? We were the heroes, the people who stayed here. I do not understand the thinking.

GC: Just to pursue that point, without labouring it – what are your thoughts on a TRC for music?

TS: I had my problems with the SABC. They would not let me perform on the radio, because I was coloured. Then when I did perform on an exclusively coloured programme, they changed my name. They changed it to some white name. They called me something like 'Toni Evans'. It was not TV, you could not see me – it does not matter who I am. But they were mad that I was coloured. I was playing on Sunday morning at 07:00, which was reserved specifically for coloured musicians. Sunday morning at 07:00, I got my family up and I said: 'Listen to me playing'. I went to Sea Point to record. And then I could not have a white bass player on the coloured programme.

GC: What do you think such a TRC would achieve?

TS: Well, I do not know what it would achieve. Musicians have suffered. Those who went away did not suffer. Those who went away into exile, they did not suffer. I am sorry; that is just the way I feel. If I had run away, I would not have suffered. I would have had a wonderful time in New York or somewhere.

GC: What do you think or feel about record companies?

TS: Record companies – they are OK, but as long as they can make the money. They're just about making money, mainly. You make good money with a guy with good talent, selling records – that is where you make your money. I was not selling enough titles, and of course I also had this attitude, you know. 'Those guys are trying to exploit me' – this is what I always thought. I worked for my talent, I did not mess around.

GC: *Did you also teach your son Hilton?*

TS: No I did not teach him. Hilton is a natural, like all of us. Like all the family. Yes, he would come to my gigs. Well, not all of my gigs, but he would listen to me at home, you see. We had a piano, we could afford one. He listened, he was a natural, without thinking he would go to the piano and sit down. And of course there are all the other instruments he plays. He is a multi-instrumentalist. African instruments, all of them. He automatically would be harmonizing while he was playing. He was always willing to learn.

GC: *How many Schilders are there?*

TS: My family? My father and mother, they had four daughters, they are my stepsisters. When he married my mother, they went ahead and had ten offspring – every one of them comes from that gene pool. Ten were musicians: Richard, myself, Philly¹⁶ – a great bass player. He is living with my elder sister. And of course there was Chris Schilder who, like Dollar Brand, changed his name: Khalil Shihab, that is his professional name. Then of course there was my brother Ronny¹⁷ (also a good musician, a guitarist) but he never pursued music further. There was my brother Jackie,¹⁸ who is Richard Caesar's¹⁹ father-in-law. If you are jumping in that gene pool, you come out slightly wet.

GC: *At your stage in your career now, do you believe that you receive adequate recognition for your contribution to the music industry?*

TS: Yes, as I said, it comes with great life experiences. I was always very popular, that was never a problem. In 1988 I got a gold medal – the top piano player in Cape Town. Paul Bothner's [music company] sponsored that. We had this huge contest, and people who were prominent in jazz were all getting gold medals for their contribution to jazz and the community. I did a lot of charity work – that was the recognition for that.

¹⁶ Phillip Schilder – bassist, brother to Tony, member of Estudio.

¹⁷ Ronny Schilder – guitarist, brother to Tony.

¹⁸ Jackie Schilder – drummer, brother to Tony.

¹⁹ Richard Caesar – Cape Town-based guitarist and vocalist.

GC: *If you were to look at your career, what would you say was the biggest/defining moment? The highlight, the realization that you had made it?*

TS: Well, I do not know. I do not think about it that way. I do not think ‘this is really something’, there is nothing like that.

GC: *What was your biggest gig?*

TS: Well, the biggest gig maybe was playing for Nelson Mandela. After he came out of jail, I played for the welcome home dinner. This was before he became the President, he was just released. Then of course the ANC will remember if you did something worthwhile – they will remember it. I got a lot of work from the ANC, you know. They said: ‘Well, listen: can you do gigs?’ – I was part of the struggle so it was their small way of thanking me.

GC: *What did Mandela think of the gig?*

TS: He came and shook my hand. I was sitting at the piano, it wasn’t a solo gig – it was with a band. He said: ‘Thank you very much for coming’. So, I said: ‘It was my pleasure’. I was thankful for this – like when Oprah Winfrey came here, it was a big concert and we played for thousands, millions of people. A lot of the people in government are jazz fans. That is a fact, and when they think about someone to play in their gigs, my name comes up – that is the way it should be. There is no overall defining moment. I do not think about it in that way. If something happens, it happens because I worked for it.

GC: *Which centres would you say were pivotal in sustaining jazz as an art form?*

TS: There were a few people who ignored the apartheid laws. There are certain people in the arts. They ignored it in the clubs, like for instance in Ox Street, Vortex and the entire jazz community – they ignored the colour legislation.

GC: *Who would these people be?*

TS: Dorkay House [in Johannesburg]; there was Pieter Dirk Uys,²⁰ for example. The Naaz [Restaurant] in Salt River, the Ambassador’s [in Woodstock] – there were quite a few places. And of course we were in defiance of the liquor law, because on Sundays you were not allowed to drink on a big jazz evening. Those were prominent business people – so you tread softly, you know. But I remember, I had an all white group at one stage, most of the people were white

²⁰ South African actor, playwright and satirist, born 1945, who has the alter ego ‘Evita Bezuidenhout’.

in my group and that is where the problems came in. They said: 'No, no, no'. So I ask them, 'Why don't you get yourself a white band?'

GC: *What do you think is happening in jazz today?*

TS: Jazz in Cape Town has taken off tremendously – I cannot believe the youngsters who play today. I know the club 'Swingers' in Wetton, but it is too far for me to go. I am glad that we are encouraging that. The youngsters go there and play, and the fingers 'stomp'.

GC: *What about the future of jazz?*

TS: I have no problems with taking jazz forward, not at all. Whichever way they want to go, they can go anywhere.

GC: *How were you received by musicians other than those in the jazz genre? What did they think of your music?*

TS: Well, I could not care [laughs]. They appreciate what I do and what I am, and how I execute my music. If they did not accept it, well, just too bad. A lot of the musicians, especially the guys who are quite big today, they used me as a role model. There are a lot of guys who said: 'You were the guy who inspired us'.

GC: *What are your perceptions of jazz education today?*

TS: Well, I am a self-taught musician. Jazz education is not a thing where you say: 'OK, this is the way to play jazz'. You do not do that. OK, you can teach music, and if you are talented enough you can become a jazz musician, because jazz is natural. You cannot say it's years of note learning, and suddenly define it as jazz. Or years of chord-learning and find it's jazz. Jazz is a natural thing.

GC: *What would you say to someone who wants to be in jazz education or a jazz musician?*

TS: They've just got to go for it, whatever way. The moment a guy takes lessons, he plays exactly how he learned in the lessons – that is fine. But once he goes off that, in pursuit of another way of playing a tune for instance, that is natural. There are plenty of musicians who play the same way all the time. I cannot play a song tonight the same. Tomorrow, I will play it totally differently. I think that is the way it should be, that is jazz. Take my brother, Chris. Because he is such a perfectionist, if he played something now and takes that same thing and plays it for 8 hours a day for the next month, he will get it perfectly – that I do not understand. If I listen to a tune then I work it out in my head and say: 'Ok,

well, we can do it this way'. And you know, I will sit at the piano and do it differently. There are no cut and dry methods for playing expressive jazz.

GC: *Are you actively involved in educating younger people?*

TS: No. As I said, I cannot teach, but I can show you. If I play a chord, then they would have to work out what chord I played – I cannot. I cannot say 'this is a dominant 7th'. A lot of people asked me: 'Would you teach our kids to learn the piano?' I said: 'No, I cannot teach you. But I can show you.' I would go and play, and at some places, there would be musicians that wanted to learn something. So I conducted a workshop. I've done workshops for a long time. And I will play what I know. I play when they request something interesting, to see how I would execute it. And that is also a learning experience.

I think I've had enough for today. Please keep in touch.

TETE MBAMBISA (b. 1942)

Being a saxophonist, I was not really aware of the leading piano players of my time when I was younger. However, on listening to 'Tete's Big Sound' in the 1980s, I was captivated by the way in which the pianist voiced his chords and improvised. Furthermore, he obviously had a highly developed ear and a rare piano technique, while his arrangements on the album seemed uniquely South African. His sound made me curious about both him and his band.

Gareth Crawford: *How did you get started in music?*

Tete Mbambisa: When I was very young, my mother used to play the pump organ [the harmonium]. I started by listening to my mother. There was another piano player, a man who used to come to my place. His name was Langa, but people called him 'Langshine'. He was a good *mbaqanga* piano player.

GC: *Did he teach your mother?*

TM: No, he did not teach my mother. I do not know where the piano came from, but he used to play A flat and these awkward keys. My mother used to play F sharp, A flat and B, you know – those are the keys I am afraid of, but my mother used to play in them.

GC: *She used to play a pump organ?*

TM: A pump organ, yes.

GC: *Did you pump the pedals?*

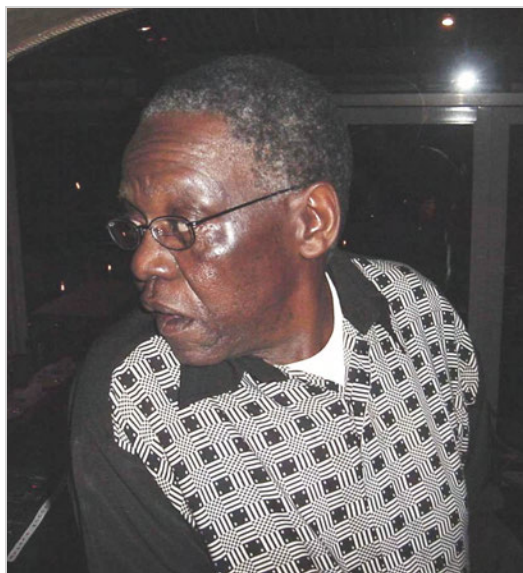
TM: I used to pump the pedals. You must imagine when I used to pump on 'A Blossom Fell' by Nat King Cole,¹ it's a very slow song, and sometimes I got stuck with the chords. They used to put cushions down because I was short. I was so little they used to put about 3 pillows on the piano stool.

GC: *So when did you get your first piano? How did you move from organ to piano?*

TM: My mother saw me pumping 'A Blossom Fell', then the next thing I saw a truck bringing the piano. An upright from the auction, you know. My mother said: 'Hey, I was so hurt when I saw you pumping', you know.

GC: *At what age did you start the piano? Were you very young?*

¹ Nat 'King' Cole – American jazz pianist and singer, 1919-1965.



Tete Mbambisa (photo by Gary Crawford)

TM: Very young, yes, I think from before 10. I was at this age when I started playing piano. If I went to the kitchen, I would check to see if the piano was still there!

GC: *So how did your mother manage to afford a piano?*

TM: Well, my mother used to do business like selling meat, *magwena* and *vetkoek*. She did everything for us, you know.

GC: *Tete, where was this?*

TM: Eastern Cape – a place called Duncan Village. That was where I was born and grew up.

GC: *Did you take lessons? How did you learn piano?*

TM: Not really. I did not have formal training at all, you know. I learned on my own by listening to records.

GC: *Who were the kind of people that you were listening to? Who influenced you?*

TM: Nat King Cole, Fats Waller, you know, the time towards the '50s.

GC: *So how old would you have been?*

TM: In my teens. I was about 13-14.

GC: *Who were the biggest influences in your career? What made you want to be a musician?*

TM: Man, it was the surroundings. People used to come to my place. They played in the big bands. I used to admire them, I used to carry their horns, you know. I used to carry a guitar, I used to carry a tenor saxophone. Before they played the show, usually they'd go to a spot, just to have a drink, you know. So I used to carry their horns. I'd wait for them, they'd drink and do that and they quarrelled about the tunes before they played, they'd discuss the songs. That was really the right influence for me.

GC: *Who were these people in the big bands?*

TM: In the big bands? Eric Nomvete, I am sure that you know him – he used to be the leader of the Havana Swingsters, that was a big band in East London. And the African Quavers, Willy Mbali,² you know. Those were the best big bands. There was a guy called Nfezile Nombathla, he was a classical piano player. That guy, he was the only guy who really, really helped me. He was a beautiful classical piano player. He said: 'Hey, this boy has got talent'. I was influenced by the blues, you know. But I used to check everything; I was listening to Louis Jordan³ and the Tympani Five,⁴ and I said: 'No this is something else'. I really practised that.

GC: *So would you go home and practise all the riffs?*

TM: All the riffs. I listened to this guy playing like [he plays music], like rock and roll.

GC: *You used to play rock and roll as well?*

TM: Yes, I used to play rock and roll as well. Then came Elvis Presley. I used to sing 'Jail House Rock', learning from Elvis. With the guys, we used to sing. I formed my own vocal group called 'The Four Yanks'. In that group, that is where I learned chords, harmony, you know. There were groups from overseas, the Four Freshman, the High Lows and the Delta Rhythm Boys from Sweden; they used to sing chords, you know.

GC: *You were singing, not playing the piano?*

TM: Yes, the piano was just for arranging.

² William Mbali 'Sax-O-Wills' – saxophonist and bandleader of the 'Big Four' in the 1920s and '30s in Queenstown.

³ Louis Jordan – African-American jazz and R&B singer, saxophonist and songwriter, 1908-1975.

⁴ Tympani Five – Jordan's band, notable for their use of electric guitar and electric organ.

GC: *So when you did the actual gig it would be for unaccompanied voices?*

TM: No, because my younger brother would play piano (I showed him how to play the piano). He was a piano player. He just died 2 years ago.

Viva: (Tete's wife): He used to play everything – piano, bass and drums, he was good. He was talented – a musical family.

GC: *Did he have a career in music like you?*

Viva: He was doing music, too, playing for Margaret Singana.⁵ She was a great woman diva of South Africa. It was a musical family, and the elder brother used to collect all the LPs for Tete to hear. Everything, all types.

TM: He used to encourage me because I could not buy them. I was not working, I was at school. He was working, and he used to buy everything. He bought records of Louis Jordan for me, Fats Waller.

GC: *So you never had a teacher as such, you were self-taught?*

Viva: Yes, self-taught.

TM: Later, I wanted to read so that I can write for big bands. I approached Abdullah Ibrahim, I approached Chris McGregor, I approached all of them, and Darius Brubeck. They told me the same story: 'Your piano, it's classical. It's classical, I do not know where to start, you know. The problem is that you never teach someone like you'.

GC: *You were too advanced for them to start at the beginning?*

TM: I do not know, maybe it was like that. They used to say: 'Hey, no man, we don't know where to start'. So I said: 'No, I want to be able to read so that I can write'.

GC: *So did you learn to read?*

TM: I was checking that on my own. Very slowly, you know. It is hard not to have somebody. Even if you have a teacher, you must have somebody who is always helping you.

GC: *Were there circumstances in which you had to read?*

TM: Yes. When I was in Johannesburg with Duke Makasi and all the guys, this is when we had to learn. When Percy Sledge⁶ came to Dorkay House in Johannesburg, they said about me: 'Where is the guy? You must book him, you

⁵ Margaret Singana ('Lady Africa') – vocalist, 1938-2000; star of *Ipi Tombi*.

⁶ Percy Sledge – American R&B and soul singer, born 1941.

must stand by because Percy Sledge is coming and you'll be playing for him'. Then this guy came carrying scores: 'Hey guys, we got scores'. So I said: 'Jesus, I don't want to lose this job'. And they said: 'Tete, do not worry, we will help you'. We looked at each other – you know, some of us could not really read. So we only checked the chord symbols.

GC: *How did you learn the melodies?*

TM: It used to be a struggle to learn. You know, you listen to the trumpets. Then you take your score and go to the trumpets because they play the melody, and you say: 'What is the melody?' Then you would be able to see: 'Oh, there is the melody'.

GC: *When did you move from the Eastern Cape?*

TM: I moved with a vocal group from the Eastern Cape. We had a drummer, a man called Dick Xhosa, he used to be our manager too. I called Dudu Pukwana⁷ from Port Elizabeth and Nik Moyake⁸ to come down to East London. I used to call musicians for shows in East London, I used to book the halls there.

GC: *How old were you when you had the vocal group?*

TM: 21, somewhere there. There was a Variety Show at Langa,⁹ and this drummer in East London recommended us, saying – hey, there is a powerful vocal group in East London. So they came to East London to fetch us. They talked to our mothers because we were young – they had to approach our families. They had to assure them that we were safe and that they must not worry, blah blah. That is how I came to Cape Town, that was in 1959. Cape Town is where I saw Dollar Brand. And I saw a lot of musicians like Hotep Galeta,¹⁰ though he was not Hotep then. I saw Hotep at Club Vortex. You know, we sang there and I saw Chris McGregor there. Chris McGregor was backing us, the vocal group. Hey, we used to sing!

GC: *So while you were singing, what stage was your piano playing at?*

TM: I used to sing and practise piano at the same time, you know, until I met Dollar Brand at Vortex. Dollar loved it and said: 'Hey, who is this helluva

⁷ Dudu Pukwana – alto saxophonist from Walmer Township near Port Elizabeth, 1938-1990, member of the Blue Notes.

⁸ Nikele 'Nik' Moyake – tenor saxophonist with the Blue Notes. Went into exile with them; died in 1969 of a brain tumour.

⁹ Langa – a Cape Town township.

¹⁰ Hotep Galeta (Cecil Barnard) – jazz pianist and educator, born in Crawford in the Cape Flats in 1941. Went into exile in 1961, returned to South Africa in 1991, currently at the Eastern Cape Audio Visual Centre.

arrogant guy who was running around?’ He said: ‘Tete: You must be careful’. ‘Why?’ I said. Dollar said: ‘You must practise your piano; I advise you to take it seriously. You have a nice beautiful voice, but you cannot sing forever, your voice will go. Then the piano will take over. You must be ready when the piano takes over’. He really advised me. He is the man who made me.

GC: *So he heard you singing but he also heard you playing piano?*

TM: No, he heard the music that we were singing and asked: ‘Who arranged it?’ I was arranging it. He said: ‘Hey, how do you arrange?’ I said: ‘I play the piano’. He said: ‘You must take it seriously. You are a piano player’.

GC: *Who were the other pianists that influenced you at that time?*

TM: There was a guy called Shakes Ngudle, he was from the Transkei. He played with Eric Nomvete and the Jazz Revellers. He was a big influence. I saw him playing the piano, and he played like the Americans.

GC: *So would you say there was a difference between the people you were listening to live, like Shakes, and those on record?*

TM: Yes. That man, he used to play the piano, classical piano, with the big bands. You know, those big band scores were complicated, especially the piano. The piano used to play all the shit. It was not always written out, you had to fill in and improvise.

GC: *What were some of the difficulties you experienced, musically, when you were growing up?*

TM: Musically, I did not have difficulties at all. I know I’m great. It was only in the townships that I did not get the right chances. I think I still need a manager or whatever, people who can put me on the map. What made Dollar advance was going to school. Dollar went to it, educationally.

GC: *He went overseas and studied?*

TM: He is well educated. Sometimes these things go with an education. And we do not know the business. We are players but we really cannot check the business properly. Some of us, like Winston Mankunku [Ngozi], have an agent, Chris Syren.¹¹ That is a lack, you know. The musician’s union here is weak. Others go overseas.

GC: *Who did you meet when you were in Cape Town?*

¹¹ Chris Syren – music talent scout and agent in the Cape Town area.

TM: Chris McGregor, Cecil Barnard – that is, Hotep Galeta, that is his real name. Yes, I met all the musicians. I made a trio with Louis Moholo,¹² Sammy Maritz¹³ (double bass), even George Kussel¹⁴ (double bass). I played with so many people. We made a quartet with Ronnie Beer on tenor and the late Max Diamond¹⁵ on drums. Yes, he played with Athalie Crawford,¹⁶ and Susan Barry,¹⁷ the chick from Durban.

GC: *When you were a youngster (20), how did you get to go to Johannesburg?*

TM: I was coming in and out of Cape Town and Johannesburg, to the jazz festivals, in the 1960s. We used to go to the Castle Lager Jazz Festivals [in Johannesburg]. Most of the time I was in Cape Town. Although I was living in East London, the gigs were in Cape Town. Educationally, musically – the music was here in Cape Town. This was where I learned. I learned a lot in Cape Town because of the other musicians, like Dollar. We used to go to clubs, man, and learn.

GC: *Were these clubs in the townships?*

TM: No, in town. There was the Naaz Restaurant in Woodstock. Vortex was in town, in Long Street, not far from Kennedy's, that is where I went with a group. When we came for the variety show in Langa, I was with Dudu Pukwana, the horn player, and the Four Voices from East London. After the show they usually took taxis back to Port Elizabeth, but I said to Dudu: 'Dudu, from here we go via your place to take your clothes and other things'. Dudu used to play the piano as well, like Spencer Mbadu,¹⁸ you know. Now Spencer plays bass, and Dudu used to play more piano, professionally. He was like a big band piano player. So I brought Dudu here. We left Nik Moyake behind because we were using an Impala car, you know – those rental cars. And in that car we could only fit the Four Voices plus Dudu and this drummer and the driver. He left the drums here in Cape Town. They went specially to fetch us – via Port Elizabeth to take Dudu's suitcase and things like that. When we came here we met Chris McGregor. He said: 'I heard about these voices', and they all

¹² Louis Tebogo Moholo – drummer, born 1940 in Langa Township, member of the Blue Notes, later of the Brotherhood of Breath.

¹³ Sammy Maritz – double bass player, born in Kensington in Cape Town in 1938. Played in the Dollar Brand Trio in ca 1960, later with Tete Mbambisa's bands.

¹⁴ George Kussel – progressive bassist, active in Cape Town from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, playing in the Vortex and elsewhere.

¹⁵ Max Diamond – Cape Town-based jazz drummer.

¹⁶ Athalie Crawford – jazz singer, born 1951; daughter of Nigel Crawford, sister to Gary.

¹⁷ Susan Barry – jazz pianist and educator at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

¹⁸ Spencer Mbadu – Cape Town bassist and bandleader.

used to come to our practices. Chris McGregor listened to us. He said: 'Shit, these guys are hot, man. I want to take them to Vortex'. Then one night they invited us again, they came to fetch us by car and we went to Vortex. We wore our suits when we sang.

GC: *But all this time you were singing and not playing piano?*

TM: I was not playing piano, I was singing.

GC: *When did you think: now I am a pianist? Was there a big moment?*

TM: 1962. No, I did not get excited, it was rough there, you know. I would listen to rock and roll and say: 'I will do that'. With 'Tutti Frutti', I said: 'No, that is not for me'. Instead, I would listen to 'Jail House Rock'. 'Jail House Rock' was better. Although they are the same, you know, both 12-bar blues.

GC: *Did you do rock and roll gigs and piano gigs? When did you start?*

TM: Yes, I even played for Richard Jon Smith.¹⁹ But we fought in the end. He said: 'No man, this guy Tete, whenever he plays a chord it sounds like jazz'. He said: 'No, man, no, no, we are going to scare the customers. I want you play straight rock and roll, do not play jazz'. 'It was too jazzy', they said. But it brought a crowd in.

GC: *Who was in your trio/quartet?*

TM: With Dudu, we said: 'Let's make a group'. Then we wanted to take a tour to Johannesburg and Dudu invited Nik Moyake. In fact, Dudu landed up now with Chris McGregor. Chris McGregor stole Dudu from me. Chris became Dudu's piano playing manager. He came to me and said: 'Tete, I am sorry to take Dudu from you but I need Dudu. Get Ronnie Beer, he's a white man who can afford you and get gigs, like Dudu'. Ronnie was a tenor saxophone player.

GC: *Who was in the trio then?*

TM: I started with Ronnie – doing a quartet with him. At Zambezi [in Cape Town] there was a basement full of mattresses and blankets. Musicians used to sleep there after playing because of the pass laws. We could not get to Langa at night, because they would arrest you. We had to play and sleep there. We used to play on top there until 12:00 and then sleep in the basement.

GC: *How did apartheid affect you?*

TM: We used to say: 'Hallelujah, fuck apartheid'. They arrest you tonight, you know, your whities will go and find you tomorrow. They arrest you now until

¹⁹ Richard Jon Smith – commercial pop vocalist.

the next morning, but then in an hour you are out. You know the cops used to respect us in a way.

GC: *So they sort of knew you?*

TM: Yes, yes, they knew I was a musician.

GC: *Were you often arrested on the pass laws?*

TM: Yes, I was arrested many times for pass, even in Johannesburg. We used to run. Run for your life, just run. But we used to get in these places where nobody can get in. And we used to have white chicks, so we were safe, you know.

GC: *What kind of gigs were you doing during apartheid times?*

TM: We did cocktail gigs in town, not multi-racial, they were whites only, but we would play. We would play there as a mixed band, but when you went out of the gig you had to watch. You had to talk to your boss: 'Hey, make a letter for us', so at least we could reach Langa. I used to live in Sea Point, with a chick. They used to write us a letter that we were from this club and blah, blah... It did not say you were playing music; it said you were a chef. If it said that you were a musician, *ai*, they would take you apart. They would say that you were fucking the white chicks.

GC: *Was it an economic thing – musicians going into exile?*

TM: That was not part of my thing, because of my mother. But still I regret it. If I'd gone into exile, I am sure I would be far out, musically.

GC: *And could you have gone into exile?*

TM: Yes. Or maybe I could have been dead, because the rest of the guys are dead, you know. Of those who went into exile, like Chris McGregor's group, only Louis is still living. The other guys are all gone. They died of drugs and so on. Maybe that could have happened to me.

GC: *What do you think of the people that did go into exile?*

TM: Some of the people pulled it through, you know. I do admire them. It was hard for them to go into exile.

GC: *What was the biggest moment in your career? When did you get recognized?*

TM: When I won the festival in Johannesburg in 1963. It was a big jazz competition [run by] Castle Lager. I won first place piano – Ronnie Beer, me

and Chris McGregor, we drew. I won piano plus arranging. Hey, I was a great arranger. I still am, but I do not have time now, I do not have a chance here.

GC: *What did you get for a prize, was there money, training or what?*

TM: Money, yes. Not very good. We decided to use my money to buy a combi, and then we took a tour to Durban, East London and Cape Town.

GC: *When did you meet your wife?*

Viva: That was when he met me.

TM: That is when I met her, in Port Elizabeth, on that tour. She was training at Livingstone.²⁰

Viva: I was training as a nurse because the old people wanted me to be either a nurse or a teacher. The singing thing to them did not seem right. But I loved music, even at home there were records. I grew up in Langa, that is where I am from. And I used to like jazz music. And in my room at the nurses' home, I had records of Ray Charles,²¹ Sarah Vaughan²² and stuff. I used to promote jazz in Port Elizabeth, in the township. Then they came around. He heard my singing – even at hospital they used to ask me to sing like a solo artist, I was not shy. So he made me a guest artist in their show. That was when he saw me. I was aged twenty or twenty-one. I had to rehearse with him before the show, I did not know this man, I just heard that he was a great pianist. That is when I met him, 1964.

I continued with my nursing career, doing music part time. When they interviewed me, I even said: 'No, you must not put me on paper, because there would be a [bad] vibe in the hospital here – they must not see that I am doing another thing'. I did not leave. When we married, then I continued – we married in August 1968.

I heard your question when I was in the kitchen. I said to him: He needs to have a manager because sometimes he sits without a job and yet he is a good pianist'. The little jobs he gets are from playing at Green Point, the Green Dolphin.²³ Here and there, here and there.

GC: *So did you do gigs together after that?*

²⁰ Hospital in the Eastern Cape.

²¹ Ray Charles – American soul musician, 1930-2004.

²² Sarah Vaughan ('Sassy') – American jazz singer, 1924-1990.

²³ Jazz venue at the Cape Town Waterfront.

Viva: Yes, after that in East London. Of course, we were stationed in East London because now there was a baby coming.

TM: We even recorded in Johannesburg. A live performance in Orlando, in a show, with the Soul Jazzmen.²⁴

GC: *Tete, how many albums have you made?*

TM: A few, from 1978. *The Brothers*, and there is another one I told you about. *Xhosa nostra, Did you tell your mother?* You can have that one.

GC: *Tete, what do people think of your music who are not jazz musicians?*

TM: Oh, they love my music. Everybody loved my music, everybody loved my music. No, there was never a problem between jazz music and other music.

GC: *Which centres were pivotal in sustaining jazz here?*

TM: I would say Dorkay House.

GC: *What kind of support did you get – what kind of people supported you?*

TM: I cannot remember people supporting me, really. I used to do things my own way. I used to help people instead. Even Chris Schilder, the piano player, I used to show him the cycle of fourths, things like that. I used to teach people.

GC: *Tete, Do you believe that a TRC for music would have been necessary to highlight the inequalities and injustices of the past music system?*

Viva: Yes.

TM: Yes, because people stole our music. We should have that. In fact, somebody has asked us that before.

Viva: Because you people were free to perform anywhere you wanted to, like going overseas – going overseas at that time was not easy for us. No, it was not an option, otherwise we would have got very far. I feel it was stolen from the musicians in that era of apartheid. They had to hide from the police and weren't able to do freely what they wanted to, musically. Clubs were being closed down because that is where they came out with their music. Everything was under pressure. They could not mix with whites, that type of thing.

GC: *Do you think there were people that benefited?*

TM: For me it would be the people who exploited it. The record producers, record companies. Yes, those are the people we must blame.

²⁴ Leading jazz group from Port Elizabeth.

GC: *Did anything personal happen to you in terms of recording?*

TM: Yes, I was ripped off. There was another record, you know, *Tete's Big Sound*. They are selling it even now here, at the Warehouse at the Waterfront. It is there, but I am getting nothing out of it.

Viva: That was his first album.

GC: *Are there any other comments you would like to make about music in South Africa?*

TM: No, later – I am singing music now.

NOEL DESMOND STOCKTON (b. 1930)

The year was 1997, and I had just joined the Pretoria Technikon Big Band on second alto sax. On first alto was Kevin Davidson, one of South Africa's leading jazz musicians, educators and arrangers. The conversation that ensued was about the arranging of jazz and commercial popular music in South Africa. Kevin mentioned a name I had never heard before – a Noel Stockton from Bloemfontein. Kevin went on to add that he was one of South Africa's finest composer/arrangers. I had never heard of him! In the months that followed, I was constantly made aware of the contribution made by Noel Stockton, in jazz circles, in the National Defence Force bands, at music conferences and in general music circles. However, it was not until a year later, in August 1998, that we made contact. My telephone rang, and on the line was Noel, requesting my assistance with a music development project he was putting together for historically disadvantaged musicians at the Performing Arts Council of the Free State in Bloemfontein. I naturally grasped the opportunity to work with such a musician. To this day, my amazement has never ceased at the breadth and depth of knowledge about music that flows from this humble man from Bloemfontein.

Chats Devroop: *Is there any one defining moment in your career that you would like to comment on?*

Noel Stockton: I started listening to jazz enthusiastically when I was 12 years of age, which is fairly young, especially for a South African. At the time, there was a programme on the SABC, hosted by a certain Allan Mandell – a broadcaster who finished up in Canada, I believe. He had a programme featuring jazz, that would be 1942, approximately. He played some very interesting jazz, and that is where I started listening seriously to it. As to why I became interested in jazz, I cannot really tell you. My mother played the piano, and music was a part of our home life, but not particularly jazz.

So my interest in jazz is difficult to explain. It just appealed to me from the very first time I heard it. At the same time I started taking some music lessons, piano lessons, in my home town of Benoni on the East Rand. I did not realize at the time that it would probably form part of my career, jazz music, but I can honestly say that I was enthusiastic about jazz from that age. A defining moment is difficult to pinpoint. I would say that there were a number of moments in my life where I had to make choices, and where I was influenced by other musicians or people.



Noel Desmond Stockton

CD: *At that time, you were growing up, learning piano; were you aware of anybody teaching jazz in the country or any sort of institution involved in jazz?*

NS: No, I was not aware of anyone teaching jazz, or even playing jazz at that time. As I say, I was round about 12 then. By the time I was 14, I was really interested in jazz, and I took lessons with another teacher in Benoni. A very wonderful Jewish man who encouraged my interest in the music, and where I started to learn something about chords and chord symbols, and what one can consider as some of the basics of jazz. No, I did not know about any jazz musicians at that time.

CD: *How did you acquire your extensive knowledge about jazz?*

NS: Well, I would listen to jazz programmes. They were few and far between, but there were programmes that featured some jazz and even as a young child I would make notes of the names of the various artists. Benny Goodman¹ comes to mind, some of the early alto sax players, tenor sax players. You know, I was starting to hear things by Coleman Hawkins for instance, and of course this is when the big bands got going, so we heard a lot of the big bands. A lot of Glenn

¹ Benny Goodman – American clarinetist and bandleader, 1909-1986.

Miller² of course, because that was a popular band. But one heard Benny Goodman, Count Basie,³ and so on.

CD: *Were the radio stations actually playing American jazz, was this prior to apartheid?*

NS: There was a certain amount, but not a lot. There was a lot more commercial music, which at that time was much higher in quality than it is today. We did not have pop music as we know it now. As a child I can remember clearly that Les Brown's⁴ recording of 'I've got my love to keep me warm' was top of the hit parade. It is a jolly fine arrangement with good singing and everything, you know. Later, I was able to subscribe to magazines like *Down Beat*, *Metronome* and others I just cannot name at the moment.

CD: *When you were growing up, were there any musicians in your area, or of whom you knew in South Africa, who were engaged in jazz? Across the spectrum, black musicians, white musicians, anyone that you might have come across?*

NS: At the age of sixteen, I met a musician from Johannesburg; he lived in the same town as me. His name was Tommy Coetzee⁵ (he recently died) and he was a tenor saxophone player. He was a little older than me, he was already earning a living, and he was able to purchase records and all sorts of magazines and so on. I would say that could have been one of my defining moments, because he introduced me to the music of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and the bebopers. Up to then I was listening to swing players, but he was really up to date with his knowledge of jazz and what was happening. You know, that was when bebop really got going – that was the heyday of Charlie Parker, Fats Navarro,⁶ subsequently Clifford Brown⁷ etc. But I must give Tommy Coetzee the credit for introducing me to the right stuff at an age when I really started trying to play. Then, in the early forties, I started to play a lot of boogie-woogie, which interestingly was the same situation with Oscar Peterson. He also played a great deal of boogie-woogie as a young man, and of course, being able to play boogie-woogie made me popular at private house parties and so on.

² Glenn Miller – American jazz musician, composer and bandleader, 1904-1944.

³ Count Basie – American jazz pianist, organist and bandleader, 1904-1984.

⁴ Les Brown – American bandleader, 1912-2001; founded the 'Band of Renown' in the big band era.

⁵ Tommy Coetzee – freelance saxophonist and flautist, 1926-2002, active for several decades as a session and big-band musician in the Johannesburg area.

⁶ Fats Navarro – American/Cuban jazz trumpeter and pioneer of bebop improvisation, 1923-1950.

⁷ Clifford Brown – American jazz trumpeter, 1930-1956.

I would often get invited to play the piano, which would be largely boogie-woogie-based blues and so on. I think bebop is probably the greatest thing that ever happened in jazz. I personally regard Charlie Parker as probably the greatest jazz musician of all time, if one can say there is such a person. If there was, I would say Charlie Parker and Art Tatum.⁸

CD: *What about the availability of material. We are talking about the 1940s here. Was a lot of the material available? Was it recorded material, stuff on the radio, or in books?*

NS: Tommy Coetzee would order records from London and America. All the Norman Granz Jazz at the Philharmonic issues we bought overseas and had them posted out to us. And, as I say, magazines like *Down Beat* and *Metronome* were available. That was how we got our knowledge.

CD: *Who were the pivotal influences in your career apart from Tommy?*

NS: As I was growing up, I was trying to acquire a technique on the piano. So I took some lessons with classical piano teachers. There was not much in the way of tuition, but I was always inquisitive about the theoretical side of the music. None of the teachers could answer many of the questions I asked with regard to harmony and so on. Then I was introduced to a man called Richard Cherry, who was a well-known member of the SABC Orchestra and also a very fine theory teacher. An incredible person, actually, and he could answer all my questions about composition. So I studied with him, and he was very influential in my career. He introduced me to all the basics of orchestration and composition. I worked enthusiastically with him for some time.

CD: *Around which period was that? Can you give us some chronological detail?*

NS: That came later. I started playing professionally when I was 18, and that was in Margate in the hotels there. Johnny Marshall⁹ was one of the members of the band. After that, I came back from the coast. After having played with a number of bands, I joined the Dan Hill Band in Johannesburg (circa 1951). Then I started studying composition and orchestration and theoretical subjects very seriously with Richard Cherry.

CD: *Were you a private student of his?*

NS: Yes. Then I was with Dan Hill, but of course my first jazz broadcast was in Durban. There was a programme hosted by a certain Wolf Louw in 1949/1950

⁸ Art Tatum – American jazz pianist, 1909-1956.

⁹ Johnny Marshall – Johannesburg-based drummer, percussionist and music entrepreneur, born 1927.

called 'Artistry in Jazz'. It was a regular jazz broadcast that invited musicians in the Durban area. He encouraged us to write original compositions in a jazz style, and these were broadcast on a regular basis. Some very good players were there. One was a clarinet player by the name of Ray Han,¹⁰ who was a very fine, Durban-based player. Bobby Chalker was another one, a tenor [sax] player who was very talented. And those broadcasts brought quite a lot of attention – we had numerous letters from all over the country. I can remember some of them, expressing interest in the programme, in particular music that I had written, and so on. And when I arrived in Johannesburg subsequently, a number of people knew about what I was doing and had listened to them. I was trying all different kinds of compositions, by the way. I was writing things in the style of Lenny Tristano,¹¹ and trying to find all sorts of ways of presenting jazz. I still have some of those tapes somewhere.

And then I joined the Dan Hill Band, which was quite in the forefront of activities in Johannesburg, and we broadcast on average three times a week. So I think being part of that band drew me into some sort of limelight.

CD: How would you say your performances were received by your public? And what sort of public did you have? Predominantly English-speaking South Africans, Afrikaans-speaking, or mixed? White/non white?

NS: I grew up as a somewhat privileged white South African with an English background. There was never the interest in jazz amongst the Afrikaans community that there was amongst the English speakers. And yet, out of the Afrikaans community came some very fine jazz players. Johnny Fourie is an example, but there were numerous others who came out of rather conservative backgrounds, yet became very fine jazz players. It is unfortunate that the situation when I was a young man did not allow me a great deal of opportunity to meet and play with black musicians. It was very tightly controlled.

I did, however, manage to meet personages like Kippie Moeketsi, and actually played with him once or twice – what we would call jam sessions in those days. I did not get to know him very well. His life style unfortunately caught up with him. He was rather strange, but he is a legendary character. I do not think he had anything near the technical facility of a Barney Rachabane or a Duke Makasi or anyone like that. But he enjoys a certain status, and considering the conditions that he had to learn under, and had to practise his art, it is amazing what he achieved. It certainly was not easy for the black players – they were really cut off.

¹⁰ Ray Han – bass clarinet player, active in Cape Town ca 1960.

¹¹ Lenny Tristano – American free jazz pianist and composer, 1919-1978.



Noel Stockton on tour with Tony Scott and friends

CD: *When you say they were 'cut off', could you elaborate? In what sort of ways? We know about the apartheid laws at the time, but were there other factors?*

NS: Well, those laws were so restrictive, it is not like today. The world is growing so small and our musicians travel today extensively. But in those days, the opportunities for black musicians to travel were very, very limited. They had very little access to what was happening in America or Europe, and it must have been extremely difficult for them. Just acquiring instruments alone was extremely difficult. For instance, how many of them could have possessed pianos?

So when you think about it, it is quite amazing that they could make any developments. I remember clearly once going into New Brighton (Port Elizabeth) – in those days we would call them 'locations' – and playing with some African musicians there. They asked me to sit in with them, I gladly

agreed, and we were just going to play some blues or something. But, to my horror, I found that the piano was a semitone out of tune. So whilst they were playing in B flat, I was having to play everything in B major. Which at that time presented me with quite a problem, and yet the young chap playing the piano was coping very well with it, you know.

In 1957, I had the opportunity of playing with Tony Scott,¹² who came out to South Africa. At that time he was rated the top clarinet player in jazz. I did seventeen concerts with him throughout South Africa, and that was a great influence on me. Because I had never realized the seriousness of approach that they brought to jazz, and that was a wake-up call for me. He was so absolutely professional in his attitude, and how he approached what he was doing. He was so devoted, you know, so serious about the whole thing. It was a stunning revelation to me.

As for the difficulties I experienced: well, as I say, as a young person the lack of contact with what was happening in America was solved largely through this friend of mine who was able to import records and magazines and so on. Later, it became a little easier but there was still the Nationalist government, which did not encourage jazz in any way.

CD: *Which years are we talking about here?*

NS: I left Durban in about 1950, I think. That was when I went to Johannesburg and joined Dan Hill. I worked in a nightclub called the 'Diamond Horse Shoe', which was a very popular venue for night-clubbing people, and we worked right through the night. We used to work from nine at night until four in the morning. Those were the regular hours; sometimes it would go on until five and six in the morning. Now, an interesting aspect of the social situation at that time was that there was a certain Jewish man who had a group of African singers – well, mainly singers – that he had gathered together and was presenting as cabaret artists. They would come into the club on a Saturday, up the fire escape so as not to 'contaminate' anything, as it were, and they would do their cabaret performance, mostly rhythm and blues singing and so on, and then they would quietly descend down the fire escape and be gone. I am not quite sure if I remember correctly, but one of those singers could have been Miriam Makeba. I just remember that it was all strange to me how these people could come all that way, entertain in the club for half an hour, and then disappear again.

¹² Tony Scott – American jazz clarinettist, composer and arranger, born 1921.

Learning jazz in this country was very difficult. It was not like today, where you can study it. Everything had to be self-taught, you had to teach yourself, you had to just listen and imitate. I originally started imitating early pianists like Earl Hines,¹³ they were my major influences as a young man. There were a few others whose names escape me now. Then, in the '40s, I started to listen to Bud Powell¹⁴ and Al Haig.¹⁵ Those were two of my great influences. Then, of course, Hard Bop with Clifford Brown started to come in; then it was Bobby Timmons,¹⁶ Hank Jones¹⁷ – a favourite – and Horace Silver¹⁸ and people like that, you know, that we were influenced by. Subsequently, Oscar Peterson to some extent; I still think that he is technically the most equipped jazz pianist of all. I would say that Tatum and Peterson are technically the greatest jazz pianists of all time.

CD: Which centres would you say were pivotal in sustaining jazz as an art form?

NS: I think Johannesburg was probably the main place, although I was very cut off from what was happening in the townships. Cape Town always had a very strong jazz following, there were always quite a lot of people interested. I am trying to think of jazz venues [in Johannesburg], but I cannot remember any particular ones where jazz was performed. Although I remember doing a jazz performance at the Rand Easter Show once, for the SABC. It was a jazz broadcast, done at the show and recorded there. So radio provided an opportunity to perform jazz as such, I cannot remember any particular venues.

CD: How would you say jazz was received by the government? Were there any sort of restrictions?

NS: Restrictions across the colour line, of course. We could not perform with black musicians, we were not allowed to. You could not be seen on a bandstand with black musicians. A mixed band was just not possible. You would have been stopped immediately, or even charged under the existing laws. So that was a difficulty. Looking back, you see that you were so closely involved with music that you were not always aware of what was happening socially and politically. I was totally consumed with my own development and playing. Looking back, I realize how restrictive the laws were. They did not really give you a chance to

¹³ Earl Hines – American jazz pianist, 1903-1983; recorded with Louis Armstrong in the 1920s.

¹⁴ Bud Powell – American jazz pianist, 1924-1966; important in the development of bebop.

¹⁵ Al Haig – American jazz pianist, 1924-1982; a pioneer of bebop.

¹⁶ Bobby Timmons – American soul-jazz pianist and composer, 1935-1974.

¹⁷ Hank Jones – American jazz pianist, born 1918.

¹⁸ Horace Silver – American hard bop pianist and composer, born 1928.

develop. This inability to communicate with coloured musicians was very restrictive.



Noel Stockton and Tony Scott. 'No more Kit Kat for you until you play the right chord'

CD: *This is which period? Around the sixties you said?*

NS: The fifties/sixties.

CD: *Were there any restrictions from the government on performing jazz?*

NS: No, there were no restrictions on the performance of jazz. But it is quite strange, certain songs were not allowed to be broadcast. There was quite a strong control over numbers like 'Love for sale', which used to be on the banned list. Very much like it was in America, you know, a lot of Billie Holiday's¹⁹ material was not allowed to be broadcast until quite recently. 'Strange fruit', which was her big, most moving number, was highly restricted. We had the same thing here. Another one that comes to mind is 'It ain't necessarily so' from *Porgy and Bess*. If I remember correctly, it was also on the banned list. You could not even broadcast those songs.

¹⁹ Billie Holiday – American jazz vocalist, 1915-1959.

CD: *Around when, would you say, did you start to receive national acclaim, and how did this happen?*

NS: As I mentioned before, it was as a result of that programme in Durban by Wolf Louw, 'Artistry in jazz'.

CD: *What are your views on the musicians who went into exile?*

NS: I understand and appreciate why they were driven to leave the country, and certainly I cannot blame anyone or anything like that. I often feel very sorry for a number who were not able to leave, and had to try and continue under those circumstances. A number of them [in exile] did very well, the major one, of course, being Cape Town's pianist, Dollar Brand, who changed his name to Abdullah Ibrahim. He did the most, and then the trumpet player Hugh [Masekela]. I spoke to Hugh some time ago; I did not realize that he spent quite a lot of time in Africa. I think he was in Nigeria, and some other countries. But you ask about how I feel about them personally?

CD: *The reason I ask you is because there are mixed views among some musicians about those who went into exile. Some have very positive things to say, and others have negative things. There are certain musicians who feel that exiled musicians now enjoy a status above those local musicians who had to stay and suffer.*

NS: I am tempted to feel like that at times; there were one or two who became very successful people, and I think have enjoyed some sort of hero status. I sometimes wonder about that. I do often think about those that did not receive the same recognition, even some who also went into exile, but came back. And yet, you know, one cannot criticize people for having left the country because of the circumstances, and then coming back and enjoying a certain – what would you call it? – status.

CD: *How were you received by musicians who were performing in genres others than jazz, both pre-1994 and post-1994?*

NS: In the early part of my career, there was not much communication between classical players and jazz players. I think that we were always regarded as inferior. I must be honest, and say that the lifestyles of some of the so-called jazz players invited criticism, and possibly added to this concept of jazz musicians as being a lower class of society. The same situation existed in America. But with the advent of jazz at tertiary level education, suddenly all that is gone.

Possibly, jazz is still not completely understood, and to some people it is still a little mysterious. But there are musicians such as Winton Marsalis²⁰ and a number of others – Friedrich Gulda²¹ for instance – who became very interested in jazz and became very good jazz players. All this influenced the thinking of the so-called ‘serious musicians’ (the term I hate), whereas the situation in my early career was not very nice, we were not looked upon as legitimate musicians. That has changed and nowadays I enjoy, I think, the same status as my colleagues in the classical music field, although they constantly show their misunderstanding of the term ‘jazz’.

CD: *Do you believe that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for music would have been necessary to highlight the inequalities and injustices of apartheid?*

NS: I do not think that a sort of TRC for music would really achieve a great deal now. It would possibly serve a purpose in highlighting the struggle of the underprivileged jazz musicians. But I do not think that it would have a great effect now, because in [the past] ten years, musicians have grown who have worked in a freer society. I do not think that they are as aware, it would only be amongst the older musicians. Whether you could regard it as being necessary – I am a bit unsure. I do not think it would change a great deal.

CD: *Do you believe that you now get adequate recognition for the work you do?*

NS: I have not been doing a great deal of strictly jazz work. I have been involved in writing music for orchestras and so on, and I think I am known as an arranger equally well as I was known as a jazz musician. You know, I received a lot of recognition when I was younger; today I’m seen more as an educator, and I think I receive a great deal of recognition now. In fact I must say that at times I am quite amazed at the respect that I am shown by younger musicians. It sometimes comes as quite a surprise to me, because as you progress, you do not really think that what you are doing might get any particular recognition. You do it because it is what you want to do, or what you have always done. So it is certainly very nice at this late stage in my life to realize that I do receive a certain amount of recognition.

CD: *With the kind of knowledge and background you have, what are your perceptions of jazz and jazz education today in South Africa?*

²⁰ Winton Marsalis – African-American jazz and classical trumpeter and composer, born 1961.

²¹ Friedrich Gulda – Austrian pianist (classical and jazz), also a saxophonist, singer, composer and writer on music, 1930-2000.

NS: I think that we still have a long way to go to create a true jazz ethic, as it were, in our education. Our problems in this country again result directly from the situation that existed before. The young black students who come into tertiary level have such limited backgrounds that they have great difficulty in catching up with the necessary theory. But even technically, very few of the young pianists that I meet and have helped have been able to practise the piano, because they never had pianos. It was only late in their lives that they were able to access instruments to play on. So they come with very limited backgrounds, and they have great difficulty in coping with the courses that are offered. Of course, great jazz musicians are not produced by universities. I can name, for instance, Chick Corea, who never completed a degree; I am not even mentioning the great, really great jazz players Clifford Brown, Charlie Parker, Sonny Stitt and on and on and on. They never went to universities, and they are the people who gave jazz its sound and style. But nevertheless, I think that the universities play a great role in encouraging not just players, but the listening public. I think that we still have a long way to go to develop systems that equal America. Somehow or other, the universities in America just do it so well, and they have such fine lecturers and teachers. We still have a long way to go to get anywhere near that.

CD: *Are there any other comments that you would like to make about music or music education in South Africa today?*

NS: I am very concerned about the way that our young people are subjected to inferior music. I find that the broadcasting companies and recording companies are very irresponsible. They do not concern themselves with producing music of any quality. And, in my contact with young people today, I have found that very few of them are listening to quality music, even in terms of classical music. I am very worried that we are breeding a race of young people who cannot understand. The students that I meet at university cannot discern good from bad. This worries me. I am currently involved in a song festival at high school level, and of all the children that I have listened to, approximately seventy [of them] – white, black and coloured – 90% or even more of what they presented was very inferior pop music. Hardly any child presented anything that one could term quality music, or had some degree of musicality. This concerns me. I think that all the arts are suffering from the same thing, that there is no discernment anymore.

CD: *You say that the media have a lot to do with it?*

NS: Yes. It is just about making money, you know – that's all it is. It's a sad truth, also in America. The only art form that can be regarded as truly

American is jazz, and the American public have really thrown it out. Jazz is not the popular music in the world. I am concerned that it should remain an art form, and it worries me that, with all the technological advancements now, there is very little jazz that I hear that can be termed 'art'. Maybe, with my background, I have always been a purist when it comes to jazz. So that could be what makes me think the way I do.

DAVE GALLOWAY (b. 1937)

I met Dave for the first time when I was playing lead tenor sax in the Pretoria Technikon Big Band, around 1999. Chatting to several musicians from the Cape Town area, it became clear that Dave was a pivotal figure in the jazz scenes of Cape Town and Johannesburg. He played with some of South Africa's leading jazz musicians, with the likes of Chris McGregor, Christopher Columbus Ngcukana, Dudu Pukwana and others. He has since earned a reputation as an outstanding lower woodwind specialist. Our relationship was cemented during our doctoral studies, and what emerged from several of our academic discussions was an outpouring of information on South African jazz that needed documenting. Dave offered to provide a written submission, since he felt more comfortable with it than with a recorded conversation.

Chats Devroop: *Is there any one defining moment in your career that you would like to comment on?*

Dave Galloway: There are a couple. My meeting with Chris McGregor at the University of Cape Town in 1956 was a true synchronicity, for a start. Establishing the large-bore bass trombone as a jazz horn in Cape Town in the early sixties was a major achievement. And, later on, doing the same with the bass clarinet – in collaboration with Darryl Walters¹ – was another; that's actually become my main horn today. Bringing us up to date: moving to Pretoria in '95 was one of the smarter moves I've made, musically and metaphysically.

CD: *How did you acquire your knowledge about jazz?*

DG: Much as I acquired my knowledge about anything else I believe in. I got involved with this art form, listened to what the rest of the world was doing on my instruments, opened a few books on the subject and picked the brains of a number of professionals, while at the same time making an effort to develop an individual style.

CD: *Who were the pivotal influences in your career?*

DG: Locally? Chris McGregor, of course, and all the cats I blew with in Cape Town and elsewhere. They can be listed as influences to a greater or lesser degree, as can the studio guys in Cape Town and Jo'burg I worked with up until

¹ Darryl Walters – clarinetist, flautist, saxophonist and bass clarinetist. Born in India, educated in London, then moved to Cape Town.

I ventured into more academic pastures in '76. Influences on record were J.J. Johnson,² Kai Winding,³ George Roberts,⁴ Tom Mitchell,⁵ Alan Raph,⁶ Gerry Mulligan,⁷ Sonny Rollins,⁸ Pepper Adams,⁹ John Coltrane, Cannonball,¹⁰ Lee Konitz,¹¹ Thelonious Monk,¹² Bud Powell, Jimmy Smith,¹³ and the immortal Gil Evans.¹⁴ Now, his writing can be described as pivotal! The jazz world has been on a higher plane since *Birth of the Cool*,¹⁵ just as jazz became recognised as an art form in its own right with the advent of bebop. JJ for style, the bass trombonists for sound, Mulligan for the 'pianoless' groups and Gil Evans for everything! Pivotal? I'd say K & JJ, Mulligan, Rollins, Monk, Smith and Evans.

CD: *What difficulties did you experience in learning and executing your art?*

DG: There just weren't enough guys who were into jazz in the '50s and early '60s. There were a few British swing merchants, but very few of us were into bebop then. The only guidance we received was from recordings and the occasional visit from overseas jazzmen. Those of us who did commercial gigs to provide an income, very soon learned the art of constructing the 'jazz sandwich'. That is: two commercial numbers with a jazz number sandwiched in between! Although opportunities for live jazz performances were never exactly thick upon the ground, we Cape Town jazzers were always on the lookout for performance opportunities. Also, the mid-'60s to early '70s in Cape Town can be regarded as a sort of 'Golden Age' when it came to recording studio activities

² James Louis Johnson – American jazz trombonist and composer, 1924-2001.

³ Kai Winding – trombonist and jazz composer, born in Denmark but moved to the USA, 1922-1983.

⁴ George Roberts ('Mr Bass Trombone') – American musician who established the bass trombone as a solo instrument.

⁵ Tom Mitchell – American swing/jazz guitarist and singer.

⁶ Alan Raph – American composer, arranger, conductor and multi-instrumentalist.

⁷ Gerry Mulligan – American jazz musician, composer and arranger, 1927-1996; best known for his work on the baritone saxophone.

⁸ Theodore Walter 'Sonny' Rollins – American jazz tenor saxophonist, born 1930.

⁹ Pepper Adams – hard bop baritone saxophonist, 1930-1986.

¹⁰ Julian Edwin 'Cannonball' Adderley, saxophonist, 1928-1975.

¹¹ Lee Konitz – American 'cool jazz' composer and alto saxophonist, born 1927.

¹² Thelonious Monk – American jazz pianist and composer, one of the founders of bebop, 1917-1982.

¹³ Jimmy Smith – American jazz organist, instrumental in creating 'funk' or 'soul jazz', 1925-2005.

¹⁴ Gil Evans – Canadian-born pioneer of big band jazz in the USA: arranger, composer and pianist, 1912-1988.

¹⁵ Jazz album made by Evans and Miles Davis.

– this included a multitude of SABC recordings while Gerry Bosman²⁰ was installed there, jazz and transcription sessions – and in the private enterprise studios of AKA, Manley van Niekerk and John Landon. A very real difficulty was keeping a viable group together – musicians had to commute all over the country to where the income possibilities were, over and above the apartheid restrictions on ‘mixed’ groups appearing in public.



Dave Galloway in Claremont, 1966

CD: *Which centres would you say were pivotal in sustaining jazz as an art form?*

DG: The semi-underground activities in Cape Town sustained a lot of live jazz. I'd have to name three popular Dens of Iniquity: the Zambezi (a rather tatty but congenial restaurant in Hanover Street, in the old District Six), the Ambassador's Jazz Club (on the first floor of a building in Main Road, Woodstock) and the Vortex Café in Upper Long Street – Haven of the Non-Conformists. By hook or by crook, they managed to keep live jazz going, and we all thumbed our nose at apartheid legislation. I could relate to you some hilarious anecdotes about what took place at the Vortex, but it might embarrass the bejeezus out of a couple of people.

²⁰ Gerry Bosman – Cape Town guitarist. Director of Light Music at the South African Broadcasting Corporation's Sea Point headquarters in the 1960s and '70s, where he promoted live and recorded jazz.

We shouldn't forget the annual Big Band concerts at the Weizmann Hall in Sea Point and the Rondebosch Town Hall, which were part of sustaining the Art of Live Jazz. The University of Cape Town with the Jamieson Hall jazz concerts can certainly take credit, too. As I've just mentioned, Cape Town was the leading Jazz City – a nexus of creativity – in the second half of the '50s and most of the '60s. I consider it a major synchronicity to have been part of that scene; these were the formative years for my generation.

Later, of course, jazz studies began to be offered at tertiary level, first by the University of Natal, then the University of Cape Town, and – significantly – the Tshwane School of Music's Diploma and Bachelor of Technology courses, where jazz is taught and promoted in its own right, and never viewed as the 'poor relative' of Western art music.

CD: *Around when, would you say, did you start to receive national acclaim, and how did this happen?*

DG: I was very well known as a trombonist – particularly as a 'pioneering' bass trombonist – and a jazz organist in Cape Town in the '60s and '70s. Today, I am better known as a 'pioneering' bass clarinetist and baritone saxophonist, having made the switch from low brass to low woodwind in the years following 1987, and as a jazz educator and arranger. I'm not convinced that the term 'national acclaim' is altogether apposite here – people tend to have short memories. In Toltec philosophy we find the applause of strangers meaningless. But, OK – one gets there by developing above-average communication skills, providing a marketable product, and by consistently giving your clients good value for money. As in other walks of life. I'd like to believe that my undeviating enthusiasm for jazz and wind instruments is infectious, too.

CD: *Why didn't you go into exile like many of your fellow musicians?*

DG: Because, Chats, there was so much to do here! In fact, there weren't that many of my fellow musicians who 'went into exile', self-imposed or not. Chris (McGregor) and the Blue Notes went to London *en masse* principally because there were no job opportunities for a multi-racial Big Band in South Africa. They didn't go there to make a political statement; they went there to make a musical statement and to survive financially, and the result was 'The Brotherhood of Breath'. One could even call this the progenitor of the Django Bates Big Band – a natural consequence of 'The Brotherhood'. What other South African musician or group has influenced their new environment to such an extent?

Look, I believe that it was a natural musical ambition and a sense of adventure that caused 9 out of 10 musicians to 'go into exile'; the apartheid aberration was an added spur, of course. By the same token, the younger generation should not underestimate the contribution made by those of us who stayed behind and 'chipped away at the system' from inside. Chris McGregor, Gerry Bosman, myself and numerous others persisted in our efforts to get 'mixed' groups into the recording studios – and elsewhere – and finally succeeded. Chris and I actually did a private gig for the Mandela treason trial fund! And I made use of the opportunity to 'spread the message' as far as possible through my record review column, which ran for over 12 years in the *Cape Times*.

CD: *In your opinion, how did apartheid impact on jazz performance and education in South Africa?*

DG: It slowed everything down. It interrupted the natural, evolutionary flow of the art form. And it seriously polarized musicians who might otherwise have been more cooperative towards one another. You see, the blinkered Calvinists viewed Jazz as a threat to their hegemony; they were not big on personal self-expression in the first place, and the fact that *anderskleuriges*¹⁶ were involved in the performing arts scared the shit out of them. We lived in a very paranoid society back then, and a very unnatural one. As I alluded to in the previous question, there was virtually no formal jazz education prior to Darius Brubeck being installed at Natal University. Back then, all other jazz education was taking place in a private capacity; I was involved in some of it myself.

CD: *What are your views on those who went into exile and enjoy a lot of recognition in the music industry today?*

DG: I have no group view on those you mention, other than to say that many of them are now playing a form of folk music rather than jazz. It's commercially successful – at least they've cottoned on to that! I do not judge individuals; I respect them as individuals. Until they act otherwise, of course. Also: be aware that 'recognition in the music industry' does not automatically translate into recognition by jazzmen! And you share my opinion, I think, on the LCD qualities of public taste. Granted, we have some fine jazzers among the guys who spent time overseas. But we also have our fair share of Bullshit Berties. And, like any other facet of reality, we have to deal with it. Bona fide jazz is still a 'minority appeal' art form; as critics before me have observed, it can never be a 'popular' music because it's too darn complicated!

¹⁶ Afrikaans for 'people of other colour', i.e. other than 'white'.



Rehearsing in the Hidding Hall, Cape Town, for the *Imagination '61 Jazz Suite*.

Back row: Johnny Gertze (bass), Buddy Herman

Middle row: Bennie Stilborg (drums), Dave Galloway,
Joe Colussi (trombones), Harry Pepper (tuba)

Front row: John Bannister (baritone sax), Denis Combrinck (alto sax/flute),
Colin Campbell (flugelhorn).

CD: *How were you received by musicians performing in music genres other than jazz? Both then (pre-1994) and now (post-1994)?*

DG: Fellow students at UCT were hip – very aware of jazz. My colleagues in the Symphony, though, initially viewed my jazz activities with suspicion (and a certain degree of paranoia). But after having been a full-time member of the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra for 8 years (and a first-call ‘extra’ for 5 years before that), I was able to ‘spread the message’ to those who had not succumbed to *verkramp*¹⁷ social conditioning. Personally, I have usually managed to avoid polarizing influences in music and in life, both before and after 1994: Jazz is, after all, the Music of Reconciliation. And it is the most international genre in music.

CD: *Do you believe that a TRC for music would have been necessary to address the inequalities and injustices of the past music system, and in order to prevent such things from happening once again?*

¹⁷ Afrikaans for ‘inhibited’.

DG: Once again? Twice again? Umpteen times again? No, Chats, I do not believe it could possibly serve any constructive purpose. History is not likely to repeat itself where an evolving music is concerned, now that musicians are at last learning to be entrepreneurs. They certainly can't rely on any 'union' to protect their interests. When push comes to shove, productive musicians don't join unions, they become members of a professional association.

The 'inequalities' – on both sides of 1994 – are almost as much a result of the ineptitude of musicians themselves as of the 'system', often due to shortcomings in their education. A balanced education is the only true liberation. We can only blame so much on the apartheid government; there were many who gave in to the 'poor me' syndrome, becoming self-fulfilling prophecies as a result. As Frank Wallace put it, 'camouflaged failure' is the worst epidemic since the bubonic plague.

A 'TRC' or like body has no place in the Performing Arts; only in rare instances does it bring closure to the parties concerned, it polarizes people further by opening up old wounds. It's high time we moved on. That's the only way to go. 'Life goes forward, or it goes nowhere' said Francis Parker Yockey.¹⁸ Once musicians wake up and learn to represent themselves – rather than leaving their fortunes in the hands of the parasites and manipulators – these injustices will not be able to re-occur.

Truth and reconciliation comes through the music itself, not from those with a specious or destructive political agenda. With the internet and direct channelling, there can be no secrets in the New Energy.

CD: *Do you believe that you now get adequate recognition for your work?*

DG: Yes, I do. The Cape Town Symphony Orchestra, convenient gig though it was at the time, was scandalously underpaid, and that's one of the reasons I went into fulltime music education and took additional qualifications. Keeping up the jazz activities at the same time, of course. The University and the three private schools at which I perform, lecture and teach appreciate my work; I wouldn't remain associated with them if they didn't, I can tell you.

CD: *What are your perceptions of jazz and jazz education today?*

DG: It is our audiences who are most in need of education. Jazz *per se* is still regarded as a novelty or even an 'off-beat' pursuit by the Great Unenlightened. But the worst feature of all this is the widespread ignorance about what jazz is and what jazz isn't. People who should know better still equate it with dance

¹⁸ American philosopher and revisionist historian, 1917-1960.

and pop music. And what goes down at these so-called Jazz Festivals – I'd be amazed if there's even 12½% of honest jazz among that lot! LCD reigns, OK? Whether 'that's what the public wants' or not, is irrelevant – the public knows squat about jazz anyway. What about the art form? What about the art of the improvisers? What about developing a half-way decent instrumental technique? What about teaching future generations what South African Jazz is? Right now, we're assailing their eardrums with what jazz isn't.

CD: Are there any other comments that you would like to make about music in South Africa today?

DG: Music is the Healing Force of the Universe. Our most inspired moments as musicians and composers come to us from the Cosmos – channelled, if you like. More than ample opportunities exist right now for all genuine types of music to thrive in South Africa, with bona fide jazz as a prime example.

You and I are agreed that the school music curriculum needs further revamping, making it less reliant on the Western art music concept and more accommodating of world music – not only indigenous music. Improvisation should be taught from an early age – preferably beginning with the pentatonic scale, something that is common to all folk musics of the world. And, yes: I'd like to see a lot more horn players, and significantly fewer guitarists, vocalists and drummers – whose markets are already over-traded.

Music needs to further assert its position and status as a meaningful profession. As you know, I've just completed my second doctorate, which deals specifically with a musically apt yet realistic new syllabus I designed for the evaluation of musicians in service bands (Syllabus 2000) – including repertoire for all wind instruments. Art music – which, of course, includes jazz – needs not only to be recognised but celebrated as a normal part of balanced life in South Africa. And we should not be lacking in Plain Words when it comes to publicising or defending its cause. The only failure in life is the failure to fight – for what you fervently believe in!

Namasté, Bru'

CONTRIBUTORS

Jasper Cook was born in 1945 in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. His music-making began on the trumpet at the age of twelve. During his student years in Pietermaritzburg, Jasper began gigging with a local university band called 'Swing Inc.'. As a white boy playing with local black musicians in and around KwaZulu-Natal, he often landed on the wrong side of the law. This problem continued even when he moved to Gauteng (then the Transvaal) later in life. Over the years, Jasper has acquired a reputation as an accomplished trombonist, composer and arranger. He has performed with the likes of the Shange Brothers, George Hayden and his Big Band, Jonas Gwangwa, Dennis Mpale and the African Jazz Pioneers. Jasper can be heard on various African Jazz Pioneers recordings, as well as on McCoy Mrubata's *Tears of Joy* (Sheer Sound).

Gareth Crawford was born and grew up in Kensington in Johannesburg. His father and mother were both professional musicians, and he grew up with a love of both jazz and classical music. He studied music at Wits University and was tutored by Fritz Buss on guitar. He went overseas in the early 1980s to continue his studies, and played with the notable Afro-fusion band 'Kalimba' in London. He returned to South Africa in 1994 and is now actively involved with talented young jazz musicians in four schools in the Cape Peninsula.

Chatradari (Chats) Devroop is an associate professor in Music Technology at the University of Pretoria. He studied music performance at the University of Durban-Westville (now the University of KwaZulu-Natal) and then at the *Staatliche Hochschule für Musik* in Karlsruhe, Germany. Several bursaries and music competition prizes allowed him to further his studies in the Netherlands under the private tutelage of Walter van Hauwe (Sweelinck Conservatorium, Amsterdam) and in the USA. Chats Devroop's academic teaching career commenced at the University of Fort Hare, from where he moved to the University of South Africa, then to his present position at the University of Pretoria. He performs regularly with leading South African musicians in the fields of Western art music, jazz, Indian music, commercial pop and African music. He can be heard on *Space in Time* (Applause Marketing) and *Moments* (LoneTree Records).

Johnny (Jan Carel) Fourie was born in 1937 in Postmasburg in the Eastern Cape. Already at the age of four, he made clear to his mother his desire to play the guitar. When his parents separated, Johnny moved with his mother to Benoni in Gauteng. Like most jazz musicians, Johnny was attracted to jazz recordings at

an early age, and began copying the masters of the time, such as Barney Kessel. He soon joined the local music circuit, playing *boeremusiek*. His thirst for jazz led him to England and the USA, where he was exposed to some of the pioneers of jazz, including the likes of Freddie Hubbard, Stan Getz, Roland Kirk and others. Johnny returned to South Africa several years later. He died in August 2007, just before the publication of this book. Johnny Fourie can be heard on *Solo Duet and Trio* (Sheer Sound) and *Strange When Serious Babies Dance* (Instinct Africaine). He is today regarded as one of the finest jazz guitarists to have emerged from South Africa.

David Galloway, born in 1937, attended the College of Music at the University of Cape Town, where he studied with Ronald Stevenson and others. He teamed up with Chris McGregor in 1956, and they worked together until the early 1960s. Having pursued a performing and pedagogic career in the symphonic and the jazz fields, Galloway now lectures in counterpoint, history and ensemble at the Tshwane University of Technology's School of Music in Pretoria. Previously a pioneer on the bass trombone in jazz, he gradually transferred to low woodwind in the late 1980s, and today performs on four different sizes of saxophone, three of clarinet, bassoon and keyboard. He has been a resident player in the TUT Big Band since 1997. Galloway completed his MMus (Rhodes) in 1985, a PhD(CUAS) in 1986, and has just completed a DMus at the University of Pretoria.

Robbie Jansen is a flautist, saxophonist, vocalist and composer. Born in Cape Town in 1949, he is widely known for his performances of jazz, African jazz, and 'Klopse'/'Goema' music. His early music experiences included pop music tours with a band called the Bismarcks, and later the Rockets. He then was a pivotal figure in the jazz-rock band Pacific Express. During his musical career, Robbie has worked with the likes of Duke Makasi, Phillip Schilder, Tony Cedras, and the late Basil Coetzee. Robbie can be heard on *Cape Doctor* (Mountain Records) and *Bringing Joy* (Sheer Sound). His musicality is perhaps best captured, however, in an award-winning documentary film of his visit to Cuba by Jonathan de Vries, called *Casa del Musica*.

Tete Mbambisa was born in 1942 in Thulandiville Location, Duncan Village, East London in the Eastern Cape, where he also attended school. Tete was one of five brothers, and he drew his first musical inspiration from his brother Fats, a pianist and bass player. Tete is today the only surviving brother. Although Tete is a self-taught musician, his early years were spent listening to his mother playing the piano. Some of his biggest influences were Louis Jordan, Nat King Cole and Fats Waller. To date he has recorded five albums, the first of which

was an album by the Soul Jazzmen entitled *Distress*. In the 1970s, he worked with Winston Mankunku Ngozi and Mike Makhalemele on the album *The Bull and the Lion*. He made further recordings with Winston, such as *Molo Africa* (Nkomo). He also worked with Ezra Ngcukana and Victor Ntoni, and together they released the album *Brothers* on the Roots label. Tete currently gigs two or three times a month, mainly at the Green Dolphin Restaurant at the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town, with Stix Mrwebi on drums and Spencer Mbadu on bass.

Johnny Meko was born in 1945 in a township called Etwatwa on the outskirts of Benoni, Gauteng. He received his initial music training at Dorkay House in Johannesburg, thereafter joining the Jazz Ministers. This was the first South African band to perform at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. Many years later, Johnny studied at the University of Natal in Durban, where he completed his degree in jazz studies under Darius Brubeck. He subsequently received a Fulbright scholarship and furthered his studies in jazz under David Baker at Indiana University, USA. His efforts as a music educator culminated in realizing his life-long dream to start a music school: the Gauteng Music Academy for historically disadvantaged children in Daveyton, Benoni, a project to which he has since dedicated all his energies. Johnny has performed with most of the renowned South African jazz musicians. He can be heard on *We have waited too long* (Third Ear) and on *Sounds from Exile* (Epic).

Barney Rachabane was born in 1946 in Alexandra Township on the outskirts of Johannesburg. Like most of the leading saxophonists of the time, he began by making music on the penny whistle. His early music training occurred at Dorkay House in Johannesburg, when he also moved to the saxophone. He soon established himself as one of the most promising young players of his time, playing with the likes of Chris McGregor, Shakes Mgodlwa, Abdullah Ibrahim, Hugh Masekela, Caiphus Semanya, Bruce Cassidy and Tete Mbambisa. His biggest success came when he toured with Paul Simon on the *Graceland* project. In 2003, Barney directed the South African National Youth Jazz Band. He can be heard on *Blow Barney, Blow* (Gallo), *Barney's Way* (Gallo) and on *Afro Cool Concept Live at the New Orleans & Heritage Festival* (B & W).

Anthony (Tony) Schilder was born in Cape Town in 1937. He received his first piano lessons from his mother, who was a major musical influence on the family. His career commenced as a pianist in various clubs and nightspots in the Cape Town area, and soon he was playing on the national music circuit at assorted venues in South Africa. During the 1980s, Tony was the resident bandleader at the Club Montreal, a premier jazz venue in Cape Town. He can

be heard on several recordings for Mountain Records; his best-known albums are *The Tony Schilder Trio* (Mountain Records) and *No Turning Back* (Sony).

Noel Desmond Stockton, born in 1930, has established a wide reputation as a leading arranger, composer, performer, teacher and jazz educator. He has been involved in all spheres of music for approximately fifty years. Noel was a member of many well-known South African bands in his youth, and broadcast extensively during the fifties and sixties. Subsequently he has worked as conductor, arranger, composer and performer for jazz ensembles, symphony orchestras and wind bands. SAMRO has commissioned the following works from him: *Manguang Suite*, première under Frederick Fennell in the USA, *Concerto for Stageband*, première in 1994 by the Cape Town Jazz Orchestra, *Conversation Piece – Suite for String Quartet and Clarinet*, and *Sol Y Sombra – Suite for String Quartet, Castanets and Clarinet*. Other compositions include *Adagio for Strings*, *South African Folk Song Rhapsody* and *Invictus, an Orchestral Prelude for Jazz Quartet and Symphony Orchestra* from 2004. Noel is a Senior Lecturer in Jazz Studies and Theory at the University of the Free State and also teaches at the University of Pretoria. He currently resides in Bloemfontein and is married to the well-known dance teacher, performer and choreographer, Jasmine Antonie.

Philip Tabane was born in 1947 into a family of musicians living in a township on the outskirts of Pretoria. He took to the guitar at a very early age, and at the age of fourteen he formed his first band, called the ‘Lullaby-Landers’. His formative years were spent blending various music traditions, particularly of the Venda and Pedi, and using modern instruments. In 1964 his group Malombo took first prize at the Cold Castle National Jazz Festival held in Johannesburg. After several changes to his band personnel, Malombo was in 1977 invited to the Newport Jazz Festival. Philip subsequently toured the United States, performing at the Apollo Theatre (New York), and also went on to play at the Montreux and the North Sea Jazz Festivals. His music, which was a fusion of traditions, was deemed unacceptable to the apartheid authorities, and as a result his recordings were unobtainable in South Africa. Philip can be heard, however, on *The Indigenous Afro-Jazz Sounds of Philip Tabane* (WEA) and *Pele-Pele* (WEA). His contribution to South African music was rewarded with an honorary doctorate from the Venda University of Science and Technology.

Chris Walton is a professor in music at the University of Pretoria. He studied at Gonville and Caius College (Cambridge), Christ Church (Oxford) and Zurich University. He was a Research Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung

at Munich University, and for ten years was Head of Music Division of the Zurich Central Library. He has written numerous musicological books and articles on subjects ranging from the Swiss Baroque to Richard Wagner, Richard Strauss and contemporary South African music. In the 1980s he wrote a musical and an opera for Christ Church Cathedral School in Oxford; his first novel, *Sound Bites*, was short-listed for the first EU Literary Award and was published in 2006 by Jacana Press.

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South African jazz under apartheid has in recent years been the subject of numerous studies. The main focus, however, has hitherto been on the musicians who went into exile. Here, for the first time, those who stayed behind are allowed to tell their stories: the stories of musicians from across the colour spectrum who helped to keep their art alive in South Africa during the years of state oppression.



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