

**PENNYWHISTLE KWELA: A MUSICAL, HISTORICAL  
AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of the history of the pennywhistle in black South African popular music, the most important style to evolve around this instrument being *kwela* music. An analysis of *kwela* is conducted from several perspectives: historical, musical, socio-cultural and political.

Chapter I explores the urban South African musical styles which preceded and influenced *kwela*. The first of these genres was *marabi*, which developed in Johannesburg's slumyards in the first three decades of the this century. *Marabi* was followed by *tsaba-tsaba* in the late thirties, which in turn gave way to the swing-influenced genre of "African Jazz" in the forties.

Chapter II chronologically traces the use of the pennywhistle in urban black South African popular music. An examination of *kwela* is preceded by a discussion of the pennywhistle-and-drum "Scottish" marching bands of the thirties and forties, and the rhythm-and-blues pennywhistle style of the early fifties. Various venues and their effect on the performance of *kwela* are explored, as are the effects of international recognition on the style's development.

Chapter III comprises an in-depth musical analysis of *kwela*'s stylistic components. The structure of *kwela* music and its harmonic, melodic and rhythmic components are examined. A discussion of *kwela*'s instrumentation includes an examination of the roles of the guitar, banjo, string bass, drum-set, pennywhistle and saxophone.

Chapter IV is an exploration of the social context and cultural milieu which spawned and nurtured the development of *kwela* music. Chapter V examines the relationship between *kwela* and South African politics in the fifties. An overview of this political environment is followed by an examination of the effects of particular apartheid legislation on the development of music in general and *kwela* in particular.

Chapter VI concludes with an exploration of the ways in which various interest groups were able to find meaning and identity in *kwela* music. Included here, for instance, are the ways in which *kwela* contributed to the formation of urban black identity, and how the style came to have meaning for various white interest groups. Finally, the meaning of *kwela* today is considered.

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Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is entirely my own work.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is my intention in this study to explore the history of the pennywhistle in black South African popular music. The most important style to evolve around this instrument was *kwela* music, which reached the height of its popularity between the middle and late fifties. I intend to examine *kwela* from several perspectives. Firstly, I trace the historical development of *kwela* music, exploring both the stylistic precursors of *kwela* and the use of the pennywhistle in other musical styles. Secondly, in an attempt to discover the internal musical components which combine to produce sounds recognised as *kwela*, I conduct an in-depth analysis of the music itself. The second part of my study aims to contextualise *kwela* within its social, cultural and political milieu. I explore how *kwela* was determined by and reflected its context, and how it provided meaning and identity for various groups.

### Methodology

Apart from a few cursory references in studies centred on related styles,<sup>1</sup> no substantial research on South African *kwela* has been published to date. It has thus been necessary to obtain the greater part of my findings from primary source material such as interviews and recordings. My secondary source material is composed of contemporary newspaper reports and research pertaining to black South African life during the fifties in other disciplines, for instance politics, sociology, history and literary studies.

As a result of choosing to approach my subject matter from various perspectives, it has been necessary to utilise several methods of inquiry. The research material on which chapters I, II, IV, V and VI are based is for the most part comprised of interviews and reports from contemporary newspapers. Over two-hundred-and-fifty *kwela* recordings (kindly made available to me by Christopher Ballantine,

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1 See for example: Muff Anderson, Music in the the Mix; Christopher Ballantine, Marabi Nights; Arthur Benseler, "Beobachtungen zur Kwela-Musik 1960 bis 1963"; David Coplan, In Township Tonight!; Charles Hamm, "Rock 'n' roll in a very strange society"; Gerhard Kubik, The Kachamba Brothers' Band; David Rycroft "The New Town Music of South Africa"; and John Storm Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds.

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Rob Allingham and the SABC in Durban) constitute the greater part of the primary research material utilised in chapter III. The introduction to Chapter III discusses various problems related to the location and utilisation of these recordings.

The fieldwork portion of this research comprises twenty-five interviews with surviving *kwela* musicians, contemporary observers and related personnel. I have also utilised material from eight interviews with contemporary musicians kindly made available to me by Christopher Ballantine.

Most *kwela* musicians were very difficult to trace. Many are no longer practising musicians and are therefore not known in musical circles. Furthermore many important musicians are now dead. For the most part I started my detective work with leads from my supervisor, Professor Christopher Ballantine, and from fellow students at the University of Natal, many of whom come from the Transvaal and are in contact with musicians in the reef townships. I also obtained very useful contacts from informants who, usually after the interview, suggested that I speak to friends of theirs. I found that informants who were able to verify my credentials, either with fellow students or previous informants, were much more relaxed and forthcoming than those who were not able to. I also found that a second interview with the same informant was generally more informative, as often he or she had thought of things in the meantime which he or she wished to tell me. Once my motives and credentials had been established, informants were generally very happy and enthusiastic to speak with me. Some times they expressed overwhelming pleasure that at last, after forty years, someone was interested in their music and thought it valuable. On a purely personal level, to have shared those few moments with those people has made all the years I have dedicated to this research worthwhile. Only on one occasion did I experience hostility from an informant on account of my race.

I always went to interviews with particular questions and issues I wished to discuss with informants. However, I frequently found that, once an informant was comfortable and confident, it was more interesting to let him or her guide the interview. The information obtained was, as a result, often very different to what had I expected, but probably reflected more directly the views and concerns of the informant.



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I did not experience any difficulty communicating with any of my informants. I do, however, recognise that had I been able to conduct the interviews in their mother-tongue it would have been far easier for them to express themselves fully. I also found that some informants were able to remember more clearly and accurately than others. Albert Ralulimi was outstanding in this regard.

I have experienced the inevitable problems and disappointments inherent in such "detective" research. A very amicable and informative interview with Teaspoon Ndledle was rendered almost unusable owing to a technical problem with my tape-recorder. A more severe disappointment accompanied the discovery of Ben Nkosi's whereabouts, only to find that he had died three weeks earlier. Another serious impediment was the high level of violence in the townships at the time I conducted my fieldwork. Informants clearly did not wish to meet with me in their homes, since not only would a single white woman driving in and out of townships be at considerable risk, but it was possible that my presence could also jeopardise their safety. Thus, barring one visit to Alexandra Township, I conducted interviews in my home in Durban, in the homes of friends in Johannesburg, and often in the present workplaces of my informants.

At this point I would like to make a few comments about choices I have made in the presentation of this work. I have chosen to use only surnames when referring to authors of academic publications. However, I use the first and surnames of musicians and other contemporary personalities since, in general parlance, they are referred to by their full names. For the sake of clarity and brevity I have chosen not to supply the record number every time I make a reference to one of the recordings I have analysed. Information from each record label is catalogued in Appendix I, in which all the recordings are listed alphabetically by title. The information on record labels is frequently inaccurate. However, I cite the information as it appears, correcting neither spelling mistakes nor erroneous claims with reference to participating personnel. Also for the sake of brevity I have chosen to use the short form when citing sources in my footnotes. Full citations of all references appear in the bibliography.

Appendix II contains transcriptions of various *kwela* recordings. These are more comprehensive than the transcribed fragments illustrating specific points which appear within the text where they are labelled as "figures". The recordings transcribed in Appendix II are selected for transcription either because they were particularly famous or because they illustrate several points simultaneously.

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Appendix III lists the contents of the cassette which accompanies this thesis. The cassette contains all the recordings transcribed in Appendix II and other important recordings referred to in the text. The recordings on the cassette are organised in order of appearance, in other words according to the first time they are mentioned in the text. Each time a composition which is included on the cassette is mentioned in the text, the relevant side and track will be stated. If, for example, "Jika Dinto" by Spokes Mashiyane appears on the cassette as number 12 of side A, the reference in the text will appear as [Cassette A:12]. If the composition has also been transcribed, its place in Appendix II will also be mentioned. Thus, for example, if "Jika Dinto" is the fourth transcription the reference in the text will appear as [Cassette A:7, Appendix II:4].

### Theoretical Perspectives

Theoretically I situate my work within the recent body of musical ethnography emanating from Southern Africa, which is primarily concerned with the examination of music within its social, political and cultural context. Such research on South African music (for instance the work of Ballantine, Erlmann, Hamm and Coplan)<sup>2</sup> and on musics emanating from elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa (for instance the work of Watermann, Stapelton and May, and Storm Roberts)<sup>3</sup> has exerted a profound influence on my theoretical perspective. I also draw from new paradigms within popular music studies (for instance in the work of Middleton),<sup>4</sup> and I am furthermore greatly influenced by the theories and concerns of the new South African historiography (particularly as established in the eighties by the Wits History Workshop).<sup>5</sup>

In a concluding essay to a recent volume of works on the relationship between history and ethnomusicology, Neuman isolates three paradigms of music history: *reflexive*,

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2 See: Christopher Ballantine, Marabi Nights; Veit Erlmann, African Stars; Charles Hamm, "Rock 'n' roll in a very strange society"; Charles Hamm, "The constant companion of man"; and David Coplan, In Township Tonight!.

3 See: Christopher Alan Waterman, Juju; Chris Stapelton and Chris May, African All Stars; and John Storm Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds.

4 For example: Richard Middleton, "Popular Music, Class Conflict and the Music-Historic Field".

5 See for example: Belinda Bozzoli (ed.), Labour, Townships and Protest; Belinda Bozzoli, (ed.), Class, Community and Conflict; and Tim Couzens, The New African.

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*interpretive* and *immanent*. My study of *kwela* music incorporates elements of all three approaches. The great body of this work is *interpretive*: that is, "music culture itself is the subject of history and the history is externally constructed and conducted." The introduction, however, is dominated by the reflexive mode (that is a consciousness of how I as the researcher may affect the findings of my research) and I attempt to maintain a reflexive awareness throughout my interpretation of source material. Furthermore, in my exploration of the social function of *kwela* music and its role in the fabrication of meaning and identity for both its exponents and patrons, I explore how life is represented and reflected through the music. I thus utilise fragments of immanent music history, in which history itself "is the subject of music: music is the medium - the crucible in which time and its memories are collected, reconstituted, and preserved - and history, its message."<sup>6</sup>

Although I lived in one town for the duration of my school years, I went to primary school in Rhodesia and secondary school in Zimbabwe. From this I learnt that, beyond very basic facts such as names, dates and places, history is a subjective and interpretive discipline. Histories of the same event differ remarkably when told by historians from opposing sides of a conflict. Some histories say as much about the agenda of the author and the contemporary concerns of the author's society, as they do about the agendas and concerns of their subjects. The same may be said for any discipline (for instance anthropology or ethnomusicology) which studies and interprets the reality of others. Such subjectivity is deeply embedded in the primary fabric of these disciplines and it is necessary that the research findings be clearly presented as an *interpretation* of reality filtered through the concerns and world-view of the researcher.

Anthropologists have recently become concerned with ideological and moral dilemmas inherent in the act of writing about, and often speaking for, people belonging to cultures other than their own. Authorial reflexivity provides one answer to the debate surrounding the veracity and authenticity of the act of telling someone else's story. Discussing a paper presented by Michael Fischer ("Ethnicity and the Art of Memory"), Marcus and Clifford point out that "many important research projects and texts are motivated by the ethnographer's salient memory of his or her own ethnicity. Far from being a narcissistic focus on the self, the explicit accounting for

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6 Daniel Neuman, "Epilogue," p. 269.

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such motivations would enrich the perspective that a text could offer on its subjects."<sup>7</sup> Marcus and Cushman propose that the "emergent mode", and the most effective method "of expressing authority in ethnographies", is represented by those texts "which offer and support arguments through the ethnographer's self reflection and calculated intrusion."<sup>8</sup>

In presenting my research findings, besides maintaining a reflexive awareness of my effect on the findings, I aim also at Clifford's concept of "dispersed authority". This approach is an "attempt to overcome the domestication of the ethnographic text by the controlling author through the recognition that the knowledge of other forms of life involves several de facto authors who should have narrative presence in ethnographies."<sup>9</sup> In other words, I acknowledge the superior knowledge and insights of my informants and attempt, as far as possible, to relate occurrences or opinions in their words or in the words of contemporary observers. Marcus and Cushman suggest that ethnography might "become not so much a coherent interpretation of the other as a mix of multiple negotiated realities written into ethnographic texts of dispersed authority."<sup>10</sup> I hope that this research provides a small contribution towards this new type of ethnography.

Ethnographic methodology which aims to give credit to, and empower, the informants interfaces well with the objectives of the new South African historiography. As exemplified by participants in the Wits History Workshop, such historiographers strive to write history about ordinary (for the most part disempowered) South Africans. They have explored ways of presenting their research so that it can be more easily reappropriated by its subjects and have researched methods which encourage and empower informants towards writing their own history.

My work is reflexive on several levels. This introduction attempts to reveal my concerns, assumptions and theories; to show how these are a product of my own position in society; and to reflect upon the fact that this vantage point might affect my interpretation of the lives and music of *kwela* musicians. Secondly, I have tried to maintain a reflexive awareness in my presentation of primary and secondary source

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7 George Marcus and James Clifford, "The Making of Ethnographic Texts," p. 269.

8 George Marcus and Dick Cushman, "Ethnographies as Texts," p. 39.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

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material. In utilising interview material I have tried, wherever possible to quote the actual words of informants. I am of course aware that such information has already been transformed by such factors as the social and personal relationship between myself and my informants; the fact that the interviews were conducted in English rather than the home-tongue of my informants; and the effect of the intervening thirty years on the memories and perceptions of my informants. My other major source materials are the contemporary newspapers aimed at black readers. As I discuss in Chapter VI,<sup>11</sup> it is vital to remain aware that the reports and reviews which appeared in the press are already interpretations of reality. Black journalists frequently held - and expressed - entirely different world-views from those of their subjects.

I am aware that the following exploration of *kwela* music is deeply influenced by my personal concerns, interests and abilities and even more profoundly by my contemporary position in South African society. The following facts are some of the filters which will have affected my investigation and interpretation of *kwela*. I am a young white South African woman whose primary musical education was in the performance of western classical music. My tertiary education has been at an English-speaking liberal university, in a particularly progressive music department which has been working towards and preparing for, "the new South Africa" since its inception twenty-one years ago.

Although I started this research whilst Nelson Mandela was still in prison, my work has reached the tentative completion represented by this thesis nearly four years after his release, and on the eve of South Africa's first democratic elections. The social and political reality of contemporary South African society and my position in it, affects the empirical choices and theoretical premises which I bring to my research. It affects my choice of subject, the questions I ask, what I choose to focus on and what I choose to leave out.

Chapter I explores the urban South African musical styles which preceded and influenced *kwela*. The first and most seminal of these genres was *marabi*, primarily a keyboard style which developed in Johannesburg's slumyards between the 1910s and the early 1930s. *Marabi* was followed by *tsaba-tsaba* in the late thirties, which in turn gave way to the swing-influenced genre of "African Jazz" in the forties.

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11 See Chapter VI, pp. 208-210.

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In Chapter II, I trace chronologically the use of the pennywhistle in urban black South African popular music. During the thirties and forties, groups of pennywhistlers and drummers formed marching bands in imitation of the fife-and-drum bands of Scottish regiments. In the early fifties, pennywhistlers started to imitate American rhythm-and-blues, swing and the "African Jazz" played by local big bands. From 1954 onwards pennywhistlers, with a small rhythm section, started to make recordings and forge a style which later became known as *kwela*. I discuss the various venues available to *kwela* bands (namely the streets, the big-stages of the large variety shows popular at the time and the recording studios) and infer some effects which performing at each of these venues may have had on the development of *kwela*. I also evaluate the effects of the international recognition received by *kwela* music on the style's development.

Chapter III comprises an in-depth musical analysis of *kwela*'s stylistic components. As James has pointed out,<sup>12</sup> research into Southern African music is dominated by two methodological approaches. The earlier approach, usually utilised in research into so-called "traditional" music, concentrates on the technical aspects of music. In their concern with the intricacies of a particular style's musical structure, such ethnomusicologists tend to ignore the effects of social, political and economic context on a style's development.<sup>13</sup> A more recent approach,<sup>14</sup> usually associated with research into urban popular music, views "music as a sociohistorical phenomenon, and is concerned with the way in which social groupings have formed around, and expressed themselves through, musical performance." The primary shortcoming of such research is that it "sometimes ignores specifically aesthetic dimensions in favour of broadly social ones."<sup>15</sup> Detailed analysis of the music itself is almost completely absent from this body of research. I situate my work strongly within the body of research primarily concerned with the relationship between music and its context. I believe, however, that the meaning and role of music in a society cannot be fully understood without an analysis of how the sounds (considered to be music) are organised so that they have meaning for their creators and audience. As James states:

Only by combining musicological and historical insights can one gain a comprehensive understanding of the strength and vigour of a musical style

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12 Deborah James, "Musical Form and Social History," p. 310.

13 See for example: Percival Kirby, *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa*.

14 See for example: Christopher Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*; Veit Erlmann, *African Stars*; and David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*.

15 Deborah James, "Musical Form and Social History," pp. 310-311.

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... an accurate awareness of its form will lend itself in turn to a more precise understanding of the socioeconomic milieu which generated it.<sup>16</sup>

For this reason I devote the whole of Chapter III to an analysis of the musical components which are combined to form the style recognised as *kwela*. I examine the style's structure and its harmonic, melodic and rhythmic components. In my discussion of *kwela*'s instrumentation, I examine the role of each instrument in the rhythm section (guitar, banjo, string bass and drum-set), as well as the solo instruments (pennywhistle and saxophone). Finally, I explore the characteristics of pennywhistle technique peculiar to South African *kwela* music.

Chapter IV is an exploration of the social context and cultural milieu which spawned and nurtured the development of *kwela* music. I discuss who played *kwela* and where they played it. I investigate the economic importance of *kwela* for its exponents, and the relationships between money, music and alcohol in the shebeens. I examine the general standard of education available to young black South Africans and explore the effects of the extraordinary lack of recreational facilities in the townships. I also survey the escalation of crime in the townships in so far as this affects the development of music. Finally I examine the cultural response of township residents to their social circumstances, with particular reference to the role of music. I concentrate on the relationship between music and two focal points of township culture: the shebeens and gangster activity (or *tsotsism*).

In Chapter V, I turn to the relationship between *kwela* and South African politics in the fifties. Following an overview of that political environment, I examine the effect of particular apartheid legislation on the development of music in general and *kwela* in particular. The legislation concerned is: the Liquor Act, the Native (Urban Areas) Act, the Group Areas Act, the Separate Amenities Act and the Immorality Act. Lastly, I consider the overt and covert reactions of *kwela* musicians to their political and social context, and investigate the ways in which (intentionally or otherwise) *kwela* music had political significance.

In conclusion, Chapter VI comprises an exploration of the ways in which various interest groups were able to find meaning and identity in *kwela* music. I discuss the meaning of *kwela* for its exponents and its audience. I investigate ways in which *kwela*

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contributed to the formation of urban black identity, and examine the relationship of this musical style to issues of class and African nationalism. I explore the meaning of *kwela* for different interest groups within the style's white audience: for young rock 'n' rollers, for Afrikans folk musicians and for whites with conservative or liberal political agendas. Finally, I explore some of the identity concerns which are articulated with *kwela* today; what the style has come to mean in retrospect.

This work is intended as a preliminary investigation of *kwela* music and makes no claim to be a comprehensive study. Several areas of further investigation could logically complement the work already completed. For instance, an exploration of the relationship between *kwela* and both "traditional" South African music and African-American jazz forms would be invaluable - as would an investigation of the effect of record companies on *kwela*, and the style's resulting metamorphosis into *mbaqanga*. I have chosen not to explore these and other areas only because they stretch well beyond the confines of a Master's thesis. For the moment, such interesting questions will have to remain in the domain of possible areas for future research.



## CHAPTER I

### MUSICAL STYLES OF THE MARABI TRADITION WHICH PRECEDED KWELA

In this chapter I discuss the stylistic precursors of *kwela* music within the urban black South African musical tradition. These musical styles were *marabi*, *tsaba-tsaba*, and "African Jazz", which enjoyed popularity in roughly the twenties, thirties, and forties, respectively. I examine each genre from two perspectives. Firstly I discuss and compare the musical characteristics of each style, and isolate those elements which may have exerted an influence on *kwela*'s internal musical structure. Secondly, in order to provide a background for an in-depth examination of such issues in relation to *kwela*, I briefly examine the ways in which the social circumstances surrounding *marabi*, *tsaba-tsaba* and "African Jazz" may have affected their development, and also discuss the meaning of these musical forms for musicians and their audiences.

#### Marabi: Mother of Kwela

*Marabi* refers both to a musical style and to the subculture which formed around its performance. "The term thus came close to describing the whole way of life of a people, the way they earned a living, the class position they adopted, the music they played and the way they danced."<sup>1</sup> *Marabi* embraces both "the name of an epoch", and "the 'hot', highly rhythmic repetitive single-themed dance tunes" of the period from the teens to the early thirties,<sup>2</sup> as played in shebeens, at weekend-long slumyard parties and any other social occasion where drinking and dancing were the focal points.<sup>3</sup>

According to Macontela *marabi* was "a modification of traditional musics, songs which our fathers sang before they came to Jo'burg." Access to commercially produced instruments (such as guitars, pianos, organs and piano-accordions), and the influences of other musical styles through records and the radio, changed the

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1 Eddie Koch, "Without Visible Means of Subsistence," p. 159.

2 Todd Matshikiza, "Twenty Years of Jazz" *Drum*, December, 1951.

3 Christopher Ballantine, "Concert and Dance," p. 135.

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interpretation of "traditional" songs. The most fundamental transformation was rhythmic: from a slow straight beat into "jive".

Then they take the very same song they come with from their birth places in rural areas, and sing them in the tune of what is in Jo'burg now. ... They can sing the very same old tune in a jive form: In a beat that one can jive. Piano can come in, and drums, and be backed. But the very same guy who is in the farms can still get the lyrics, [he] can identify the song as the song which used to be slow on drums in the rural [areas]. But now once these guys come in Jo'burg, the very same songs, they put them into rhythm and they are backed up - that's *marabi*.<sup>4</sup>

The melodies of *marabi*, which formed the nuclei of this improvisational form, were frequently drawn from "African Christian hymns" and "the commercially popular tunes of the day" as well as from "traditional" sources. These melodic fragments (often drawn from different sources into one *marabi* composition) were played over the repeating four-bar chord progression I IV I6/4 V. The cyclical nature of the basic chord progression discloses the "traditional" roots of this style.<sup>5</sup>

*Marabi* was primarily a keyboard style and, in the shebeens, pedal organs were more prevalent than pianos. Piliso claims that the original *marabi* style was developed in Prospect Township by an organ player named Ntebejana.<sup>6</sup> The best examples of how piano *marabi* may have sounded are "Zulu Piano Medley, No. 1" and "Zulu Piano Medley No. 2" by Thomas Mabiletsa.<sup>7</sup> *Marabi* was also played on guitars, piano-accordions and concertinas, with the percussion line played on improvised or homemade instruments. Maracas were commonly made from condensed milk tins filled with pebbles, and two short lengths of hose pipe served as sticks for drums made out of the inner tube of a car tyre stretched over a two gallon paint tin. Shakers were constructed by punching holes in the centre of metal bottle caps and threading them onto a piece of wire, the ends of which were then joined so that the caps would rattle against each other.<sup>8</sup> Sometimes the rhythm would merely consist of spoons clicked against each other or sticks beaten against the table.<sup>9</sup>

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4 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

5 Christopher Ballantine, "Concert and Dance," p. 135.

6 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 26.7.85.

7 Tracks 22 and 23 respectively of the cassette accompanying Christopher Ballantine's book *Marabi Nights*.

8 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

9 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

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*Marabi* performed two primary functions for the communities in which it was created. It provided an escape from the misery and deprivation of slumyard life; and it provided a platform for the expression of identity and evolving sense of self-worth of people whose personal value was consistently denied and denigrated by those in higher social classes. As Ranger notes, people of the lumpen-proletariat and working classes do not "control formal means of articulating their desires": it is therefore necessary to "look at the informal, the festive, the apparently escapist, in order to see evidence of real experience and real response."<sup>10</sup>

Wilson Silgee candidly expresses the importance of the escapist function of *marabi*:

Actually, *marabi* was a relaxation, getting out of boredom and all that. You felt, "I should be happy at some stage in my life." There was dancing, rollicking. It was all happiness, even when you have troubles in the heart, you get out having forgotten about them. There was happiness and mixing of people.<sup>11</sup>

The ability of *marabi* music to speak of and for an epoch, to express the identity of a subculture, is explained by jazz musician Ntemi Piliso in this account of the close relationship between *marabi* musicians and their environment.

You think of Doornfontein, you visualise the slums there, where this music was created ... they [*marabi* musicians] used to virtually live there, and that's where they got these ideas I think. *Marabi* is a music that is created from slum conditions - as the music of the slum. Because you sleep there, you sleep next to the organ and the *skokiaan* is there, always there - you get inebriated, all of the time.... you are almost insane I think, you are not normal, ah, and then you create this music. That's where you get, is it inspiration?<sup>12</sup>

The power of *marabi* is suggested by the vehemence with which it was decried by members of the black petty-bourgeoisie who had elitist, or at least "respectable", aspirations. The renowned choral conductor Reuben Caluza wrote songs warning children of the evils of *marabi*,<sup>13</sup> and musicians consistently recite tales of parental

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10 Terence Ranger, *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa: 1890-1970* (London: Heinemann, 1975) p. 3, cited in Christopher Waterman, *Juju*, p. 10.

11 Wilson Silgee, "Kingforce," p. 20.

12 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 2.3.85 and 3.3.85.

13 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

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attempts to stop them from involving themselves in *marabi*-type environments. The depravity of *marabi* culture is central to the plot of Modikwe Dikobe's novel, The Marabi Dance, in which the women took the removal from Doornfontien to Orlando "humorously": "They danced about and consoled each other with the thought that in the new place their children would not find it easy to go to Marabi."<sup>14</sup> Ballantine relates several examples of the particularly "vituperative treatment" dealt *marabi* by spokes-people of the petty-bourgeoisie. He points out further that although the ostensible reasons for condemning *marabi* were the "'scuffles', 'violence', 'lawlessness', and 'intoxication'" which accompanied *marabi* dances, the real motivation for the spreading of such myths of woe and damnation about *marabi*, was the concern that "it should not be permitted to contaminate the more 'respectable' classes and jeopardise their ambitions."<sup>15</sup>

As fundamentally a keyboard style, and as the cultural expression of the lumpen and working-class inhabitants of Johannesburg's slumyards *marabi* did (as Couzens suggests)<sup>16</sup> disappear with the clearance of Doornfontein and Prospect Township in the mid-thirties. However, although *marabi*'s "musical spaces" (the social conditions which nurtured its existence) had been destroyed, the psychological, emotional and physical needs it fulfilled still existed and the spirit of *marabi* lived on. Although slum clearance made Piliso's depraved, perpetually intoxicated *marabi* organist redundant, the need remained for dance music invoking strong "traditional" ties. For as long as the consumption of alcohol by blacks was prohibited and a frustrated and exploited underclass existed, there would be a need for *marabi*-type social situations. There would be a need firstly for venues where emotions could be expressed and an identity forged; and secondly, for establishments in which life's realities could be temporarily forgotten - drowned in liquor and stamped away in wild dancing.

*Stokvel* parties and shebeens fulfilled these needs.<sup>17</sup> They provided the cultural spaces for the conception of *marabi*'s stylistic descendants. They were the nurseries of *tsaba-tsaba*, *mbaqanga*, "African Jazz" and *kwela*.

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14 Modikwe Dikobe, The Marabi Dance, p. 111.

15 Christopher Ballantine, Marabi Nights, pp. 75-79.

16 Tim Couzens, "Moralizing leisure time," p. 98.

17 The social and cultural importance of these institutions is discussed in Chapter IV pp. 150-153 and 167-171.

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Lerole claims that *kwela* originated in the shebeens and *stokvels*: "That's where the *kwela* started ... in the *stokvels*, that's where I was playing for 2s 6d a night." From 1948, Lerole played pennywhistle in shebeens with a guitar, concertina and homemade percussion instruments. His repertoire included *marabi* compositions and renditions of popular swing-band numbers such as "In the Mood", "All Over", "Back Door Blues", "Chattanooga Choo Choo", "Choo Choo to Boogie", and "String of Pearls".<sup>18</sup>

*Kwela* is closely associated with *marabi*. In fact, until the term *kwela* came into common usage during the late fifties, pennywhistle music was frequently called *marabi*. For instance, the classification on the USA record label of numbers such as "Sweet Dhladhla" by The Black Hammers (USA.51), and "Twatwa" by The Buthelezi Flutes (USA.31), was "Flutes: Marabi". The same term was used on the RCA label to describe pennywhistle compositions "Korea" and "Stone Breakers", by the Orlando Shanty Maxims (RCA 74015).

Some of the confusion surrounding the categorisation of the different musical styles within the *marabi* stylistic tradition results from the fact that informants frequently use two sets of definitive criteria simultaneously. Informants who are musicians sometimes classify styles in terms of internal musical components (for instance; form, chord progressions, rhythm and instrumentation). As occurs elsewhere in Africa, however, musical genres are also frequently distinguished primarily in terms of social function.<sup>19</sup> Thus an informant will claim that *kwela* came "straight from *marabi*, *tsaba-tsaba*. So *kwela* is same with *marabi*," but, in the same conversation, explain the technical differences between these styles.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, because it fulfilled an identical social function, Lerole considers the pennywhistle music he played in shebeens in the late 1940s to be *marabi*, despite the many stylistic differences between it and Ntebejana's twenties keyboard style. Conversely, Lerole considers this same music to be early *kwela* because of similarities in its internal musical components, mainly the inclusion of a pennywhistle.

The fundamental musical differences between *kwela* and its related styles are seen by informants to be: instrumentation (*kwela* must include pennywhistles or a solo

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18 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

19 See for example: Christopher Waterman, *Juju*, p. 16.

20 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

saxophone); rhythm (*kwela* is generally swung whereas most of the other styles are based on a straight beat); and melody (the character of *kwela* motifs and the distinctive way in which they are structured).<sup>21</sup>

Stylistic boundaries were further confused in the mid-fifties when *marabi* tunes were recorded by pennywhistlers and thought of as *kwela*. An example is provided by Mashiyane's recording of "Sponono", one of the most famous *marabi* songs. It is interesting to note the varying ways in which different styles exploit this melody. Two earlier recordings are available: "Sponono naMarabi", by Griffiths Motsieloa and Company [1931]; and "Sbhinono" by the Amanzimtoti Players [1932],<sup>22</sup> both of which illustrate an interpretation of "Sponono" within the vaudeville tradition.

Griffiths Motsieloa and Company circumvent the problem of sustaining interest and providing variation by juxtaposing "Sponono" with another popular *marabi* song "Ntebejana" [Cassette A:1]. Mashiyane solves these problems by utilising the *kwela* variational technique of octave displacement on the "Sponono" melody and contrasting it with typical *kwela* solo passages. Figure 1. illustrates the *kwela*-type structure of Mashiyane's "Sponono Ndiye Bhai",<sup>23</sup> [Cassette A:2]. Motifs "b", "c", "d", and "e" could also be analysed as solo passages, but as they are repeated I prefer to consider them as separate motives.<sup>24</sup>

Fig. 1. The structure of "Sponono Ndiye Bhai" played by Spokes Mashiyane.

										(-solo-)		(solo)									
	a	a1	a	a1	a	solo	a	solo	a	b	c	d	a	e	a1	a	a1	a	solo	a	
*	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	4	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	4	

\* = number of repetitions of the two-bar harmonic cycle.  
a = the "Sponono" melody  
a1 = the "Sponono" melody up an octave.

The atypical aspects of "Sponono Ndiye Bhai" as a *kwela* composition are: the way in which it starts abruptly (*kwela* compositions usually have an introductory passage);

21 These issues are discussed further in Chapter III.

22 Singer GE 67, and HMV GU 130 respectively. Both recordings, however, have been reissued on the cassette accompanying the book *Marabi Nights* by Christopher Ballantine.

23 See the structure of *kwela* compositions, Chapter III, pp. 60-67.

24 See definition of a motif, Chapter III, p. 61.

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and the tempo (MM = 126, which is slower than most *kwelas*). However, the structure, methods of motivic variation, solos, and the ending, illustrate Mashiyane's successful incorporation of a *marabi* melody into the *kwela* idiom.

The composition of "Sponono Ndiye Bhai" is incorrectly attributed to Mashiyane. Apart from the obvious fact that this song was first recorded before he was born, the authorship of *marabi* melodies is generally unknown. The communal memory pool which provides a reservoir of *marabi* melodies is explained by General Duze: "... all this stuff remained with every musician. The melodies remained and they were passed on and on to others."<sup>25</sup>

*Marabi* was the first black South African musical style to evolve in the urban residential areas inhabited by the new black working-class which was created by the advent of industrialisation in South Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Between the twenties and the sixties a series of urban working-class musical styles developed, all of which merged African musical elements with the contemporary popular African-American musical styles. As *marabi* was the first musical style in this series (the others broadly being *tsaba-tsaba*, African Jazz, *kwela* and *mbaqanga*) and because *marabi* is recognised as having mothered black South African jazz, I have chosen to refer to this series of styles as "the *marabi* tradition".

### Tsaba-tsaba: Dance and Music

The term *tsaba-tsaba*, which some informants maintain was one of the forerunners of *kwela*, is used to denote both a musical and a dance style. The latter took over from the *marabi* dance in the late thirties and early forties, propelled by a musical style which was influenced by, if it was not actually, *marabi*. "Zuluboy" Cele is the personality most frequently cited in nostalgic references to *tsaba-tsaba*,<sup>26</sup> and it may therefore be assumed that the recording by his band, the Jazz Maniacs, named "Tsaba Tsaba" [Cassette A:3] is representative of the music used for this dance. Ntemi Piliso identified this recording as being *tsaba-tsaba* and the flip side, "Izikhalo Zika Zulu-

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25 General Duze. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 29.1.87.

26 Drum, September 1960; and Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 2.3.85 and 3.3.85.

Boy" [Cassette A:4], as *marabi*.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless stylistically the two recordings are remarkably similar, their most distinctive characteristic being the extremely fast quaver beat played on a bass drum (these quavers occur at the speed of MM = 232).<sup>28</sup>

In 1941 Walter Nhlapo noted that the inventor of the *tsaba-tsaba* dance was unknown but that the style originated in Sophiatown and was "dusky South Africa's own creation art ... an indispensable part of our musical and dance culture." Although when it first appeared the dance was "chastised as indecent, scurrilous and lewd", Nhlapo's eulogies suggest that it strongly signifies the 1940s "New Africanist" movement.<sup>29</sup> In later years journalistic descriptions of the dance indicate that the *tsaba-tsaba* became a symbol of the "good old days": "Guys and dolls swayed their shoulders from left to right, shaking, trembling and sweat dripping from their faces. Those were the days."<sup>30</sup> Geoffrey Tsebe wrote:

They break into a rhythmic leg-kicking arm-flinging and body rocking.... The girls separate from their sweetie-pies and plunge into frenzied contortions, their skirts sweeping high up to their waists. They hop and high-step as if walking on hot bricks.<sup>31</sup>

Researchers have offered differing accounts of the *tsaba-tsaba* dance. Kubik cites the 1952 Catalogue of the International Library of African Music as containing "four examples of the Tsaba-tsaba (wagging the finger) dances. The style was copied from jazz dances seen in films in which the dancers held up a hand and wagged the forefinger."<sup>32</sup> Mensah describes a style which became popular in Zambia called *tsaba-tsaba* which literally translated in Sotho means "run-run".<sup>33</sup>

... a male and a female danced towards each other, shaking their knees in what is known as the "rubber-legged style", emphasising both pelvic

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- 27 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 2.3.85 and 3.3.85. These recordings are tracks 24 and 25 of the cassette accompanying Christopher Ballantine's book *Marabi Nights*.
- 28 This evidence directly contradicts the assertions in David Coplan's book *In Township Tonight*, p. 152. Coplan's account of *tsaba-tsaba* would be an acceptable description of "African Jazz" or what later became known as *mbaqanga*.
- 29 *Bantu World*, January 11, 1941.
- 30 *Drum*, September 1960.
- 31 Geoffrey Tsebe, "Kwela's Gone All Very Posh On Us", *Post*, August 24, 1958.
- 32 Gerhard Kubik, "Donald Kachamba's Montage recordings," p. 115.
- 33 Mensah explains the etymology of *tsaba-tsaba* as Zulu for "separating" but he is incorrect.



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movement and footwork. Just before the couple made contact, '*tsaba!*' was shouted and they danced backwards to their starting points (separating).<sup>34</sup>

Shouts of "*tsaba*" are audible on the Jazz Maniac's recording of "Tsaba Tsaba", which suggests that this practice also occurred in South Africa.

By the 1950s, however, the term *tsaba-tsaba* was used to refer to a different musical genre from the Rhodesias.<sup>35</sup> The late-thirties South African *tsaba-tsaba* style diffused north, through the sale of gramophone records and the influence of returning migrants, and fused with elements of contemporary Rhodesian popular music. Thus during the forties in the Rhodesias, a new musical genre developed which retained the name *tsaba-tsaba* but was stylistically distinct from *marabi*, South African *tsaba-tsaba* of the thirties, and the South African contemporary style, "African Jazz".

The most renowned Rhodesian *tsaba-tsaba* composition, "Skokiaan" [Cassette A:5], was written in 1947 by August Musarugwa,<sup>36</sup> an alto saxophonist with the B.S.A. Police Band based in Bulawayo.<sup>37</sup> Fundamental stylistic continuities exist between the Jazz Maniac's "Tsaba Tsaba" and "Skokiaan" [Cassette A:3 and A:5 respectively], the most striking similarity between the two recordings being the extremely fast straight beat (MM = 232), which dynamically propels the music forwards. In "Tsaba Tsaba" the driving beat is played on a bass drum whereas in "Skokiaan" it is played by the banjo. If this beat is taken to be in crotchets, the harmonic changes in both compositions occur every minim. The tempo and the fast, straight beat are the stylistic characteristics most often isolated by informants as defining Rhodesian *tsaba-tsaba*. Significantly, these are the characteristics most allied to *vastrap*, and the other remark often made about *tsaba-tsaba* is that it contains influences of the style.<sup>38</sup>

There are, however, also significant stylistic differences between the above two compositions. "Tsaba Tsaba" consists of a single melody, varied in four ways, which is

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34 Atta Mensah, "Jazz: the round trip," p. 128.

35 David Rycroft "The New Town Music of South Africa", p. 55.

36 Several different spellings are used for this name:

Musarugwa - *Drum*, June 1955, and *World*, June 18, 1955.

Msarurgwa - record label.

Msarurgwa - Muff Anderson, *Music in the the Mix*, p. 40.

Musurugwa - David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, p. 154.

37 *Drum*, June 1955.

38 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90; David Rycroft, "The New Town Music of South Africa," p. 55.

reiterated over a four-bar chord progression. Aside from short trombone riffs, movement is basically homophonic (for example the muted trumpet plays the tune a third higher than the saxophone) and the melody is generally clearly audible. The internal structure is clear-cut, relying on repetition and contrast of the variations [See figure 2].

Fig. 2. The structure of "Tsaba Tsaba" by the Jazz Maniacs.

	a	b	a	b	c	b	c	d
*	5	2	4	2	4	2	2	3

\* = number of repetitions of the four-bar cycle.

a = the melody

b = vocal variation of the melody

c = instrumental variation of the melody

d = rhythmic riff following the chord progression.

"Skokiaan", on the other hand, is based on a two-bar cycle following the chord progression I IV I $\frac{6}{4}$  V. Compared to "Tsaba Tsaba", the solo saxophone parts move faster and interface runs, arpeggios, and rhythmic patterns in a more complex manner. The relationship between the saxophone parts is strongly contrapuntal and, as a result of the fluid improvisatory treatment of the theme, the composition cannot be conceptualised as contrasting repeated units.

Stylistic continuities exist between *kwela* and both South African and Rhodesian *tsaba-tsaba*. For example, the structure and the ending (a scale from the dominant to the tonic) of "Tsaba Tsaba" are typical of *kwela*; as are the fast moving scalar and arpeggiated explorations of the chord progression played by the saxophones in "Skokiaan".<sup>39</sup> Both types of *tsaba-tsaba* contributed to the pool of stylistic influences drawn upon by *kwela* musicians a decade later.

### African Jazz: Child of Marabi and Swing

The third and most important style influencing the development of *kwela* was "African Jazz". This style was born in the thirties and forties, the progeny of a

39 See chapter III, pp. 79-80 and pp. 123-124.

marriage between *marabi* and American swing. An investigation of the foundations and development of "African Jazz" beyond the scope of this study; in any case excellent research in this area (particularly regarding the music's social and political context) has already been carried out by Ballantine.<sup>40</sup> In the following section I attempt to build on the body of knowledge presented by Ballantine by exploring the ways in which the music itself changed and developed in response to social and political transformation.

Since the early thirties, black South African big-bands had imitated American swing, frequently playing from published arrangements. However, in the late thirties the Jazz Maniacs, led by "ZuluBoy" Cele, started to arrange *marabi* melodies for big-band giving rise to such compositions as "Tsaba Tsaba" and "Izikalo Zika Z-Boy".<sup>41</sup> If defined according to its social function such music may be classified as "African Jazz": it is South African music performed on band instruments and played as dance music in township halls. However, when defined according to their internal musical components (as specified by Ntemi Piliso), these recordings have more in common with *marabi* and *tsaba-tsaba* than they do with "African Jazz".<sup>42</sup>

For the most part, informants primarily classify "African Jazz" as *marabi* arranged for dance band instruments.<sup>43</sup> If we may judge from Ntemi Piliso's reaction to a number of dance-band recordings, in order to be categorised as "African Jazz" rather than *marabi* or *tsaba-tsaba*, a composition must be rhythmically influenced by American swing. The above recordings by the Jazz Maniacs are not.

Piliso cites the Harlem Swingsters' version of the Cape *vastrap* song "Tomatie Sous" [Cassette A:6] as a seminal "African Jazz" composition:

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40 See Christopher Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, particularly pp. 11-38.

41 Both recordings have been re-issued on the cassette accompanying Christopher Ballantine's book *Marabi Nights*.

42 The following arguments and comments were presented by Ntemi Piliso during interviews conducted by Christopher Ballantine in Johannesburg, on the following dates: 24.1.84; 2.3.85; 3.3.85; 26.7.85.

43 For example: General Duze. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 29.1.87; Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 26.7.85.

Based on knowing that instead of



$\text{♩} = \pm 120$

ta ma be sous stu kies'n brood etc

we can sing



$\text{♩} = \pm 120$

dup da ta ba di da ba da ba do du-p etc

We are swinging it, we are changing the tempo to this. I think that is when "African Jazz" started properly you know - with big-bands. A full band playing African music.<sup>44</sup>

In other words the Harlem Swingsters took a well known South African melody, slowed the tempo down by half and superimposed a swing beat. This way their audience could dance the Jitterbug to their own songs. The response was electric, "Tomatie Sous" became an overnight rage. Figure 3 illustrates Piliso's piano version of the transformation.<sup>45</sup>

Fig. 3a. "Tomatie Sous" as *vastrap*



$\text{♩} = 200$

Fig. 3b. "Tomatie Sous" as "African Jazz"



$\text{♩} = 144$

The distinction between swung and non-swung renditions of local music is one of internal musical structure. The conversion to swing, however, was necessitated by social context. The function of bands such as the Harlem Swingsters was to provide dance music for a clientele which was accustomed to swing. As Piliso explains:

... mostly we used to play for people who do that jiving business, the jitterbugs and so forth. We never used to play for this concert - sitting audience.<sup>46</sup> ... "Tomatie Sous" was based on the Cape "coloured" *tikkie-draai*, but we gave it a swing beat. ... it must be equal to jive like they jive when we play American swing.<sup>47</sup>

Ballantine, quoting Doc Bikitsha, offers a differing explanation for the rhythm of "African Jazz"; namely that it derives from "traditional" sources, particularly the Zulu *indlamu* dance, and is thus a musical manifestation of the literary, political and social movement, the New Africanism.<sup>48</sup> The *indlamu* rhythm, described by Bikitsha as "African stomp", is illustrated in figure 4.

Fig. 4. The *indlamu* rhythm.



The fact that the same rhythm can signify such differing (if not opposing) areas of influence, to adherents of "African Jazz", demonstrates the power and complexity of meaning inherent in musical sound. Piliso, a musician deeply influenced by his black American models, played the "African Jazz" rhythm as an Americanization. The same rhythm was heard as an Africanisation by Bikitsha, a journalist who was presumably influenced by the New Africanism.

46 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 26.7.85.

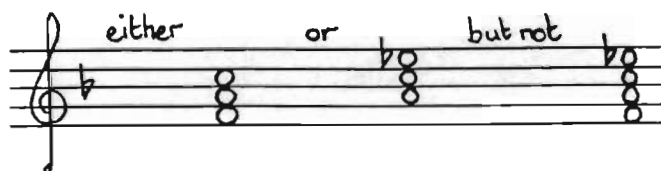
47 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 24.1.84.

48 Christopher Ballantine, "Music and Emancipation," p. 150.

Arrangement was another important swing influence in "African Jazz". Swing-type backing riffs were played under solos, and parts were conceived such that the brass and reed sections were able to "counter" each other.

However, although Piliso conceptualises the rhythm and arrangements of "African Jazz" as American, he presents all other definitive stylistic elements of this form as African. He explains that "African Jazz", like *marabi*, is based on the cyclical repetition of a short, two- or four-bar progression of the primary chords, whereas "American swing uses longer and more complex chord progressions, and the chords themselves are more complex."<sup>49</sup> "African Jazz" does not use chords more complex than a triad or dominant seventh, and only three pitches are sounded at any one moment. Thus, if the seventh of a chord is sounded, the tonic is customarily left out.<sup>50</sup> Figure 5 illustrates this voicing and bars 6 and 8 of figure 3b illustrate this principle in practice.

Fig. 5. The voicing of chords in "African Jazz".



The cyclical nature of the short "African Jazz" chord progression controls the structure of a composition in this style. Piliso explains that unlike American "standards", which contain a "bridge" with a differing chord progression from the "head", "African Jazz" compositions retain the same progression throughout:

[In "African Jazz"] there's no intersection [bridge] where you change the chord progression ... like the standards you know. ... With us it's just eight bars, it's just straight, and then you variate. We'll call it an intersection and yet it's just a variation with the same chord progression.<sup>51</sup>

49 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 2.3.85 and 3.3.85.

50 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 26.7.85.

51 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 24.1.84.

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Piliso describes the structure of an "African Jazz" composition and explains how one tune like "Tomatie Sous" could provide the Harlem Swingsters with improvisational material for forty five minutes:

[The same song] but with different variations ... They were improvised. And then in between we'd take solos: Maybe one instrument with a rhythm section, a tenor ... would stand up and take a solo with brass accompaniment. And then when the tenor's through we come back to the tune for about sixteen bars, ... then the trumpet would take a solo to the saxophone accompaniment.... when we come back to the tune, we don't come to letter "A" again, we just get to some other variation, something like a hot chorus. Then we play all together, brass countering the reed section. It's the same song all the time. And then after a while, when we feel that we have played enough solos, we come back to the beginning, the tune... when we sing "African Jazz", that's the type, the style which we use.<sup>52</sup>

The repetitive nature of "African Jazz" is isolated by Piliso as a crucial definitive element, one that deeply embodies African musical ideals:

... with our music, I think the dominating factor is the monotony.... [You] repeat it so much that it must get into you. And then when they dance, they dance themselves into a frenzy. It gets into the soul ...<sup>53</sup>

He asserts that Americans do not identify with the incessant repetition of the three primary chords: "it gives them trouble. They can't just imagine people improvising on a three-chord sequence and just playing all the time. They want to expand further". Piliso claims that Americans dislike playing music constructed only of the three primary chords because they are accustomed to improvising over longer, and more complex, chord progressions.<sup>54</sup>

The tempestuous romance of urban black South Africans with black American culture went through several cycles of emulation and rejection between the thirties and the sixties. The development of "African Jazz" was a conscious emotional and ideological return to African roots on the part of many of its adherents. Spontaneous group composition of "African Jazz" numbers is emphasised by informants. Ntemi Piliso recounts in detail how the Harlem Swingsters, building on a melody by Todd

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52 *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.*

54 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 2.3.85 and 3.3.85.

Matshikiza, created a composition during a performance.<sup>55</sup> A less lengthy narration, however, is Matshikiza's description of an incident which occurred on a Harlem Swingsters tour:

[During] an elevating early breakfast of corn bread and black tea in the open air ... Gray put the corn bread aside and started blowing something on the five tone scale. We dropped our corn bread and got stuck into Gray's mood. And that is how some of the greatest and unsurpassed African Jazz classics were born.<sup>56</sup>

The ability of several musicians to compose collectively without discussion or rehearsal, implies the existence of a communal pool of stylistic understanding, validating the New Africanist notion of African cultural roots. "African Jazz" was a deliberate return to *marabi*, the musical manifestation of those roots, after swing had colonised the dance halls.

Quoting Keil, Waterman suggests that the act of naming a style is a "declaration of cultural consolidation", signifying a conscious sense of identity.<sup>57</sup> At the outset, various terms were employed to refer to the swing/*marabi* style played by big-bands in dance halls. The first term widely applied was "African Jazz", which is simply a description of its musical stylistic components.<sup>58</sup> The word-order of the term implies that the style is Africanised American music. This concurs with Barney Rachabane's explanation of "African Jazz" as what happens when African musicians try to imitate Americans: "I try to play like them but what comes out is real me, real Africa. That's "African Jazz", we try to play American jazz but it comes so original."<sup>59</sup> However, in terms of the stylistic elements discussed above, and considering the conscious utilisation of African roots expressed by Matshikiza and others, "African Jazz" is more satisfactorily described as Americanised African music.

However, the need to define and express an independent and valuable black South African urban identity is revealed in the search for a name for the new style. A

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55 *Ibid.*

56 *Drum*, August 1957.

57 Charles Keil, "People's music comparatively: style and stereotype, class and hegemony," *Dialectical Anthropology*, 1985, 10:126, quoted in Christopher Alan Waterman, *Juju*, p. 8.

58 I have chosen to use this term, partly as it was the first, but more importantly because of the confusion which has arisen over the other widely used term, *mbaqanga*, which is also used to describe a completely different musical style which became popular in the sixties.

59 Barney Rachabane. Author's interview, 16.9.89.



term, preferably in an African language, was sought which articulated the autonomy of the new style, rather than expressing it as a qualified version of something else. One such term to receive a fair amount of usage was *majuba* [literally "doves" in Zulu]. "Majuba" was the title of one of the Harlem Swingsters' most popular compositions and it gradually became used to describe other compositions in a similar style.

The most popular and long-lasting name for this style, however, was *mbaqanga*, which is Zulu for the maize bread which constitutes the staple diet of the majority of South Africans. *Mbaqanga* the music is aptly named after *mbaqanga* the meal; both are quick, easy and cheap to make. The other widely accepted explanation for the use of the term *mbaqanga* is that it was necessary for musicians to play in this style in order to retain popularity, and to be able to make enough recordings to earn enough money to buy maize-meal.

Although the leaders of "African Jazz" expressed emotional and ideological reasons for returning to their roots, it was the groundswell of popular opinion that initially propelled them in this direction. Piliso describes the situation in the dance halls once "Tomatie Sous" became popular:

So when that "Tomatie Sous" came it changed everything.... *tsotsis*, the gangsters, those who used to attend our shows, just demanded "Tomatie Sous".... you can't finish, you can play all this "String of Pearls" and what not, but you must play "Tomatie Sous" before you close up.<sup>60</sup>

Tales of knife-wielding *tsotsis* forcing the performance of numbers such as "Tomatie Sous" have become part of the period's popular history. Piliso describes the audience which supported the Harlem Swingsters, and particularly their "African Jazz" compositions, as including the "thug element ... sort of rough, let me put it just frankly - compared to people who would go to a ballroom session - ... our audience was ...the rank and file".<sup>61</sup> He also points out that, unlike bands such as the Merry Blackbirds, who played for elite occasions and wore evening-dress, the Harlem Swingsters usually performed in casual clothes so that they could mingle freely during breaks with their informally dressed audience.

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60 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 26.7.85.

61 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 24.1.84.

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In his description of his band's connections with the "grass-roots", however, Piliso reveals a personal wish to be associated with the international jazz community (an aspiration shared by many black South African jazz musicians). He points out that casual clothes are uniformly worn by jazz musicians world-wide and draws parallels between performances by the Harlem Swingsters in the halls and Louis Armstrong's performances in Chicago's dens, where brawls were just as likely to break out.<sup>62</sup>

The influence of *tsotsis*' taste preferences on the development of music reflects a widespread social problem in townships during the 1940s and 1950s. Contemporary newspapers contain articles and letters expressing concern over the increasing level of violence, and the domination of ordinary people by gangs and violent individuals.<sup>63</sup> But there was a balance of power in the relationship between *tsotsis* and music. *Tsotsis* (frequently little more than ordinary economically disenfranchised people who chose violent or illegal means to change their situation), forced the performance of certain music because of its power to change their sense of reality. Piliso describes the effect of "Tomatie Sous" on a potentially violent audience:

The thing got into them so much that they were emotionally absorbed, they were taken away ... dancing to the rhythm of this "Tomatie Sous". It got them so much that there was actually no fight.... You could feel that these people ... they're in a different world altogether. It's, I think it's the monotony ... so much that it's got deep into them, they are just living in another world.<sup>64</sup>

The control exercised by *tsotsis* over repertoire performed in the dance halls does denote abuse of ill-attained power by a small minority. Nevertheless, this should not mask the reality that the musical style preferred by *tsotsis* was analogous with the taste preferences of a large proportion of the urban black population. Piliso describes how the dance floor would erupt on the advent of a number like "Tomatie Sous", and the naming of this style "*mbaqanga*" indicates recognition of its strong connections with mass-based culture. Piliso explains the popularity of "African Jazz" as resulting from the instinctive response of African people to their musical roots:

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62 *Ibid.*

63 The relationship between musicians and *tsotsis* and the effect of violence on the development is discussed further in Chapter IV, pp. 160-165 and 171-173.

64 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 26.7.85.

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... I think the African feels the African music ... because even a small kid once you play two bars of "Mannenberg" you must find some reaction, there must be a reaction. Whereas with the other type of music you don't, the reaction doesn't just come naturally.<sup>65</sup>

Piliso also explains the development of "African Jazz" as a strategic economic response on the part of bands, to the popularity of such numbers as "Tomatie Sous": "... we had to capitalise on that. We had to take advantage of the fact that well, if they want 'Tomatie Sous' what's wrong with composing" other numbers in a similar style.<sup>66</sup>

The transformation of American swing into "African Jazz" may be seen as the musical embodiment of important social and political movements within black South African society. As Waterman points out, musical taste preferences of the black elite generally emulate the colonialist attitudes that "pure" African or Western styles are valuable, but any attempt to mix these styles amounted to "bastardisation".<sup>67</sup> During the 1940s, however, the ordinary working people were gaining power: politically the African National Congress was evolving from an elite to a mass-based organisation. In music, members of the working class were becoming the patrons (the paying audience in terms of numbers) and thus they became the controllers of taste. Both musical and political shifts were expressed in terms of the "New Africanism" and were fuelled by the need to obtain social and economic power.

"African Jazz" is fundamentally important in the development of *kwela*. Young aspirant musicians, who could not afford band instruments, acquired pennywhistles (which were much cheaper) and proceeded to imitate big-band music. Many of South Africa's jazz musicians started their musical careers on the pennywhistle (for example: Ntemi Piliso, Barney Rachabane, Teaspoon Ndlele and Peter Macontela.)

Most informants remember copying American swing compositions, such as Glen Miller's "In the Mood", from records, but claim that the local big-bands which played "African Jazz" constituted a more influential role model. There is evidence of pennywhistlers imitating "African Jazz". Jake Lerole, for instance, remembers playing

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65 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 24.1.84.

66 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 26.7.85.

67 Christopher Waterman, *Juju*, p. 75.

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"Tomatie Sous" on pennywhistle,<sup>68</sup> and a review of a pennywhistle recording by the Orlando Shanty Maxims describes their music as "loosely in the Majuba style."<sup>69</sup> The "African Jazz" legacy is evident in some of the terms and concepts *kwela* musicians use to describe aspects of style. Albert Ralulimi, for example, describes the pennywhistle backing riffs of *kwela* compositions as if he were talking about big-band instrumentation and arrangement:

...me and Spokes Mashiyane and this guy Frans were the first guys who played well-phrased tunes on pennywhistle with the correct harmony of first, second, first alto, tenor, and we put in a fourth tenor pennywhistle.... the influence was mostly from our local bands here like the Jazz Maniacs, the Alexandra All Stars. They used to play their music with a lot of harmonising in it. So we thought we can do it on pennywhistle.<sup>70</sup>

In an effort to imitate their "African Jazz" heroes, this young generation of pennywhistlers forged a vibrant new musical style later to become known as *kwela*.

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68 Jake Lerole. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 15.1.86.

69 Bantu World, August 5, 1954.

70 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.

## CHAPTER II

### THE USE OF THE PENNYWHISTLE IN BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN POPULAR MUSIC

In this chapter I trace the use of the pennywhistle in various styles of urban black South African popular music. The first groups to utilise pennywhistles intensively were the "Scottishes", pennywhistle-and-drum marching bands which proliferated up until the end of the Second World War. During the early fifties, pennywhistle versions of the blues and American swing enjoyed a brief surge of popularity but, by the mid-fifties, such music was eclipsed by a *marabi*-based pennywhistle style. I discuss the performance options available to the new generation of pennywhistlers: namely busking in the streets, taking part in variety shows, and recording in the studios. Finally, I discuss the impact of international recognition, and various theories as to how pennywhistle music of this era came to be called *kwela* music.

#### The Use of the Pennywhistle Before 1945: "The Scottishes"

The pennywhistle has been played by black South Africans since the early nineteenth hundreds. James Mpanza, for instance, reportedly "charmed the girls" with his pennywhistle in 1901;<sup>1</sup> and Hamm maintains that the instrument was "brought to South Africa by marching units attached to the British military and imitated by bands of black musicians as early as the 1910s."<sup>2</sup>

In the late thirties and early forties, the marching style and parade costumes of Scottish regiments had a marked influence on developing black urban popular culture. Huddleston reports that on Sunday afternoons in Sophiatown one could witness an "all-female band: dressed in tartan kilts, white gloves, bandsman's staff and accoutrement."<sup>3</sup> These "Macgregor women" marched around the location drumming up support for *stokvels*. Scottish fife-and-drum and pipe-bands were more precisely

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1 Drum, September 1961.

2 Charles Hamm, "The constant companion of man." p. 165.

3 Trevor Huddleston, Naught For Your Comfort, p. 133.

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imitated by groups of black males, known as "Scottishes", playing pennywhistles and drums.

One such band, the Phalanyoni Scots, which operated in the Sophiatown/Western Native Township area, comprised thirty-five pennywhistlers and two drummers.<sup>4</sup> One of the few surviving members of this band, Frederick Maphisa, recalls that their leader was Johannes Kumalo.<sup>5</sup> Willard Cele, Jake Lerole, and Ntemi Piliso were all at various times members of the Alexandra-based "Scottish" band, originally known as the Alexandra Scots and later as the Alexandra Highlanders. The leader, between 1945 and 1947 when Jake Lerole was a member, was known by the name of Bra Damblens.<sup>6</sup>

The membership of "Scottish" bands varied, but usually included fifteen to twenty-five pennywhistlers and two to five drummers. Members ranged in age from adolescents to men in their early thirties. The most striking aspect of these bands were their uniforms which, as far as cost would allow, simulated exactly the regalia of Scottish Pipers: white spats, glengarrys and tartan kilts with sporrans.

A further facet of pipe-band performance aspired to by the "Scottishes" was their technique of formation marching. Maphisa recalls, "Do you remember the Scottish could play the drums and turn around, turn around and jump? We used to do that."<sup>7</sup> "Scottishes" generally included the percussion required in a pipe-band, namely side-drums, snare-drums, cymbals and a bass drum. The ability to emulate the exhibitionist drumming techniques, particularly on the bass drum, was held in high regard. Piliso describes a "Scottishes" performance: "... then the drummists will demonstrate with the drums and do all these antics, you know - with the big drum."<sup>8</sup>

Commentators have spent more time describing the dress and movements of "Scottish" bands than the sounds they created, and it is therefore difficult to ascertain exactly what sort of music was played. It certainly seems that the music was less directly imitative of pipe-bands than were other parameters of performance, such as

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4 *Drum*, April 1958.

5 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 11.7.90.

6 Jake Lerole. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 15.1.86.

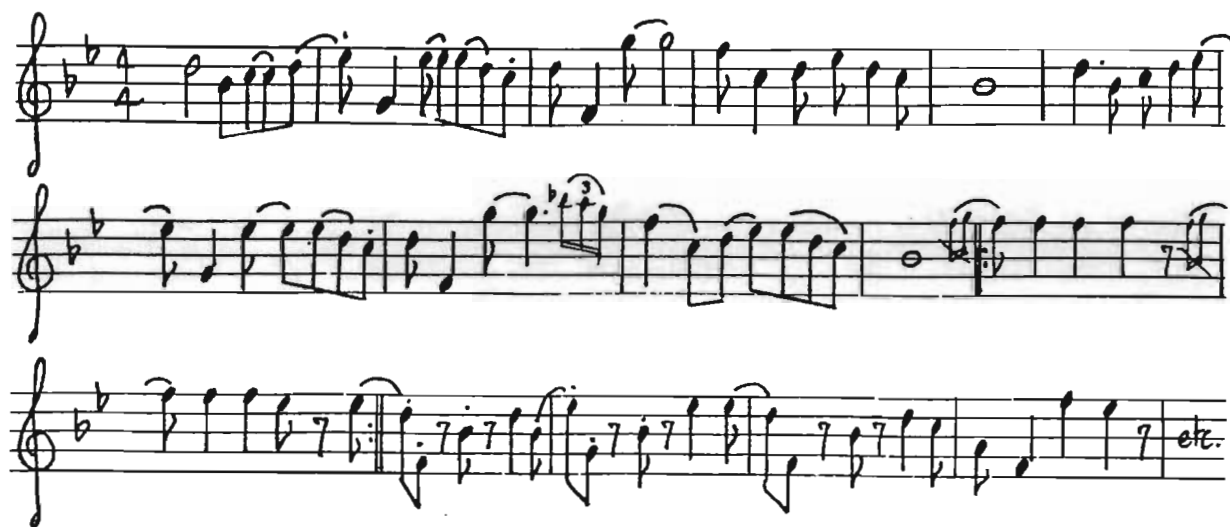
7 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

8 Ntemi Piliso. Author's interview, 4.9.90.

dress and marching style. Informants differ widely on the exact nature of "Scottishes" repertoire, presenting, at times, almost contradictory accounts. Maphisa, for instance, asserts that the "Scottishes" played the same music as the pipe-bands they were imitating. He justifies his position by recounting a system which was used to produce a continuous drone: three pennywhistlers would play a single note consecutively, each taking over before the previous one ran out of breath. Maphisa would play a tune over this drone thus simulating the structure of a bagpipe composition: "it came to the same thing" he maintained.<sup>9</sup> Even if the music played by the Phalanyoni Scots in Maphisa's day was not all directly inspired by pipe-bands, a strong European influence in their repertoire is suggested by the following comments: "Say we are coming to play from Western [Native Township] and we are going to Sophiatown, we [played] on the way like soldiers, ... church songs too, like "Rock of Ages", Allelulia songs, marches."<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to Maphisa, Jake Lerole asserts that the music played by the "Scottishes" was influenced by Cape *ghomma ghomma* and cites the following tune as an example:<sup>11</sup>

Fig. 1. An example of a tune played by the "Scottishes" as remembered by Jake Lerole.



The melody in figure 1 was played by the lead pennywhistles, accompanied by groups of backing pennywhistles playing the patterns illustrated in figure 2. There were generally four pennywhistles to a part. Figure 3 illustrates the drum part which, according to Lerole, was a *ghomma ghomma* rhythm.

Fig. 2. Backing riffs of a "Scottishes" number.

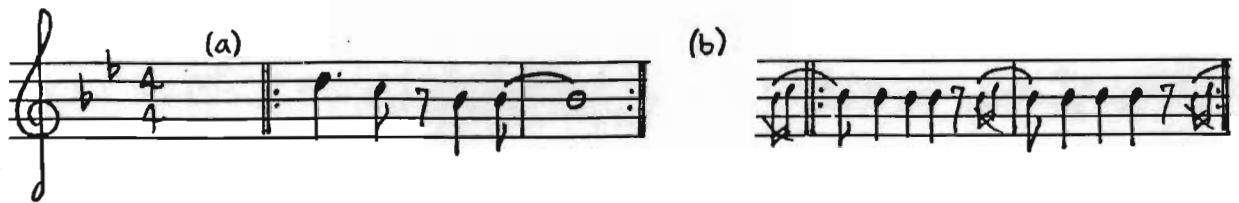
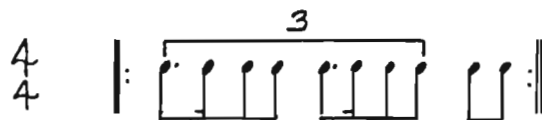


Fig. 3. The rhythm of a "Scottishes" number.



Ntemi Piliso is adamant that "Scottishes" music was African and not based on pipe-band music.<sup>12</sup> Most probably these bands included both European-based and African music in their repertoire, a theory suggested the following remarks by Jake Lerole: "... the music that they play it's just like a march song, ... sort of an English number. ... And they used to play even our kind like "Tomatie Sous".<sup>13</sup>

The occurrence of "Scottishes" was geographically widespread: bands are reported to have existed in Johannesburg, Cape Town,<sup>14</sup> Kimberly, and Bloemfontein.<sup>15</sup> The latter must have existed in the late twenties and early thirties since the two pennywhistlers who taught Fredrick Maphisa from 1936 were at least ten years older than he and came from Bloemfontien.<sup>16</sup>

11 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

12 Ntemi Piliso. Author's interview, 4.9.90.

13 Jake Lerole. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 15.1.86.

14 David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, p. 156.

15 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

16 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 11.7.90.



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Fredrick Maphisa<sup>17</sup> started playing pennywhistle in 1936, when the instrument cost 3s. 6d. Frequently he would walk from Western Native Township into Johannesburg in order to busk in front of cinema queues and for tourists outside the Carlton Centre. His repertoire for these occasions included such songs as "South of the Border" and "Rock of Ages". In 1939 he joined a "Scottish" band led by Johannes Khumalo, which was disbanded in 1945 because of the death of some crucial members. In 1958, Maphisa won first prize in a "Township Talent" competition (organised by the Union of Southern African Artists) playing "Lovely Lies" by Mackay Dvashe.<sup>18</sup> Maphisa abhorred the style of pennywhistling which later became known as *kwela* and although he was persuaded to make several recordings in this style he felt it was an abomination. As a result of the pro-tribal apartheid attitudes which proliferated in the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and recording companies in the 1950s, Maphisa was frequently told that his music (such as his rendition of "Lovely Lies") was too "classical and complicated" to be recorded.<sup>19</sup>

In the late thirties and early forties the "Scottishes" marched around the locations and the city of Johannesburg, playing as they marched and stopping to perform for bystanders who threw coins. Wartime inflation increased the basic cost of living by twenty to fifty percent,<sup>20</sup> so any means of increasing one's income was vitally important. As Maphisa says, "I could buy myself shoes, I could wear beautifully because of the whistle." However it seems that Maphisa made more money from his solitary busking than from being a member of the "Scottishes", since most of the money collected went to the leader who had provided the capital outlay for the uniforms, drums and some of the pennywhistles.<sup>21</sup>

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17 Fredrick Maphisa, probably unlike most other members of "Scottishes" bands, hailed from petty-bourgeois origins: His father was a governmental clerk. He was born in 1924 in Doornfontein, Johannesburg, but grew up in Western Native Township where he opted to stay after his family was removed to Orlando East in 1934. The financial hardship which resulted from his father's retirement and the start of World War Two in 1939, pressured Maphisa into leaving school and starting work, even though he had only reached Standard Four. However, he has successfully run his own business since 1943 when he got married. He now lives in Orlando and has seven children and seventeen grandchildren. Besides his musical activities, Maphisa is well known in veteran boxing and soccer circles. (Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 11 and 13 July 1990.)

18 *Bantu World*, March 3, 1958.

19 Fredrick Maphisa, Author's interviews, 11.7.90 and 13.7.90.

20 A. Stadler, "Birds in the Cornfield," p. 21.

21 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 11.7.90.

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Besides the informal activity of street busking, the "Scottishes" were frequently employed to drum-up support for *stokvels* and to play for weddings and other large social gatherings. The highlight of Maphisa's "Scottishes" career was an invitation to open a military camp in Kroonstad in the early years of the Second World War. This was the only occasion on which his band played officially for a mixed audience and (particularly in the light of the subsequent deterioration in race relations) the acclaim, respect, and celebrity treatment they experienced has become extremely important to Maphisa.<sup>22</sup>

The "Scottishes" experienced contradictory attitudes from the communities which spawned and patronised them. The response of location residents towards members of the "Scottishes" depended largely on whether the expected relationship was one of audience-performers, or fellow members of society. The reaction of location inhabitants to the band as an entity, and to the music they produced, was most enthusiastic. Maphisa recalls:

When playing going there, not us only feels the music, [also] our mothers, sisters and aunties, old people. Fathers used to say we musn't come on a certain time because our mothers don't even make food for them. They follow us the whole day. Then when the old man comes nothing has been cooked. .... [but] the fathers loved us also.<sup>23</sup>

The individuals who made up the band, conversely, were regarded as depraved "ne'er-do-goods", and both Maphisa and Piliso suffered chastisement from their parents for associating with people of bad influence. Both, however, confirm that their parent's concern was not completely misplaced as many members smoked *dagga* and drank to excess.

After the Second World War, the popularity of "Scottish" bands waned. Maphisa played pennywhistle only for friends and family and Piliso was already playing saxophone in a big-band which performed swing and "African Jazz". Younger pennywhistlers, attracted by music with a "hotter beat", split into smaller groups to re-interpret the music of American swing-bands and *marabi*.

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22 Fredrick Maphisa Author's interviews, 11.7.90 and 13.7.90.

23 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

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### **Pennywhistle Blues: Willard Cele and the "Magic Garden"**

The first pennywhistler to attain widespread fame was Willard Cele, who provided the music for The Magic Garden,<sup>24</sup> the second South African film to be produced with an entirely black cast.<sup>25</sup> Cele, who grew up in Alexandra township, was twenty when the film was released in 1951. He learnt the pennywhistle from his elder brother Moses, who was a member of the Alexandra Scots, and later joined this band himself (which had by then been renamed The Alexandra Highlanders.)

However, Cele found the music of the "Scottishes" old fashioned and, as he explained to a journalist, "... I only stayed with them for six months, ... I wanted to play something hotter, jazzier."<sup>26</sup> Thus Cele turned to solo pennywhistle explorations of American rhythm-and-blues, and his pavement performances made him a household name in Alexandra Township long before The Magic Garden was released. Ralulimi describes Cele's popularity:

The pied-piper that started all this was Willard Cele in Alexandra. He used to draw children from 20th Avenue and they would follow him up to 1st Avenue.... They would dance following him, some of them would end up getting lost.... He was the only first popular pennywhistler that ever existed then.... the cinema owners at times used to get fed up when he is around, because just before the show starts, and if Willard is maybe standing or sitting across the street and starts playing his blues on pennywhistle, the audience won't go into the cinema. Instead they will be so very much attracted to what he is doing that the show ends up being delayed.... they used to give him a complementary ticket so that he goes into the cinema before the audience, because otherwise they are going to have a late show.<sup>27</sup>

After hearing Cele playing for a bus queue in Alexandra, Donald Swanson, director of The Magic Garden, decided to use his music in the film's soundtrack. Both Piliso and Macontela corroborate Cele's popularity in Alexandra before the making of The Magic Garden,<sup>28</sup> but it was this film that launched him nationally as a role model for aspiring pennywhistlers. The Magic Garden was filmed on location in Alexandra and

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24 Produced by Swan Film Productions Ltd., and directed by Donald Swanson.

25 The first was Jim Comes to Joburg, made in 1949.

26 Drum, April 1958.

27 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

28 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90; and Ntemi Piliso. Author's interview, 4.9.90.

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apart from the star roles the cast consisted of Alexandrians.<sup>29</sup> It was therefore appropriate that the soundtrack featured music already popular in the township.

Cele's music is also aesthetically appropriate for the film genre to which The Magic Garden belongs: that is, a Chaplinesque farce populated by archetypal stereotypes. The plot follows the movements of a sum of money which is "magically" discovered in the garden of a poor but deserving family. The money was buried there by a thief (played by Tommy Ramokgopa) and the film follows his attempts to steal it back. Cele's "Pennywhistle Boogie" provides lively atmosphere for the many "chase" scenes, and his slightly more melancholy "Pennywhistle Blues" [Cassette A:7] sets the ambience for situations during which the "good guys" are temporarily on the losing side. Eventually good triumphs over exploitative shop owners and thieves, the hero (Victor Qwayi) is able to pay *lobola* for his bride (Dolly Rathebe), and all ends happily in a boisterous township wedding.

Cele's recording, "Penny Whistle Boogie", is a typical boogie-woogie based on the twelve-bar blues progression. It is very fast (MM = 224) and has a prominent bass line. "Penny Whistle Blues" [Cassette A:7,], which also follows the twelve-bar blues progression, is rather slower (MM = 196).

The Magic Garden was shown publicly in South Africa for the first time in decades at the "1990 Weekly Mail Film Festival", receiving a highly mixed response. To an audience sensitised by the intervening forty years of apartheid the film seemed an embarrassingly naive portrayal of "Happy Africa". When it was made, however, the inhabitants of Alexandra obtained great enjoyment and satisfaction both participating in, and watching it.<sup>30</sup> Such appreciation is articulated by Can Themba, in the following comment about the first "all-black" South African film, Jim Comes to Joburg:

... it was a terrific hit. White South Africa gasped to see, in 1949, that the sheer event was dreamworthy. Black South Africa thrilled at the idea that black faces, black life, black background could appear on the screen.<sup>31</sup>

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29 I was able to identify both Ntemi Piliso and Jake Lerole, and no doubt inhabitants of Alexandra would recognize more friends and kin.

30 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

31 Can Themba, The World of Can Themba, p.188.

As a genre film had a strong township following and was powerfully influential within popular culture. "The favourite bioscopes" of black Johannesburgers "were the Harlem next to Faraday Station, the Casablanca in Malay Camp (Ferreirastown), the Broadway in Fordsburg, the UNO or the Good Hope in Commissioner Street, and the Rio as it stands today."<sup>32</sup> The première of The Magic Garden was held in the latter venue, which is also mentioned in the spoken introduction of the *kwela* number "Baile Batho" played by Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Mabaso. Sophiatown boasted two cinemas: the Picture Palace, also known as the Balanski, and the Odin. According to Mattera, the latter was the largest cinema in Africa, seating 1100,<sup>33</sup> and was also used as a venue for political meetings and the famous Sophiatown jazz series, "Jazz at the Odin". Kubik asserts that American films influenced both dance styles and popular music all over southern Africa.<sup>34</sup> Certainly Ntemi Piliso was inspired to become a jazz musician by the film Sun Valley Serenade which featured Glen Miller's orchestra.<sup>35</sup>

The Magic Garden impacted upon popular township culture, particularly music, more profoundly even than did contemporary American films. All primary sources (informants, newspaper articles) as well as previous academic research,<sup>36</sup> cite Cele's participation in this film as the birth of the pennywhistle craze in Johannesburg's townships. Macontela explains: "The thing which made pennywhistle more popular, it was Willard Cele. Now everybody was playing that song, one song.... after Willard Cele, the pennywhistle was available easily, everybody was seen to be a pennywhistler."<sup>37</sup> Macontela explains further, how Cele's pronounced limp (a result of a football injury)<sup>38</sup> influenced the choreography of the aspirant generation of pennywhistlers:

You know he was a limping guy, his feet were not equal. He walked like that and we would imitate him. ...when we play pennywhistle, you do that

32 Godfrey Moloi, My Life, p.72.

33 Don Mattera, Memory is the Weapon, p.74.

34 Gerhard Kubik, "Afrikanische Elemente im Jazz," pp.91-92; and Gerhard Kubik, "Donald Kachamba's Montage recordings," p. 115.

35 Ntemi Piliso. Author's interview, 4.9.90.

36 See: David Rycroft "The New Town Music of South Africa," p.56; Chris Stapelton and Chris May, African All Stars, p.188; Jonas Gwangwa and Fulco van Aurich, "The Melody of Freedom," p. 149; Macontela, Peter. Author's interview, Johannesburg, 13 July 1990; Ilanga, February 17, 1951; Bantu World, June 8 1955; World, March 10, 1956; Drum, April 1958.

37 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

38 Ilanga, February 17, 1951.

[sways from side to side] because of Willard Cele. I'll say we thought it was the style, but when we grew up we realised that he was a cripple ...<sup>39</sup>

Imitation of Cele probably explains why constant bodily movement formed part of the pennywhistle performance practice of Jake Lerole and particularly Lemmy Mabaso, both of whom grew up in Alexandra, whilst Spokes Mashiyane, who came from the Northern Transvaal, remained still when he played.<sup>40</sup>

The star billing accorded Cele in a film did much to raise the pennywhistle from the status of a toy to that of a recognised musical instrument. In 1951 Cele expressed astonishment at the sudden prestige brought by his instrument: "I'm so surprised - I can't believe it! I never thought I could make up something out of such a small toy instrument ..."<sup>41</sup> In later years, however, after deep disappointment and bitterness induced by the lack of just royalty arrangements, Cele bemoaned his lack of financial reward as a star pennywhistler and yearned for a more bourgeois musical occupation: "I'm sure I would feel happier as a church choir conductor instead of playing the flute."<sup>42</sup>

Cele seems not to have made any recordings other than his "Penny Whistle Blues" and "Penny Whistle Boogie" for The Magic Garden. However, since Piliso remembers Cele playing at Troubadour's studios, it is possible that he made recordings for which he was not credited.<sup>43</sup> He participated in several live shows after his appearance in The Magic Garden: for example, "The African Pageant", held at Johannesburg's Wembly Stadium in 1951<sup>44</sup> and the 1956 "Township Jazz" variety shows.<sup>45</sup> The last performance of Cele's documented by the media, was an "impromptu session" with the American clarinetist Tony Scott in 1957.<sup>46</sup> In 1958 Cele, who unlike most pennywhistlers had obtained his Junior Matriculation,<sup>47</sup> was working as a governmental clerk,<sup>48</sup> but his subsequent whereabouts have been unknown to fellow musicians and he is now believed to be late.<sup>49</sup>

39 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

40 Drum, December 1958; and Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

41 Drum, March 1951.

42 Drum, April 1958.

43 Ntemi Piliso. Author's interview, 4.9.90.

44 Drum, April 1951.

45 Golden City Post, July 29 and November 18, 1956; and World, August 4, 1956.

46 World, October 12, 1957.

47 Ilanga, February 12, 1951.

48 World, January 1 and April 12, 1956.

49 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91; and Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

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## Marabi Pennywhistle

### The Growth of a South African Pennywhistle Style

Throughout the history of musical styles within the *marabi* tradition, African and American musical elements have been constantly engaged in a dialectical process of negotiation and transformation. *Kwela* is the syncretic amalgam of these elements in a particular period of South Africa's history. Throughout the *kwela* era the jazz- and *marabi*-influenced streams of pennywhistle music existed concurrently. Artists generally specialised in a particular stream, but all the leading *kwela* musicians recorded both *marabi*-type, and rhythm-and-blues pennywhistle numbers.

In the mid-fifties commentators frequently highlighted continuities between the new pennywhistle music and earlier styles incorporating strong African musical elements. A review of a recording by Hamilton Nzimande and his Mad Kids states: "The recording opens with a guitar solo which heralds great things in this 'Tamatie-sous' like number. The tune is typical African Traditional jazzed up."<sup>50</sup> Jake Lerole suggests that the great popularity of the new pennywhistle style resulted from the successful integration of what was familiar with what was new.

They [working people] liked that music because it was something different from *tsaba-tsaba*, it's flavour was not the same as *marabi* or *tsaba-tsaba*. It's still in the *marabi* idiom, but now this one was let's say a modern *marabi*, a modern version of the music.<sup>51</sup>

Lerole also explains how, at its genesis, *marabi*-based pennywhistle music was created by the people, for the people, dancers and musicians collaborating in communal self-expression:

... it came out of people's vibes. To me myself, it didn't come from me, it came from the people who were dancing about. Those people were making me so happy that I could play. I don't know until I played my heart out, until I could play no more. But that's what they wanted, they really loved it that way.<sup>52</sup>

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50 *Bantu World*, June 8, 1955. See also Chapter 1 pp. 22-23.

51 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

52 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

Willard Cele's loss of popularity is often ascribed to the fact that he played rhythm-and-blues rather than music rooted in the *marabi* ethic. In Alexandra, the group said to have propagated the latter style was the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys led by Lemmy "Special" Mabaso. They were popular in Alexandra and on the streets of Johannesburg several years before their first recording in 1956. Piliso explains: "... especially in town they were the craze. They used to demonstrate you know, they had some sort of choreography that was very attractive."<sup>53</sup> Ralulimi describes the relationship between the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys' music and preceding musical trends:

They were now following the style that was called *marabi* in the townships, played by black big-bands that had now started composing music of their own. Like when they started playing things like "Tamatie Sous" etc. So the Alexandra Bright Boys based their music on that pattern sort of, and then Willard Cele with his blues he really faded off.<sup>54</sup>

Although Willard Cele's blues and boogie pennywhistle recordings were very popular in 1951, the next pennywhistle recording session seems to have occurred only in mid-1954.<sup>55</sup> "Majuba style" pennywhistle recordings by the Orlando Shanty Maxims were also reviewed in August 1954.<sup>56</sup> The commercial potential of pennywhistle music, however, does not seem to have been recognised until the release of Spokes Mashiyane's first recordings ("Ace Blues", "Kwela Spokes", "Skokiaan", and "Meva") which were made on October 8, 1954.<sup>57</sup>

Spokes Mashiyane, one of eight children, was born in 1934 in the Vlakfontein-Hammanskraal area of the Northern Transvaal. As he spent most of his youth tending his father's cattle, he attended school only as far as Standard III.<sup>58</sup> Although I have not been able to find corroborative evidence, it is possible that, as Kubik asserts,<sup>59</sup>

53 Ntemi Piliso. Author's interview, 4.9.90.

54 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

55 According to Rob Allingham (Author's interview, 4.5.93.) this was the Orlando Tin Whistlers (Silas Ramokhasi, pennywhistle; Kenneth Nkosi, guitar) produced by Strike Vilakazi.

56 Bantu World, August 5, 1954.

57 Rob Allingham. Author's interview, 4.5.93.

58 Post, January 20, 1963; Star, February 18, 1972; World, September 9, 1964.

59 Gerhard Kubik, "Afrikanische Elemente im Jazz," p. 94.



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Mashiyane started his musical career on reed flutes traditionally played by herd boys in his area. He certainly played firstly a plastic, and later a metal pennywhistle whilst still living in the Northern Transvaal.<sup>60</sup>

At the age of eighteen Mashiyane travelled to Johannesburg to seek work as a domestic servant. He lived with his aunt in Parkview where he met guitarist France Pilane. The two formed a duo, and (as domestics were not permitted to make a "noise" on their employer's properties) they rehearsed at the Zoo Lake Park during their free time. It was there that they were noticed by Strike Vilakazi, a talent scout for Trutone, who subsequently invited Mashiyane and Pilane to record.<sup>61</sup>

Mashiyane's first recordings, particularly "Ace Blues" [Cassette A:8], sold extremely well<sup>62</sup> and by early 1955 he was receiving favourable reviews. His records were also being played by the Southern Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation and he soon obtained a following all over Southern Africa.<sup>63</sup> As in the case of African Jazz, Mashiyane's popularity is attributed to his utilisation of "grassroots" musical elements, Albert Ralulimi explains:

Spokes became more popular because he took tunes from the community, something that he felt. He went about *stokvels* and watching people singing their old songs.... So Spokes improvised the pattern of the type of music that was sung by anybody, or small boys playing on the street and so forth.<sup>64</sup>

Johnny Mekoas defines Mashiyane's composition "Ace Blues" [Cassette A:8], as "an old traditional number".<sup>65</sup> The primary melodic material of this composition is clearly syncretic and the composition is thus not "traditional" in the sense of it being derived purely from music of South Africa's pre-colonial past. However, the term "traditional" is often used by informants to mean songs everyone knows, songs passed down from former generations. *Marabi* melodies are often considered "traditional" because they are "stored" in communal memory. Structurally, "Ace Blues" consists of an introduction and two motifs, varied slightly on repetition. That it does not contain

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60 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

61 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interviews, 12.2.90. and 15.7.90.

62 Rob Allingham. Author's interview, 4.5.93.

63 *Drum*, February 1955.

64 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.

65 Johnny Mekoas, Author's interview, Durban, June 1989.

the typical *kwela*-type solo passages is possibly indicative of its transitional position in the metamorphosis of *kwela* from communally remembered musical material.

Mashiyane's success precipitated a search by other record companies for their own pennywhistle stars. BB Records, owned by Charles Berman, recorded pennywhistler Jerry Ndhlovu (known as Jerry penny Flute) contemporaneously with Mashiyane's first recordings. Jerry penny Flute's first recordings, "Ngiyabonga" and "Kupela", were issued in November 1954<sup>66</sup> and the first newspaper advertisements appear in January 1955 simultaneously with the earliest advertisements of Mashiyane's recordings.<sup>67</sup>

Charles Berman first heard Ndhlovu playing in the streets, dubbed him "Jerry penny Flute" and offered him a recording session. On discovering that Ndhlovu was jobless Berman also employed him as a gardener. Berman asserts that Ndhlovu was a "tremendous seller" before Spokes Mashiyane became so popular, explaining that he also recorded as a member of the Melody Makers and the Alexander King flutes.<sup>68</sup> Jerry penny Flute, accompanied by Jerry Mhlanga on the guitar, was recorded by Berman in the BB studios, but their recordings were released on EMI's JP label.<sup>69</sup>

The search by various record companies for pennywhistle stars resulted in a plethora of recordings by pennywhistle groups who recorded only once or twice. Of the many aspirant pennywhistlers who recorded between 1955 and 1958, very few became regular recording artists.

During the middle to late fifties the pennywhistle was an extremely popular instrument with young township boys. Macontela describes the instrument's prevalence:

Now when the pennywhistle came, young boys - it seems out of ten, six were playing pennywhistle.... nobody would even glance because of so many played it. It made it insignificant so much.... wherever you go, you see people playing pennywhistle and guitar.<sup>70</sup>

By 1958 the pennywhistle had become so common that Jake Lerole learnt the saxophone: "I started playing saxophone for good now, because pennywhistle,

66 EMI Numerical Catalogue, 1957.

67 Drum, January 1955

68 Charles and Sadie Berman, Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, London, 16.5.86.

69 Rob Allingham. Author's interview, 4.5.93.

70 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

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everyone used to play it around the streets so it made me blush."<sup>71</sup> The instrument's popularity was country wide,<sup>72</sup> and the aspiration of many pennywhistlers to record was based on the mythical belief that they could become instantly rich and famous.<sup>73</sup> The record companies' search for an equivalent to Trutone's Spoke's Mashiyane was greatly facilitated by the groups of hopeful pennywhistlers who waited at their doors.<sup>74</sup>

### Pennywhistle Music: Sounds of the Streets

An important dialectic existed between recorded pennywhistle music and that which was played "live" in the townships or for passers-by in the cities. The streets and the recording studios were the primary musical spaces available to most pennywhistlers. The effect of the inter-relationship between the two venues is most obvious in the changing instrumentation of pennywhistle bands. In the early fifties, groups of youngsters busking on the streets played only pennywhistles and guitars. (Although informants report having made private recordings for people with home-tape recorders, unfortunately I have been unable to trace any of these.)<sup>75</sup>

Jerry penny Flute's "Ngiyabonga" [Cassette A:9] and "Kupela", recorded by BB Records in November 1954, are some of the few remaining examples of how this street music might have sounded. Although prior to his first recording Spokes Mashiyane played only with guitarist France Pilane, double bass and drums were added at their first recording and this became the norm for all pennywhistle recordings. (The bass and drum set are very soft in Mashiyane's recording of "Ace Blues" [Cassette A:8], making this the best available example of how he and Pilane may have sounded when busking.) Musicians inspired by recordings subsequently included homemade tea-box basses and drums to their pennywhistle bands, and these instruments became integrated into street performance.

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71 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

72 See Chapter IV pp. 134-142.

73 See discussion of the financial rewards of pennywhistle playing, Chapter IV pp. 146-148 and Chapter VI pp. 210-211.

74 World, May 25, 1957.

75 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.; and Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

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By the mid-fifties busking pennywhistle bands contained three to eight pennywhistlers, one to three guitarists, a drummer, and a bass player. After 1960, *kwela* bands grew smaller and started to die out, tourists providing most of their custom in the latter years.<sup>76</sup> During the boom years, pennywhistle bands were a feature of central Johannesburg: one could, for example, be sure to hear *kwela* in the Eloff/President Street area, or near the Station.<sup>77</sup> Bands also operated in Hillbrow, Berea and the Northern Suburbs.

All the major *kwela* musicians spent a great deal of time, before and during their recording careers, playing in the streets. Jake Lerole maintains that busking was far more lucrative than recording; on the streets takings could be as high as R60 a day.<sup>78</sup> In fact, as a result of the lack of royalty agreements, busking was a mandatory method of financial survival.<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, from about 1958 police harassment of buskers intensified, and eventually perpetual arrests, fines, and physical abuse made the streets an unviable venue for musicians.

The great popularity of pennywhistle music in the late-fifties resulted from the symbiotic, mutually nourishing relationship between recorded and live *kwela*. The success of recordings inspired the formation of more pennywhistle bands and, as Ralulimi explains, street performances popularised *kwela* music, thus increasing record sales: "... it was promoted by us the pennywhistlers ... I'm sure we should have charged record companies moneys for doing that work for them."<sup>80</sup>

The circumstances which led to Ralulimi's graduation from busker to recording artist typify those of many contemporaneous pennywhistlers. Albert Ralulimi grew up in Sibasa in the Northern Transvaal, and spent much of his childhood herding cattle and playing the "traditional" ocarinas and reed flutes of his area. Aged eighteen, he moved to Johannesburg and worked his way from employment as a caddy to a telephone operator. In 1954 he became friends with Spokes Mashiyane and they spent many Sunday afternoons together at Zoo Lake, Ralulimi learning "the finer points" of

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76 Gerhard Kubik, "Afrikanische Elemente im Jazz," p. 92.

77 Irene Menell. Author's interview, 3.9.90.; Golden City Post, January 1, 1959.

78 Sunday Tribune, September 1, 1974; and Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

79 See Chapter IV, pp. 147-148.

80 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.

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pennywhistling from Mashiyane. In 1956, Ralulimi formed his own band, the Basement Boys, with Specks Rampura, Simon Majassi, and Sam Hlongwane. Busking in front of a Berea hotel one Saturday afternoon, the Basement Boys impressed Roy Evans of the Gallo record company who consequently invited them to record. Ralulimi recorded for Gallo until 1958 when he signed a contract with Trutone.<sup>81</sup>

### Pennywhistle on the Big Stage

The third platform available to pennywhistlers, after the studios and the streets, was the large variety shows that thrived in the fifties. These shows featured black performing artists but, as a consequence of oppressive apartheid policies<sup>82</sup> and the resultant restrictions of black entrepreneurial activity, operated under white management.<sup>83</sup> The first show of this type was "Zonk", organised by Ike Brooks for the entertainment of troops during the Second World War.<sup>84</sup> It was impresario Alfred Herbert, however, who really capitalised on the situation and developed the variety show concept.

During the fifties Herbert ran a show called African Jazz and Variety which consisted of black music and dance moulded to Herbert's conception of white audience's taste. He unabashedly commoditised "his" artists, as he explained to Can Themba: "Can, man, in jazz I sell rhythm. That's the staple.... what I deal in is the rhythm of the African."<sup>85</sup> Herbert's racist and condescending attitude is expressed in the following report of a Durban performance:

... he [Alfred Herbert] suggested to the audience that it was the sort of show one might find in a location and anyone who expected more of it would be disappointed. That was hardly the way to speak of the most sophisticated non-European presentation Durban has seen in years.<sup>86</sup>

Herbert's political stance is evident in his vociferous condemnation of anti-government statements made by Miriam Makeba and other exiled musicians in the early sixties:

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81 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interviews, 12.2.90. and 15.7.90.

82 See Chapter V, pp. 192-193.

83 See David Coplan, "The African Performer and the Johannesburg Entertainment Industry," pp. 199-200; and David Coplan, In Township Tonight!, pp. 168-171.

84 David Coplan, In Township Tonight!, pp. 150-151.

85 Can Themba, The World of Can Themba, p. 201.

86 Daily News, May 9, 1955.

The South African Government had always dealt fairly with non-white performers, and even encouraged their talent by giving them passports to travel overseas.... The Government's readiness to help is abused when these performers make derogatory statements about their country ... Miss Makeba worked with me for seven years, and in that time she was never politically minded. These artists are falling prey to agitators when they get overseas and the South African government is being treated unfairly.<sup>87</sup>

Coplan describes African Jazz and Variety as "something of a burlesque, a loose-jointed mixture of local imitations of Black American entertainers, tap dancing, inauthentic "stage" pastiches of rural African life and "traditional" culture, powerful "township" jazz, and "sexy" dancing."<sup>88</sup> Pallo Jordan (political and cultural activist and senior member of the ANC) more damningly calls Herbert "a musical huckster", targeting his notoriety for "cultural exploitation and artistic prostitution".<sup>89</sup>

Herbert tried to claim credit for the successful careers of many black artists, asserting that "ten of the top non-white stars ... achieved their real break in showbiz, and their fame as members of ... African Jazz and Variety."<sup>90</sup> For at least one of the ten musicians mentioned, Lemmy "Special" Mabaso, this is an extravagant claim. Mabaso's first stage performances were a tour with African Jazz and Variety<sup>91</sup> (probably in 1955), but Mabaso did not achieve widespread public and media acclaim until his appearance in Township Jazz Tribute<sup>92</sup> organised by the Union of Southern African Artists (USAA) in 1957.<sup>93</sup>

The variety shows organised by USAA were Herbert's fundamental competition. They were catalysed by the extraordinary success of Father Trevor Huddleston's

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87 Daily News, December 30, 1964.

88 David Coplan, "The African Performer and the Johannesburg Entertainment Industry," p. 201.

89 Pallo Jordan, "Johnny Dyani: A Portrait", Rixaka, date unknown.

90 Drum, June 1962.

91 Lemmy "Special" Mabaso, video made for the SABC TV3 program Mino by Joubert & Van Dyke Productions.

92 See Chapter II, p. 49.

93 A fair amount of confusion has resulted from the similarity in titles of the shows organised by Herbert, African Jazz (and Variety), and those organised by USAA, Township Jazz. Both newspaper reports and informants periodically switch titles and it is necessary to identify the show from other factors, such as the personnel or venue. See for example, incorrect reports in: Golden City Post, January 20, 1963; The Star, April 15, 1957; Lemmy "Special" Mabaso, video made for the SABC TV3 program Mino by Joubert & Van Dyke Productions; Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.

farewell concert in 1954. The proceeds of this concert enabled USAA to hire their own premises in Dorkay House from where a series of talent competitions and Variety concerts were organised.<sup>94</sup>

USAA first included pennywhistlers in their Township Jazz show of 1956. Performances were put on at the Johannesburg City Hall,<sup>95</sup> the University of the Witwatersrand's Great Hall and the Selborne Hall. They also toured to Durban.<sup>96</sup> Both Willard Cele and Spokes Mashiyane<sup>97</sup> were featured, the latter's backing group including pennywhistlers J. Mhlanga, H. Makaya and Mutstitshu.<sup>98</sup>

USAA also organised a series of shows featuring such artists as Miriam Makeba, the Manhattan Brothers, and the Jazz Dazzlers which toured various parts of the Transvaal late in 1956 and early in 1957. The Solven Whistlers (Ben Nkosi, Peter Macontela, Milton Pitwe and Joseph Matope) toured with this show,<sup>99</sup> and are likely to be the four pennywhistlers mentioned by Makeba in her description of the road accident which resulted in the death of comedian Victor Mkhize.<sup>100</sup>

It was, however, at the memorial show organised by USAA for Victor Mkhize and Henry Nxumalo (a recently murdered top journalist known as "Mr. Drum") that Lemmy "Special" and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys enjoyed their first major success.<sup>101</sup> Newspaper articles report prodigious audience acclaim, for instance: "People are still screaming about the pennywhistlers who stole the show";<sup>102</sup> and "[they] so mesmerised the audience with their tin whistle music that they had two curtain calls."<sup>103</sup> Subsequently, Lemmy "Special" and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys signed a recording contract with Gallo, swiftly joining Spokes Mashiyane in the pennywhistle top league. The group participated in the show Dorkay Jazz organised by USAA in 1958,<sup>104</sup> and Mabaso went to London with King Kong in 1960.

94 Ian Bernardt. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 14.1.86.

95 Drum, August 1956.

96 Golden City Post, July 29 and November 18, 1956; World, August 4, 1956.

97 World, June 23 and July 14, 1956.

98 Drum, August 1956.

99 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

100 James Hall and Miriam Makeba, Makeba, p. 59-61.

101 Golden City Post, February 2 and March 10, 1957; World, March 9, April 20, 24, 27, and May 25 1957.

102 Golden City Post, March 10, 1957.

103 World, March 9, 1957.

104 Golden City Post, May 4, 1958.

Mabaso's most frequently commended attribute was his showmanship and charisma, largely manifesting in the extraordinary choreography integral to his performance practice. A journalist described a performance: "Lemmy was in terrific form. He played his instrument with one hand while he pirouetted like a ballerina."<sup>105</sup> Macontela elaborates: "[Mabaso] holds [the pennywhistle] with one finger and jives around. He lies on his back, he kicks and these [other pennywhistlers] keep on backing him. That's how Lemmy came popular in town."<sup>106</sup>

The method devised by USAA to recruit personnel for their Township Jazz shows was to hold a series of regional talent competitions and minor shows. Some pennywhistlers made their reputations through this system, others achieved brief acclaim and disappeared.<sup>107</sup> In 1958, the Melo-Flutes, led by Frederick Maphisa, won the £100 first prize in the finals of the "Township Talent" musical and beauty contest at the Bantu Men's Social Centre (BMSC).<sup>108</sup> This duo made their variety show debut on the same occasion (namely USAA's "New Faces of 1958" show held at the Selborne Hall, February 13 to 15) as the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys,<sup>109</sup> but the latter enjoyed a longer and more illustrious career than the former.

Both Barney Rachabane and Spokes Mashiyane appeared in the Township Jazz shows of 1958 and 1959. (It seems, however, that frequently the pennywhistler thought to be Mashiyane was actually Albert Ralulimi who "stepped in" whenever Mashiyane "disappeared". As Mashiyane "was a shy guy", allegedly this was a common occurrence.)<sup>110</sup> Rachabane and his pennywhistle group were "rescued" by USAA when they were stranded in Cape Town after an abortive tour of the Lofty Adams show Africa Sings. USAA paid their return tickets and immediately included them in Township Jazz.<sup>111</sup>

The culmination of USAA's variety shows was the extremely successful stage production, King Kong, in 1959. The parts of the pennywhistlers were played by

105 World, October 8, 1958.

106 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

107 For example: the Payneville Whistlers, who took part in the "Search for township talent and beauty show" held in Springs, received one good review in Golden City Post, November 11, 1957.

108 World, March 1, 1958.

109 Golden City Post, February 2, 1958; World, February 10, 1958.

110 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interviews, 12.2.90. and 15.7.90.

111 Golden City Post, January 4, 1959.



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Barney Rachabane and his group in the South African version,<sup>112</sup> and by Lemmy "Special" in the production which went to London in 1960.<sup>113</sup>

### The "Kwela Boom"

#### The "Overseas" Factor

Pennywhistle music sold well on the South African market for three years before the occurrence of what became referred to as the *kwela* "boom". Both the use of the term *kwela*, and the sudden prestige accorded this style, resulted from its recognition and acclaim internationally. Two events in mid-1958 alerted South Africans to the value of *kwela* music: Spokes Mashiyane recorded with American jazz pianist Claude Williamson; and "Tom Hark" by Elias and his Zig-Zag Jive flutes, was used as the theme tune for a programme on British television, subsequently topping the British Hit parade.

Bloke Modisane explains how inferior local culture was considered when compared with "overseas" products: "... only imported culture has any import in South Africa, so 'Tom Hark' had to go great hums in England before we caught on."<sup>114</sup> Kippie Moeketsi elaborates further on the aura of "overseas":

... we suffer from this complex that whenever a man is from overseas he's the end in life. There's nothing better than a man from overseas! Ha! ha! You know, *daai gedagte* - that kind of impression. *Monna ga bare o tswa overseas ra mo sheba, man. Ra mo tshaba* - when a man is from overseas, we admire him. We are scared of him!<sup>115</sup>

Spokes Mashiyane obtained his star status and title of "King *Kwela*" through his recordings with the Claude Williamson Trio, who were touring South Africa with the Bud Shank/Bob Cooper "Jazz West Coast" show. These recordings, "Kwela Claude" [Cassette A:10] and "Sheshisa! (Be Alive!)", were some of the first to be made by a

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112 Barney Rachabane. Author's interview, 16.9.89.

113 Post, February 12 and March 5, 1961; Drum, February and April 1961.

114 Golden City Post, July 13, 1958.

115 Kippie Moeketsi, "Roll 'em Morolong," p. 75.

local artist in collaboration with American jazz musicians.<sup>116</sup> This event was hyped by the mass media and record company publicity machines turning Mashiyane into an instant celebrity.

The following comments express the sensation aroused by collaboration between American and black South African musicians:

"Six months ago, when we printed a picture of Spokes Mashiyane, he was just one of the Reef's pennywhistlers, little known outside. Today, he's known in many lands, and his records are as likely to be sold out in London and New York as they are in any of the towns of the Union... [Now he is] floating on a flood of international fame ...".<sup>117</sup>

"Since "Kwela Claude" and "Sheshisa", with Claude Williamson, Spokes has become the most sought after and polished penny whistler in the world."<sup>118</sup>

Eager to capitalise on this publicity, Trutone embarked on an aggressive marketing campaign, billing Mashiyane as "King *Kwela*" and printing his picture on record labels. The "King *Kwela*" campaign was the first time a record company had lavished such extensive publicity on a black musician. A contemporary newspaper article comments on Mashiyane's resultant rise in status: "[he] sky rocketed to fame since recording with Claude Williamson ... White disc jockeys used to credit these sides to Claude Williamson and local artists, but now it's Spokes Mashiyane and Williamson."<sup>119</sup>

Trutone exploited the "American connection" as far as possible in their marketing strategy. It was unprecedented to print comments on record labels of 78's, but the "Kwela Claude" label declares:

The famous American pianist CLAUDE WILLIAMSON, says: "The Kwela Rhythm, born in the cradle of jazz, is unlike any other I have played. It could well take its place alongside Calypso and the Samba."<sup>120</sup>

The flip-side "Sheshisa! (Be Alive!)" proclaims:

The popular whistle player SPOKES MASHIYANE says: "It was a thrilling experience to play Kwela with the famous American Claude

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116 Tony Scott recorded with the Solven Whistlers in 1957 but these recordings seem not have made the same impact.  
 117 *Drum*, December 1958.  
 118 *Drum*, August 1958.  
 119 *Golden City Post*, June 15, 1958.  
 120 Quality (Special) TJ.222, side A.

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Williamson Trio. They gave me the inspiration to make 'SHESHISA!' one of the finest records I have ever cut!"<sup>121</sup>

Similarly a newspaper advertisement reads: "KING KWELA applauded by the American Stars of Jazz West Coast. Spokes Mashiyane plays *kwela* with the famous American artists 'The Claude Williamson Trio' on TJ 222 ..." <sup>122</sup>

The second event responsible for the sweeping popularity of *kwela* in 1958 was the success of "Tom Hark" in Britain. This composition was recorded by Elias and his Zig-Zag Jive Flutes in October 1956,<sup>123</sup> and enjoyed modest success for two years [Cassette A:11]. In 1958 "Tom Hark" was used as the theme-tune of The Killing Stones, a British television series written by Wolf Mankowitz about illicit diamond dealing in South Africa.<sup>124</sup> The response of television viewers precipitated a British release of "Tom Hark" (Columbia DB 4109)<sup>125</sup> which, according to the South African press, reached the top of the British Hit Parade.<sup>126</sup> Rycroft reports hearing English workmen whistling "Tom Hark" as they laboured in London's Drury Lane,<sup>127</sup> and asserts that it was a "best-seller" in Britain "for over two months".<sup>128</sup>

An English cover-version was recorded by Ted Heath and his dance band (Decca F 11025), in which the "Tom Hark" melody is alternated with an Afrikaans folk tune "Sarie Marais".<sup>129</sup> Rycroft remarks that this version lacked the spontaneity of the original and, in the words of a South African journalist, "it was the African product that grabbed the 'cats' by the ears."<sup>130</sup>

"Tom Hark's" British success is frequently quoted as the birth of *kwela*.<sup>131</sup> A newspaper article claims for instance:

Because of "Tom Hark" other records of our artists are enjoying a boom both here and abroad. "Kwela Claude"(Rave R 28; Quality TJ 22 and

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121 Quality (Special) TJ.222, side B.

122 Golden City Post, May 18, 1958.

123 EMI Numerical Catalogue, 1957.

124 World, August 13, 1958.

125 David Rycroft "The New Town Music of South Africa," p. 54.

126 For example: Golden City Post, July 13, 1958; World, August 13, 1958.

127 David Rycroft "The New Town Music of South Africa," p. 54.

128 David Rycroft, "African music in Johannesburg," p. 29.

129 David Rycroft "The New Town Music of South Africa," p. 54.

130 World, September 12, 1959.

131 See, for example, World, September 27, 1958; and Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

Rave Rep 4.45 rpm) by Spokes Mashiyane and Claude Williamson are fantastic sellers. They've become signature tunes of our commercial radio wires.<sup>132</sup>

South African record companies certainly invested more in *kwela* publicity after "Tom Hark's" success and attempted to exploit the blossoming international market. Although the tour never actually took place, owing to difficulties in obtaining passports, there was much media coverage of an EMI plan to promote *kwela* by sending the Lerole pennywhistle band to England.<sup>133</sup> Most record companies started to issue *kwela* compositions on LP records, the format utilised by the white South African and foreign markets.<sup>134</sup>

### The Origins of the Term "Kwela"

According to the dictionary *khwela* in Zulu means to "climb, ascend, mount, mate".<sup>135</sup> The dictionary definition of *khwela* in Xhosa is to "climb, mount, ride, fall upon, attack".<sup>136</sup> The word *kwela* does not appear in either dictionary. According to Kubik, however, the word *kwela* is used as a verb meaning "to climb up", "to raise", "to mount", in several Southern African languages.<sup>137</sup> *Kwela* also means rising in the sense of social emancipation and advancement towards power,<sup>138</sup> as Jake Lerole explains: "I had a number which was called "Kwela Africa". Meaning Africa climb up! You see, improve - improve with the music, be at the top."<sup>139</sup>

There are several theories of how the term *kwela* came to refer to pennywhistle music.<sup>140</sup> The most plausible explanation is that *kwela* was originally used as a

132 Golden City Post, July 13, 1958.

133 For example: Golden City Post, July 13 and November 30, 1958.

134 For example: "Tom Hark" was reissued on the LP Kwela Africa!; and Mashiyane's recordings with Claude Williamson are reissued on the LP King Kwela (Rave RMG 1107).

135 C. Doke and B. Vilakazi, Zulu-English Dictionary.

136 J. McLaren, A New Concise Xhosa-English Dictionary.

137 Gerhard Kubik, Malawian Music, p. 19.

138 Gerhard Kubik, "Afrikanische Elemente im Jazz," p. 92.

139 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

140 The most dubious of which is guitarist Allan Kwela's claim that, as he invented the style, it is named after him. [Daily News, April 26, 1989.]

stylistic label by the British market: the term was extracted from the phrase "*Daar kom die Kwela-kwela*" which occurs in the spoken introduction to "Tom Hark". In *tsotsitaal* this phrase means "here comes the police van", but, by English speakers, it was understood as an announcement of the impending music.<sup>141</sup>

The introduction to "Tom Hark" is a tableau about street corner gambling during which the approach of a police van induces the gamblers to pocket their dice and pull out their pennywhistles. Elias Lerole explains:

Then I started to say, "Now gentlemen let's make little bits of speech before we play this number." Then the guys they say, "What are we going to say?" I say, "Look - you know all the time when you are in the street we are afraid for these pickup vans." Always they used to come and arrest some people, you know. And I say, "Now look here, we are going to say: Gentlemen, lets play the dice." And I throw the money and I check the dice, I throw them, I say, "I do!" Then somebody say, "No can do!" Then I draw again, I say, "I do!" Then they say, "Popp!" and I can grab the money. Then when are you going to grab the money I say, "Gentlemen, here comes the *Kwela-kwela*. Let's play our pennywhistles to keep the police busy so that they musn't arrest us." You see, then we start to play the flute.<sup>142</sup>

Jake Lerole explains that police vans were called *Kwela-kwelas* because "if you refuse to board it they say '*Kwela! Kwela!*' and they kick your backside."<sup>143</sup> Elias Lerole elaborates: "when you climb up in the *Kwela-kwela* everybody's jus' pushing. '*Kwela! Kwela!*', you mus' hurry up and climb up."<sup>144</sup>

Retrospectively, it has been claimed that *Kwela-kwela* vans bequeathed their name to pennywhistle music because the police incessantly arrested pennywhistlers for causing a "public disturbance".<sup>145</sup> This, however, could not have been Elias Lerole's motivation since during the introduction to "Tom Hark", the actors use pennywhistling as a "cover" to hide their primary activity of gambling. Furthermore, police harassment of pennywhistler buskers did not intensify until 1958,<sup>146</sup> and "Tom Hark" was recorded in 1956.

141 David Rycroft "The New Town Music of South Africa," p. 56; and Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

142 Elias Lerole. Author's interview, 16.2.90.

143 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

144 Elias Lerole. Author's interview, 16.2.90.

145 For example: Golden City Post, January 20, 1963; and Louis Peterson, "The Evolution of Black Music."

146 See Chapter V - police intimidation pp. 180-184.

The theory which attributes the use of the term *kwela* to "Tom Hark's" British success is substantially corroborated by dates. Before June 1958 the term *kwela* is used very little, whereas after June it is used almost exclusively. From this point no record review of pennywhistle music was complete without mention of the term *kwela*.<sup>147</sup> From 1955 to 1958 pennywhistle recordings were categorised on record labels variously as: Tin Whistle Jive; Flute/Tin Whistle; Flutes; Flute Jive; Sax & Flute Jive; Jive; Flutes-Jazz; Flutes-Marabi; Pennywhistle Flute; Pennywhistle; and Flageolet Rock. From the middle of 1958 onwards such records were classified as: Flutes - *Kwela*; Flute/Pennywhistle *Kwela*; Flute *Kwela*; or Penny Whistle *Kwela*.

The word *kwela* was associated with music long before pennywhistles became popular. It was often shouted during a number to motivate people to get up and dance.<sup>148</sup> In the Jazz Maniacs' 1939 recording of "Tsaba-Tsaba", for instance, shouts of *kwela!* are audible [Cassette A:3].<sup>149</sup> The instruction *kwela!* was also used between musicians to induce someone to take a solo.<sup>150</sup> It is in this sense that, before 1958, the term *kwela* appeared in song titles coupled with a person's name. Thus Mashiyane's 1954 recording "Kwela Spokes" meant climb up Spokes, take a solo Spokes. It is likely that the title "Kwela Claude" was conceptualised in the same way. Since it achieved success at the same time as "Tom Hark", however, the title "Kwela Claude" is likely to have lent further credence to the new usage of the term *kwela* (meaning pennywhistle music).

Incorporated into a title before 1958, the meaning of the word *kwela* was either: to rise up and play (e.g. "Kwela Joe" by the African Swingsters,<sup>151</sup> "Kwela" by the Shanty City Seven,<sup>152</sup> and "Kwela Biza" by the Alexandra Shamber Boys<sup>153</sup>); or as a reference to a police van (e.g. "Kwela Kwela" by Constance Piliso,<sup>154</sup> "Kwela Kwela"

147 For example: *Drum*, August, September, October, November, December, 1958; *World*, May 5, July 12, September 27, October 25, 1958; and *Golden City Post*, November 16, 1958.

148 David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, p. 158.

149 (Better XU 9), reissued as track 25 of the cassette accompanying Christopher Ballantine's book *Marabi Nights: Early South African Jazz and Vaudeville*.

150 Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

151 *Bantu World*, May 8, 1954.

152 *Drum*, January 1955.

153 *Drum*, August 1956.

154 *Drum*, November 1955.

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by Booyse Gwele and his City Jazz Giants,<sup>155</sup> and "Kwela Kwela Blues" by the Soft Town Bombers).<sup>156</sup>

Pennywhistle music became known as *kwela* at the zenith of its existence. At the height of its popularity in 1958, prime *kwela* exponents, such as Spokes Mashiyane and Jake Lerole, took up the saxophone. At first these musicians played exactly the same music on different instruments but gradually *kwela* evolved into *mbaqanga*. Much interesting pennywhistle *kwela* continued to be recorded in 1959 and during the early sixties. By 1965, however, the pennywhistle as a popular township instrument, was almost obsolete.

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155 Golden City Post, February 25, 1956.

156 Golden City Post, September 9, 1956.

# CHAPTER III

## KWELA MUSIC: AN ANALYSIS

### What is Kwela?

What is *kwela* music? Discussions with *kwela* musicians and other informants have produced a wide assortment of definitions. A few of the most common are: all pennywhistle music composed after 1950; all *marabi*-based pennywhistle music; all *marabi*-based music with a swing beat. The latter, however, seems to be a more common definition of "African Jazz" played by black big-bands in the forties and fifties. Occasionally, the term *kwela* is used interchangeably with *marabi*, *mbaqanga*, and "African jazz".

Academics who have written about *kwela* have been no more precise, or more in agreement with one another, about the boundaries of this musical style. It was not within the scope of Kubik's detailed study of Malawian *kwela* to define the limits of the South African style.<sup>1</sup> Coplan bases his definition on Kubik's work,<sup>2</sup> and Ballantine defines *kwela* as "*marabi*-derived pennywhistle music of the streets, produced by the children of the black slums in creative imitation of their favourite jazzmen."<sup>3</sup>

Hamm uses an umbrella term "jive" to denote the "body of mass disseminated music of Southern Africa emerging in the fifties performed by black musicians for black audiences."<sup>4</sup> He treats *kwela* as a subgroup within "jive", and uses the terms interchangeably. Hamm asserts that "'jive' gradually replaced 'jazz' as the generic term for a large repertoire of black South African social dance music descended from *marabi* and characterised by a succession of brief melodic fragments, repeated and varied but never developed in the Western sense".<sup>5</sup> Hamm's use of the term "jive" is

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- 1 See Gerhard Kubik, The Kachamba Brothers' Band.
  - 2 David Coplan, In Township Tonight!, p. 158.
  - 3 Christopher Ballantine, Marabi Nights, p. 7.
  - 4 Charles Hamm, "Msakazo and all that Jive."
  - 5 Charles Hamm, "The constant companion of man," p. 166.



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problematic because he coalesces genres which, although they do share many common aspects, are distinct from one another both in terms of musical stylistic features and social function. Thus, when Hamm makes observations about "jive" he is generally correct in terms of some forms of "jive" but not in terms of others.<sup>6</sup> In order to avoid such confusion I refer to *styles within the marabi tradition* when making an observation which is true for all the styles, and use the terms *marabi*, "African Jazz", *kwela*, and *mbaqanga* when making observations specific to each one.

Consultation with musicians, and consideration of the academic literature published thus far, suggests that the most widely acceptable definition of *kwela* music is *marabi*-based pennywhistle, and solo saxophone music composed between 1954 and 1964.

Such a definition is, however, lacking in that it contains no reference to the internal musical characteristics of *kwela*. It is purely a result of the common ground found between various people's opinions about, or understandings of, a musical style. A more complete understanding of *kwela* can only be achieved through a thorough investigation of the music itself. In order to discover what musical elements produce the sounds which people recognise as *kwela* I have conducted a detailed analysis of over two-hundred-and-fifty compositions defined as *kwela* by musicians, record labels, advertisements and record reviews [see Appendix I]. The ensuing discussion of the stylistic aspects most prevalent in these compositions will serve to provide a more detailed and precise definition of *kwela* music.

I start with a review of the most common formal structures of *kwela* recordings, continuing with an assessment of the style's harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic characteristics. I then examine the most definitive element of *kwela*; instrumentation. I discuss the characteristics and function of each instrument in a typical *kwela* rhythm section (which includes a drum-set, string bass, guitar and sometimes a banjo) and examine the roles played by, and relationships between, *kwela* front-line instruments (namely pennywhistles and saxophones). I also discuss the effects on *kwela* music, of the inclusion of vocals or other instruments (for instance a clarinet, violin or piano). Finally I review the use of the pennywhistle in *kwela*, discussing ornamentation and pennywhistle techniques particular to this style.

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6 See for example, Chapter VI pp. 231-233.

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Original *kwela* recordings are extremely difficult to obtain. Most *kwela* compositions were issued on brittle 78-rpm shellac gramophone discs which are easily broken or badly scratched. Therefore, the intervening thirty years resulted in the irretrievable loss of much valuable music. Besides the inevitable ravages of time, however, the chronic lack in availability of historic black music recordings is exacerbated by political attitudes engendered by forty years of apartheid ideology. For instance, with the exception of Charles Berman's personal notes,<sup>7</sup> none of the record companies kept a log of the recordings made by black musicians in their studios, let alone an archival library. The master-tapes of recordings made in the Gallo, Trutone and EMI studios are stored in the Gallo archival depot, but the holdings are uncatalogued and many of the master-tapes are unlabelled. Since 1991, however (notably only after the release of Nelson Mandela and the beginning of a new political dispensation) Gallo has employed archivists to begin classifying these historic master tapes.

The state of the South African Broadcasting Corporation's black music libraries when I started my research in 1989 reflects a similar wholesale negation of the value of recordings made by black musicians. Erlmann reports that for many years access to these libraries was denied.<sup>8</sup> Although this was not the case in 1989, the holdings of recordings made in the fifties and sixties were uncatalogued and stored in an exceedingly careless manner. In recent years (in the Durban library at least) efforts to remedy this situation have been made.

The *kwela* recordings I have chosen to analyse are the haphazard result of what has been salvaged from the wreckage caused by these destructive forces.<sup>9</sup> Fortunately however, there are enough recordings to reasonably represent all the major *kwela* musicians, as well as the differing stylistic aspects of the genre.

### The Structure of Kwela Compositions

Structurally *kwela* music consists of the repetition of a short harmonic cycle over which a series of melodies, usually the length of the cycle, are repeated and varied.

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7 Charles and Sadie Berman, Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, London, 16.5.86.

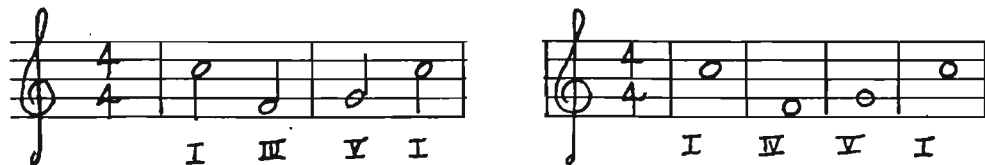
8 Veit Erlmann, *African Stars*, p. xix.

9 These recordings were kindly made available for this research by Christopher Ballantine, Rob Allingham, the SABC and private collectors.

Cyclicity is an attribute *kwela* shares with much black South African traditional music, *marabi*, and many other sub-Saharan neo-traditional musical forms.<sup>10</sup>

The harmonic progressions typical of *kwela* will be discussed later; it suffices here to say that the chords are always the primary ones and there are four per cycle. The harmonic cycle is usually two or four bars long, and most compositions have four crotchets to a bar with chord changes taking place either every bar or half bar.

Fig. 1. Typical spacing of chords within the harmonic cycle.



The fact that *kwela* compositions are based on the cyclical repetition of a short harmonic progression means that structural analysis is more usefully based on melodic variation than on harmonic movement. Most compositions consist of a series of short melodies which are repeated, interspersed with improvisatory passages. In my analysis of *kwela* compositions, I have chosen to term these short melodies "motifs". For the sake of clarity I define any melodic material which is repeated more than once as a motif and classify unpeated melodic lines as a solo passage.

Figure 2. is a key to the symbols and abbreviations I have used in the following diagrams to illustrate the structure of *kwela* compositions. If the layout of a diagram requires that abbreviations be shortened, the change will be stated below the diagram along with any other information specific to a particular example.

10 Christopher Ballantine, "Concert and Dance," p. 135.

Fig. 2. Key to diagrams illustrating the structure of *kwela* compositions.

a	=	melodic motif, also "b, c, d, x, y" etc.
guit	=	guitar
intro	=	introduction
guitsol	=	guitar solo
P	=	pennywhistle [if no space for "pw"]
pchor	=	pennywhistle chorus
pw	=	pennywhistle
pwsol	=	pennywhistle solo
S	=	saxophone [if no space for "sax"]
sachor	=	saxophone chorus
sasol	=	saxophone solo
sax	=	saxophone
sol	=	solo passage
SS	=	solo saxophone, ie: with no accompaniment
2*	=	number of repetitions of the two-bar harmonic cycle
4*	=	no. of repetitions of the four-bar harmonic cycle

### Kwela Structure: Motifs Alternating with Solo Passages

The most common *kwela* form (almost one quarter of the compositions I have analysed) is that of two motifs alternating with solo passages. A good example of this form is "Copper Avenue" played by Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Special

Fig. 3. The structure of "Copper Avenue" by Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Special.

	a	b	a	b	solo	-solo over-						
4*	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	1

The number of repetitions of a particular motif is at the discretion of the soloist and generally appears to be quite arbitrary. Compare, for instance, the number of repetitions in "Copper Avenue" with the number of repetitions in the following compositions:

Fig. 4a. "Two-One Special" by Ben Nkosi.

	backing	intro	a	b	a	b	solo	a	b
2*	2		4	4	4	3	8	5	5

Fig. 4b. "Jika Dinto" by Spokes Mashiyane

SS	-----sax + ryth-----									-----pw + ryth-----									
a	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	mod	a	b	a	b	sol	b	a	b	sol	b
1	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2

ryth = rhythm section  
 mod = modulation

By way of contrast, "See You Later", composed by white musicians and record producer Dan Hill [see figure 5], is formally partitioned into eight-bar segments (that is, the two-bar cycle repeated four times). All the other aspects of this composition (instrumentation, rhythm, and the melodic formation of the motifs) are typical of *kwela*, although the influence of formal theoretical training is evident in the composition's carefully balanced structure. The relatively formal construction of "See You Later" differentiates it from the more spontaneously rendered compositions by self-taught black musicians, and provides strong internal evidence that "See You Later" was actually composed by Hill, and is not one of a large group of compositions which were appropriated from musicians by their producers.

Fig. 5. "See You Later" played by Little Lemmy Special & Big Joe.

	S P S P	S P S P	sasol	pssol	sasol	pwsol	
#	a a b b	a a b b	2x4	2x4	2x4	2x4	
	S P S P	S P S P	sasol	pssol	S P S P	S P SPSP	
#	a a b b	a a b b	2x4	2x4	2x4	2x4	2x4

# = no. of bars

Hill's influence on structure is similarly evident in "Little Lemmy" which appears on the flip side of this record.

Fig. 6. "Little Lemmy" played by Little Lemmy &amp; Big Joe.

	guit	P+S	sasol	pwsol	S	P+S	sasol	pwsol	P+S
	intro	a			a	a			a
4*	1	4	2	4	1	3	2	4	4

Albert Ralulimi, who also recorded at Gallo under Dan Hill, describes a studio situation which would have resulted in a similarly mediated composition:

We were told to play four songs and then told to go up to the roof to practise. One, two, three, we heard our song being played down stairs after Dan Hill had phoned his band members ... So when we were called downstairs we were placed behind microphones. Said - play each phrase four times and keep quiet until we signal to you. We played four times. We kept quiet. Here came now that big-band behind us playing exactly the same phrase that we had played. When they have counted to four, they will break off and signal to us to start the second phrase. That was our first cut that was called "Kwela Bafana".<sup>11</sup>

*Kwela* compositions constructed of three motifs interspersed with solo sections are also very common, although in *kwela* numbers I have analysed there are half as many compositions constructed from three motifs as there are of compositions constructed from two. "Azikwelwa", played by the Alexandra Casbahs, contains three motifs interspersed with solo passages, as does "Phehello" played by Spokes Mashiyane [see figure 7].

Fig. 7. "Phehello" by Spokes Mashiyane.

	a	b	a	solo	c	a	solo	a	b	solo	c	a	solo	b	a	solo
2*	4	3	2	6	3	2	4	2	2	4	3	2	3	3	2	7

Melodic repetitiveness is such a definitive aspect of *kwela* that it was even noted in a newspaper record review. With regard to "Thimelela" by the Alexandra Dead End Kids the reviewer commented, "this record like any other flute [recording] has several repetitions of phrases."<sup>12</sup>

11 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

12 Drum, October, 1957.

There are a number of examples of *kwela* compositions with more than three motifs, commonly four or five. It is very rare to come across a number containing six or more motifs. In these cases the distinction between a motif and a solo becomes moot. For example, in terms of definition of a motif as melodic material which is repeated, "Double Qwela" by Lemmy Mabaso could be analysed as containing seven motifs [see figure 8a] Considering that motifs "a" and "c" are the only ones which recur, the composition could also be analysed as consisting of two motifs with solo sections [see figure 8b] However, I find the latter analysis unsatisfactory because the solo passages are constructed from a series of motifs and this is atypical of Mabaso, whose solos are generally adventurous and creative.

Fig. 8a. "Double Qwela" by Lemmy Mabaso.

a	a	b	c	d	e	f	a	c	guit	sol	a	c	g	a
1	4	3	3	2	2	4	3	3	5		3	2	3	2

Fig. 8b. "Double Qwela" by Lemmy Mabaso.

a	a	solo	c	solo	a	c	guit	sol	a	c	solo	a
1	4	3	3	8	3	3	5		3	2	3	2

For Mabaso, this number is uncharacteristically repetitive and lacking in creative solo passages, which suggests the intervention of an external force. It is possible that Mabaso was instructed to play a typical (by this producers often seemed to mean repetitive) *kwela* number in order to neutralise the effect of the flip side of the disc, "Jazz Kwela", which is innovative and influenced by jazz ornamentation.

Some *kwela* compositions contain no solo sections, but consist purely of alternating repeating motifs. Ordinarily such recordings were made in the formative stages of a pennywhistler's career, since a more advanced level of technical and musical expertise is required to solo over a chord progression than to simply repeat, with small variations, a previously conceptualised melody. For instance, one of Spokes Mashiyane's first recordings, "Ace Blues" [Cassette A:8], consists of an introduction followed by two motifs which are repeated, varied slightly and alternated with each other [see figure 9]. Another of Mashiyane's early recordings, "Meva", is constructed

of three motifs. Other compositions in this form were made by relatively unknown groups.<sup>13</sup>

Fig. 9. The introduction and motifs of "Ace Blues" by Spokes Mashiyane.



Many of Spokes Mashiyane's early saxophone recordings do not contain solos<sup>14</sup> The fact that these recordings were made in the middle of Mashiyane's career suggests that the lack of solo passages was due to technical inability on the saxophone rather than musical ineptitude. This point is well illustrated by "Jika Dinto" [Cassette A:12] in which Mashiyane plays both the pennywhistle and the saxophone. This composition is constructed from two motifs which Mashiyane plays on both instruments, but a solo is played on the pennywhistle only [Appendix II:4].

13 For example: "Amagoduka" and "Sweet Dhladhla" by the Black Hammers; "Penny Penduka" by the Pretoria All Blacks; "Sondelani" by the Shandies Brothers; and "Hit and Beat" by the Sewer Rats.

14 For example: "Mapetla", "Big Joe Special", "Mosupa Tsela", "Phuza Spokes" and "Uthomile" played by Spokes Mashiyane.



### Kwela Structure: The Solo-over-ostinato Form

The other typical *kwela* form (apart from motifs alternating with solo passages) consists of the solo pennywhistler improvising throughout the duration of the composition, backed by a pennywhistle chorus playing one or more *ostinato* riffs. The backing riff (or riffs) is either a motif, as typified by the above examples, or merely the harmonic progression played in a particular rhythm. The solo is improvised and does not contain repeated motifs. The most famous example of this type of *kwela* is "Tom Hark" played by Elias and his Zig-Zag Jive Flutes [Cassette A:11; Appendix II:3] This particular structure was a favourite of the Lerole family pennywhistlers. They recorded more numbers in the solo-over-*ostinato* form than any other group.

Lemmy Mabaso used this form but, in his typically innovative way, made it more interesting by varying the arrangement of the ostinato parts. In "Dingo", performed by Lemmy Special with the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys, the solo pennywhistle stops occasionally, letting the backing riff dominate for a few cycles. In return, the backing chorus stops for ten cycles whilst Mabaso solos alone. The composition begins with a cycle of the backing riff played without the rhythm section or the solo penny whistle.

Fig. 10. "Dingo" by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys

			psol		psol	psol	psol		psol	psol	
chorus	a	a	a'	a	a		a	a	a'	a	a
	1	6	4	3	4	10	1	5	3	6	2

In "Shame Special", Mabaso again presents an enterprising manipulation of the solo-over-*ostinato* form. By changing and increasing the backing throughout the composition, he creates a sense of progression which is most unusual in *kwela*.

Fig. 11. "Shame Special" by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys

	psol	psol+pchor	psol+guitcpt	psol+guitcpt+pchor
	intro	b	b	b
4*	1	9	5	7

guitcpt = guitar counterpoint

### Variations on the Primary Methods of Structuring Kwela

Progression and development, central aspects of western music, are not important in traditional or neo-traditional African styles. In the latter, the technique of variation is far more prevalent and significant. It is possible that Mabaso acquired the idea of gradually adding instruments from American jazz drummer Jimmy Pratt, with whom he made several recordings. One of these recordings, "Lemmy's Jump", for instance, boasts a five-cycle introduction with the addition of a new instrument each cycle.

Fig. 12. "Lemmy's Jump" by Jimmy Pratt with Lemmy Special.

	solo guitar	+drums	+bass	+piano	+pw	pwsol...
2*	1	1	1	1	1	rest...

In addition there exists a small group of *kwela* compositions which structurally combine the two above-mentioned typical forms (the solo-over-*ostinato* form, and motifs alternating with solo passages). In such compositions the pennywhistle chorus plays an *ostinato* figure throughout, whilst the soloist moves between solo passages and motivic sections. Lemmy Special's "47 Zone 4" illustrates this form.

Fig. 13. "47 Zone 4" by Lemmy Special

soloist	a	a	b	a	b'	solo	a	solo	b
chorus	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2*	1	1	2	2	3	13	2	9	3

x = ostinato riff played by the pennywhistle chorus

A more sophisticated structure along similar lines is illustrated by "Blue Riband". In this composition by Reggie Msomi a saxophone chorus alternates between two motifs while a trombone, a tenor and an alto saxophone alternate with solos over these motifs.

Fig. 14. "Blue Riband" by Spokes Mashiyane and Reggie Msomi.

soloists	trombone	solo	alto	tenor	alto	tenor	trombone
sax chorus	a	b	a	b	b	b	a
4*	4	4	2	2	2	1	4

alto = alto saxophone  
tenor = tenor saxophone

This level of complexity is unusual in *kwela* compositions. It reflects the development of the musicians concerned towards "African Jazz". These compositions are strongly influenced by jazz performance practice, both in terms of instrumentation (which includes a trombone and trumpet) and ornamentation.

Occasionally pennywhistle compositions are not based on the repetition of a four chord short form, but rather on a longer progression, often of eight bars. This eight-bar progression functions as a verse which is repeated several times. I have therefore termed this type of structure "verse form". Whether or not compositions in verse form may strictly be classified as *kwela* is a point of contention which may only be resolved through the consideration of each composition individually. The question to be asked is whether the other musical parameters besides form are typical of *kwela*?

"Harare Special" by Spokes Mashiyane is an example of a composition in which verse form is successfully integrated with the *kwela* idiom. The harmonic structure of each verse (with harmonic changes taking place every minim) is:

$$4/4 \quad \left| \begin{array}{cc|cc} \text{I} & \text{I} & \text{IV} & \text{V} \\ \text{I} & \text{I} & \text{IV} & \text{V} \\ \text{I} & \text{I} & \text{IV} & \text{IV} \\ \text{V} & \text{V} & \text{I} & \text{I} \end{array} \right|$$

This eight-bar harmonic cycle, or verse, is played ten times, supporting melodic material which is repeated and varied in exactly the same way as are motifs in *kwela* compositions based on a two- or four-bar harmonic cycle: melody "a" constitutes the primary "tune" of the song, and "b" is a more arpeggiated version of "a".

Fig. 15. Structure of "Harare Special" by Spokes Mashiyane.

melodic material	a	b	a	solo	b	solo
no. repetitions of verse	2	2	1	1	2	2

The instrumentation (solo saxophone, banjo, guitar, bass, and drum-set) is certainly typical, as is the tempo (crotchet = MM 152). The extremely common banjo backing figure, namely the shuffle rhythm illustrated in figure 30, adds further credence to the claim that this is a *kwela* composition.

A pennywhistle composition in verse form which may be defined as *kwela* according to similar criteria is "Banjo Special", composed by Reggie Msomi and played by Spokes Mashiyane and his "All Star Flutes". The form of "Banjo Special" is:

introduction:            4/4     $\left| \begin{array}{cc} \text{I} & \text{I} \\ \text{V} & \text{V} \\ \text{I} & \text{I} \\ \text{V} & \text{V} \end{array} \right| \left| \begin{array}{cc} \text{IV} & \text{IV} \\ \text{I} & \text{I} \\ \text{IV} & \text{IV} \\ \text{I} & \text{I} \end{array} \right|$

Verse:                                     $\left| \begin{array}{cc} \text{I} & \text{I} \\ \text{I} & \text{I} \\ \text{I} & \text{I} \\ \text{V} & \text{V} \end{array} \right| \left| \begin{array}{cc} \text{IV} & \text{V} \\ \text{IV} & \text{V} \\ \text{IV} & \text{IV} \\ \text{V} & \text{I} \end{array} \right|$

(Harmonic changes take place each half-bar.)

Although this composition is in verse form, it follows the structure common to the majority of *kwela* numbers which are based on shorter cycles, that of two motifs and a solo section. In this case the letters "a" and "b" refer not to motifs but to eight-bar melodies. However, the structural principle is analogous.

Fig. 16.            Structure of "Banjo Special" played by Spokes Mashiyane.

melodic material	intro	a	b	a	solo	a	b	a
*	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2

\* number of repetitions of eight-bar cycle, or verse.

"Tsamaea", by Lemmy Special, is a composition in verse form for solo pennywhistle, guitar, bass, and drum-set, which exhibits many attributes atypical of *kwela* [Cassette B:1, Appendix II:5]. The guitar plays an exceptionally important role, providing an introduction, taking a solo and playing prominent counter melodies. The tempo is very slow and relaxed (MM = 100) and the ornamentation, strongly influenced by jazz, adds to the "bluesy" atmosphere.

When vocal parts are added to the normal *kwela* instrumentation, the composition is often conceptualised as a song with the addition of a pennywhistle or saxophone. For example "78 Phatha", performed by Spokes Mashiyane and the Four Lads, is termed "Vocal Jive" on the record label. This composition (for pennywhistle, banjo, bass,

trombone, and male quartet) is a most successful amalgam of two contemporary genres: the close-harmony male vocal style, as typified by the Manhattan Brothers; and *kwela*. The chord progression and backing is common to both styles.

Fig. 17. "78 Phatha", by J. Monaheng.

		-----pwsol-----						----pwsol----				
tromb	riff	a	b	c	a	c	talk	a	a	b	c	a
		V+P	V	V	V	V		P	V	V	V	V
4*		2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2

V = vocal  
tromb = trombone

"Hlalanaye", by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys [Cassette B:2, Appendix II:6] is termed "Flute and Vocal Jive" on the record label. This is appropriate since the pennywhistle and vocal sections are more integrated than they are in recordings in which a *kwela* musician simply improvises over a song. Furthermore, the structure of "Hlalanaye" more closely approximates that of typical *kwela* compositions. The vocal and pennywhistle choruses fulfil equivalent roles, and the principal pennywhistle improvises over both.

Fig. 18. "Hlalanaye", by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys.

	solpw			solpw			solpw			solpw	
pchor	Vocals		pchor	pchor		pchor	Vocals		pchor	pchor	
a	b		a	a		a	b		a	a	
4* 1	4		3	4		1	5		1	4	

There are several instances in which vocal parts have not been credited on the record label at all.<sup>15</sup> This typically occurs when the vocal parts simply provide an *ostinato* backing riff, and the composition may be structurally classified as a variation on the typical *kwela* solo-over-*ostinato* structure. In "Hlaecks", by Lemmy and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys, a female close harmony group repeats the same cycle throughout, alternating between the syllables "ooo" and "eya eya". In "Matsetse", composed by

<sup>15</sup> For example: "Hlaecks", "Phesheya Elandani" and "Mama Ndiyeke" by Lemmy and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys; and "Matsetse" by Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Special.

Frans Pilane, the same riff is exchanged between the pennywhistle chorus and male vocals throughout. Both a pennywhistle and a guitar improvise over this backing riff.

Fig. 19. "Matsetse" by Frans Pilane.

	-----pw solo over-----			guit sol			--psol-----		
	pchor	pchor	vocal	pchor	pchor	pchor	vocal	pchor	
2*	8	1	12	1	6	3	2	8	2

### African and African-American Structural Elements

It was a reasonably common occurrence for pennywhistle numbers to be composed in the twelve-bar blues form. (There are fifteen "pennywhistle blues" in the compositions analysed for this research.) Most of these compositions are for solo pennywhistle and a rhythm group. However, in cases where a pennywhistle chorus is also involved, the chorus generally plays a repetitive backing riff following the blues chordal structure. "Time Square" by Peter "Blues" Makana [Cassette B:3, Appendix II:1] and Willard Cele's "Penny Whistle Blues" [Cassette A:7,] are both examples of compositions for pennywhistle in this form. Such recordings are, as a rule, stylistically very close to their American models. "Ben's Hawk" by Ben Nkosi, however, retains a connection with more typical *kwela* structures through the utilisation of a solo passage and two repeated melodic areas (in this instance these melodic areas twelve bars long).

Fig. 20. "Ben's Hawk" by Ben Nkosi.

melodic material	a	b	solo	a	b
*	12x2	12x2	12x2	12x2	12x2

\* = number of repetitions of the twelve-bar cycle.

Occasionally, *kwela* musicians made pennywhistle recordings completely within the jazz idiom. For example, a cover version of Duke Ellington's "Rockin in Rhythm" was recorded by Lemmy Special, Jimmy Pratt, and Miriam Makeba. Such recordings were generally made in collaboration with visiting American jazz men and cannot be stylistically classified as *kwela*.

One of the primary structural elements which locates *kwela* within the African and African-American musical traditions is the style's incorporation of the call-and-response principle. Merriam defines this antiphonal principle as "alternate singing by soloist and chorus" and asserts that it provides the basic foundation of much of African song. Elaborating further he says that "the melodic line sung by the chorus identifies the song, while the leader's melody is for the most part improvised, and that the chorus line remains basically unchanged throughout a song while the solo line changes each time it is sung."<sup>16</sup>

Elements of call-and-response exist in all African-American and neo-traditional African music. Storm Roberts has remarked on the use of this principle in the Count Basie type big-band music, where an ensemble riff was frequently answered by a couple of bars of solo. Furthermore, he suggests that the backing riff, common in jazz, fulfils the function of the "response" whereas the solo, which is improvised over this riff, represents the "call".<sup>17</sup> By the same token, the most common structures of *kwela* music are basically structured on the call-and-response principle. In compositions which consist of motifs and solo sections, the solos represent the "call" and the motivic sections the "response". Whilst in compositions in the solo-over-*ostinato* mould, the "response" function is fulfilled by the *ostinato* backing riff.

Besides forming a primary element in the basic structure of *kwela*, the call-and-response technique is often clearly apparent between a solo instrument and a chorus. In "Shelela" by Lemmy Special, for example, the "a" motif is internally antiphonal (that is, a "call" from the solo saxophone is "answered" by the pennywhistle chorus.) The "b" motif consists of a saxophone improvisation over an *ostinato* figure played by the pennywhistle chorus.

Fig. 21. The antiphonal nature of the "a" motive in "Shelela" by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Bright Boys.

16 Alan Merriam, "African Music," p. 67.

17 John Storm Roberts, *Black Music of Two Worlds*, pp. 210-211.

In "Jump to Tap", by Spokes and his Ragtime Boys, the "c" motif consists of a "call" by the pennywhistle and a "response" by the saxophone chorus. The "a" motif of the same number is alternated between the solo pennywhistle and the saxophone chorus and, although both parts are playing exactly the same motif, the aural effect is that of a call and response.

Fig. 22. Instrumentation of the "a" motive of "Jump to Tap" by Spokes and his Ragtime Boys.

	a	a	a	a
	pwsol	sachor	pwsol	sachor
2*	1	1	1	1
	call	response	call	response

Occasionally, antiphonal elements are apparent within the melodic structure rather than the instrumentation. Ben Nkosi in his composition "Nuya Ngwani" plays each motif twice but gives the second one a different ending. This creates the effect of a question and answer within one melodic line.

Fig. 23. "Nuya Ngwani" by Ben Nkosi.

	intro	a	a'	a	a'	b	b'	b	b'	a	a'	b	b'	b	b'	solo
2*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4
		a'	=	"a"	with	a	different	ending								
		b'	=	"b"	with	a	different	ending								

In "Lona Na Lona", by Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five, the "b" motif is a call which illicit the response of motif "c". This forms an eight bar melodic unit which is repeated. The repetition of an eight-bar melodic unit in a composition based on a four-bar harmonic cycle is anomalous in *kwela* and perhaps, in this instance, demonstrates the strength of the urge felt by *kwela* musicians to respond to a call.

Fig. 24. "Lona Na Lona" by T. Ramadi.

	a	b+c	a	b+c	solo	b+c	a
#	4x4	8x2	4x4	8x2	4x9	8x2	4x3
	# = no. of bars						



From the above it is possible to draw some general conclusions about the structural nature of *kwela* compositions. They are usually based on a short harmonic progression of the primary chords which is repeated throughout. Secondly, there are two fundamental methods of organising melodic material over this harmonic cycle: either a series of motifs are repeated and alternated with solo passages; or a solo is improvised over an *ostinato* backing riff. There are also many variants of these basic structures within the *kwela* repertoire.

### Kwela Harmony: An Analysis

The repetitive short form which provides the structural base of *kwela* is always founded on the primary chords (I IV V). No specific progression may be upheld as harmonically definitive of *kwela*, although groups of chord progressions are typical of the style. Principally there are three chord progressions, although the cyclical nature of *kwela* produces a situation in which the short form may essentially start at any point. Figure 25 illustrates the way in which each basic chord progression spawns at least one other when the cycle starts on a different chord.

Fig. 25. The three groups of *kwela* progressions.

(a)	I	I	IV	V			
		I	IV	V	I		
			IV	V	I	I	
(b)	I	IV	V	V			
		IV	V	V	I		
(c)	I	IV	I	V			
		IV	I	V	I		

In my analysis I assume the first chord of a progression to be that which coincides with the beginning of the melodic motifs played by the soloist or backing chorus. As may be seen from figure 25, motifs never start on the dominant, nor do they start on the tonic at a point in the progression where the next chord is the dominant. Thus the three basic groups yield seven progressions.

Evidence from the *kwela* compositions analysed for this study suggests, nonetheless, that some progressions are more popular than others. Those most frequent progressions are I I IV V and I IV V I, the former being named as the most prevalent *kwela* progression by two informants.<sup>18</sup> This, and the fact that group (a) contains three chord progressions whilst groups (b) and (c) contain two, probably explains why the majority of *kwela* compositions belong to group (a). In the compositions analysed, over half of the compositions were based on progressions from group (a), whereas groups (b) and (c) represented less than a quarter each.

All three groups of progressions are represented in the transcriptions and cassette examples of *kwela* compositions illustrating other points in this chapter. "Tom Hark", by Elias and his Zig-Zag Jive Flutes [Cassette A:11, Appendix II:3], and Albert Ralulimi's "G-String Kwela" [Cassette B:4, Appendix II:7], illustrate the use of the harmonic progression I IV V I. "O.K. Radio" by Gladys Setai and Spokes Mashiyane [Cassette B:5] uses IV V V I from the (b) group of harmonic progressions. The transcriptions representing group (c) also illustrate how varying harmonic progressions are obtained from the same basic cycle when the melodic motifs have different starting points. For instance "Hlalanaye", by Lemmy and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys [Cassette B:2, Appendix II:6], uses the progression I IV I V, whereas IV I V I is used by Jake Lerole in "Laughing Kwela" [Cassette B:6, Appendix II:8].

As a rule chord changes occur on the beat, every two or four beats. (For the sake of continuity all compositions analysed are assumed to have four beats, or crotchets, per bar.) Thus some compositions are based on harmonic cycles of two bars and others of four. Very occasionally, a harmonic change takes place on a weak beat of the bar. In "Mangalisa Blues" by Jerry Penny Flute, for example, a harmonic change takes place on the fourth crotchet of each bar:

4/4 | I I I IV | I I I V |

This case is, however, quite exceptional and atypical of *kwela* compositions.

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18 Elias Lerole. Author's interview, 16.2.90; and Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 26.7.85.



between *marabi*, *kwela* and *mbaqanga*. Ntemi Piliso uses progressions common in *kwela* when discussing *marabi* and explains that the order in which the chords appear is not of particular importance, provided that they are the primary chords:

... *marabi* can be I IV V V or I IV V I ... it doesn't disqualify it from the *marabi* beat. ... there's no difference actually ... it's just a change, it's just a difference of the, that particular melody based on *marabi*. It's still *marabi* but the melody demands that the V must, must be two Vs. It's not a complete change like I III IV V. I III IV V changes the thing.<sup>21</sup>

Jake Lerole confirms that the same progressions were used in *marabi* and *kwela*; he cites two *marabi* songs, "Selina Dumedisa Mmago" and "Serantabole", as following the chord progression I IV V I.<sup>22</sup> Both Lerole and Piliso agree that *tsaba-tsaba* differs from *marabi* and *kwela* rhythmically but not in terms of harmonic structure.

Lerole claims that "a *kwela*" may be built on any chord sequence, even a blues progression; to him *kwela* is "the melody and the way of strumming."<sup>23</sup> Although results from the analysis of a large number of *kwela* compositions do not endorse this statement, it does indicate the definitive importance of melody in *kwela*.

### The Melodic Characteristics of Kwela: An Analysis

The short repetitive melodic motifs are certainly the most memorable components of any *kwela* composition. They are the basis upon which everything else is built. Even solo passages tend to be an exploration of the motifs rather than of the harmonic progression. *Kwela* motifs fulfil a similar function to the "head" in a jazz standard. In terms of copyright, the composer is understood to be the person who created the motifs. Everything else, including the solos and backing, is added by other members of the band who lay no claim to partial composition. The following remarks by Peter Macontela exemplify this attitude: "Once you listen to one song it's not necessary to listen to ten of them. It depends on the skill of the leader who is playing, he changes the song but the guys behind don't change."<sup>24</sup>

21 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 26.7.85.

22 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

23 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

24 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

The most important global observation to be made about *kwela* melodic motifs is that they are very often closely modelled on the chord tones of the harmonic progression. In very basic *kwela* compositions the motifs consist almost exclusively of chord tones. The two melodic motives of Spokes Mashiyane's "Jika Dinto" [Appendix II:4], for instance, contain only three non-chord tones between them. Figure 27 illustrates the harmonic progression of "Jika Dinto" followed by its two motifs.

Fig. 27 The chordal character of the motives in "Jika Dinto" by Spokes Mashiyane.

Chord progression

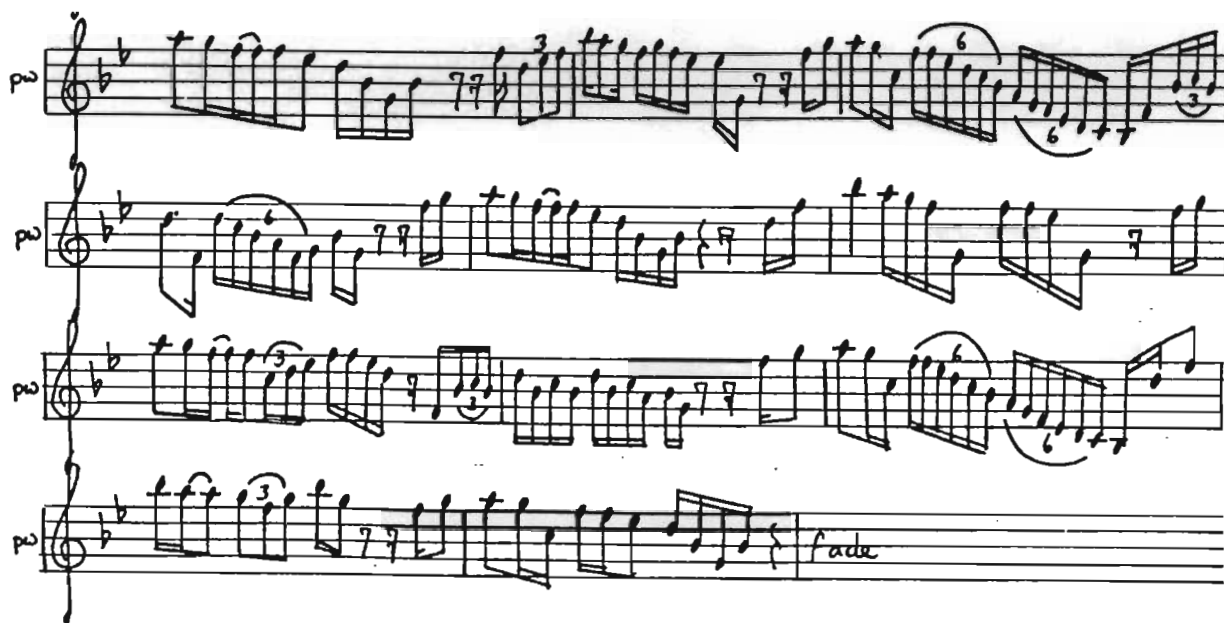
\* = non-chord tones.

Thus, arpeggiated figures are the dominant feature of *kwela* melodies. "Laughing Kwela" by Jake Lerole [Appendix II:8], for instance, is comprised almost entirely of variations on the tonic major, and dominant seventh arpeggios.

Fig. 28. Arpeggiated variations in "Laughing Kwela" by Jake Lerole.

The limitations and possibilities inherent in the pennywhistle as an instrument had a strong formative influence on the melodic structure of *kwela*. Scaler passages, for example, are particularly common, probably because they are very easy to play on an instrument designed to play in one key only. The utilisation of scale passages in *kwela* is illustrated in figure 29 with an extract from "G-String Kwela" by Albert Ralulimi [Cassette B:1, Appendix II:7] The melodic characteristics related to pennywhistle technique (for instance: chromaticism, ornamentation, articulation, and typical improvisational techniques) are discussed later in this chapter.<sup>25</sup>

Fig. 29. Scale passages in "G-String Kwela" by Albert Ralulimi.



Kirby attributes the transition of urban vocal styles away from traditional pentatonic scales towards heptatonicism, to the widespread use of the pennywhistle. It is possible that the popularity of the pennywhistle made the major scale more familiar to many people; however the diminishing occurrence of pentatonic traditional songs in urban areas is more likely to have been a result of the influence of jazz and other African-American musical styles heard on records, the radio and played by local bands. Kirby

25 See Chapter III, pp. 110-118.

also asserts that the "fact that this inexpensive instrument is built in perfect tune, enables the youths to use the major scale in correct intonation, and this is influencing their vocal practices to a remarkable extent."<sup>26</sup>

I cannot endorse this assertion. After playing on several original Hohner and Generation penny whistles, I do not agree that they were "built in perfect tune". Secondly, *kwela* musicians evidently did not feel constrained into playing "in perfect tune" with the major scale that their instruments were designed to produce. On the contrary, using variation in breath control and particular finger techniques, musicians "bent" notes, shaping the intonation to suit their expressive needs.

### Rhythm in Kwela: An Analysis

Rhythm is frequently identified by informants as a primary factor differentiating *kwela* from other South African black urban musical styles. The basic rhythm in *kwela* is provided by the guitar rather than the drum-set, an instrument not present in early *kwela* street bands.<sup>27</sup> The percussion line in recordings largely functions to offset or reinforce the guitar line.

The most important rhythmic difference between *kwela* and *marabi* or *mbaqanga*, is that the former is "swung" whereas the latter two styles are based on a driving straight beat. The *kwela* rhythm has been described as a "lilting shuffle";<sup>28</sup> although jazz commentators universally agree that the nuances of swing cannot be successfully notated, figure 30 attempts a reasonable approximation. This rhythm comprises the most common guitar, banjo and drum-set figure in *kwela*.

Fig. 30. The shuffle rhythm of *kwela*.<sup>29</sup>



A distinguishing aspect of the Count Basie-type swing, from which *kwela* drew much inspiration, is that equal weight is given to all four beats of the bar.<sup>30</sup> In *kwela*, as in swing, the walking-bass technique ensures that each beat is marked. In a large percentage of *kwela* compositions this bass line is reinforced by the drum-set which plays on the beat, four beats in a bar. This relationship between the bass and the drum-set is illustrated in "Hlalanaye", by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys, [Appendix II:6]. The prevalence of this style of drumming is second only to the shuffle rhythm [see figure 30] in *kwela* recordings.

The third drum-set line prevalent in *kwela* recordings is the strong accentuation of the back-beats (that is, the second and fourth crotchets in each bar). This type of accentuation is typical of rock 'n' roll and much of jazz. Accents on the second and fourth beats of the bar are clearly audible in "O.K. Radio", performed by Gladys Setai and Spokes Mashiyane [Cassette B:5].

Two or more of the above rhythmic patterns frequently occur simultaneously in a recording. For instance, in Jake Lerole's "Blues Ngaphanzi" the bass marks the crotchet, the banjo plays the swing rhythm and the drum-set accentuates the back-beats. It is also very common for the drum-set to switch between rhythmic patterns in a recording. In "Dumazile" by the Mashiyane & Msomi Double Five, for instance, the drum-set starts playing on the crotchet and ends accentuating the back-beats.

Apart from the common ones described above, various other rhythms occur in drum-set lines. Compositions strongly influenced by jazz often contain the rhythm illustrated in figure 31, which is played on the ride cymbal with brushes. This rhythmic pattern is used in Peter Makana's "Time Square" [Cassette B:3, Appendix II:10], and "Back to the Shelters" by the Solven Whistlers [Cassette B:7].

Fig. 31. Typical jazz drum-set figure.



29 Barry Kernfeld (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, Vol. II, p. 448.

30 Barry Kernfeld (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, Vol. I, pp. 86-87.



Rhythmic influences from the jazz idiom are evident in many *kwela* compositions: for instance, "Sanny Boy Special" by the Benoni Flute Quintet contains blues-type 'breaks'. Another jazz influence is the drum-set 'kick', or 'fill', which frequently marks the end of a four bar cycle or a verse. A composition which incorporates this technique in a particularly jazz-like way, is the twelve-bar boogie "Times Square" by Peter Makana [Cassette B:3, Appendix II:10].

Occasionally pennywhistle compositions based on Latin-American rhythms were recorded. Spokes Mashiyane's "Jealous Down" and "Goli Kwela" by Kippie Moeketsi, contain the Latin-influenced drum-set riff illustrated in figure 32. The rhythm of Mashiyane's "Mambo Spokes" is provided by a full Latin-American percussion section, and a record review reports that "Elizabethville", by Bopape, M. Nkosi and B. Nkosi (Columbia YE 308), is based on the Calypso rhythm.<sup>31</sup>

Fig. 32. The rhythmic pattern played by the drum set in "Goli Kwela" by Kippie Moeketsi and "Sanny Boy Special" by the Benoni Flute Quintet.



Although rhythm in *kwela* is strongly influenced by jazz, the rhythmic components of some compositions do derive more directly from African musical sources. There are, for instance, compositions in which there is a tendency to play the quavers straight rather than swung. This occurs in the drum-set line of "Mahlalela" and "Nika Nika" by Spokes Mashiyane and His Big Five. Significantly, many of the compositions played by this group reflect the transformation of *kwela* into the *mbaqanga* of the sixties, and the change from a swung to a straight beat is one of the primary differences between these two styles. Mashiyane's "Big Five Twist" is undoubtedly a *mbaqanga* composition in terms of other stylistic criteria, and the drum-set line consists of clearly defined straight quavers.

The tension between the rhythmic characteristics of *kwela*'s roots (swing-jazz and "traditional" African music) is evident in Ben Nkosi's "Two-One Special" [Cassette B:8]. The basic beat of the guitar line is subdivided equally into two whilst the other instrumental lines (particularly those of the pennywhistles) are swung. The result is a subtle two-against-three cross-rhythm between the instruments.<sup>32</sup>

Fig. 33. Rhythmic nuance in "Two-One Special" by Ben Nkosi.



Straight quavers correspond to the elementary pulse which forms the rhythmic basis of traditional African music. The influence of the latter is especially clear in compositions in which the quavers between the beats are emphasised. In Jerry Penny Flute's "Mangalisa Blues" the drum-set plays equal quavers but accents the second of every pair. The interlocking (or hocket) technique, central to much "traditional" African music, is clearly evident in compositions which include shouts or whistles on the quavers between beats. Some examples are: the shouts in Peter Macontela's "Little Bob"; the whistles in "Habo Phati" by Spokes Mashiyane and his All Stars; and the whistles in "Amagoduka" by the Black Hammers.

Not discounting these important elements of influence from "traditional" African music, the rhythmic base of *kwela* is the solid four-four beat and swing "feel" of the Count Basie-type big-band. Several theories have been forwarded in an effort to explain the relative lack of African rhythmic influence in *kwela*. Kubik suggests that the scarcity of appropriate trees to construct drums resulted in a dearth of drumming in Southern African traditional music. The consequential lack in the development of complex rhythms meant that there was little in "traditional" music to challenge the

32 Cross rhythm does occur in *kwela*, particularly two-against-three, but it customarily appears in the pennywhistle parts as such rhythmic complexity is unusual in *kwela* drum-set lines. See Chapter III, p. 116.

colonising jazz beat.<sup>33</sup> Rycroft surmises that "loose syncopation comes easily to people whose folk-song background is one in which natural word-rhythms colour the phrasing."<sup>34</sup>

Storm Roberts offers a different perspective asserting that jazz became popular in South Africa because certain of its basic characteristics are evident in "traditional" South African music. He suggests, for instance, that the rhythmically complex solos and riffs, which are pitted against the solid four-four beat of the rhythm section in swing bands, parallels the general trend of "traditional" South African music which "tends toward a pattern of complex sung rhythms set off against a steady beat." Storm Roberts also surmises that the swing beat in *kwela* owes "its existence to the fact that many traditional rhythms also had a pattern of firm beats with light, lifting beats in between."<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Kubik points out, using Swazi bow playing as an example, that the basic swing pulse exists in traditional South African music.<sup>36</sup>

Clearly the essence of swing may be traced back to the African roots of jazz and the swing feel is neither solely African nor American.<sup>37</sup> It is entirely possible that elements of swing in traditional music made the rhythm more accessible, although young boys growing up in the townships were more exposed to the music of American swing, through records and live performances by African big-bands, than to traditional music. It is therefore more likely that American swing was more influential in the formation of *kwela*'s rhythm than "traditional" African music.

Tempo is frequently referred to as one of the crucial elements which invoke the *kwela* "feel". According to Ntemi Piliso, "with *kwela* it's almost always fast"<sup>38</sup>; and says Jake Lerole, "up-tempo, bouncy - that was *kwela*."<sup>39</sup> The single most common speed of *kwela* compositions is MM = 138 per beat, or crotchet. The slowest compositions analysed are the Benoni Flute Quintet's "The Third Street" and "Tropik Blues", at

33 Gerhard Kubik, "Afrikanische Elemente im Jazz," p. 1.

34 David Rycroft, "The New Town Music of South Africa," p. 55.

35 John Storm Roberts, *Black Music of Two Worlds*, p. 257.

36 Gerhard Kubik, "Afrikanische Elemente im Jazz," p. 94.

37 Universally this rhythm is the practical result of certain instrumental techniques: any movement which entails a strong downward movement followed by a weaker upward one easily results in the shuffle rhythm. For example, the guitar strum of figure 30, and the proverbial tin can filled with stones which provided the rhythm at *marabi* sessions.

38 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 2.3.85 and 3.3.85.

39 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

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MM = 92. The fastest recording, "Phesheya" by Spokes Mashiyane and his All Star Flutes is MM = 224. However, the great majority of *kwela* compositions range in tempo from MM = 132 to MM = 152.

### **The Instrumentation of Kwela Compositions**

The structural, harmonic, melodic and rhythmic criteria discussed above are extremely important components of *kwela* music. The decisive paradigm in the definition of *kwela* is, however, instrumentation. A composition may contain all the most typical elements indicated above, but without the sound of a pennywhistle, or a solo saxophone, a composition is generally not called *kwela*. Take, for example, "Zulu Boy Kwela" performed by Toko Tomo & The Bachelors. This composition is based on one of the most common *kwela* chord progressions: I I IV V. The backing rhythm and instrumentation is typical of *kwela* and, while it is structurally more symmetrical than most *kwela* compositions, it is based on three motifs which are repeated and varied. In spite of all these factors, and notwithstanding the composition's title, a pennywhistle or solo saxophone is not included and therefore this composition unlikely to have been recognised as *kwela* by musicians or by the general public.

There are various combinations of instruments which constitute the front-line in a *kwela* ensemble. The earliest line-up was simply a solo pennywhistle accompanied by either a guitar, or a typical *kwela* backing group (which consisted of a guitar, a string-bass and a drum set). Although the use of a solo pennywhistle was characteristic of the early days of *kwela*, it remained popular as the style developed. All the major stars made solo recordings without the normal chorus of backing pennywhistles. Some of these recordings, for instance Jake Lerole's "Laughing Kwela" [Cassette B:6, Appendix II:8], are straightforward, typical examples of *kwela*. Others, such as "Jazz Kwela" by Ben Nkosi, and "Tsamaea" by Lemmy Mabaso [Cassette B:1, Appendix II:5], are more exploratory and tend towards the jazz idiom.

The most stereotypical *kwela* line-up is certainly a solo pennywhistle backed by a pennywhistle chorus. "Tom Hark" [Cassette A:11, Appendix II:3], which topped the British Hit Parade in 1956 and catalysed the "*kwela* boom" in South Africa, is one of the most famous examples of such instrumentation. Peter Macontela provides some

insight into the hierarchical relationship between a soloist and his backing pennywhistlers in the following description of his band in action:

The three, or four, or six guys stand around me in an arc form, then they just play in parts. They are not actually playing a song, they are backing (sings) in harmony. Then I start building a repetition of what I do. Then I must be above them and do all that, they just go ba ba ba (sings). I'm going to let them know that I am stopping abruptly then they all "*bvoir*" [demonstration of the sound] they stop, and it's another song again.<sup>40</sup>

Very occasionally recordings were made of two solo pennywhistles with a rhythm section. Early in his career Spokes Mashiyane made two recordings, "Mamlambo" and "Daisy's Blues", in which another solo pennywhistler plays a counter-melody. This second part is miked down to such an extent that, at times, it is inaudible. Two recordings by the Buthelezi Flutes, "Sondela Mntwana" and "Twatwa", also include two solo pennywhistles.

The occurrence of a *kwela* recording in which two pennywhistles are, musically speaking, equally important is so contrary to the normal hierarchy of *kwela* bands that the possibility of external influences must be considered. Evidence suggests that "Manyatela" and "Copper Avenue" [Cassette B:9], played by Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Special, were not spontaneous creations of the musicians concerned, but were rather made "on request" from the record company. Gallo had just accomplished a coup by obtaining Spokes Mashiyane from Trutone. Both of the major *kwela* stars were now safely installed in Gallo's stable and it made good commercial sense to advertise this fact as widely as possible. Thus the two stars were asked to record together providing opportunities for such statements as the following one which forms the introduction to "Manyatela":

Ladies and Gentlemen, for the first time in the history of South Africa we have the two *kwela* kings: On my right hand I have King of Kings, Lemmy Special (signature tune and badly dubbed cheers). On my left hand I have King of *Kwela*, Spokes Mashiyane (signature tune and more badly dubbed cheers).

The introduction to "Copper Avenue" also refers to the two "kings" of *kwela*. Although a pennywhistle duet was not a typical *kwela* form, Mabaso and Mashiyane managed to

adapt quite successfully to the new arrangement. There seems not to have been any professional animosity between the two "kings" for, in a recent interview, Lemmy Mabaso spoke warmly of his musical and personal relationship with Spokes Mashiyane.<sup>41</sup>

In 1958, Spokes made his first saxophone recording, "Big Joe Special". From this point forward, the line-up of musicians in *kwela* recordings included saxophonists as soloists and members of backing choruses. With the exception of two compositions by Christopher Songxaka, all the analysed recordings for solo saxophone and rhythm section were made by Spokes Mashiyane. The vast majority of these compositions are exactly as they would have been had Mashiyane played them on the pennywhistle, most of them consisting of two motifs with solo sections. "Jika Dinto" by Spokes Mashiyane is an excellent example of the transition from pennywhistle to saxophone as both instruments are played in the same composition [Cassette A:12, Appendix II:4].

Fig. 34. The structure of "Jika Dinto" by Spokes Mashiyane.

SS sax + rhythm-----	pw + rhythm-----
a a b a b a b a b mod	a b a b sol b a b sol b a
1 2 3 2 2 3 3 3 2 1	2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2 2 2
<p>* = the number of repetitions of the two bar cycle          SS = solo sax          mod = modulation</p>	

The same motifs are played on each instrument, the only difference being that the pennywhistle section contains solos whereas the saxophone section does not. As suggested earlier,<sup>42</sup> a possible reason for this could be that Mashiyane had not completely mastered his saxophone technique at the time of this recording. Lack of saxophone technique would also explain another completely anomalous aspect of this recording, that of the modulation which takes place between the saxophone and pennywhistle sections. The pennywhistle section has to be in the key in which the instrument is built, in this case Bb. It is distinctly possible that Mashiyane chose to play the saxophone portion in the key of F because this is the key which results when the same pennywhistle fingerings are transferred to an alto saxophone.

41 Lemmy Mabaso. Author's interview, 19.2.90.

42 See Chapter III, p. 66.

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The transition from pennywhistle to saxophone is also illustrated in "Baile Batho", and its flip side "Ilali Mothoana", played by Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Special. The record labels do not indicate who is playing which instrument, but the pennywhistle solos in "Baile Batho" are typical of Lemmy Special's style and the saxophone solo in "Ilali Mothoana" sounds more like Mashiyane.<sup>43</sup> Problems of hierarchy and musical structure which result from having two stars in one recording, are dealt with resourcefully. The two compositions were recorded during the same session which provided each musician with an opportunity to take a solo whilst the other played an accompanying riff. In "Ilali Mothoana" motifs "a" and "b" are played in close harmony, and in the same rhythm by the saxophone and pennywhistle. The motifs in "Baile Batho" are exchanged between the instruments and equivalence is maintained to such an extent that the pennywhistle starts first in the beginning and the saxophone starts first after the solo. In neither composition could one instrument be said to dominate during the non-solo sections. Any possible dispute about billing or royalties is preempted by the attribution both of compositions to a third party, H. Mathaba, who was presumably the producer.

A further stage in the transition from pennywhistle to saxophone is illustrated in the following recordings by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Bright Boys in which a solo saxophone is accompanied by a pennywhistle chorus: "Godini", "Shelela", and "Deep Heat". Besides the antiphonal "a" motif in "Shelela" (in which a saxophone "question" is "answered" by the pennywhistle chorus), little is done to highlight timbral differences between the instruments. These compositions are as they would have been had the solo instrument been a pennywhistle. Very occasionally, as in "Xmas Night Jive" by Allen Kwela and "Jump to Tap" played by Spokes and his Ragtime Boys, the situation is reversed and a solo pennywhistle is backed by a saxophone chorus.

The most notable *kwela* recordings in which both the solo and backing parts are played on the saxophone, are those made by Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five. In terms of musical elements other than instrumentation, these compositions are, for the most part, identical to Mashiyane's pennywhistle *kwelas*.

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43 See discussion of Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Special's solo styles, Chapter III pp. 117-118.

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All compositions which combine saxophones and pennywhistles, especially those in which a solo pennywhistle is pitted against a saxophone chorus, would be unsuccessful without the use of mixing equipment. This is because a saxophone is so much louder than a pennywhistle. The pennywhistle *kwela* compositions discussed so far are essentially the same as those performed on the streets. The introduction of the saxophone meant, however, that such *kwelas* could not be successfully performed on the streets or in the townships if studio-type equipment, such as amplifiers and mixers, were not available. Therefore musicians who did not have the financial means to provide this equipment had to start relying on record companies for the organisation of live shows as well as recordings. With the introduction of the saxophone, *kwela* still sounded like *kwela*, but the relationship between musicians and their market was beginning to change. The foundation of sixties *mbaqanga* was being set in place.

### The Kwela Rhythm Section

The move from the streets into the studios had a significant impact on the instrumentation of *kwela* rhythm sections. Willard Cele used to play completely alone on the streets of Alexandra. The guitar, bass and drum-set evident in his recordings "Penny Whistle Blues" and "Penny Whistle Boogie" were added in the recording studio.<sup>44</sup> However, the *marabi*-based pennywhistle street music later dubbed *kwela*, which proliferated in the early fifties, was commonly played on pennywhistles and guitars. Spokes Mashiyane consolidated his style playing with a guitarist, Frans Pilane, long before his first recording in 1955. Furthermore, the two musicians continued to play together on Sundays at Johannesburg's Zoo Lake for years after they started recording.

Comments in reviews of early pennywhistle recordings suggest that the reviewers were accustomed to hearing such music without a rhythm section. A review in Drum says of "Penny Whistle Boogie" by Willard Cele, "The accompaniment may be a little heavy, but on the whole, they do very well behind Willard."<sup>45</sup> A 1954 review of

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44 Ntemi Piliso. Author's interview, 4.9.90; and Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.  
45 Drum, March, 1951.



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"Boarding House Blues" and "Down South" by the Orlando Shanty Maxims comments, "with some heavy studio accompaniment the Orlando Maxims handle well."<sup>47</sup>

There are a few recordings which document how *kwela*, as it was played on the streets, may have sounded. "Ngiyabonga" and "Kupela" by Jerry Penny Flute, for example, are played on pennywhistle and guitar with no other backing. These recordings were produced by Charles Berman, and it is to his credit that Jerry Penny Flute's compositions were not tampered with, or "improved" by the addition of backing, as happened in virtually all other studios. Another surviving glimpse of "grassroots" *kwela* is a section of the film Dirty Linen, which was filmed on location in Mamelodi township.<sup>48</sup> There is a scene in which people dance to *kwela* music. Momentarily the camera settles on the musicians and shows three young boys, two playing pennywhistles and one playing a guitar.

Dan Hill, musical director of Gallo in the fifties, admits that pennywhistles and guitars are the only instruments needed to play *kwela* music. He explains, however, that it was generally felt that recordings required the "fullness of sound" provided by the addition of bass and drums. Pennywhistle and guitar "sounds thin on a recording. You have to have a bass because it gives it body, and you have to have drums for the beat really."<sup>49</sup>

In the mid-fifties a fluid relationship existed between *kwela* recordings and street *kwela*. As the style's popularity swept the country, a bevy of bands took to the streets. These bands imitated *kwela* compositions as they existed on hit records, that is with a bass and drum-set. In this way a modification instigated by the record companies was absorbed into, and accepted as an integral part of, *kwela* as a "grassroots" musical style. Even some musicians who had busked for years with pennywhistles and guitars, and who were already successful recording artists, introduced the tea-box bass into their street performances. The Leroles were a case in point. Elias Lerole remembers playing in the streets with two guitars and four pennywhistles.<sup>50</sup> Later, Jake Lerole reports, their street band consisted of two or three guitars, four to seven

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47 Bantu World, August 8, 1954.

48 Dirty Linen, directed by Werner Gruenbauer.

49 Dan Hill. Author's interview, 5.9.90.

50 Elias Lerole. Author's interview, 16.2.90.

pennywhistlers and a tea-box bass.<sup>51</sup> Other groups, did not wish to go to so much trouble, as Barney Rachabane explains: "No we just use guitar and flutes that's all. It was a problem to have that box you know - how you going to get into the bus?"<sup>52</sup>

By the late fifties, a rhythm section consisting of at least two guitars, a bass and drums had become the norm in live *kwela* performances as well as in recordings. Jake Lerole's memories of this line-up in *stokvel* performances is corroborated by a newspaper report of a *patha-patha* session in 1959: "Swaying couples were dancing to hot pennywhistle music given out by Aaron "Jake" Lerole and his Black Mambazo band. ... Several guitarists and a double bass player thumped out the beat."<sup>53</sup>

The bass players and drummers provided by recording studios to back black groups were often white. In a description of the Manhattan Brothers' first recording Nathan Mdledle writes, "We found to our surprise that we would be accompanied by a European band of three musicians."<sup>54</sup> This happened in most studios but at Gallo, under the musical directorship of Dan Hill, it was particularly common. Hill himself played saxophone or clarinet on the recordings of many black artists, as he explains: "in those days we just used to fill in what ever we could."<sup>55</sup> Some of the white session musicians Hill remembers employing are: guitarists Stan Murray and Johnny Fourie; bass players Bob Hill and Mannie Parks; and drummers Andy Johnson and Jean Latimor. Hill explains that these musicians provided backing "for white acts as well, so they were on call most of the time to do sessions. We did recordings every day you know whether it was black or white." Hill's justification for using white musicians was ostensibly a commercial one: "... we often used white drummers because they were actually better at the time ... We used them because it was more efficient, a black guy didn't have the experience usually to play neatly and that." He was also of the opinion that as the bass and drums were not part of street *kwela*, it was of little importance who played them in the studio: as "street music it was often just pennywhistles and guitar ... the bass and drums were added but you didn't really need it ... the *kwela* rhythm itself was mainly the guitars doing this shuffle type of beat and the drummer just played you know."<sup>56</sup>

51 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

52 Barney Rachabane. Author's interview, 16.9.89.

53 World, August 29, 1959.

54 Bantu World, May 29, 1954.

55 For example: "See You Later" and "Little Lemmy" composed by Hill and played by Little Lemmy & Big Joe.

56 Dan Hill. Author's interview, 5.9.90.

Despite such attitudes, white backing musicians were not the norm in *kwela* recordings. There were many black session musicians available, and groups often had their own drum and bass players. Jake Lerole remembers recording at Troubadour with a drummer named Peace, and later with drummer Peter Makitla.<sup>57</sup> Chooks Tshukudu, Danny Boy, and General Zala are remembered by Peter Macontela as session musicians who played bass.<sup>58</sup> Backing musicians (of any race) were rarely acknowledged on record labels in the fifties, and besides the memories of living musicians there are few clues as to who played in which recordings. A 1958 review of the LP Penny Whistle Kwela does, however, provide some idea of who was around since it credits the members of the rhythm section: "The rhythm throughout all numbers on this LP is provided by Chooks Tshukudu, bass; Louis Molubi, drums; and Jakes Mabaso, guitar."<sup>59</sup> Another newspaper report mentions Jeff Hooja as the bass player in a performance by Lerole's Black Mambazo.<sup>60</sup>

### The Drum-Set

Elias Lerole says that his street band included a drummer playing on a side drum.<sup>61</sup> This, however, does not appear to have been the norm in other *kwela* groups. When Peter Macontela played *kwela* at *stokvels*, his band consisted of three pennywhistles and a guitar. The rhythm was provided by any one of the *stokvel*'s clientele who could play the spoons. "The drums they used to take the dessert spoons and put them upside down, I don't know how, and put a finger in between there and then he just [makes clicks]: Two spoons back to back."<sup>62</sup>

According to Elias Lerole, drummers and bass players who had learnt on homemade instruments had little difficulty in adapting to the commercially produced instruments available in the studios.<sup>63</sup> Dan Hill suggests that this was the case because, he claims, black musicians rarely used the whole drum set: "most of the time they just used the

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57 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

58 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

59 Drum, August 1958.

60 World, January 1, 1958.

61 Elias Lerole. Author's interview, 16.2.90.

62 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

63 Elias Lerole. Author's interview, 16.2.90.

side drum, the snare drum with brushes, and the cymbal going and that was it."<sup>64</sup> On occasion only one drum was used. Barney Rachabane describes the modification of a snare drum to produce the right sound for a *kwela* recording: "You put a cardboard [from a cardboard box] on top of the snare drum and you use brushes. ... there is a certain sound that's wanted. You get a very different sound, a *kwela* or *mbaqanga* sound which you couldn't really imitate."<sup>65</sup> Occasionally modifications were made in the percussion section: in Ben Nkosi's "Jika Maswazi", for instance, a bottle is struck with a wooden stick; and in "Mkhekhelezi", by Spokes Mashiyane & his Big Five, the drumsticks are beaten on the side of the drum.

### The String-Bass

Jake Lerole's group Black Mambazo was allegedly the first to use a tea-box bass regularly in street performances. The Alexandra Bright Boys led by Lemmy Special and several other groups soon included the tea-box bass in their line-up, but the instrument was never adopted by Spokes Mashiyane.<sup>66</sup> The inclusion of a "Joko Tea string bass" made busking a less mobile, and therefore a more risky, operation. Peter Macontela explains: "the problem is if the flying squad comes you must run."<sup>67</sup> Bus drivers were singularly unsympathetic to the needs of young *kwela* bands, as Duzi Magwaza reports: "We used to go and hide that thing because it was a very big thing to keep it in the bus and the drivers used to shout at us. We had to hide it somewhere. Each time we have to play, we come to find it. Sometimes we don't find it."<sup>68</sup> If the bass was lost, stolen or broken by police, it was simply built again.

A tea-box bass is relatively easy to construct. The resonator is a large tea chest made of three-ply wood. The open end is placed on the ground and a small hole drilled in the centre of the opposite face. A large knot is then made on one end of a piece of string which is threaded through this hole. (Sometimes the "string" is made of the inner tube of a tyre.)<sup>69</sup> The other end is tied to the end of a wooden stick, often a broom handle. The free end of the broom handle is placed on one corner of the tea

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64 Dan Hill. Author's interview, 5.9.90.

65 Barney Rachabane. Author's interview, 16.9.89.

66 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

67 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

68 Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

69 *Ibid.*

box so that a triangle is formed between the string, the broom handle and the top of the box. The bass player places his left foot on top of the box to keep it steady. The broom handle is gripped near the top with the left hand, leaving the right hand free to pluck the string. There are two principal methods of plucking. One is similar to the technique of strumming on a guitar as the string is struck with two fingers. In the other method, the thumb and first finger are used in a pinch-pull-release action. Different pitches are produced by tilting the broom handle towards or away from the centre of the box thereby loosening or tightening the string.

The technique of playing a one-stringed tea-box bass is quite unlike that required by a double bass. It is likely, therefore, that the bass lines of *kwelas* played on the streets would have been different to those of *kwela* recordings. Owing to the lack in availability of street recordings of *kwela*, the following comments on *kwela* bass lines refer purely to recorded *kwela*, which employed a double bass.

The function of the bass in *kwela* music is to provide a fundamental harmonic outline of the chord progression and to hold the composition together rhythmically by continuously playing on the crotchet.<sup>70</sup> Occasionally, the bass line moves in minims (as in Spokes Mashiyane's composition "Mosupa Tsela"), or in swung quavers (as in "Nuya Ngwani" by Ben Nkosi), although bass movement on the crotchet is the norm. The "walking bass", so common in *kwela* recordings, is yet another aspect of the American big-band legacy inherited by *kwela* musicians from famous local big-bands. Examples of the walking bass lines in *kwela* compositions are to be found in "Time Square" by Peter Makana [Cassette B:3, Appendix II:1 .], and "Hlalanaye" by Lemmy Special [Cassette B:2, Appendix II:6]. It seems that the walking bass technique was also used in street *kwela*. As Albert Ralulimi remarks, "when our fellows started using tea chests as basses you can feel that they are also following the footsteps of the walking bass style."<sup>71</sup>

Although Monde Futshane agrees that *kwela* bass lines are "a kind of walking bass", he points out that the harmonic progressions of *kwela* and American jazz are

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70 Monde Futshane. Author's interview, 10.6.92  
Futshane is a jazz student at the University of Natal. Most of his knowledge about bass playing in *kwela* was obtained from Jake Lerole during rehearsals for a *kwela* revival concert held at the University of Natal on May 17, 1991.

71 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

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substantially different, affecting the nature of the bass line. Therefore, he claims: "it's similar but it's not the same thing." Futshane also points out another distinctive trait of a *kwela* bass line, the fast upbeat to the basic crotchet at important points in the music: "Bra Jake said you play on the crotchet except for those moments when you kind of kick start it to give it a boost."<sup>72</sup> This technique is also used by *kwela* drummers and guitarists to provide the forward propulsion so intrinsic in music created primarily for dancing.

### The Guitar

The guitar is the only instrument of the *kwela* rhythm section which belonged to the original *kwela* bands of the pre-recording days. It therefore plays a far more significant part than do either the bass or drum-set. In fact, the rhythm produced by the way in which the guitarist strums, is frequently quoted as one of the definitive aspects of *kwela*. Dan Hill asserts: "*kwela* evolved in the townships. It evolved from having a cheap guitar and strumming it a certain way. That became the norm, the rhythm that caught on."<sup>73</sup>

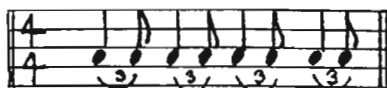
The four-crotchets-per-bar, on-the-beat type of strumming is typical of many early *kwela* recordings. Stylistically, it is a hallmark of Frans Pilane, Spokes Mashiyane's initial guitarist. "Ace Blues" [Cassette A:8] is one of the best examples of the Mashiyane-Pilane duo as it might have sounded one Sunday afternoon at Zoo Lake in 1954. The bass and drums are very soft on the recording, appropriately conceding centre stage to the guitar and pennywhistle. The timbre of Pilane's guitar is quite "tinny", and he uses the most basic strumming technique consisting of downward strokes only. This technique can be heard in several of Mashiyane's early recordings, for example "Kwela Spokes", "Meadowlands Boogie", "Skodi Phola", and "Sponono Ndiye Bhai" [Cassette A:2].

The above strumming technique develops naturally into the definitive *kwela* shuffle-type rhythm. A shorter, softer upward stroke precedes each downward strum which occurs on the beat. It is a spontaneous result of the wrist movement required to produce a downward stroke.

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72 Monde Futshane. Author's interview, 10.6.92.

73 Dan Hill. Author's interview, 5.9.90.

Fig. 35. The shuffle-type *kwela* rhythm.

This method of strumming is clearly audible in "G-String Kwela" composed by Albert Ralulimi [Cassette B:4, Appendix II:7]. Such movement on the part of the rhythm guitar is largely responsible for the "swing feel" that distinguishes *kwela* from sixties *mbaqanga*.

Figure 36 illustrates some variations of the basic shuffle beat commonly played by rhythm guitarists in *kwela*. Such rhythms generally exist in pennywhistle compositions which are influenced by jazz, such as "Back to the Shelters" by the Solven Whistlers.

Fig. 36a. Variation on the swing beat in "See You Later" and "Little Lemmy" by Dan Hill.

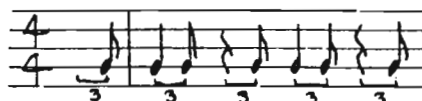


Fig. 36b. Variation on the swing beat in "Year 1962 Blues" by Allen Kwela.



Occasionally, as in the introductions of "Don't Be Mad" and "Girls, What about Jerry?", by Spokes Mashiyane, the rhythm guitar plays triplet quavers. This kind of figure, however, is usually played by a banjo, and in this instance is almost certainly a reference to that instrument.

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As *kwela* developed, guitar parts became more sophisticated and the instrument played an increasingly prominent role. It gradually became the norm for a *kwela* band to include both a rhythm and a lead guitar. The rhythm guitar was frequently replaced by a banjo. In "Skodi Phola" by Mashiyane, the two guitar parts are clearly audible: The rhythm guitar plays on the crotchet beat, in the manner described above; whilst at certain points in the composition the lead guitar plays an *ostinato* figure on the supertonic. Occasionally, for instance in "Mashashane" by David Ramosa, the lead guitar plays one of the pennywhistle motifs. For the greater part of this recording, the most evident guitar line is that of the shuffle rhythm played by the rhythm guitar. During the pennywhistle solos, however, the "tune" is played by the lead guitar. Sometimes *kwela* compositions are started by the lead guitar, either with an improvised introductory passage (as in "Back to the Shelters" by the Solven Whistlers) or simply with a rendition of the first motif (as in "Manyatela" by Spokes Mashiyane).

As the guitar gradually became more important, contrapuntal lines were introduced into the lead part. This was especially the case after electric guitars became popular and is one of the primary indications of the metamorphosis of *kwela* into *mbaqanga*. Lead guitars also started to take solos. These varied in length from four bars in "Matsetse", by Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Special, to twenty four in Mashiyane's "Phenduka Twist". "Tsamaea" by Lemmy Special contains a lead guitar introduction, counterpoint lines, and solos [Cassette B:7, Appendix II:5].

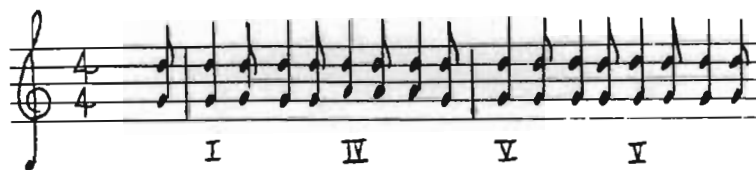
The tendency of the guitar line to become more important is taken to extremes in two compositions, "Fish & Chips Kwela" and "City Kwela" by Jerry Mhlanga. Both recordings are typical of *kwela* in every way except that the instrumentation is bass, drum set, rhythm guitar, and lead guitar. It includes neither a pennywhistle nor a saxophone. The structure of "Fish & Chips Kwela" is three motifs with solo sections, the basic harmonic progression is I IV V V, and the drums play the shuffle rhythm whilst the bass and rhythm guitar play on the crotchet. The part customarily played on the pennywhistle, that of the motifs and solos, is played by the lead guitar. In spite of the fact that these compositions are typical in many other ways, as a result of the absence of a pennywhistle whistle they are unlikely to be widely recognised as *kwela*.

The solo sections of "Fish & Chips Kwela" illustrate the most characteristic element of *kwela* guitar lines, a supertonic *ostinato*. As is generally the case, the rhythm of the *ostinato* figure is swung quavers, and it lasts for at least one cycle, often more. During



his solo Jerry Mhlanga demonstrates a second particularly characteristic element of the *kwela* sound by playing open fifths and fourths [see figure 37]. Voice leading and spacing which results in open fifths and fourths is common in much black Southern African "traditional" and neo-traditional music. This is a particularly African element of *kwela*.

Fig. 37. Open fifths and fourths on the lead guitar in "Fish & Chips Kwela" by Jerry Mhlanga.



A further device commonly incorporated into *kwela* guitar solos is that of the cross-rhythm. The electric guitar in "Woza Woza", played by Spokes Mashiyane and his All Star Flutes, plays a series of triplet crotchets on the dominant, producing the most typical cross-rhythm in *kwela*, two-against-three.

On occasion the lead guitar plays a short motif at the end of each cycle. The function of this motif is the same as the typical drum-set kick, that is to mark the end of one cycle and introduce a new one. Examples of a short guitar motif functioning in this way are to be found in "Back to the Shelters", by the Solven Whistlers, and "Copper Avenue", played by Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Special [Cassette B:9]

The introduction of a lead guitar into *kwela* and the advent of electrification happened almost simultaneously. The electrification of guitars occurred in two stages. In the first, *kwela* guitarists attached a 'pick-up' microphone to their acoustic instruments. This amplified the sound, thus making guitar solos possible, but did not change it. The pennywhistle *kwela* character was not essentially altered. In the late fifties, however, the introduction of the electric guitar heralded the coming of *mbaqanga*. Peter Macontela is of the opinion that rock music did not have much impact on black South African music "but they brought the instruments into usage."<sup>74</sup> Ben Nkosi, for example, won a trophy at a "Township Talent" show in 1958 playing an

74 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90. See also the discussion of the impact of rock 'n' roll, Chapter VI, pp. 227-233.

electric guitar.<sup>75</sup> The use of *glissandi*, a technique associated with electric guitars, became quite common in guitar lines after 1958. *Glissandi* are clearly evident in "Se Hong-Hong" by Spokes Mashiyane, and in "Hit and Beat" by The Sewer Rats. The guitarist in the latter recording slides from the tonic down a semitone and back again over the time span of a minim.

Fig. 38. *Glissandi* in "Hit and Beat" by The Sewer Rats.



According to guitarist Zami Duze, the main difference between guitar technique required by *kwela* and *mbaqanga* is that *mbaqanga* is faster, requiring the guitarist to be "more technically proficient". Furthermore Duze points out that a *mbaqanga* lead guitarist plays an independent melody line throughout containing "fast singing lines" and "special kind of fill-ins", and typically plays "lots of parallel thirds".<sup>76</sup>

In spite of their fundamental importance, *kwela* guitarists have tended to be just as unacknowledged as bass players and drummers. However, because guitarists were generally permanent members of the band rather than itinerant session musicians, they are remembered by pennywhistle players more clearly than other members of the rhythm section. Jake Lerole recalls recording at Troubadour with guitarist Rex Shongwe in 1952, although Peter Khumalo was the main guitarist with the various Lerole family bands during the height of *kwela*'s popularity.<sup>77</sup> Ben Nkosi was a guitarist and bass player, and when he was not recording his own pennywhistle numbers he played as a session musician on other people's recordings.

The changing role of the guitar in *kwela* music is illustrated by the series of guitarists who played with Spokes Mashiyane. Frans Pilane was Mashiyane's first guitarist; they played together before entering the studios and for Mashiyane's first recordings at

75 World, March 8, 1958.

76 Zami Duze, personal communication, 23.11.93.

77 Jake Lerole. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 15.1.86.

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Trutone. Pilane, with his basic rhythm guitar style, was ousted by Jerry Mhlanga when acoustic guitars became amplified. Albert Ralulimi recalls:

Then when guitars started to be electrified he [Pilane] lost touch, so surely we couldn't use him. He didn't have that zeal, because we needed push really ... Jerry had a pick-up on his guitar. Whereby, when Spokes recorded "Kwela Claude", Frans couldn't cope up with the arrangement which had that western touch in it, so they had to bring in Jerry Mhlanga.

The latter recorded with Spokes Mashiyane until Mashiyane left Trutone for Gallo in 1958. Mashiyane and Mhlanga continued to perform together in live shows for years afterwards, even though they were recording with different studios. Jerry Mhlanga was the most acknowledged *kwela* guitarist. Ralulimi points out that at one stage Mashiyane and Mhlanga were given equal publicity: "he became even on the King Kwela album - there is Spokes Mashiyane's and Jerry Mhlanga's photos on that." At Gallo, Spokes recorded most often with Allen Kwela, who went on to become a jazz musician, and Reggie Msomi, a Zulu guitarist who later became known as an *mbaqanga* saxophonist.<sup>78</sup>

### The Banjo

The importance of the rhythm guitar in *kwela* had already been severely eroded through the increasing role played by the lead guitar, when the introduction of the banjo threatened to make rhythm guitars completely redundant. The appeal of the banjo lay in the customary technique of strumming a banjo fairly continuously, thus increasing the volume of the backing section and filling in the gaps. Albert Ralulimi explains: "Let's say the guy [rhythm guitarist] is playing 4/4 type of strumming - it leaves open gaps, but now the banjo fills in."<sup>79</sup>

In 1957, Saul Malahela, a banjo player from White River, joined the Gallo stable. Malahela grew up in the Eastern Transvaal and originally played guitar in a Nelspruit band. However his employer, a farmer in the White River area and a keen *Boereorkes* musician, gave Malahela a banjo which he soon adopted as his primary instrument. In Nelspruit Malahela met Billy Zambi, a saxophonist from Rhodesia, and together they

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78 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

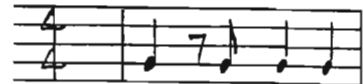
79 *Ibid.*

travelled to Johannesburg to join Gallo. At Gallo Billy Zambi, Saul Malahela, Allen Kwela, and Spokes Mashiyane formed a "brotherhood" and made many recordings together. Banjo quickly became integrated into the *kwela* sound and Malahela was frequently "borrowed" by other studios. Other banjo players who also recorded *kwela* were Marks Mankwane, who was already accomplished on other instruments, and Saul Nkosi.<sup>80</sup>

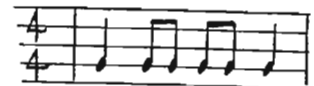
The influence of the Afrikans *Boereorkes* is evident in the banjo style of several *kwela* recordings. Figure 39 illustrates the banjo rhythms of three *kwela* recordings by Spokes Mashiyane which have a strong *vastrap* "feel". All three recordings are extremely fast: In "Caledon River" and "Lona Na Lona" the bass moves on the minim; and the crotchet beat of "Phesheya" is MM 224 [Cassette B:10, Appendix II:2]. The banjo is the only instrument which takes a solo in "Caledon River".

Fig. 39. Banjo rhythms which indicate the influence of Afrikaans *Boereorkes* music.

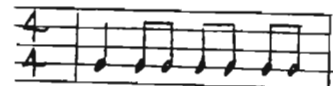
a) "Caledon River" by Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five.



b) "Lona Na Lona" by Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five.



c) "Phesheya" by Spokes Mashiyane and his All Star Flutes.



In many *kwela* recordings the banjo replaces the rhythm guitar only to play exactly what the latter would have played, namely the shuffle rhythm illustrated in figure 35. On occasion, the banjo is the only backing instrument playing the shuffle rhythm, for example "Harare Special" by Spokes Mashiyane. More frequently, however, (as in

Mashiyane's "Jika Dinto" [Cassette A:12, Appendix II:4], and "78 Phatha", by Monaheng) the banjo plays the shuffle rhythm in unison with the drum-set.

The close relationship between the banjo and rhythm guitar lines is further exemplified by two Mashiyane compositions ("Don't be Mad" and "Girls, What about Jerry?") in which the rhythm guitar plays the most characteristic banjo rhythm, triplet quavers. In "Deep Heat", by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Bright Boys, the banjo plays triplet quavers continuously from the "b" motif to the end. This figure does "fill up the gaps", providing the "zest" described by Albert Ralulimi in his explanation of the importance of the banjo in *kwela*. Using "Double Qwela" by Lemmy Special as an example, figure 40 illustrates one of the most typical rhythmic relationships between the banjo and the rest of the rhythm section.

Fig. 40. A typical set of rhythmic relationships between the instruments of a *kwela* rhythm section.



Triplet quavers and the shuffle rhythm are readily compatible. This accounts for the ease with which the banjo player in "Maseru Special", by Spokes Mashiyane and his New Sound Band, alternates triplet quavers with sections of the shuffle rhythm. Figure 41 illustrates two banjo backing riffs which result from the amalgamation of these rhythmic figures.

Fig. 41. An amalgamation of the shuffle rhythm and triplet quavers in backing riffs.



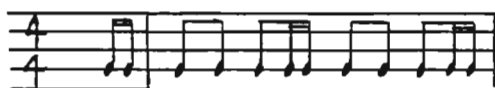
Woza Woza-Spokes Mashiyane  
and his All Star Flutes



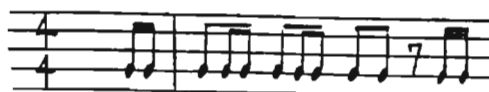
Mama Ndiyeke-Lemmy Special  
and the Alexandra Bright Boys

*Kwela* compositions may be divided into two fundamental rhythmic groups: those which are swung and those which are based on a straight beat. The basic crotchet beat of the former is subdivided into three and the latter into two or four. The swing beat is a legacy of the jazz roots of *kwela*, whereas the straight beat stems from Southern African "traditional" music. *Kwela* compositions belonging to the second group exemplify the general trend away from jazz towards a neo-traditional African style which culminated in sixties *mbaqanga*. Examples of the types of banjo figures found in *kwela* compositions which are not swung are illustrated in figure 42.

Fig. 42. Straight-beat banjo figures.



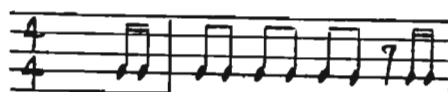
London Special-Lemmy Special



Dingo - Lemmy Special



Godini-Lemmy Special

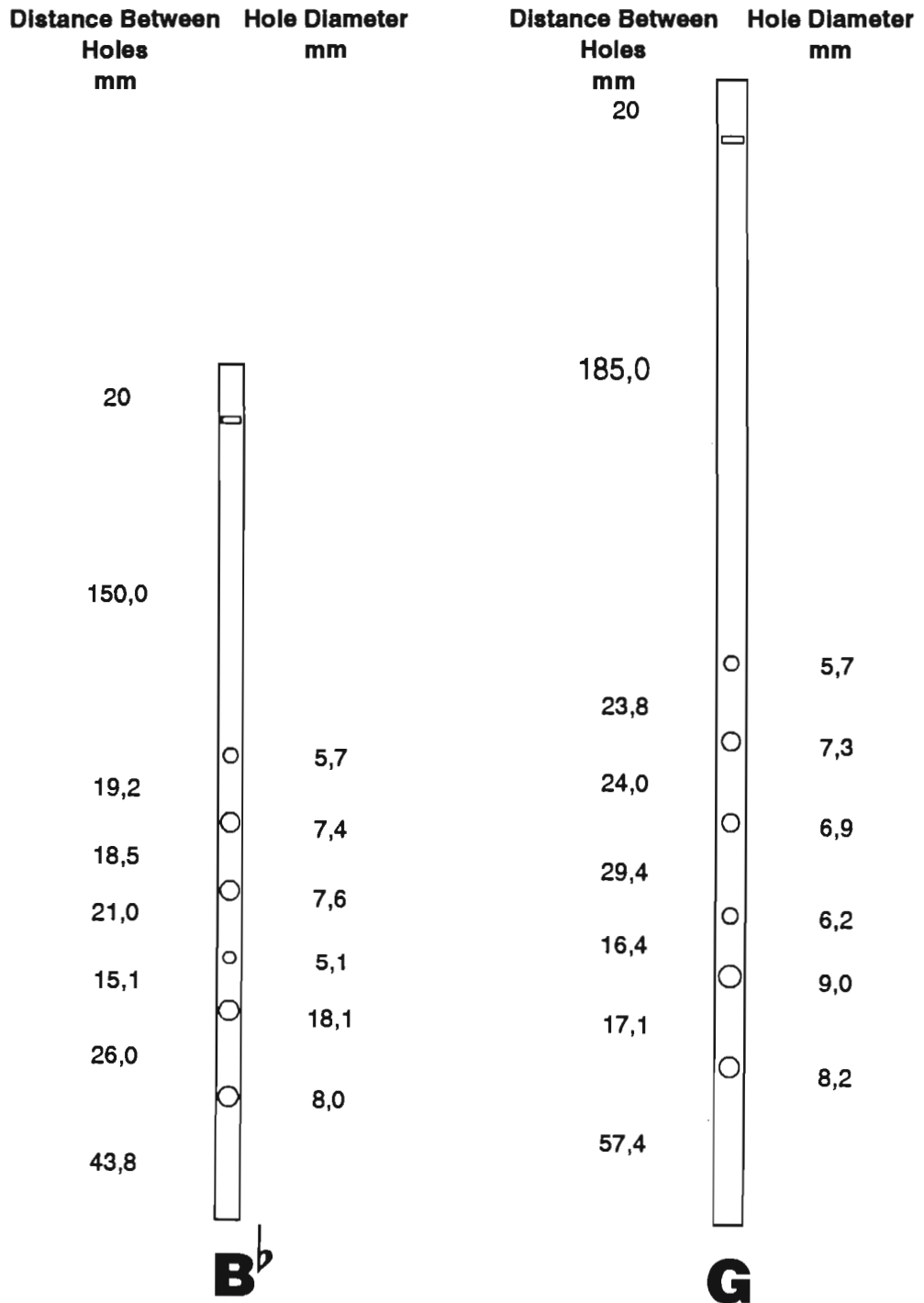


Jazz Kwela-Lemmy Special

### The Pennywhistle

In the fifties, the pennywhistle was made of a cylindrical metal tube moulded at one end into a fipple mouth piece. The most commonly available pennywhistles were those in the keys of "Bb" and "G". These are 36,5cm and the "G" 43 cm long, with bore diameters of 15,5 mm and 16,4 mm respectively. There are six finger holes which are reasonably evenly spaced, the top hole placed approximately in the centre of the instrument. The diameter of each finger hole is slightly different, which controls the tuning of the instrument; the larger the hole, the sharper the note. Figure 43 is a scale diagram of the dimensions of two Hohner pennywhistles.

Fig. 43. The dimensions of Bb and G Hohner pennywhistles.



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The absence of a thumb hole at the back of the pennywhistle means it can only be played conveniently in one major key. The key of a pennywhistle is taken to be that note which is sounded when all the finger holes are covered so that the air stream vibrates along the whole length of the tube. The range of the pennywhistle is two octaves, the second octave being obtained by over blowing.

The pennywhistles available in South Africa in the thirties, forties and early fifties were made of brass.<sup>81</sup> In 1958 the Hohner Company in Trossingen, Germany, started mass-producing nickel-plated pennywhistles for the South African market.<sup>82</sup> British nickel-plated pennywhistles were also sold in South Africa under the trade name "Generation". However, musicians who were accustomed to brass pennywhistles found the nickel instruments inferior. Peter Macontela states: "the Hohner was too tinny, too light. I have never recorded with that." Describing the pennywhistles he preferred, Macontela said: "I have my brass, copper you know when it fades, the genuine ones ... it's silver coated. But as it wears off you could see there's brass coming. But you can hit it and it dents. Those were our pennywhistles." All the Solven Whistlers, including Ben Nkosi, played on these "genuine" instruments because, as Macontela explains, "you have to have the correct sound, you must be uniform. All play same make otherwise they don't tune the same way."<sup>83</sup>

In the early fifties it was fairly difficult to obtain metal pennywhistles. By 1955, however, Indian shops in central Johannesburg were keeping pennywhistles in regular stock. Peter Macontela reports that the best areas for such shops were on Market Street between Troye Street and End Street on the east side of the central business district, and between Rissik Street and Sauer Street on the west end of Market Street. He explains: "Indian shops where you could cut suits and things, that's where we would get our pennywhistles from."<sup>84</sup> In other areas the most likely place to sell pennywhistles was the local bicycle shop. Macontela remembers that the price of a pennywhistle on Market Street was 5s 6d. This was certainly cheaper than the prices offered by music shops in central Johannesburg: In 1956, for instance, H. Polliack and Co. Ltd. placed the following advertisement in Bantu World:<sup>85</sup>

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81 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 11.7.90.

82 Gerhard Kubik, Malawian Music, p. 19.

83 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

84 *Ibid.*

85 World, August 25, 1956.



**UMSA KAZO**

**FLUTES.....** The genuine  
*IMPORTED "Flageolet!"*  
BRASS, NICKLE-PLATED. Obtainable in Keys of

B Flat --- --- **8'6**  
C --- --- **7'6**

The "His Master's  
Voice"

**GRAMOPHONE**  
THAT PLAYS  
LOUD AND  
SOFT!

Price  
£19/19/-  
Battery:  
32/6

SEE  
THEM  
AT YOUR  
MUSIC SHOP

FOR FURTHER  
DETAILS WRITE TO—  
H. Pollack and Co. Ltd.  
124 President St Johannesburg Phone  
22-8161 P.O. Box 3108 Also at Durban,  
Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Bulawayo.

In the early fifties, metal pennywhistles were not easily available in the townships. Macontela explains how children used to make do with various plastic instruments:

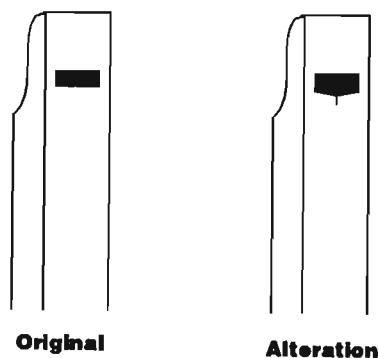
The first plastic flute that came in was shaped like a trumpet. It was this small [10 cm] and it had 3 holes. Then I started with that [in] 1949, 1950. ... [it was] shaped like a trumpet, made of plastic, but it's so little. But you play something, you can build up a song. You used to buy it for a tickey. Then from there '50, '51, '52, came a fish flute, it's broad - made just exactly like a fish. It had a hole underneath like a recorder now. That was a difficult one, broader here at the mouth. ... After that came this straight pennywhistle, with six holes on top which the mouthpiece you could dismantle like a sax. It used to be white and mouthpiece yellow or red or green, it was colourful ... nobody recorded with that ... you can get it from any shop in Soweto ... I got hold of my first flute in 1955 I think, the metal one. ... You sort of graduate from plastic to that."<sup>86</sup>

Spokes Mashiyane and Barney Rachabane are two famous pennywhistlers who are known to have started on plastic instruments.

In order to overcome the difficulties of the lack in availability of pennywhistles, and their prohibitive cost, many young aspirant musicians made their own instruments. In rural areas reeds provided the basic material whereas a bicycle pump, or any other available metal tubing, was used in the towns. Albert Ralulimi describes his early attempts at instrument building: "I remember pinching my uncle's bicycle pump. It was made from steel. I looked for stronger nails to punch holes in it and I was even given a hiding for that. But after they listened how I made use of it, they became excited."<sup>87</sup> The Hohner factory in Germany apparently used a "home-made flute acquired from a South African youngster in Johannesburg" as the prototype for their pennywhistles.<sup>88</sup>

Factory-manufactured pennywhistles always needed to be altered slightly before they could produce the volume and timbre required by *kwela* musicians. Ralulimi describes this operation: "So a pennywhistle has to be tuned as well, it needs something like a pocket knife just to open the mouth piece for it to give you the correct volume."<sup>89</sup> The pocket knife is used to enlarge the air passage in the mouthpiece and to press down the centre of the lip so that it is "V" shaped.

Fig. 44. The alterations made to a pennywhistle.



87 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.  
 88 Gerhard Kubik, *Malawian Music*, p. 19.  
 89 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

It is impossible to play *kwela* on the pennywhistles available commercially today because they have plastic mouthpieces, and plastic cannot be bent or altered in the manner described above. More importantly, it is not possible to play with the typical *kwela* embouchure because the mouthpiece is a different shape. The distance between the fipple opening and the end of the mouthpiece is almost a centimetre longer on the plastic variety. This means that it is extremely uncomfortable to place the mouthpiece in the mouth far enough for the lips to partially cover the fipple opening. Even if one's mouth is big enough to do this without choking, the shape of the fipple opening is such that a very inferior sound is emitted when the opening is partially covered. In a demonstration of the different sounds obtainable from the old and new pennywhistles, Frederick Maphisa explained: "Plastic one I don't like at all - it gives you this tone [plays a very straight, soft, thin note with no vibrato]. It doesn't give you this [plays louder and fuller with vibrato and a buzzy timbre]."<sup>90</sup>

The typical *kwela* embouchure was devised by pennywhistlers to command a louder, richer sound from the instrument. Rachabane explains: "a pennywhistle sounds very rich when you put it that way [sideways], then you get a better tone. If you do it that way [straight] you get a very small sound - thin."<sup>91</sup> By partially covering the fipple opening with the lips it is possible to direct more air through the instrument without over-blowing and mistakenly play an octave above.

To achieve this effect, the mouthpiece is placed in the mouth cushioned on the tongue, the tip of which is directly under the fipple opening. The tongue protrudes beyond the bottom teeth and extends the bottom lip forward. The pennywhistle is rotated 45 degrees to the player's right so that the left edge of the mouthpiece may be gently held between the front top teeth. The top lip is then extended forward in order to cover the fipple opening partially. If the head is tilted slightly to the left the shape of the lips covering the opening is altered, resulting in improved tone quality. The pitch of the instrument is flattened in proportion to the degree in which the fipple opening is covered. This differs between individual musicians, but on average the pitch is lowered by a semitone. Therefore, a composition played on a Bb pennywhistle will usually sound in A major. Occasionally, as in "Phehello" by Spokes Mashiyane, a *glissando* effect is produced by moving the lips forwards and backwards over the

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90 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 11.7.90.

91 Barney Rachabane. Author's interview, 16.9.89.

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fipple opening. This is the only way of producing a *glissando* on the tonic as the fingering requires that all the holes be covered.

Usiyazi, journalist for World, describes how pennywhistlers looked when playing: "... lips mouthing the mouthpiece in a big round O fashion, eyes drooping and the Adam's apple working up and down like an old-fashioned petrol pump."<sup>92</sup> Such an embouchure renders the tongue unavailable for purposes of articulation. Therefore, the only functional method of separating notes is to contract and release the vocal chords as one would in order to say "koo". This accounts for the extraordinary movement of the Adam's apple observed by Usiyazi.

Ben Nkosi, who was technically and musically one of the most creative pennywhistlers, frequently used a flutter-tonguing effect in his compositions. As a result of the embouchure described above, this flutter-tonguing would technically have to have been a throat growl rather than a tongue roll. Some of Nkosi's compositions which demonstrate this technique are "Nuya Ngwani", "Ben's Special" and "Lova". Although flutter-tonguing was a technique which distinguished Ben Nkosi's style, it was occasionally used by other pennywhistlers. Spokes Mashiyane, for instance, flutter-tongues on a held dominant note in "Girls, What about Jerry?".

A fast throat vibrato is occasionally used as a method of ornamentation in *kwela*. Spokes Mashiyane uses this device more often than do other pennywhistlers, for example "Sondela Ntombi" or "Bennies 2nd Avenue Special", in which he uses a fast vibrato on the final tonic note.

Another method of sound manipulation available to pennywhistlers or saxophonists is control of the air stream by the diaphragm. A sudden contraction of the diaphragm muscle dispels a greater quantity of breath faster, which results in an accent. Spokes Mashiyane uses this technique in "Big Joe Special": A punch from the diaphragm occurs at the ends of some notes in the "c" motif played by Mashiyane on the saxophone. At the end of the "b" motif in "Maseru Special", by Spokes Mashiyane and his New Sound Band, a diaphragm contraction on the part of the saxophonists results in a "da-up" effect very reminiscent of American big-band style. In "Ben's Special", Ben Nkosi uses a slower contraction of the diaphragm to simulate on the pennywhistle the crescendos typical of big-band horn and brass lines.

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92 World, October 11, 1958.

Various fingering techniques are used by pennywhistlers to achieve certain effects. The instrument is designed to play two octaves of a major scale; notes foreign to that scale are not possible without using cross-fingering or partially covering the tone holes. Figure 45 illustrates the fingerings required to produce a scale of Bb major on a Bb pennywhistle.

Fig. 45. The fingering of Bb major on a Bb pennywhistle.

The figure shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The scale notes are Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, A, Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, A, Bb. Below the staff is a fingering chart with six rows of finger holes, each represented by a circle. A solid black circle indicates a fingered hole, and an open circle indicates an open hole.

B <sup>b</sup>	C	D	E <sup>b</sup>	F	G	A	B <sup>b</sup>	C	D	E <sup>b</sup>	F	G	A	B <sup>b</sup>
●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	○
●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The absence of a thumb hole at the back of a pennywhistle limits the scope of cross-fingering: only the minor seventh is successfully sounded using this method. Figure 46 illustrates fingerings which may be used to play the minor seventh which, on a Bb instrument, would be Ab. The first fingering in Figure 46 is easier and more in tune than the other two options. Utilisation of this cross-fingering results in the ability to play in the subdominant major key with relative ease, that is for instance, the key of Eb major on a Bb pennywhistle.

Fig. 46. Methods of sounding the minor seventh.

○	●	○
●	○	●
●	○	○
○	○	●
○	○	●
○	○	○

Commentators frequently express amazement that pennywhistlers are able to play chromatic notes on their "limited" instruments. Although some fundamental errors are made in the following newspaper report of the show Township Jazz, the journalist colourfully expresses the sense of awe instilled by complicated pennywhistler fingering techniques: "The tin whistle has only eight notes, but these boys, out of their own ingenuity can produce 13 [sic] ... They played sharps and flats and sixths and sevenths and all those things found in a musical dictionary ... all out of the simple eight-holed [sic] whistle."<sup>93</sup>

Actually, most *kwela* compositions are strongly based in the major mode, and the occurrence of notes foreign to the key of the instrument is very rare. Chromatic notes customarily occur in compositions influenced by jazz or other forms of American popular music such as rock 'n' roll. There are two reasons why, in these instances, the method of playing chromatic notes is generally one of partially closing the tone holes rather than through the use of cross-fingering. Firstly, there are few successful cross-fingerings available on a six holed instrument. Secondly, the method of partially covering holes allows far greater scope as to the actual pitch of the non-scaler notes. Providing that other variables like breath speed remain constant, the pitch of a cross-fingered tone is specific, whereas a partially covered tone hole will produce a pitch anywhere between the note of that hole and the note of the hole above. Thus the performer achieves flexibility and a greater expressive range. This is particularly important in jazz-influenced *kwela* compositions, as the flattened third and seventh of the blues scale are rarely sung (or played) according to the well-tempered scale. Peter Makana's "Time Square" provides a good illustration of the use of blue notes in pennywhistle recordings. [Cassette B:3, Appendix II:1]

Fig. 47. An extract from "Time Square" by Peter Makana.



Using the finger technique which produces chromatic notes by partially covering the tone holes, *glissando* and "bent" notes may also be achieved. Ben Nkosi uses both methods of ornamentation frequently; good examples may be heard in "Nuya Ngwani", "Lova", and "Ben's Hawk", [see figure 56, and Cassette B:11]. In "Tsamaea", as figure 48 illustrates, Lemmy Special makes extensive use of chromatic notes, bent notes, and *glissandi*. [See also: Cassette B:7, Appendix II:5]

Fig. 48. An extract from "Tsamaea" by Lemmy Special.



None of the above ornamental effects can be successfully achieved if the fingers are rounded with the fingertips covering the holes. For ease and flexibility the fingers must be placed flat on the pennywhistle with the crease under the first knuckle, or the pad between the first and second knuckles, over the tone holes. The fingers are bent backwards to achieve a rising *glissando* or higher chromatic note and vice versa to play lower.

Jake Lerole explains how the ease with which notes may be "bent" on the pennywhistle attracted him to the instrument:

When I was playing this piano I didn't like it because it didn't give me the sound exactly what I wanted, because you can't twist a piano note and do it exactly what you want it to do, like a wind instrument. ... It can be in between, it can be semi-tone but sometime you find it's not a semi-tone in fact it's a tone of it's own.<sup>94</sup>

Another category of ornamentation used by pennywhistlers comprises various types of trills. Trills in *kwela* typically occur on the tonic and dominant, although there are exceptions (for instance "Davytown Special" by the Dube Satellites, which contains trills on the mediant). The most common method of trilling is a fast fluctuation between a note and the note above or below. On occasion, *kwela* musicians experiment beyond this basic trill, for instance the minor third trills in "Steak & Porridge" by Themba Madondo. Another example is a figure based on the trill principle (generally occurring between the tonic and the leading-note) which is measured rather than being played as fast as possible. In "Tamatie Sauce Swing" by the African Dizzy Fingers for instance, this trill-type figure occurs in the rhythm of swung quavers.

The single most striking attribute of pennywhistle or saxophone solos in *kwela* music is the occurrence of dominant and tonic *ostinato* patterns or pedal notes. These are always at least the length of one harmonic cycle, often longer, and mostly occur in the high range where they are most audible. Pedal notes and *ostinato* figures occur more often on the dominant than on the tonic, although the latter is still very common, and in some compositions (for example Lemmy Special's "Phansi", [see figure 50]) both appear. Figures on the dominant also occur in guitar solos, (for instance "Se Hong-Hong" by Mashiyane and Monaheng, and "Phansi" by Lemmy Special [see figure 50e]) although *ostinatos* on the super-tonic are far more prevalent on this instrument.

Occasionally *kwela* solos are comprised solely of pedal notes or *ostinato* figures: for example, in "Zoo Lake Jive", Spokes Mashiyane's saxophone solo is merely a held note on the dominant and there is no other significant improvisation. Generally, however, pedal notes occur as part of an improvisation, for example the tonic pedal in



"Phansi", by Lemmy Special [see figure 50c], and the dominant pedals in "Midnight Party Jive", "Spokes Jump" and "Bennies 2nd Avenue Special" by Spokes Mashiyane.

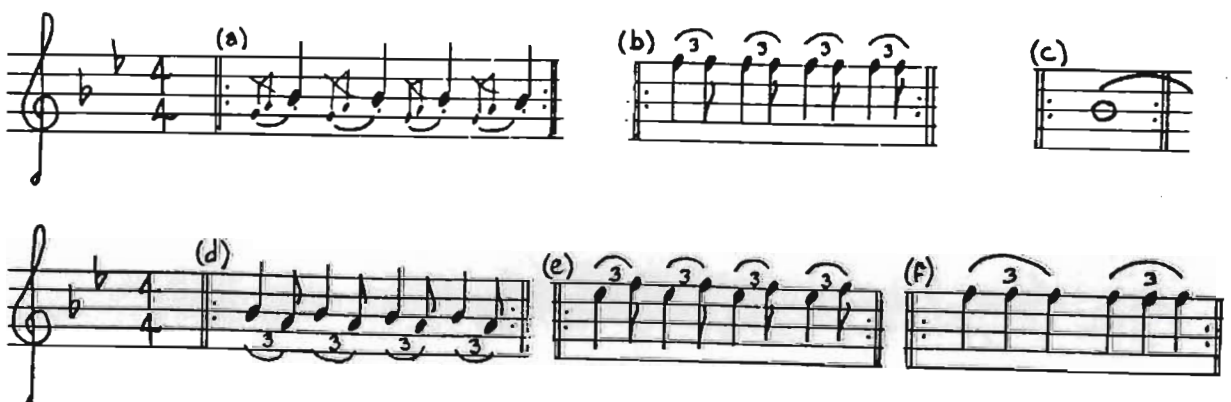
*Kwela* musicians utilised various techniques to vary the pedal notes in solos. The trill, one of the most basic methods of variation, is used for this purpose on the tonic in "Mashashane" by Aron, Pieter and David, and on the dominant in Mashiyane's "Vela Bahleke". Oscillation between octaves, another method of imbuing a pedal note with interest, is used on the dominant by Kippie Moeketsi in "Goli Kwela", and by The Black Hammers in "Sweet Dhladhla". Mashiyane's solos in "Sheshisa! (Be Alive!)", illustrate both the exploration of octaves rhythmically [see figure 49a] and measured trilling [see figure 49b].

Fig. 49. Octave oscillation and measured trilling in "Sheshisa! (Be Alive!)" by Spokes Mashiyane.



Rhythmic patterns on a single note embody an intermediary phase between pedal notes and *ostinato* figures. The two most common rhythmic patterns are both utilised by Lemmy Special in "Phansi": The shuffle rhythm is played on the dominant during the first pennywhistle solo [see figure 50b]; while the second pennywhistle solo contains crotchet triplets [see figure 50f].

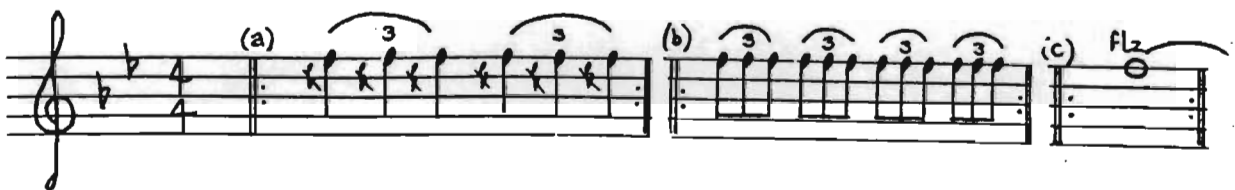
Fig. 50. Variations of pedal notes in "Phansi" by Lemmy Mabaso.



"Phansi" further illustrates the use of the note below the tonic or dominant in *ostinato* patterns. The first pennywhistle solo contains *glissandi* up to crotchets on the tonic [see figure 50a]; and later, the tonic and leading-note alternate in the shuffle rhythm [see figure 50d]. The latter also occurs during the guitar solo between the dominant and subdominant [see figure 50e].

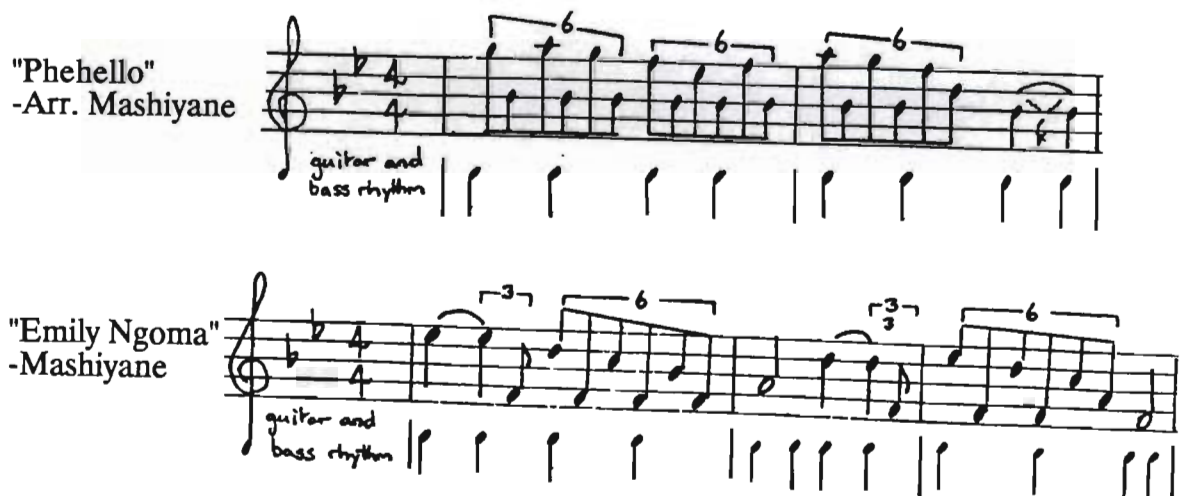
In "Girls, What about Jerry?", Mashiyane demonstrates three additional ways of varying a pedal note: fast grace-notes leading from the subdominant onto crotchet triplets on the dominant [see figure 51a]; triplet quavers [see figure 51b]; and flutter-tonguing on a pedal note [see figure 51c].

Fig. 51. Variations of pedal notes in "Girls, What about Jerry?" by Spokes Mashiyane.



In "Phehello" and "Emily Ngoma", Mashiyane plays figures which combine the two-against-three cross-rhythm with a tonic *ostinato* in the former, and a dominant *ostinato* in the latter.

Fig. 52. Tonic *ostinato* combined with two-against-three cross-rhythm.



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It is within the solo passages, not surprisingly, that the individuality of each musician is expressed. Certain features are characteristic of particular soloists and tend to distinguish their personal styles. Variations on a dominant or tonic pedal, for example, are universal in *kwela* solos but are particularly prevalent in performances by Spokes Mashiyane. Generally Mashiyane's solos tend to be quite motivic, and rarely stray from the primary chords of the harmonic progression.

In contrast, Lemmy Special's solo style is particularly flamboyant, containing many quick notes and fast scalar passages. (This aspect of Mabaso's style is well illustrated in "Hlalanaye" [Cassette B:2, Appendix II:6].) He also plays many more chromatic notes than Mashiyane. Both "Hlalanaye" and "Tsamaea" [Appendix II:6 and II:5] illustrate Mabaso's extensive use of the flattened thirds and sevenths characteristic of the blues scale. In "Tsamaea", Mabaso features chromatic movement between the mediant and dominant, and in "Hlalanaye" he frequently passes chromatically between the subdominant and dominant.

Ben Nkosi's style is easily identifiable through his use of jazz scales, chromaticism and his manipulation of various decorative techniques such as *glissando* and flutter-tonguing. A remarkable innovation contributed by Ben Nkosi to pennywhistle technique is the method of playing two pennywhistles at once. He was not the only pennywhistler to master this technique, but he was the first to make recordings using it. Jake Lerole also taught himself this technique in 1961,<sup>95</sup> while Bernett Rahlao won a competition in 1962 playing two pennywhistles at once.<sup>96</sup>

A newspaper article eulogising Ben Nkosi's prowess at the new technique observes that "not only does he play the two but he produces two different tones, like a duet."<sup>97</sup> This effect is achieved by using pennywhistles in different keys, namely in Bb and G. The instruments are placed in the mouth so that there is approximately a 45 degree angle between them. The mouthpieces are only inserted a short way as it is not possible to use the *kwela* embouchure when playing two pennywhistles. Each

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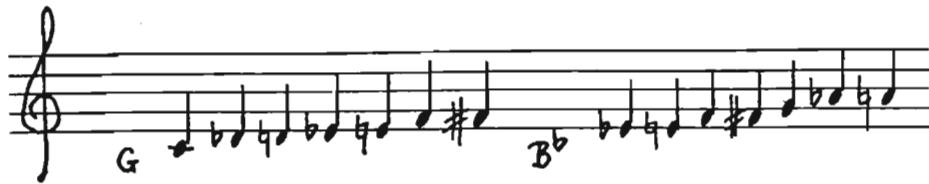
95 Jack Lerole, video made for the SABC TV3 program Minq by Joubert & Van Dyke Productions; and Jake Lerole. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 15.1.86. There are two video recordings of Jake Lerole demonstrating this technique: the aforementioned SABC program and the video of the "Flutes For Africa" concert held at the University of Natal on May 17 1991.

96 World, November 13, 1962.

97 World, November 19, 1960.

hand controls the first three holes of each instrument with the result that chromatic scale from the subdominant to the leading-note on each instrument is available.

Fig. 53. The range of notes available when Bb and G pennywhistles are played simultaneously.



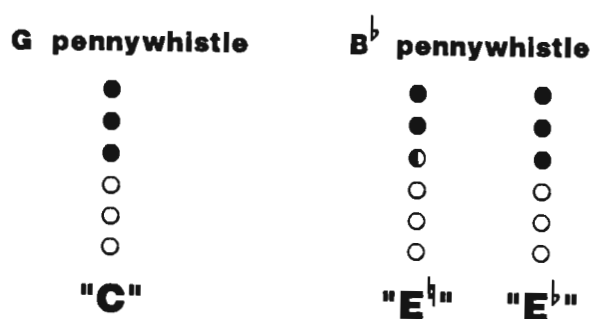
The parts played on each instrument move simultaneously, and generally the fingering is identical. This results in chordal movement at intervals of a minor third or major sixth depending on octave displacement. Most double-flute compositions played on Bb and G instruments are based in C major although there is always a great deal of chromaticism. Ben Nkosi's "Two-One Special" illustrates the intervallic relationship between the two pennywhistles which provides the characteristic haunting chromaticism of this technique.

Fig. 54. The pennywhistle intervallic relationship in "Two-One Special" by Ben Nkosi.



Exceptions to the practice of identical fingering on each instrument occur only when harmonically necessary. Non-identical fingering occurs most often in relation to the third hole of the B $\flat$  pennywhistle, which when fully covered produces E $\flat$ . As C major does not possess a minor third it is frequently necessary to cover half of this third hole in order to produce an E natural.

Fig. 55. Alteration in identical fingering necessitated by the harmony.



The transcription of "Ben's Hawk" by Ben Nkosi, [see figure 56] illustrates this fingering alteration in context. The chords marked (x) are played with a half-hole fingering on the B $\flat$  pennywhistle to produce the major-third degree in C major. The chord marked (y) illustrates a situation in which E $\flat$  is acceptable because it forms the seventh of IV7 in C major.

Fig. 56. "Ben's Hawk" by Ben Nkosi.

The musical score for "Ben's Hawk" is presented in two staves. The top staff is in G major (one sharp) and the bottom staff is in B $\flat$  major (two flats). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes various chords and melodic lines. Chords marked with (x) indicate the use of half-hole fingering on the B $\flat$  pennywhistle to produce the major-third degree in C major. The chord marked (y) illustrates a situation where E $\flat$  is acceptable because it forms the seventh of IV7 in C major.

The soloist in a *kwela* band customarily contributes the distinctive qualities of each composition, whereas aspects of the pennywhistle or saxophone chorus parts, such as the backing riffs and the ways in which compositions begin and end, provide a sense of continuity and homogeneity within the style.

The most basic backing riff played by pennywhistle or saxophone choruses consists merely of the harmonic progression in which the start of each chord is anticipated. This type of backing is played by a saxophone chorus in "Zulu Khayalami" by the Mashiyane & Msomi Double Five, and by a pennywhistle chorus in "Tsaba Tsaba" by Jake Lerole.

Fig. 57. The pennywhistle backing of "Tsaba Tsaba" by Jake Lerole.<sup>98</sup>



Chordal harmonic outline by the backing chorus is varied through the used of rhythms. The most routine of these is the shuffle rhythm, a variation of which is played by the pennywhistle chorus of The Dark Creatures in "Iskortana". A more complex series of rhythms is used in "Deep Heat" by Lemmy Special.

Fig. 58. The pennywhistle backing riff in "Deep Heat" by Lemmy Special.



98 The following backing riffs from compositions by Jake Lerole were taught to the author by Lerole, in preparation for the "Flutes for Africa" concert held at the University of Natal on May 17, 1991.

The parts of most backing riffs are not usually constrained to one pitch per chord, but move between chord tones generating short melodies. Each line of the chorus parts in "Tom Hark", for example, is able to stand on its own as a melody [Appendix II:3]. Backing riffs are often varied slightly as happens in "One Way" by Jake Lerole.

Fig. 59. The pennywhistle backing riff of "One Way" by Jake Lerole.

The musical score for three pennywhistles (1st, 2nd, 3rd) is shown in 4/4 time. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The score is divided into four measures, with the third measure labeled "Variation". The 1st pennywhistle part starts with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The 2nd and 3rd pennywhistle parts start with a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The 1st pennywhistle part has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The 2nd pennywhistle part has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The 3rd pennywhistle part has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The score is divided into four measures, with the third measure labeled "Variation".

The backing parts of compositions for double-flutes are played on both Bb and G pennywhistles, and chromatic fingering is required in order to produce the desired harmonies. Figure 60 illustrates the ways in which the backing parts of Jake Lerole's "Thata Slow" are voiced and altered, resulting in a composition in C major.

Fig. 60. The pennywhistle backing of Jake Lerole's "Thata Slow" for double flutes.

The musical score for three pennywhistles (G, G, Bb) is shown in 4/4 time. The key signature is C major. The score is divided into four measures, with the key signature changing to C major. The chords are labeled C major I, IV, V7, and I. The G pennywhistle part has a treble clef and a key signature of C major. The G pennywhistle part has a treble clef and a key signature of C major. The Bb pennywhistle part has a bass clef and a key signature of C major. The score is divided into four measures, with the key signature changing to C major. The chords are labeled C major I, IV, V7, and I.

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*Kwela* compositions typically begin with one cycle of the first motif, played by the solo pennywhistle or saxophone alone, followed by repetitions of the first motif played by the whole *kwela* band. "Laughing Kwela" by Jake Lerole [Cassette B:6, Appendix II:8], illustrates this style of introduction. The hierarchical structure of *kwela* bands explains why it is normally the solo pennywhistler or saxophonist who sets the tempo and character of a composition, although occasionally the first motif is played by other members of the band, such as the guitar in "Mapetla" by Reggie Msomi, or by the pennywhistle chorus in "Dingo" by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys.

The problem of how to end a cyclical composition is solved in many *kwela* recordings by a "fade out" executed at the discretion of the recording engineer or producer. This kind of ending, as illustrated in "Phesheya", by Spokes Mashiyane and his All Star Flutes [Cassette B:11, Appendix II:2] and "O.K. Radio" by Gladys Setai and Spokes Mashiyane [Cassette B:5], is one of the ways in which the record companies interfered with *kwela* to suit their own purposes. The 78-rpm shellac discs lasted just under three minutes, and recordings were simply faded out at the end of that time.

*Kwela* compositions which finish before the point of "fade out", however, inevitably use one of three categories of endings. The first consists of an extended tonic chord, for example "Dingo" by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys. The second category comprises compositions which end with a descending major arpeggio on the tonic, for instance "Hlalanaye" by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys [Cassette B:2, Appendix II:6]. The third and largest category of endings contains various forms of the major scale from the dominant up to the tonic. Figure 61 illustrates the most common rhythmic variants of this ending and lists compositions which utilise each variant.



Spokes Mashiyane used this type of ending more often than any other *kwela* musician and further variants found in his compositions are illustrated in figure 62.

Fig. 62. Dominant to tonic scalar endings in compositions by Spokes Mashiyane.



"Vela Bahleke"

"Phakamisa Spokes"

"Meva"



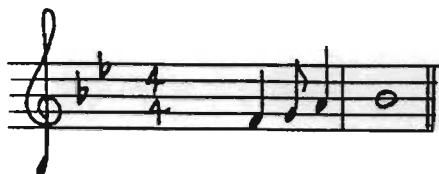
"Bal la Ekhaya"



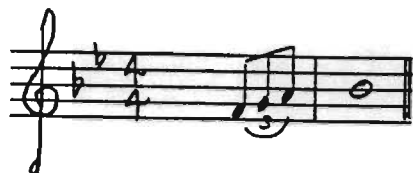
"Mapetla"

A feature which imparts a poignant touch to this dominantly exuberant musical style, is the addition of the submediant to the final tonic chord. Figure 63 illustrates several endings of this nature.

Fig. 61. Variations of the dominant to tonic scalar ending.



"Mashashane" - Aron, Pieter, David  
 "Kill Me Quick" - Sewer Rats  
 "Lehalima" - Mashiyane  
 "Kwa Mandele" - Mashiyane  
 "Se Hong-Hong" - Mashiyane  
 "Moreneng Matsieng" - Mashiyane  
 "London Special" - Mabaso  
 "Mama Ndiyeke" - Mabaso  
 "Double Quela" - Mabaso



"New Jive Blues" - Mashiyane  
 "Uthomile" - Mashiyane  
 "Banana Ba Rustenburg" - Mashiyane  
 "Phuza Spokes" - Mashiyane  
 "Sondela Ntombi" - Mashiyane  
 "Six Down" - Mabaso  
 "47 Zone 4" - Mabaso



"Hae Phokeng" - Mashiyane  
 "Lona Na Lona" - Mashiyane  
 "Sondela Ntombi" - Mashiyane  
 "Maraba Helele" - Sewer Rats  
 "Shelela" - Mabaso  
 "Deep Heat" - Mabaso  
 "Phansi" - Mabaso



"Moreletsane" - Mashiyane  
 "Kwela Kong" - Mashiyane  
 "Blues Ngaphanzi" - Lerole



"Xmas Jump" - Mashiyane  
 "Tobetsa" - African Dizzy Fingers

Fig. 63. Inclusion of the submediant in the final tonic chord.



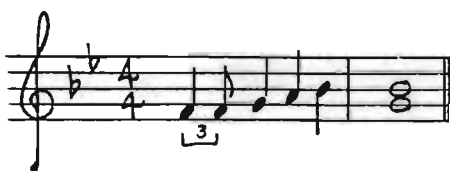
"Matsetse" - Spokes Mashiyane & Lemmy Special  
 "Copper Avenue" - Spokes Mashiyane & Lemmy Special  
 "Jika Retse" - Spokes Mashiyane  
 "Maseru Special" - Spokes Mashiyane



"Hamba Naye"  
 - Aron, Elias and Zeph  
 "Phansi"  
 - Lemmy Special



"Jika Retse"  
 -Spokes Mashiyane  
 "Mfana Ka Nkosi"  
 -Peter Makana



"Davytown Special"  
 - The Dube Satellites



"Hit and Beat"  
 - The Sewer Rats

As a result of his studies of Malawian *kwela*, Kubik maintains that the relationship between dominant, subdominant and tonic chords is not that of functional harmony as utilised in the west.<sup>99</sup> However, all the above endings emphasise the tonic as a place of rest, and the scale from the dominant to the tonic has particularly strong harmonic implications. Thus, the ways in which South African *kwela* compositions end (when they are not faded out), suggest that this style is governed by the basic tenets of functional harmony.

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### **The Occurrence of Other Instruments in Kwela**

Some *kwela* recordings include instruments other than the typical line-up discussed above. Frequently these were a result of collaboration between *kwela* musicians and visiting jazz musicians from America, or with white South African musicians. Incorporation of the clarinet into *kwela* recordings is a case in point.

One of the most heralded American visitors in the fifties was clarinettist Tony Scott, who made several recordings with pennywhistlers. Tony Scott recorded an LP album called Something New from Africa with the Solven Whistlers. The integration of jazz clarinet with pennywhistle *kwela* on this album is accomplished more successfully on some tracks than on others. The title track, "Something New from Africa" by Peter Macontela [Cassette B:7], demonstrates the expertise with which the pennywhistlers were able to imitate big-band swing. The pennywhistlers provide the backing riffs, whilst Tony Scott plays the solos. "African Pennywhistle song" is a typical *kwela* composition and exemplifies a less successfully integrated collaboration. The clarinet enters only near the end and plays a particularly jazz-like solo whilst the pennywhistles are faded into the background.

In contrast Dan Hill, who played in several of Gallo's *kwela* recordings, tends to blend less obtrusively into the backing textures. For instance the clarinet in "Credit Tomorrow", by Albert Ralulimi, does little more than outline the bass line.<sup>100</sup>

Complete integration of the clarinet into the *kwela* idiom is accomplished by Kippie Moeketsi in "Goli Kwela" and "Clarinet Kwela". Besides the substitution of the solo pennywhistle or saxophone by a clarinet, both recordings are generic examples of this style.

The only other instrument occasionally included in the front line of a *kwela* band, is the violin. Spokes Mashiyane made several recordings with violinist Robert Cele. Two of these, "Manotcha" and "Simple Simon", consist of typical motifs on the part of the pennywhistle supported by a violin riff which relies heavily on the dominant. In Albert Ralulimi's "G-String Kwela" the violinist, probably also Robert Cele, plays a

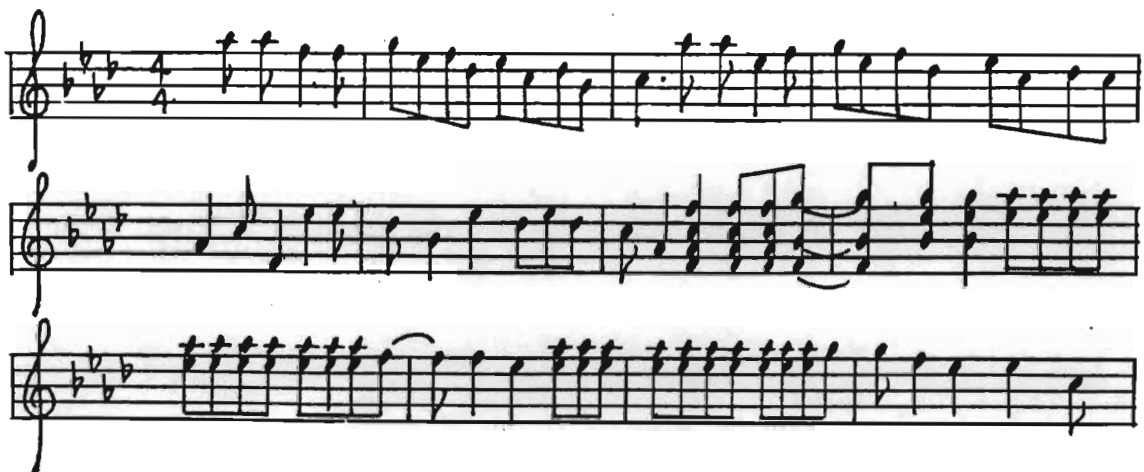
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100 The clarinetist is not credited but is almost certainly Dan Hill.

more prominent role taking two solos and providing the introduction [Cassette B:4, Appendix II:7].

The recordings which first brought widespread fame to Spokes Mashiyane, "Kwela Claude" and "Sheshisa! (Be Alive!)", were made with visiting American jazz pianist Claude Williamson. Both compositions are fundamentally *kwela*, although the former includes a piano solo which is strongly grounded in the jazz idiom. Subsequent to the success of these recordings, the piano became an acceptable supplement to the *kwela* line-up. The pianists were not always visiting whites either: for instance, a newspaper report of a *kwela* performance by "The Black Mambazos" reveals that their backing included Gideon Nxumalo on piano.<sup>101</sup> The role of the piano in *kwela* compositions is that normally fulfilled by a guitar: that is, to provide the harmonic framework and occasionally to take a solo. Frequently, as in the case of "Mambo Spokes" by Mashiyane, the piano completely replaces the guitar. Figure 64 portrays the piano backing riff and solo in this rhythmically unusual pennywhistle composition.

Fig. 64. The piano part of "Mambo Spokes" by Spokes Mashiyane.<sup>102</sup>



Another typical alteration of the regular *kwela* rhythm section is the augmentation, or replacement, of the bass by the trombone. "78 Phatha", by Spokes Mashiyane and the Four Lads, exemplifies a pennywhistle composition in which the bass line is enhanced

101 World, March 1, 1958.

102 Transcribed by Zami Duze as part of the "Natal University Internship Program".

by a trombone. For the most part, as in "Kill me Quick" and "Hit and Beat" by The Sewer Rats, the trombone simply traces the bass line of the chord progression: I I6 IV V. According to Albert Ralulimi, The Sewer Rats were a "pick-team" and Darkie Slinger was probably the trombonist.<sup>103</sup> The latter certainly played the trombone in Spokes Mashiyane's Big Five and wrote several of the compositions recorded by this band. Slinger performs a more prominent role in the Big Five recordings than does the trombonist of The Sewer Rats. In his own composition, "New Sound Flying Rock", he plays an important counterpoint line and in "Nika Nika" and "Phatha Nova", composed by C. Coke and S. Ntutu respectively, Slinger plays the only solos. The trombone is used more frequently with saxophones than with pennywhistles. In fact its inclusion is indicative of a tendency of the development of some *kwela* players towards "African Jazz". This is reflected by the recordings made by the Mashiyane & Msomi Double Five, some of which (for instance "Dumazile" and "Durban Express") even include trumpet. Figure 65 illustrates the structural integration of the trombone and trumpet into the latter recording.

Fig. 65. The structural integration of the trombone and trumpet into "Durban Express" by the Mashiyane & Msomi Double Five.

	TC		TC	TC+tc		tc	
	a	b	a	b	trombone solo	a	b
4*	2	3	2	3	6	2	3
							1

"a", "b" = saxophone chorus riffs  
 TC = trombone counterpoint  
 tc = trumpet counterpoint

The pennywhistle was recorded with vocal music throughout the entire time-span of the instrument's popularity. Jake Lerole remembers playing pennywhistle in vocal recordings as far back as 1948,<sup>104</sup> and his group Black Mambazo recorded flute and vocal compositions as late as 1961.<sup>105</sup> During the height of the "*kwela* boom" many pennywhistle and vocal recordings were made, particularly with female close harmony quartets. Of these, Spokes Mashiyane's recordings with Miriam Makeba and the Skylarks, such as "Ishayisa Mfana" and "Umtha Kathi", were the most highly

103 Albert Ralulimi, Author's interview, 15.7.90.

104 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

105 For example: "Chelete E Ncha" and "Ngoana A'Malome" by Black Mambazo (YE 339), are advertized as Flute/Pedi/Sotho Vocal in Drum, March 1961.

publicised. According to Albert Ralulimi, the New Sounds, a group with whom Mashiyane made several recordings, were the Skylarks recording under another name.<sup>106</sup> The female quartet who recorded "Hlalanaye" with Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys, are not credited despite the importance of their contribution to the recording [Cassette B:2, Appendix II:6] This was a frequent occurrence. All the recordings of pennywhistle and male vocal quartet, in the sample analysed for this research, for instance, either do not credit the presence of the vocalists at all, or they are given a pseudonym such as the Four Lads (with whom Spokes Mashiyane recorded "78 Phatha").

The relationship between the vocal and pennywhistle parts ranges widely: from dialogue sounding within a typical *kwela* composition (as is the case in "Azikhwelwa" by the Alexandra Casbahs [Cassette B:1]), to compositions which are essentially songs with an added pennywhistle improvisation. "Hlalanaye", by Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys, exemplifies those compositions which are dominated by pennywhistles but which include some vocal sections [Cassette B:2, Appendix II:6]. Compositions belonging to the latter group are the most prevalent, existing either in verse form (such as "Ishayisa Mfana" [see figure 66a]), or based on the cyclical repetition of a short form (such as "Mekoalaba" [see figure 66b]).

Fig. 66a. The structure of "Ishayisa Mfana" by the Skylarks with Miriam Makeba and Spokes Mashiyane.

pw solo	pw solo over	pw solo	pw solo over
	---vocal---		---vocal---
* 1	2	2	4

\* = no. of repetitions of 16 bar verse

Fig. 66b. The structure of "Mekoalaba" by Spokes Mashiyane & his "All Stars".

pwsol	-----pw solo-----										
a	vch	vch	vch	vch	vsol	vsol	vch	vch	vch	vch	vsol
4* 2	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a
	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	1

vch = vocal chorus

vsol = vocal solo [male]

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### Conclusion

The results of my analysis of over two-hundred-and-fifty *kwela* recordings indicate that certain basic assumptions may be made about the internal musical structure of *kwela* music.

Structurally, most *kwela* compositions are comprised of either motifs alternating with solo sections, or an *ostinato* backing figure over which a soloist improvises. Harmonically, *kwela* compositions are generally based on a cyclically repeating four-chord harmonic progression. The chords are nearly always primary (in other words chords I IV or V), sevenths and substitutions are very rarely utilised. However, compositions based on longer chord progressions, for instance those in "verse form" or blues form, are also recognised as being *kwela* provided that other definitive aspects (such as instrumentation) are present. The individuality of each *kwela* composition is ordinarily defined by its melodic motifs. These are often closely modelled on the chord tones of the harmonic progression, and arpeggiated and scalic passages dominate the melodic contours. *Kwela* rhythm is defined primarily by the guitar rather than the drum-set and has been described as a "lilting shuffle". The most important rhythmic difference between *kwela* and *marabi* or *mbaqanga*, is that the former is "swung" whereas the latter two styles are based on a driving straight beat.

Instrumentation is the most important definitive aspect of *kwela*. Even if a composition fulfills all the other stylistic criteria, if it does not contain a solo saxophone or a pennywhistle, it will generally not be recognised as *kwela*. The horn section in *kwela* compositions generally comprises a solo pennywhistle; or a solo saxophone; or a solo pennywhistle with a pennywhistle chorus; or a solo saxophone with a saxophone chorus; or a solo saxophone with a pennywhistle chorus; or (occasionally) a solo pennywhistle with a saxophone chorus. Originally a *kwela* rhythm section consisted of one guitar, but once recordings started to be made a string-bass and drum-set became the norm. Later a banjo was added and, as the style developed towards sixties *mbaqanga*, both rhythm and a lead guitars were required. Providing other parameters remained constant and a pennywhistle or a saxophone was included, the addition of vocals or other instruments (for instance clarinet, piano or violin) did not prevent a composition from being recognised as *kwela*.



## CHAPTER IV

# THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF KWELA MUSIC

In this chapter I explore the social context and cultural milieu which spawned and nurtured the development of *kwela* music.

Firstly, I ascertain what sort of people became *kwela* musicians and where they performed. I then reveal the social conditions under which *kwela* musicians lived, and discuss the ways in which these conditions affected their music. I explore how, for its exponents, the performance of *kwela* contributed to alleviating the financial deprivation experienced by most township residents, and discuss the relationship between music and shebeens. I also examine the standard of education available to *kwela* musicians, the consequences of the almost non-existent recreation facilities in the townships, and the effect of increasing crime on the development of music.

Having considered how the social conditions surrounding the creation of *kwela* affected its development, I investigate *kwela's* contribution to its surroundings. In the final section of this chapter I attempt to situate *kwela* within its cultural context. In my exploration of the ways in which township culture moulded, was moulded by, and was reflected in *kwela* music, I examine the relationships between music and two of the most influential aspects of township culture: namely the subcultures which developed around shebeens and *tsotsis*.

### Who Played Kwela Music?

Pennywhistlers generally came from working class backgrounds and were invariably male. In terms of professional musicianship, gender roles are particularly strong in South Africa. To this day, black women do not feature other than as singers, keyboard players or dancers, and in the fifties it was inconceivable that a woman or girl would play pennywhistle. One informant gave a particularly telling reply to a question about female pennywhistlers: "No, I have never seen a girl play. Yet it was such an easy instrument."<sup>1</sup>

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1 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

The other generalisation which may be made about the exponents of pennywhistle *kwela* is that they were frequently very young - adolescent or even pre-pubescent. The two pennywhistlers who became famous as children were Lemmy Mabaso (who made his first recording in 1955 aged nine),<sup>2</sup> and Barney Rachabane (who made his Johannesburg debut at the Selborne Hall in 1958 when he was ten.)<sup>3</sup> It is likely that the small build of both stars fostered the publicity surrounding their youth, for as teenagers they probably appeared younger than their actual age. Pennywhistling also provided a source of income for many young unknown groups. Newspaper reports tell of small boys playing professionally as far afield as Orlando,<sup>4</sup> Benoni,<sup>5</sup> and Cato Manor in Durban.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the media "hype" about pennywhistle child prodigies, professional pennywhistling was, for the most part associated with adolescent males. Jake Lerole was 16 when he made his first recording in 1952,<sup>7</sup> and his brother Elias was 15 in 1956 when the Leroles recorded their biggest hit, "Tom Hark".<sup>8</sup> Many pennywhistle bands were founded amongst school mates.<sup>9</sup> For instance, Peter Macontela, who made his first recordings with a school group, estimates that up to fifty percent of boys his age played the pennywhistle.<sup>10</sup> Frederick Maphisa recalls that most members of the "Scottish" bands which proliferated in the thirties and forties were teenagers,<sup>11</sup> and newspaper reports about relatively unknown adolescent pennywhistlers were common throughout the fifties and early sixties.<sup>12</sup>

Kubik reports that "In Malawi *Kwela* is considered a music for young boys. A thirty-year old man playing a flageolet flute in public could possibly be mocked by the audience."<sup>13</sup> In South Africa it was also very unusual to hear a thirty-year old man

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2 Post, January 20, 1963.

3 World, November 29, 1958.

4 Golden City Post, April 1, 1956.

5 Bantu World, June 1, 1955.

6 Ilanga, April 30, 1960.

7 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

8 Drum, November 1958.

9 See: Golden City Post, January 4, 1959; and Yvonne Huskisson, Bantu Composers of Southern Africa, p. 130.

10 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

11 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 11.7.90.

12 See: Drum, January 1955 and August 1958; Golden City Post, January 15, 1955; Post, March 12, 1961; and Arthur Benseler, "Beobachtungen zur *Kwela*-Musik 1960 bis 1963," p. 119.

13 Gerhard Kubik, "Donald Kachamba's Montage recordings," p. 104.

playing a pennywhistle, but the reasons for this are more complex than the instrument's childish associations. Firstly, the personal musical development of many pennywhistlers prompted conversion to an instrument offering more technical possibilities; and secondly, pennywhistle *kwela* was not popular long enough for any of its major exponents to turn thirty.

The belief that pennywhistles were not played by adult males is, however, incorrect. Willard Cele was twenty when his role in a film, The Magic Garden, made the pennywhistle popular,<sup>14</sup> and *kwela*'s most famous star, Spokes Mashiyane, was also twenty at the time of his first recording in 1954.<sup>15</sup> Albert Ralulimi was twenty-two when he started playing with Spokes Mashiyane in 1954,<sup>16</sup> and *kwela*-guitarist Reggie Msomi made his first recording at the age of twenty in 1956.<sup>17</sup>

These young adult *kwela* musicians were all domestic servants, and outsiders to Johannesburg. There were many *kwela* musicians (for example: Study Manana, Paulos George Ngubeni, Joseph Khoza,<sup>18</sup> and Alfred Mshibe<sup>19</sup>) who obtained some fame but remained domestic servants as they were not able to become full-time professional musicians. Besides aspirations to professional musicianship, *kwela* was evidently a popular form of self-entertainment for domestics during the fifties and early sixties. Nat Nakasa describes the pennywhistle fashion amongst domestic servants:

Go along a White suburb any evening and you'll hear those flutes going. The Black guys in these suburbs depend upon the flute and the guitar for most of their fun. Under the dark shades in the cool avenues of the suburbs they gather at night and blow their whistles, their guitars along.<sup>20</sup>

One factor common to the three principal groups of pennywhistlers (children, adolescents, and young adult domestics) was relative poverty. That a pennywhistle could be bought reasonably cheaply, for five to nine shillings, contributes substantially to the instrument's popularity within these groups.

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14 Drum, March 1951.

15 Post, January 20, 1963; Drum, April and December 1958.

16 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.

17 Post, January 20, 1963.

18 Drum, April 1958.

19 Yvonne Huskisson, Bantu Composers of Southern Africa, p. 181.

20 Drum, April 1958.

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### **Where Was Kwela Played?**

#### **Pennywhistling on the Witwatersrand:**

Alexandra township spawned more acclaimed pennywhistlers than any other area in South Africa. The following comment from a review of an early recording by Spokes Mashiyane, suggests that the *kwela* style was originally associated with Alexandra: "Take a bass, drums, guitar and two tin-whistles and you have an original combination of jazz as it is played in Alexandra."<sup>21</sup>

At least one "Scottish" band was constantly active in Alexandra in the thirties and forties,<sup>22</sup> and the film which popularised "non-Scottish" pennywhistle music (The Magic Garden) was shot on location in that township. The Magic Garden featured local pennywhistler Willard Cele, who instantly became a role model for many young Alexandrians and the township effervesced with aspirant pennywhistlers.

Some pennywhistlers from Alexandra who became moderately famous were Philip Modiba,<sup>23</sup> Peter "Blues" Makana and Black Duke. According to Albert Ralulimi:

Peter Makana was amongst the first pennywhistlers in Alexandra township following on the footsteps of Willard Cele.... him and a guy called Black Duke. They used to record together in the early days, and sometimes as individuals.<sup>24</sup>

The most successful *kwela* bands from Alexandra were: Lemmy "Special" and his Alexandra Junior Bright Boys; the Lerole family pennywhistlers (who performed variously as the Shamber Boys, Elias and his Zig-Zag Jive Flutes, and the Black Mambazo); and Barney Rachabane with his band. There was a fair amount of personal and musical interaction between members of the Alexandra *kwela* bands.

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21 World, April 21, 1956.

22 See Chapter I, p. 32.

23 Drum, January 1955.

24 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

Barney Rachabane played with both Lemmy Special,<sup>25</sup> and the Black Mambazo.<sup>26</sup> Backing musicians and chorus pennywhistlers often played with more than one band, increasing further the fluidity of personnel within the Alexandra *kwela* fraternity.

Other areas of the reef did produce successful pennywhistlers, although nowhere as consistently as Alexandra. Orlando, particularly the Orlando Shelters, is an area frequently cited in connection with impromptu *kwela* performances (see figure 2).<sup>27</sup> The most famous *kwela* band from Orlando was Ben Nkosi and the Solven Whistlers (including Peter Macontela). Benoni produced the Benoni Flute Quintet which made several recordings and a newspaper claimed that the "streets are littered with small boys playing pennywhistle.... From these pennywhistle kids the future jazzmen of Benoni are born."<sup>28</sup>

The other Witwatersrand area to produce well-known pennywhistlers was Pretoria and its environs. *Kwela's* most famous exponent, Spokes Mashiyane, grew up in the Vlakfontein-Hammanskraal area outside Pretoria. Lesser known pennywhistlers are Leslie Nkosi,<sup>29</sup> the Bon Accord Boys,<sup>30</sup> and the Pretoria All Blacks. (The latter was led by Ben Nkosi, who came from Orlando.<sup>31</sup>) Two very young pennywhistlers featured in the film Dirty Linen, which was shot on location in Mamelodi near Pretoria.<sup>32</sup>

### The Popularity and Practice of Kwela Beyond the Witwatersrand

As a result of radio, and the dissemination of records to remote areas, *kwela* became popular throughout South Africa. Although most famous pennywhistlers came from the Witwatersrand, this fact reflects more the dearth of recording studios than a lack of talented pennywhistlers in other areas. Peter Macontela describes the proliferation of pennywhistlers in small Transvaal towns:

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- 25 Jake Lerole. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 15.1.86.  
 26 Barney Rachabane. Author's interview, 16.9.89.  
 27 For example: Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.; Queenth Ndaba. Author's interview, 6.9.90.; Golden City Post, January 15 and April 1, 1956.  
 28 Bantu World, June 1, 1955.  
 29 Drum, May 1958.  
 30 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interviews, 12.2.90. and 15.7.90.  
 31 Drum, July 1961.  
 32 Dirty Linen, directed by Werner Gruenbauer.

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When I go home to Rustenburg I would find boys playing pennywhistle....  
 When I get to Kroonstad I would find guys playing, groups and groups.  
 Jo'burg is far - they wouldn't worry of recording but others were very  
 good.... anywhere we got to, you would find a group, people playing  
 pennywhistle.<sup>33</sup>

Many aspirant musicians moved to Johannesburg from their home areas in search of recording opportunities. The Orange Free State spawned John Ramotsi and Jacob Khotle,<sup>34</sup> while Teaspoon Ndledle and Duzi Magwaza started their musical careers as pennywhistlers in Durban, although later they both learnt the saxophone and moved to Johannesburg in search of performance opportunities.<sup>35</sup> Natal also produced two of *kwela*'s most prominent guitarists, Reggie Msomi and Allen Kwela. The musician who made the banjo part of the *kwela* sound, Saul Malahela, came from White River.<sup>36</sup> Many of the musicians who made their names playing late *kwela* and early *mbaqanga* came from areas outside Johannesburg: West Nkosi grew up in Nelspruit, and both Marks Mankwane and Joe Makwela came from Warmbaths.<sup>37</sup>

Cape Town seems not to have produced any notable *kwela* musicians. The only "local" pennywhistler to receive press attention was Frank Sithole who grew up in Johannesburg.<sup>38</sup>

Some musicians are open about their rural origins. Informants who grew up in rural areas (such as Albert Ralulimi and Reggie Msomi, from Sibasa in the Northern Transvaal and Port Shepstone in Natal respectively), speak of their formative experiences on "traditional" or homemade instruments.<sup>39</sup> The philosophy of "New Africanism" (which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI)<sup>40</sup> assigned value to being African and precipitated a search for African cultural roots. Supporters of the New Africanist philosophy tended to assign particular authenticity, and therefore

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33 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

34 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

35 Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

36 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

37 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

38 Drum, May 1961.

39 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90; Reggie Msomi. Author's interview, 21.1.93; Daily News, June 3, 1977.

40 See Chapter VI, pp. 220-223.

credibility, to pennywhistlers who had strong ties with "traditional" methods of flute playing. For instance, a Drum feature article on *kwela* states:

How it all began: Judas Mayile says that our forefathers used to play a reed version of the penny whistle in the days long gone by. Judas, 17, is a herd boy at Modderfontein, not far from Pretoria.<sup>41</sup>

Besides narrating the biography of a particular musician, both this caption, and the many instances in which Spokes Mashiyane's rural roots are cited in newspaper articles,<sup>42</sup> indicate the search by contemporary black journalists for African cultural roots.

Other considerations gave rise to situations in which musicians preferred to hide their origins. Peter Macontela explains:

Now the thing is these people when they came to Jo'burg, they filtered around, they didn't identify them as coming from such such. You would be called a stupid and the people would look down to you. So everybody played big coming to Jo'burg. Let's take it now, Spokes Mashiyane comes from very out of Jo'burg, but he was regarded as clever like [people from] Sophiatown.... The other thing - you would put the poor guy in trouble because of pass. You wouldn't say that, you would say he is born in Jo'burg.<sup>43</sup>

Besides being the hub of the recording industry Johannesburg has always been "the spiritual and physical home of non-European jazz."<sup>44</sup> According to Todd Matshikisa this is because "a quarter of a million Blacks spend and end their lives in and around Joburg. And where so much life is found, good jazz is found."<sup>45</sup> The economic opportunities promised by Johannesburg attracted people from all over the sub-continent and, in turn, these people enriched the cultural wealth of the city. The cycle was completed when cultural groups such as *kwela* musicians toured spreading the urban syncretic mix and inspiring more aspirant musicians.

The dissemination of *kwela* through live performance primarily occurred on two levels. *Kwela* stars sometimes toured as part of large variety shows which took place

41 Drum, April 1958.

42 See, for example: Bantu World, March 19, 1955; World, September 9, 1964.

43 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

44 Can Themba, The World of Can Themba, p. 204.

45 Antony Sampson, Drum, p. 29.

in big venues and received good publicity. These shows were generally produced and controlled by white interests.<sup>46</sup> Willard Cele, for example, took part in a Durban performance of Township Jazz in 1956,<sup>47</sup> and in 1958 Spokes Mashiyane was flown to Cape Town to perform in a fund raising concert for the Treason Trial Defence fund.<sup>48</sup>

Live dissemination of *kwela* at the other end of the spectrum occurred through bands who toured either under black entrepreneurs or without a permanent manager. These shows occurred in the townships, featured the visiting band only, and received no press publicity. Jake Lerole travelled all over the Transvaal performing in such places as Hammanskraal, Klerksdorp, and Mafikeng,<sup>49</sup> and Albert Ralulimi toured extensively in the Northern Cape and the Orange Free State. Recalling a Northern Cape tour made in 1958 with Kid Moncho, Joseph Makwela, Marks Mankwane, and Lucky Monama, Ralulimi explains some of the difficulties which beset bands performing under such conditions:

... when we touring we are just a group of musicians. When we arrive at a certain town we have to get someone who we might think is reliable, or someone who has put up those shows. Then we charge an outright fee, lets say R80 per show. If the guy pays it's OK. At times you perform and then the promoter just disappears. Like what happened with us at Vryburg. These fellows had arranged a number of shows ranging from Kimberly, Upington, Kuruman, Vryburg and our last show was supposed to be at Mafikeng. Now this guy I'm sure made quite a reasonable amount of money and then after our second show in Vryburg he disappeared and we got stranded.<sup>50</sup>

Barney Rachabane tells of a Malawian tour, managed by a Mr. Masinga, which encountered severe financial difficulties. Finally the band was declared "a liability on the State" and was flown home courtesy of the Malawian government.<sup>51</sup> Not that artists travelling with large shows were exempt from the results of mismanagement and financial difficulty: Barney Rachabane, aged ten, and his pennywhistle band were stranded in Cape Town as a result of the bankruptcy of the variety show Africa Sings! produced by Lofty Adams.<sup>52</sup>

46 See Chapter II, pp. 47-51.

47 Golden City Post, November 18, 1956.

48 World, September 20, 1958.

49 Jake Lerole. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 15.1.86.

50 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

51 Barney Rachabane, video made for the SABC TV3 program Mino by Joubert & Van Dyke Productions.

52 Golden City Post, January 4, 1959.



Spokes Mashiyane and the King Kwela Trio participated in a reasonable compromise between the relative lack of artistic control experienced in large variety shows and the insecurity resulting from the musicians' having to organise everything themselves. Albert Ralulimi was employed by a small firm, the directors of which (the Crop Brothers) took an interest in his musical activities. The Crop Brothers fulfilled a managerial role in so far as they arranged venues for the King Kwela Trio, but they did not interfere with the band artistically or attempt to gain financially. The King Kwela Trio performed in Brakpan and Durban as a result of their arrangement with the Crop Brothers.<sup>53</sup>

*Kwela* musicians did tour internationally, although mostly in the sixties playing late *kwela* and early *mbaqanga* on saxophones rather than pennywhistles. Jake Lerole took part in a European tour in 1962-63,<sup>54</sup> and the Hollywood Jazz Band (including Lemmy "Special" Mabaso, Reggie Msomi, and West Nkosi) played extensively in Rhodesia in 1965.<sup>55</sup>

Although *kwela* musicians travelled widely, the universal popularity of the pennywhistle can only be credited to the sale of records and the radio. *Kwela* bands operated in Durban<sup>56</sup> and Cape Town,<sup>57</sup> but use of the pennywhistles was not confined to the urban areas. As Peter Macontela explains, "Pennywhistle started from township and it went back into deeper places, rural places."<sup>58</sup> Documented evidence provides only glimpses of the geographical extent of the pennywhistle's popularity. In 1969 a musician calling himself "No 1 Pepsi Cowboy" was heard playing a home-made pennywhistle on the road from Tzaneen to Pietersburg,<sup>59</sup> and a photograph of some pennywhistlers (figure 1) was taken west of the Hartbeestpoort Dam near Magaliesburg in June 1958. Recordings made by Hugh Tracey in 1958 at Havelock Mine in Swaziland and in Usutu Forest, Mbabane, Swaziland; provide examples of *kwela* music played by pennywhistlers remote from the big cities.<sup>60</sup>

53 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

54 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

55 *Post*, February 7, 1965.

56 *Ilanga*, April 30, 1960; and Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

57 *Golden City Post*, November 2, 1958; and Arthur Benseler, "Beobachtungen zur Kwela-Musik 1960 bis 1963," pp. 121-123.

58 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

59 Arthur Benseler, "Beobachtungen zur Kwela-Musik 1960 bis 1963," p. 123.

60 Hugh Tracey, *Catalogue: The Sound of Africa Series*, Vol. II, p. 140-141; Record number AMA. TR-72, side (a) tracks 1-6.

Fig. 1 Rural pennywhistlers.<sup>61</sup>

*Kwela* recording artists (or their producers) were clearly aware of the wide geographical appeal of their music. Some of the commercial "hype" surrounding *kwela*, such as the spoken introductions to numbers and the advertising, was obviously aimed at encouraging regional audiences to identify *kwela* as their own. For instance, the spoken introduction to "Double Qwela" by Lemmy Mabaso starts: "There you are! This is Durban ...", and a 1956 newspaper advertisement is headed: "Mr Spokes - his tunes from the Cape."<sup>62</sup> Some spoken introductions provide

61 Photograph taken by Prof. Dennis Claude.

62 Golden City Post, April 8, 1956.

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familiarity and ownership for audiences on the reef by alluding to places in local townships. Spokes Mashiyane's "Monate" begins with the words: "It's me again - Spokes, come boys let's go and board 93 train to Naledi." "First Stop" by Themba Madondo starts with a list of the stations on a train from Johannesburg to Soweto: "First stop Mzimhlophe, Phomolong, Phefeni, Dube, Khwezi, Nhlazane and Naledi. Everybody inside."

It is difficult to ascertain the motivation behind the spoken introductions of some compositions - primarily because at time it is impossible to tell who conceived the introduction. Producers and musicians, the two possible authors of an introduction, would have been directed by different agendas in the creation of a spoken introduction. A producer, I assume, would prioritise his notion of commercial appeal, whereas a musician is more likely to refer to artifacts, places, or people which have some personal meaning. If, for example, Themba Madondo created the introduction to "First Stop", it is likely that he used that train frequently, and it may be understood as a personalised reflection of his life experience, rather than a commercial gimmick on the part of his producer.

The titles of many *kwela* compositions refer to places and, as most of these titles have no particular commercial appeal, I would suggest that for the most part they embodied personal significance for the musicians. Some *kwela* numbers are named after townships (for example: "Mapetla" by Spokes Mashiyane; "Orlando" by Reggie Msomi; and "Mdala Meadowlands" by Frans Mudau). The titles of other numbers are inspired by places further afield, such as: Mashiyane's "Banana Ba Rustenburg" (Men from Rustenburg); and "Durban Express" by Reggie Msomi. Touring evidently inspired composition. The Morning Star Whistlers, with Lemmie, Spokes and Reggie, recorded a number entitled "Sangena Kwamzilikazi" (we have reached Mzilikazi's place) which refers to Matabeleland in Zimbabwe. Reggie Msomi and his Hollywood Jazz Orchestra recorded a number titled "E Mbabane", and Spokes Mashiyane and his New Sound Band recorded "Maseru Special".

*Kwela* very quickly became popular in the countries north of South Africa's borders. The style was heard and imitated in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi (then Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland respectively). Kubik reports that the dissemination of *kwela* in these countries occurred "in the middle and late fifties via

records and radio broadcasts and also as a result of direct contact due to large-scale labour migration in southern Africa.<sup>63</sup> A 1955 newspaper advertisement claimed that Mashiyane's recordings were being broadcast by the Southern Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation,<sup>64</sup> which is corroborated by other reports of *kwela* being broadcast throughout southern Africa.<sup>65</sup> Whilst living in Salisbury between 1957 and 1961 Donald Kachamba, a Malawian *kwela* musician and Kubik's principal informant, "learned his repertoire from the South African records of Spokes Mashiyane, Lemmy Special, Abia Themba, David Thekwane, Frans Mudau, and other famous musicians of the late fifties and early sixties.... By the mid sixties this urban tradition [*kwela*] had spread through almost all of Malawi."<sup>66</sup>

One of the major differences between Malawian and South African *kwela* is that shakers were not used to provide rhythm in the latter. There are two possible reasons for the inclusion of shakers in Malawian *kwela* despite the fact that they are not found in the South African prototypes. Firstly, Kubik states that when *kwela* became popular in Malawi often a "flute and a one-string bass were merely added to the existing instrumentation" of Malawian "township" music which included shakers.<sup>67</sup> Secondly, homemade shakers were more readily available to Malawian youths than drum sets, and they provided a reasonably accurate imitation of the sound of brushes on a snare drum.<sup>68</sup>

The popularity of *kwela* music, and the use of the pennywhistle, lasted far longer in countries north of South Africa's borders than in the style's country of origin. As a widespread phenomenon *kwela* had disappeared from South Africa's streets by 1965, whereas the style was practised in Malawi well into the seventies.

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63 Gerhard Kubik, "Donald Kachamba's Montage recordings," p. 102.

64 Drum, February 1955.

65 See the SABC annual report of 1958, p.19; and Atta Annan Mensah, "Jazz: the round trip," pp. 1-2

66 Gerhard Kubik, "Donald Kachamba's Montage recordings," p. 91.

67 Gerhard Kubik, "The Southern African Periphery," p. 16.

68 For further information about Malawian *kwela* see: Gerhard Kubik, The Kachamba Brothers' Band, 1974; and Gerhard Kubik, "Donald Kachamba's Montage recordings," 1979-80.

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### The Social Environment of Kwela Musicians and its Effect on Their Music

This exploration of the social conditions surrounding the creation and practice of *kwela* music focuses on Alexandra because this township produced such a high number of famous pennywhistlers.

Situated twelve kilometres north of the Johannesburg city centre, this five kilometre square "black spot" is bordered by the industrial areas of Wynberg and Marlboro, and the white suburb of Bramley. By the fifties an estimated 80 000 people inhabited this small area.<sup>69</sup> The following description of Alexandra in 1957 provides a sense of *kwela* musicians' physical environment:<sup>70</sup>

The general picture now ... is one of both good conditions, with some well-built houses ... [and] appalling slum conditions with dilapidated raw brick houses, rusted iron shacks and fences, and streets ugly with refuse and slop water. The impression is one of shocking overcrowding, the streets tumultuous with people, vast numbers of children, chickens and goats. Owing to the nature of the terrain, that is, steep slopes with correspondingly deep valleys, storm water and seepages from dongas are a problem; seepage water, especially makes road levelling difficult and even fills up the freshly-dug graves.<sup>71</sup>

One very important factor differentiates Alexandra from most other contemporary townships: "in 1912 the Alexandra Township Company decided to make the township a non-European township, exclusively for Africans and Coloured persons." Thus, in terms of Section 8(1)(i) of the 1913 Natives Land Act, black people could legally own land.<sup>72</sup>

The financial situation of the average urban black family was precarious at best. The State's definition of black workers as migrants temporarily domiciled in the cities, endorsed the manufacturing and mining industries' calculation of "wage levels according to the subsistence needs of an individual worker and excluding the needs of

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69 Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p. 183.

70 Feature articles in *Drum* provide good descriptions by contemporary black writers of general living conditions in the townships, for example: "Why our living's so tough", *Drum*, June 1958; "Inside Dube Hostel"; and "Dustbin babies", *Drum*, November 1957. Also useful is Lionel Rogosin's 1957 film *Come Back Africa* (which was written in collaboration with Lewis Nkosi and William Modisane.) It was made in secret and attempted to reflect the reality of township conditions.

71 Zea Zimmerman, "A History of Alexandra Township", p. 3.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

his family."<sup>73</sup> According to Lodge, "in 1956 the average income was £91 a year," and more than eighty percent of Johannesburg's families lived off incomes less than that needed for "minimum essential expenditure". The ANC claimed that the average weekly wage per worker was £2 10s and according to the South African Institute of Race Relations the average family income was £15 18s 11d a month. The difficulties experienced are exemplified by the "budget of a family in Vlakfontien ... Municipal rents were £2 7s 3d. Monthly transport costs were £2 4s 3d. This left less than £5 for everything else."<sup>74</sup>

Occasionally *kwela* musicians refer to financial difficulties in their recordings: the title of a composition by Jake Lerole, "Inmupeko" [Imhlupeko], means hardship or poverty; and in the introduction to "Inkal Meva" by Elias Lerole, a voice accuses another of being a "dodger", a person who is always fleeing debt collectors.

Housing was the single largest expense for black families, transport coming a close second. Writing in 1956 Huddleston claimed that, "there are in Johannesburg today some forty thousand African families with no home of their own."<sup>75</sup> In response to this housing crisis, some homeowners in Alexandra "built up to fifteen lean-to rooms to their stands, letting each room to a family for rents that could be as high as £4 per month."<sup>76</sup> Mattera quotes rentals of such wood and zinc shanties in Sophiatown at £2 and £3 per month.<sup>77</sup> Moloi describes the "shelters" in Moroka and some of the resulting living conditions:

In Moroka people built their shacks using jute bags or sacks for walls and painting the same material to make a waterproof (sometimes) roof. ...this area, where Rockville is today, the municipality would follow up and erect toilet facilities where they found space. This they did by digging a deep oblong hole with steps at the back leading down to the bottom of the hole. These steps were for the municipality employees who went down and collected the waste using shovels and containers, and carried it up to the ox-wagons outside for disposal.<sup>78</sup>

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73 Eddie Koch, "Without Visible Means of Subsistence", p.152.

74 Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, pp. 155-169.

75 Trevor Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, p. 39.

76 Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p. 157.

77 Don Mattera, *Memory is the Weapon*, p. 50.

78 Godfrey Moloi, *My Life*, p. 119.

Food is another major consideration in the family budget, and the many references to particularly cheap food in *kwela* numbers suggests the poverty experienced by many musicians. Philip Cele, for instance, entitled one of his compositions "Fat Koek Kwela". A *vetkoek* is a very cheap type of doughnut which Lemmy Mabaso remembers eating with *Ma Shangane Varse*, a large Vienna-type sausage of inferior quality.<sup>79</sup> The stiff maize-meal porridge not only bequeathed its name (*mbaqanga*) to a style of music which grew from *kwela*, it also became the subject of several *kwela* compositions. Themba Madondo titled one of his compositions "Steak and Porridge", a staple *mbaqanga* and meat sauce dish which cost a shilling per plate.<sup>80</sup> Spokes Mashiyane and his All Stars recorded a number titled "Qo Petsa", which in Sotho refers to dipping *mbaqanga* into a meat sauce. The song text provides a humorous sketch of this practice:

*Malantja a monate ka papa e tjhesang.* [x2]

*Mona mo Lesotho re jala mabele.* [x2]

*Qo petsa, qo petsa.*

*O tla utlwa monate.* [x2]

(Dog's intestines are nice with hot porridge. [x2]

Here in Lesotho we plant mealies. [x2]

Dip and Dip,

you feel the great taste. [x2])<sup>81</sup>

Lack of commercial infrastructure reduced access to good quality low-cost foodstuffs for township dwellers.<sup>82</sup> Mattera describes the practices of exploitative store owners in Sophiatown:

Food was sold in small quantities but at huge profits. A five-penny loaf of bread would be sliced into twelve or fifteen pieces and sold at a penny a slice. Other commodities such as cooking oil, sugar, maize-meal, tea, and candles were neatly packed into three-penny or five-penny parcels which realised bigger profits. And the unsuspecting customers paid, unaware that they were the victims of bloodsucking.<sup>83</sup>

79 Lemmy "Special" Mabaso, video made for the SABC TV3 program Mino by Joubert & Van Dyke Productions.

80 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

81 Translated by Concord Nkabinde.

82 "On Hungry Children", a feature in Drum, August 1958, describes the levels of starvation commonly reached in the townships. Also see Can Themba, The World of Can Themba, p. 140.

83 Don Mattera, Memory is the Weapon, pp. 49-50.

One of the results of poor housing and insufficient nutrition is tuberculosis. Contemporary press reports and oral testimony suggest that *kwela* musicians tended to suffer from tuberculosis more than any other serious illness. Along with alcoholism,<sup>84</sup> tuberculosis contributed crucially to the deaths of Willard Cele and Ben Nkosi, and has substantially disrupted the careers of Lemmy Mabaso and Jake Lerole. Most township dwellers shared conditions which favour the contraction of tuberculosis: wood or coal stoves burnt inside without effective chimneys; insufficient clothing and housing in cold weather; and malnutrition. However, as Piliso points out, as a result of their nocturnal profession, musicians are particularly at risk: "During night time I used to get cold. You'll find most of us are like that. Then we have to go and play out at night, we are not properly dressed, we are suffering from malnutrition, drink."<sup>85</sup>

#### Closing the Gap: Music in the Informal Economy

Huddleston points out that the average township family "had to face a gap between income and expenditure of over £2 10s per month.....at least half the families on the city must live below the bread line - *unless they can close that gap.*"<sup>86</sup>

The formal economy provided few means to close gap: apartheid policies resulted in a general diminishment in the opportunities of economic advancement for black people. By 1956 all black-owned business was removed from white areas to the townships where it was temporarily permitted so that black businessmen could "build up capital and gain experience" which would ultimately be invested in the homelands. Even this limited trading was restricted to "daily domestic necessities."<sup>87</sup>

Thus many people had recourse only to the informal economy (of which petty crime may be considered a part) in order to survive. It was often necessary for children to contribute to their family finances. Motjuwadi describes his youthful forays into the informal sector:

How very early in life we became criminals. To make up school-fees and pocket money we sold sweets in the trains between Randfontein and

84 The high level of alcoholism amongst musicians is discussed later in this Chapter, see pp. 149-152 and pp. 166-170.

85 Ntemi Piliso. Author's interview, 4.9.90.

86 Trevor Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, p. 88.

87 Edward Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*, p. 374.



Springs. As unlicensed traders on the railways we ended up scrubbing the floors and shining bicycles at Langlaagte Railway Police Station.<sup>88</sup>

Lawful employment for juveniles was "generally limited to very poorly paid casual work such as newspaper selling, golf caddying and domestic service." Wages ranged from £1 19s 9d per month for domestics to £2 per month for newspaper sellers.<sup>89</sup> Aged eighteen, Albert Ralulimi worked as a caddy for £1 1s per month.<sup>90</sup>

Such factors highlight the significance of money earned by young *kwela* musicians busking on the streets. Many *kwela* players talk of music as a way of "closing the gap", for themselves and their families. Elias Lerole reminisces:

We did live with that money. Because if we play for a whole day we've got at least something to make us to live. ... We were little guys. And if we go around the street and get little bit of money, at least that time we've made let's say about £10, that time it was a lot of money. A lot of money, really! Everybody could eat in the family.<sup>91</sup>

Elias's testimony is corroborated by his brother Jake. In answer to a question about his role in supporting the family Jake replied, "Yes. I grew up, I never had a father. I know he was still alive, so I suffered a lot. I worked hard to make a living for us all."<sup>92</sup> Lemmy Mabaso's earnings were obviously also important in family finances. He remarks:

I didn't like going to school partly because my parents couldn't afford it, so I would play truant at times. On Saturday as usual we went back to town and sat at the usual places [Busking].... Then we went home and my mother made me some food and we ate. Then we gave her some money as usual.<sup>93</sup>

The amount of money earned through busking was obviously substantial. Jake Lerole has quoted a figure of £60 a day on several occasions,<sup>94</sup> although this figure seems excessive and is not corroborated by other musicians. On another occasion he

88 Stan Motjuwadi, "Kid Brother", in Casey "Kid" Motsisi, *Casey & Co.*, p. VIII.

89 Andre Proctor, "Class Struggle, Segregation and the City", p. 74.

90 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.

91 Elias Lerole. Author's interview, 16.2.90.

92 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

93 Lemmy "Special" Mabaso, video made for the SABC TV3 program Mino by Joubert & Van Dyke Productions.

94 Jake Lerole. Author's interviews, 13.7.90. and 19.5.91; Sunday Tribune, September 1, 1974.

mentions the more practicable figure of £30 a week.<sup>95</sup> Several *kwela* musicians remember earning between £2 and £3 in an afternoon.<sup>96</sup>

*Kwela* musicians who had to contribute substantially to family earnings frequently report absent fathers.<sup>97</sup> The only employment opportunities available to women were washing and casual domestic service, for which they earned between £1 and £2 per month.<sup>98</sup> Both Jake Lerole and Duze Magwaza's mothers supported their families by doing white people's washing. Duze Magwaza remembers:

She used to do washing. I remember when I was doing my standard two-three, I used to come around here in town, collect washing take it back home. After school I go home and take the washing back to town.<sup>99</sup>

As formal employment was hard to come by, and so poorly paid, women turned to the informal sector. By far the most lucrative occupation was the brewing and selling of beer and other alcoholic concoctions. New arrivals in the city often had the most trouble finding work. Brewing beer for sale was a logical option since this activity is traditionally done by women in rural homesteads.

### Shebeens: The Relationship Between Money, Music and Alcohol

The illicit brewing and selling of alcoholic beverages took place in shebeens, and the women who ran these establishments became known as "shebeen queens". Shebeens ranged in stature from a single room in a make-shift shack to expensive social clubs. Can Themba describes an institution of the latter class, "Little Heaven", Sophiatown's "poshest shebeen."

I walked into a very well furnished, brightly lit room. Modern jazz music of the hottest kind blared at me. And the room was crowded with African men and women sitting in clusters of threes and fours, enjoying - most of them - beer. The amber quart bottles stood all over, full, half-full, and

95 "Big Voice Jack is back and groovin'," RPM in-house publication, p. 23.

96 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 13.7.90; Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90; Golden City Post, January 4, 1959.

97 For example: Elias Lerole. Author's interview, 16.2.90.; and Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

98 Andre Proctor, "Class Struggle, Segregation and the City", p. 73.

99 Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

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empty. But here and there a party was drinking brandy from tumblers measured accurately to the fourth finger.... [such places] make you feel at home, and the atmosphere is friendly and sociable. There are kids to go and buy soda water, ginger ale, or Indian tonic for you. There is often a private room where you can "sleep it off" if you've had too many.<sup>100</sup>

Such shebeens fulfilled a wider social function than the provision of illegal liquor. They provided a relatively protected social space and a hospitable environment where people could briefly escape the tawdry struggle of their everyday lives. In the fifties shebeens became the nuclei of intellectual, political, and cultural life in the townships. However not all shebeens were equally illustrious. Themba describes the poorer establishments:

But there are those that are just out to make money, and damn the customer. They are dirty, and crowded, and hostile. The shebeen queen is always hurrying you to drink quickly, and swearing at somebody or other. "You b-s act as if you've licences to drink!" She sells everything, brandy, gin, beer and skokiaan, hops, hoenene, barberton, pineapple, and even more violent concoctions. It is in these that "doping" takes place.<sup>101</sup>

In these shebeens, where the need to obliterate the futility and hopelessness of life was more important than the social or intellectual environment, the alcohol was often "doped", or adulterated. Water or black tea was added to "hard" liquor in order to stretch this expensive commodity further. More dangerous, however, was the addition of substances such as tobacco water to produce a "kick".

Shebeens played an ambivalent role in township society: they provided forums which simultaneously nurtured alcoholism and the formation of cultural identity; they encouraged the wasting of money and provided economic independence for many women and their families. Deriving from one of women's most "traditional" roles, brewing beer, it was also the response to social displacement and often marginalisation of women due to the shattering of "traditional" values and roles as a result of urbanisation.

One of the main reasons why shebeens suffered such continual police harassment is that they kept the copious amount of money spent on alcohol circulating within the

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100 Can Themba, *The World of Can Themba*, p. 158-160.

101 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

community. The most calamitous event in the history of the government's struggle to appropriate these earnings, was the establishment of municipal beer halls in 1937.<sup>102</sup> These were inhospitable "drinking cages" whose profits went to the municipality. This system robbed the community twice over: it impoverished those dependent on shebeen earnings for their livelihood; and the poor were being indirectly taxed to fund what meagre services were provided by the municipality.

The other institution which harnessed money spent on alcohol for the community was the *stokvel*. This institution provided a method of raising money for individuals, customarily in order to save for a sudden big expense such as a funeral. *Stokvels* were essentially parties hosted by each member of an association in rotation, and the host of each party would keep all the profits. The other members of that association, and as many other people as possible, would attend the party, pay an entrance fee and buy alcohol from the host. The price of drinks at *stokvels* and in shebeens varied. Godfrey Moloï frequented a shebeen at which a "nip of wine cost two and six and a nip of brandy was five shillings."<sup>103</sup> According to Can Themba "A quart of beer may cost 3s 6d to 6s. A 'straight' of brandy or gin, between 14s 6d and 26s. A bottle of whisky, between 30s and 50s."<sup>104</sup> Wilson Silgee remembers that at *marabi* parties in the forties, entrance was 1s, and *Skokiaan* or (a similar concoction) cost 1s per jam tin.<sup>105</sup> Both Moloï and Jake Lerole quote 2s 6d as the average entrance fee for *stokvels* and jive sessions,<sup>106</sup> although a poster for a "Concert and Jive" in 1956 advertised admission as 3s 6d (see figure 2).

✂ Good music was crucial for the success of shebeens and *stokvels*: it was the heartbeat which kept money circulating around the social and economic system based on the sale of alcohol and "good times". Realising the importance of music to the success of their enterprises, *stokvel* organisers and shebeen queens made various arrangements with musicians. Generally musicians were granted free admission and a certain amount of food and alcohol. According to Moloï: "If you were a musician you enjoyed the privilege of paying no admission and getting a free two-shilling scale of *jwejwe* [a greenish concocted home brew] in any of these sessions."<sup>107</sup> Elias Lerole remembers

102 Paul La Hausse, *Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts*, p. 48.

103 Godfrey Moloï, *My Life*, p. 122.

104 Can Themba, *The World of Can Themba*, p. 160.

105 Kingforce Silgee, "Kingforce: Interview", p. 20.

106 Godfrey Moloï, *My Life*, p. 69; Jake Lerole. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 15.1.86.

107 Godfrey Moloï, *My Life*, p. 27.

having access to unlimited food and alcohol, being paid a small fee, and that members of the audience would throw coins when pleased by the music.<sup>108</sup> His brother Jake asserts that, as a twelve-year-old pennywhistler playing at *stokvels* in the late forties, he was paid 2s 6d a night.<sup>109</sup>

Fig. 2. Poster advertising a "Concert and Jive".

**HALLO, HALLO CHIEFS!**

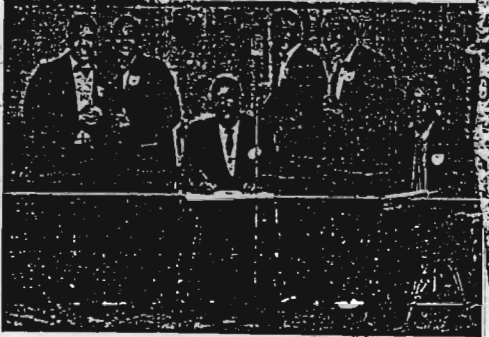
A GRANDEL

# Concert & Jive

will be sponsored by Student of Chalsby School,  
MOSENTHAL BROS. SANYANE  
a well-known gentleman

**On Friday, 3rd. August, 1956**

**AT**  
**No. 3**  
**Polly St**  
**Jo'burg**



**Music by S. K. J. BROS. & ORLANDO FLUTE BROS.**

This boys will keep you warm. Oh the town is theirs,  
do attend. See them this night.

Chairladies and Waitresses: City Beauties  
Doorkeepers: Ben Mojela & Fanny Body Guard

COMMENCE 8 P.M.  
**ADMISSION 3'6**

108 Elias Lerole. Author's interview, 16.2.90.

109 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

Musicians were clearly not apportioned much of the profits made at jive sessions: 2s 6d was the average admission fee for one person. However, shebeens and *stokvels* did provide a platform for musicians, an environment in which they could both present their music to the community and incorporate the community's spirit and songs back into their music. This process had given birth to *marabi* and African Jazz, and Jake Lerole claims that he played *kwela* as dance music at *stokvel* parties in the late forties.<sup>110</sup>

One of the most enduring effects of financial impoverishment on *kwela* musicians was that often, because they had to contribute to family finances from an early age, they received very little education.

#### Education Available to Kwela Musicians

Most pennywhistlers received little formal schooling. Willard Cele and Peter Macontela were amongst the fortunate few who managed to stay at school long enough to write their Junior Matriculation examinations.<sup>111</sup> Ntemi Piliso had to leave school after Standard Six, but managed to obtain his Junior Matriculation certificate by attending correspondence and night schools.<sup>112</sup> Albert Ralulimi and Duze Magwaza reached Standard Six,<sup>113</sup> whilst Fredrick Maphisa and Jake Lerole left school after Standard Four.<sup>114</sup> Spokes Mashiyane reached Standard Three and Lemmy Mabaso Standard Two.<sup>115</sup>

Procter states that in 1938 most schools in Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare:

... reported at least fifteen percent absenteeism, due usually to the need for the child to contribute materially to the family income either by carrying washing for the mother, minding the children while both parents were at work, acting as lookouts for beer brewers, or going out to work themselves.<sup>116</sup>

110 *Ibid.*

111 *Ilanga*, February 17, 1951; Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

112 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 24.1.84.

113 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.; Duze Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

114 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 11.7.90. Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

115 *World*, September 9, 1964; Yvonne Huskisson, *Music of the Bantu*, p. 79.

116 Andre Procter, "Class Struggle, Segregation and the City", p. 74.

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The situation had not improved by 1955 when, according to Huddleston, only one in three to one in five "African children of a school-going age were in school."<sup>117</sup> All the fore-mentioned pennywhistlers who left school early did so because it was necessary for them to contribute to the family income. Boys growing up in rural areas were often required to herd cattle well beyond school-going age, further reducing the number of years they were able to spend at school. This was the case for both Albert Ralulimi and Spokes Mashiyane. Even Jake Lerole, who was only briefly sent to a rural school, spent some of his childhood herding cattle.<sup>118</sup>

Even when family finances allowed children to spend many economically unproductive years at school, places in schools were not necessarily available. Enrolment increased by half in the decade following the Second World War,<sup>119</sup> but new schools were not built for the burgeoning population. Those which did exist were inadequate and hopelessly overcrowded. Joyce Dube describes her experience of fifties township schools:

They were dilapidated buildings whose roofs were leaking, windows shattered beyond the winter breeze. Bucket-toilets overflowing. A shortage of teachers faced with overcrowded classrooms. Many children came from poverty-stricken homes and had to go to school without stationery or school-uniforms. The desks which were normally donated to us seated four pupils. School was a place of cold and discomfort - it is a wonder I did not quit like many of my peers.<sup>120</sup>

Many musicians played truant, as much to escape the misery and futility of the school environment as to earn money. Once their musical activities started to provide financially, musicians frequently did not return to school. Newspaper reports not only condoned, but glamorised this choice. Photographs of young hopefuls were supported by such captions as: "Professional music and school don't mix. So Tandie discovered. She left school!"<sup>121</sup>; and pennywhistler Shakes Molepo "couldn't manage school and the whistle at the same time.... [he] made two discs with Tony Scott ... the dough bought neat togs."<sup>122</sup>

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117 Trevor Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, p. 161.

118 Jake Lerole. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 15.1.86.

119 Tom Lodge, "The Parents' School Boycott, 1955", p. 366.

120 *Vrye Weekblad* 28 June - 4 July, 1991.

121 *Bantu World*, November 11, 1955.

122 *Drum*, April 1958.

Lack of education, particularly the inability to communicate effectively in English, meant that musicians were easily exploited. This was particularly the case in the record companies where musicians were frequently unable to communicate directly with the directors and producers, and were thus vulnerable to manipulation by middle-men. As Magwaza explains:

[Educated people] are able to go to the manager or director or producer. They will have a very good communication, they will understand each other.... [if] the communication was not so good ... they say, "OK, we will call somebody." That particular somebody is not going to deliver the message as it is.<sup>123</sup>

One of the insidious objectives of "Bantu Education" is that the inability to communicate renders people defenseless against exploitation. Under Bantu Education, compulsory mother-tongue education was introduced in the lower grades, and English was often taught by second-language English speakers in the middle and high schools. The philosophy behind "Education for Natives as a Separate Race" was master-minded by the Eiselen Commission between 1949 and 1951. In Verwoerd's words the intentions of "Bantu Education" were:

... getting the natives to grow from their own roots out of their own institutions and from their own powers. It is a policy of gradual development through mother tongue and own environment, to bring the natives to literacy and usefulness in their own circle.<sup>124</sup> ... if the native in South Africa today, in any kind of school in existence, is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake.<sup>125</sup>

The Bantu Education Act of 1953 came into force on April 1 1955 and placed all schools, previously controlled by provincial administrations and missionary societies, under the central jurisdiction of the Department of Native Affairs. "The Act made the maintenance of any unregistered Bantu school (including night schools) or the conducting of any unregistered class for Africans, an offence punishable by fine or imprisonment, and it aimed at the eventual elimination of the mission schools."<sup>126</sup>

123 Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

124 Trevor Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, p. 53.

125 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

126 Edward Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*, p. 394.



All state-aided schools had to be staffed by government-trained teachers, and all schools had to be registered and use official syllabuses. Before 1955 primary school syllabi were conceived especially for black school children and varied between the provinces, whereas secondary school pupils followed the same syllabus as their white peers.<sup>127</sup>

The standard of education in black schools deteriorated after 1955; so did the general condition of grounds and facilities, while the costs for parents went up. Lodge reports that "a two shilling monthly education levy was implemented on urban households, while teacher/pupil ratios would increase, per capita expenditure would decrease, school meals services would be shut down and the abolition of caretakers' posts would make pupils responsible for school cleaning."<sup>128</sup> The yearly "per capita State expenditure on African pupils fell from R17,08 in 1953-4 to R11,56 in 1962-3."<sup>129</sup> In 1959-60, twenty-one percent of the white population were children in school. Of the black population, only fourteen percent were children in school. The per capita State expenditure for white children in school was R125 per year, compared with R70 for Indian and "coloured" children and R14 for black children.<sup>130</sup> Through taxation and levies the onus of redressing such inequities was placed on the already strained resources of the black community.

Another result of the policy that blacks must pay for their own development was the withdrawal of the 2d per child government subsidy of an African Children's Feeding Scheme. According to Can Themba, in 1956

... the Government put a tricky question to African parents: Choose, which would you rather have, expansion of African education - or school-feeding? Knowledge or food? It was a bitter choice, but the people decided in favour of school expansion, and the ½d trickle dried up."<sup>131</sup>

The introduction of Bantu Education created an outcry and a spate of protests. Many mission schools closed down in protest rather than be party to Bantu Education. Father Trevor Huddleston spoke for this lobby:

127 Tom Lodge, "The Parents' School Boycott, 1955", pp. 366-368.

128 *Ibid.*, p. 368.

129 Muriel Horrel, Race Relations as Regulated by Law in South Africa, p.120.

130 Edward Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, p. 377.

131 Can Themba, The World of Can Themba, p. 140.

There is only one path open to the African: it is the path back to tribal culture and tradition: to ethnic groups; to the reserves; to anywhere other than the privileged places habited by the master race. It is because we cannot accept such principles that we are closing St. Peters.<sup>132</sup>

The ANC attempted to run independent schools which, for legal reasons, were called "Cultural Clubs" and were run informally. According to Lodge:

The children would be taught, through a programme of songs, stories and games, the rudiments of mathematics, geography, history and general knowledge. Club leaders, supported financially by the modest fees that were charged, would be provided by the African Education Movement with cyclostyled teaching material, encouragement, and a training programme.<sup>133</sup>

The long term survival of Cultural Clubs was inhibited by lack of resources and because they were the targets of continuous police action. A 1956 newspaper article describes the fate of many of Cultural Clubs:

A small boy sits on a big heap of old school desks and debris - all that is left of the once proud Itireleng Cultural Club at Germistion. It was pulled down by Location workmen while children were still inside.... Earlier this year an application to the Bantu Education Department for it to be registered as a school was accepted ... and later withdrawn.<sup>134</sup>

The advent of Bantu Education impacted directly on black culture. The creation of mass illiteracy reduced the efficacy of the popular press as a vehicle for both cultural and political expression, simultaneously increasing the population's dependence on government controlled radio and television. Musical and dramatic activities fostered at mission schools were non-existent in the new system. Mourning the loss of "the school concert", which had been the nursery of jazz and popular entertainment for decades, Sepamla states, "the Bantu Education Act has had a terrible influence on the development of our cultural landmarks."<sup>135</sup>

Besides mission-school choirs, where tonic-solfa was taught, there was no official music education in black schools. Musical children had to teach themselves,

132 Antony Sampson, *Drum*, p. 172.

133 Tom Lodge, "The Parents' School Boycott, 1955", pp. 383-384.

134 *World*, November 17, 1956.

135 Sipho Sepamla, "Towards an African Theatre", *Rand Daily Mail*, April 2, 1981.

sometimes aided by instrumental tutor books, and glean what they could from older musicians.<sup>136</sup> Dorkay House, established by the Union of Southern African Artists in the mid-fifties, was the first (and for many decades the only) institution at which black people could obtain theoretical and practical music tuition. Most *kwela* and *mbaqanga* musicians remained musically illiterate throughout their careers: composing, work-shopping arrangements, and performing, all relied solely on aural memory. Some musicians did learn the theoretical rudiments of score reading and writing, but this always occurred in mid-career at great personal effort - it was never a childhood educational opportunity.

### The Lack of Recreation Facilities in the Townships

Not only was there a dearth of extra-curricular activities in schools, but also a general lack of sporting and entertainment facilities in the townships. Some areas even lacked a basic community hall. Sophiatown was a lot better off than most, boasting two cinemas: the Picture Palace (also known as the Balanski) and the Odin. The latter seated 1100 people and was reputedly the largest cinema in Africa. Mattera records: "It was also used as a concert hall, a church and a venue for mass political meetings by organisations such as the African National Congress, the Anti-Removals Committee, the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign Committee." Between 1948 and 1950 the owner of the Odin cinema also "opened a Harlem-USA type milk bar and juke-box saloon complete with slot-machines and peer-in movie boxes."<sup>137</sup> People who lived in other townships had to travel to central Johannesburg to see films. The most popular cinemas were the Harlem next to Faraday Station, the Casablanca in Ferreirastown, the Broadway in Fordsburg, the Good Hope and the Rio in central Johannesburg.<sup>138</sup>

The Anglican Mission in Sophiatown, headed by Father Trevor Huddleston, did a great deal to provide recreational facilities for the community. Sophiatown's only swimming pool, "which attracted children from far and wide", belonged to St. Cyprian's Primary School, and "the Anglicans also operated a small but comprehensive school library."<sup>139</sup> One of the few other libraries available to black

136 For information about music education for blacks before 1945, see: Christopher Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, pp. 34-38.

137 Don Mattera, *Memory is the Weapon*, pp. 74-75.

138 Godfrey Moloi, *My Life*, p. 72.

139 Don Mattera, *Memory is the Weapon*, pp. 78-79.

people was housed in the Bantu Men's Social Centre. Western Native Township seems to have retained unusually good community facilities. According to Mattera the township boasted:

... an up-to-date library with lots of reading and study space and neat desks and chairs; a community hall and a well-equipped youth centre. There were three football fields, two tennis courts, a cloakroom fitted with toilets and showers and a huge centrally-situated public washroom with baths and showers. ... The township also had spacious lawns and beautiful pine, fir and blue gum trees - all well tended and trimmed - and a children's park, complete with swings, see-saws, slides and rocking horses.<sup>140</sup>

In Can Themba's opinion, the lack of recreational facilities in the townships fostered alcoholism:

There's no place where a hard-singing girl might find relaxation. No place except the shebeen. So Dolly [Rathebe], like so many of us, took to drinking. Hard, heavy drinking, with a brutal vengeance against the life that crowded her among the ruffians, amid the ragamuffins.<sup>141</sup>

Along with high unemployment, inadequate educational and recreational facilities contributed significantly to the rise in violent crime experienced in Johannesburg during the late forties and early fifties. "In 1951 there were about 20 000 African teenagers in the city who were neither at school nor in regular employment."<sup>142</sup>

Contemporary newspaper articles express both concern within the black community about the rise in juvenile crime and awareness that one of the underlying causes was the lack of constructive means of spending time. (See, for example, a cartoon which appeared in Umteteli Wa Bantu on May 22, 1954, figure 3.) In 1957, a newspaper reported that "Jazz Appreciation Clubs" were "sprouting up all over the Reef townships." These were clubs at which one had to "sit and listen only" to music from (the then prestigious) three-speed gramophones. The article boasted: "This does a lot to pass the time on Sundays and on holidays, (and keeps most of us from the streets)."<sup>143</sup> An article on crime in Alexandra Township proposed similarly

140 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

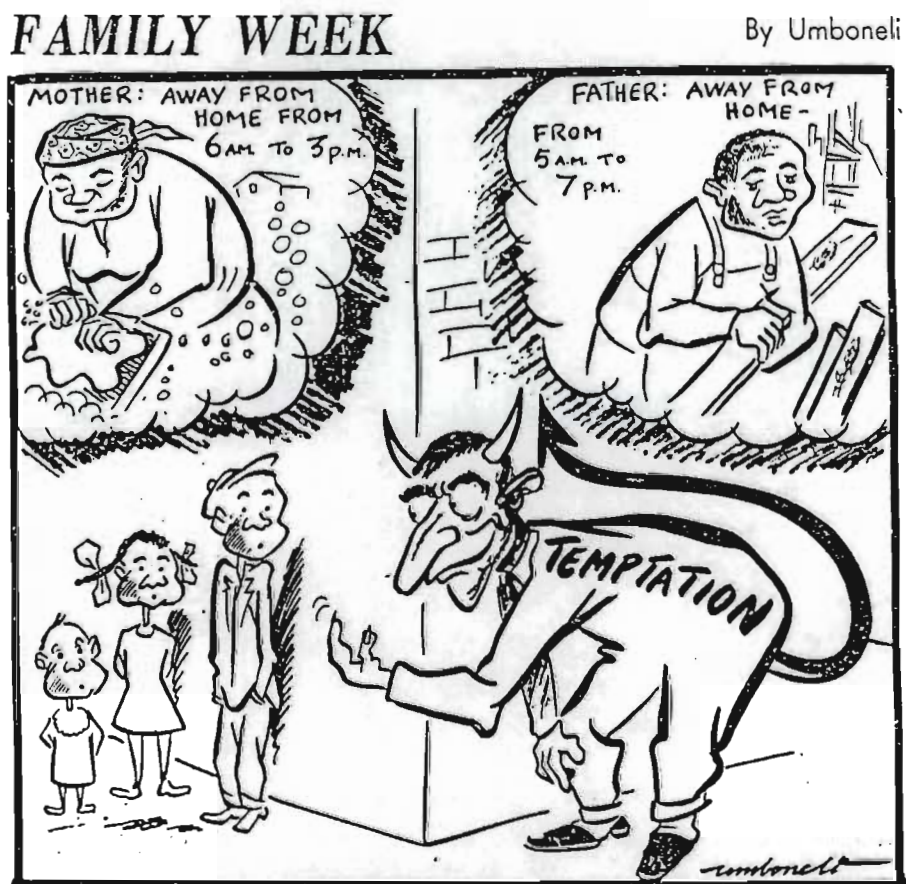
141 Can Themba, The World of Can Themba, p. 193.

142 Tom Lodge, "The Destruction of Sophiatown", p. 349.

143 Bantu World, April 20, 1957.

respectable activities, "ballroom dance lessons, indoor games and music appreciation classes", as an answer to the problem and cited examples of such projects that had already achieved some success.<sup>144</sup>

Fig. 3 Cartoon from *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, May 22, 1954.



Concerned white people also related crime to the lack of facilities. Huddleston laments, "the *tsotsi* is, very largely, the product of frustration. And much of that frustration is physical: the absence of any decent, healthy outlet for his energies in recognised sport."<sup>145</sup> Sampson points out:

Chatting with gangsters at the *Cosy Cafe*, I grew to understand the pressure towards crime. On top of the usual factors which make a juvenile delinquent was the eternal humiliation of black life in a white city - the constant rejection and exclusion. Gangster films, street-corner gambling,

144 *World*, November 11, 1962.

145 Trevor Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, p. 97.

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drinking to get drunk, were open to all. Theatres, decent houses, open spaces, libraries, travel abroad, were for Europeans only.<sup>146</sup>

The problem of escalating crime even attracted the attention of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce which recommended that "Street and Domestic Lighting in Non-European townships should receive priority attention", and that "Social Service Activities and Recreational Facilities in Non-European townships are urgently needed. Attention should be given to provision of these facilities in all townships as a counter to boredom."<sup>147</sup>

The government did not substantially act on any of the above recommendations. Its only response was the establishment of a cable radio service (known as rediffusion) in some townships which, according to the SABC, served "to provide the native with entertainment in his own home, and in this way to contribute towards the prevention of crime; [and] to contribute towards the education of the Bantu."<sup>148</sup> In practice rediffusion served only to propagate government ideology.

#### Criminal Activity in the Townships and its Effect on Music

Poverty was the single most important cause of the increase in crime and violence in black townships after the Second World War. However, the influx of people from rural areas into the cities, the failure of the government to provide for black ex-servicemen, inadequate schooling, and almost non-existent recreational facilities all contributed to the problem.

Some violence, however, resulted directly from apartheid policies. In 1957 many people were killed in "tribal" fighting in the area later named Soweto. Mattera maintains that the "local authority instituted its own commission of inquiry in view of the government's refusal to probe the tribal violence." The findings of the commission were that: four-fifths of the area's residents lived on or below the poverty line; in

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146 Antony Sampson, *Drum*, p. 99.

147 "Memorandum of Findings and Recommendations of Johannesburg Conference on the Combating of Crime". The Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, Special information circular No. 8, 1957, p. 2.

148 Annual Report of the SABC, 1952, p. 36.

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most cases there was a complete breakdown in parental authority; the police had been unable to cope with township gangs; and tribal grouping was a direct cause of the township riots. However, "Dr Verwoerd laughed at the findings and dismissed them as exaggerations inspired by liberals."<sup>149</sup>

Apartheid was responsible for township violence in other more insidious ways. Bad education and limited employment opportunities drove many youths to join gangs in order to physically survive. The relationship between the State and black people, as exemplified by police action and removals, provided a violent role model. The continual degradation of blacks within the apartheid system led to a personal sense of devaluation. Mattera explains the relationship between personal degradation and violence:

We knew no other life except brutality and bloodshed. Whether you used your fists, or weapons, you knew it was the only way to survive. ... Freedom and justice can only mean something to a boy when that boy has been taught to mean something to himself.... To have been a young street fighter or a thug or gangster ... was to be the victim of dehumanisation. We were animals trapped in cages of human indifference.<sup>150</sup>

Another way in which apartheid encouraged crime was that a black person could obtain a criminal record, even serve time in prison, simply for not carrying a pass or for being in possession of alcohol. Thus one was not risking much more punishment by participating in a burglary, and the financial rewards were greater than could be obtained legally. Sampson claims that:

... to some extent the tsotsis were the African aristocracy. They not only earned more money, and led a more comfortable life, but they were often in the first place more lively and intelligent than their law-abiding brothers.... Many, after a few years of housebreaking or shop-lifting, retired quietly from crime, with enough money to marry and have children.<sup>151</sup>

According to Sampson, the economic advantages of some gang activities spread into the wider community. The Americans, a gang from Sophiatown, were known as "the

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149 Don Mattera, *Memory is the Weapon*, p. 143.

150 *Ibid.* p. 98.

151 Antony Sampson, *Drum*, p. 99.

African Robin Hoods" because they robbed rich whites to benefit poor blacks. Stolen foodstuffs and other goods were sold at reduced prices in the townships.<sup>152</sup>

Apartheid affected the relationship between township residents and the police, and diverted the attention of the police from real crime to the upkeep of petty legislation such as the pass and liquor laws. Sampson points out that the "police tended to regard all blacks as equally savage" which was "as convenient for the gangsters as it was inconvenient for respectable citizens."<sup>153</sup> Zimmerman reports a large discrepancy in opinions about crime in Alexandra between township residents and the police. Residents reported a very high incidence of crime, whilst the police claimed a low crime rate stating that "the Natives are well behaved and the only real evil is the existence of liquor dens."<sup>154</sup> A Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce memorandum found that "there is a lack of sufficient patrols in Non-European townships" and, with regard to Police training, stated:

... greater emphasis should be laid on the importance of good relations between the Police Force and Non-Europeans. Wrong treatment is causing friction between the Non-European population and the South African Police, and if they were dealt with on a more humanitarian basis, greater co-operation would be engendered.<sup>155</sup>

Even if the police had been genuinely concerned with the prevention of crime, they were not equipped to deal with the size and professionalism of township gangs. The Berliners, for example, "numbered about two to three hundred, owned more guns than the local police station, and they used them effectively."<sup>156</sup>

The names of gangs said much about their projected image and intentions. Sophiatown produced a gang known as the Americans who were highly influenced by Chicago gangster movies. Gang members drove large American cars, dressed in slick American-style clothing and even changed their speech patterns. Some gangs named themselves after "the enemy" as portrayed by the media (for example: the Russians, the Gestapo, and the Berliners), other gangs chose descriptive titles indicating power and violence such as the Stonebreakers and the Spoilers.

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152 *Ibid.*, p. 107-108.

153 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

154 Zea Zimmerman, "A History of Alexandra Township", p 11.

155 "Memorandum of Findings and Recommendations of Johannesburg Conference on the Combating of Crime". The Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, Special information circular No. 8, 1957. p. 2.

156 Don Mattera, *Memory is the Weapon*, p. 101.



Contemporary newspapers ran feature articles lamenting the increase in violent crime.<sup>157</sup> In an article entitled "Victims of the Knifemen," Nakasa reports "In this city there are hoodlums who slash and stab and beat just for the hell of it!"<sup>158</sup> Mattera reflects this lack of respect for human life from the perpetrator's perspective:

I carried a Browning pistol and often fired it without concern that someone could be killed or injured. We never thought of death; only of making names for ourselves.... That he had killed, that I had killed, will remain an eternal indictment against us. But it is an indictment which society of that time as well as of today must share.<sup>159</sup>

Occasionally titles or texts of musical recordings referred to topical violent acts. For instance Peter Makana's "Bank Snatch" was, a newspaper claimed, "inspired by the incessant bank robberies in Jo'burg."<sup>160</sup> A press release about "Black Car" by Sparks Nyembe stated: "This year's most fabulous story of the notorious 'Black Car' that mowed down pedestrians as it ran between Moroka and Naledi in Soweto is vocally retold with Sparks Nyembe's rhythmic accompaniment. A strong warning is given to those who perchance may fall victim to the car."<sup>161</sup> The most famous example, however, is the musical King Kong which was based on the violent life and death of a boxing champion.

The domination of the townships by violent gangs had a direct effect on musicians and their music. Musicians were particularly vulnerable to *tsotsi* intimidation because their profession required a great deal of night travel. Barney Rachabane spent two months in hospital after being stabbed one night on his way to a "gig" in Cape Town.<sup>162</sup> That it was unsafe to go out at night threatened not only the personal safety of musicians but also their livelihood: much of their potential audience was not prepared to risk attending concerts. Gangs started to make attacks at concerts and ordinary people began to fear incidents at their destination as well while as travelling. Kippie Moeketsi remembered such an incident at the BMSC in 1948:

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157 For example, "Alexandra gangs: The 'Spoilers'," Drum, October 1956; and "Why Taximen are terrified", Drum, April 1958.

158 Nat Nakasa, The World of Nat Nakasa, p. 34.

159 Don Mattera, Memory is the Weapon, pp. 104-107

160 World, April 26, 1958.

161 World, July 19, 1963.

162 Barney Rachabane. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 20.4.84.

Tsotsis came, man. There were about seventeen, carrying tomahawks, and chopping everybody in the hall for no reason. After they had finished with the audience, they came onto the stage while we stood there glued, frightened. They then began chopping up our instruments and just then we ran for our lives with the thugs in hot pursuit.<sup>163</sup>

Nathan Mdllele explains the results of such attacks:

... in many shows to come the old people would stay away. It meant that the life-blood of show business would dry up because if the halls are left to the tsotsis alone, their money would not be able to support musicians and artists. ... it became fashionable, when you went dancing to "take your knife and leave your wife". ... The innocent patrons were scared stiff to go to shows with the result that there were more and more flops. The losers, of course, were the promoters, the singers, the musicians and the good people in the audiences.<sup>164</sup>

Besides harassing patrons and disrupting concerts, gangsters also intimidated musicians directly. Both Miriam Makeba and Nathan Mdllele report being forced to repeat numbers over and over for the amusement of gun or knife wielding *tsotsis*.<sup>165</sup> Piliso remembers that *tsotsis* would not allow a show to end until "Tomatie Sous" was played. He also recalls the effect this number had on the gangsters: "they were emotionally absorbed. They were taken away dancing to the rhythm of this 'Tomatie Sous' - so much that there was actually no fight!"<sup>166</sup> In this case particularly, the taste preference of the *tsotsis* moulded the growth of a musical style: African Jazz subverted the American Swing preferred by an older generation and a more law-abiding class of people.

Gangs often "adopted" bands, acting as protectors and patrons. Zacks Nkosi reported a brawl at a concert in Alexandra: "But they didn't touch us musicians at all. As The City Jazz Nine, we played at parties organised by the Msomis - and they paid us good money, £250." Often "protection" of a particular band entailed the disruption of a rival band's concert, or violent reaction to disturbances of their elected band's performances. Musicians who refused the patronage of gangsters put themselves at great risk. Jake Lerole titled one of his recordings "Highlands North Special" after the

163 Kippie Moeketsi, "Roll 'em Morolong", p. 71.

164 Nathan Mdllele, "20 years in Show Business," *Bantu World*, June 19, 1954.

165 *Drum*, February 1961; and Makeba, *Makeba: My Story*, p. 50-51.

166 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 24.1.84.

white suburb where he sought refuge because people "used to harass me, many people used to fight for my services or what. This band wanted me to be with that one and so my life wasn't good. Others, they were very jealous. There was a point where I was supposed to be knifed to death."<sup>167</sup>

### The Cultural Milieu which Spawned Kwela

This exploration of *kwela's* cultural context supports the school of thought which embraces a broad definition of culture.<sup>168</sup> According to Koch culture includes:

... not only the products of specialised intellectual work (books, philosophy, painting, etc), but also the general social activity whereby all men and women give creative expression to the material conditions that surround them. In this sense culture is the way in which social groups "handle" their experience of living in a set of objective conditions and thereby create a corresponding set of attitudes, symbols, values and mores.<sup>169</sup>

*Kwela* was an aspect of the cultural response of black South Africans to the grinding poverty of township life. Township culture consisted of an aggregate of coping mechanisms devised by the urban poor to deal with economic exploitation, social deprivation, political injustice, and still maintain a sense of personal value and find meaning in life.

A fluid and ambiguous relationship existed between township inhabitants and their cultural vessels. Shebeens were seen as "dens of iniquity", but their right to exist provoked a long political struggle. Tsotsis were simultaneously feared and admired for their ability to work the system. Musicians were revered as cultural heroes, but were often rejected as respectable members of the community. In reality, the cultural responses to the hardships of township life were often sordid, cruel, and degrading. However, in the search for value, meaning and identity, township culture was frequently romanticised and glorified.

167 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

168 See: Eddie Koch, "Without Visible Means of Subsistence", pp. 154-155; Kelwyn Sole, "The Study of South African Working-Class Culture," pp. 64-78.

169 Eddie Koch, "Without Visible Means of Subsistence", p. 154.

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In an attempt to contextualise *kwela* music within the general milieu of township culture in the 1950s, I shall explore two of the most notable areas of cultural response to urban conditions and discuss the relationship of *kwela* to both. The first is based on a locale, the shebeen; the second on an activity, *tsotsism*.

### Wine, Women and Song: Shebeen Culture and Kwela Music

Shebeens provided the cultural spaces which nurtured the development of a complex web of relationships between alcohol, women and music. Ambivalent bonds of mutual dependency linked each of the three elements to each other and to the communities shebeens served.

Shebeens came into being as a primary response of women to economic hardship. Urban myth contains countless tales of women who travelled to Johannesburg from their farms to seek husbands they have not heard from for years. On arrival they discover that their husbands have taken common law wives, are alcoholics and incapable of earning a living, or are untraceable. These women then had to devise a way of supporting themselves and frequently their children. Typically the only legal employment available was domestic service or doing the laundry of Johannesburg's northern suburbs. The former was difficult for a single mother as children were not permitted on her employee's premises and the latter was very poorly paid. Such pressures forced many women into making a livelihood in "low-life" culture, as shebeen queens, prostitutes or female *tsotsis*. Brewing and selling alcohol was one of the most lucrative ways of making a living. Thus, the role of shebeens for women was to provide empowerment and financial independence.

The role of women in shebeen culture was more complex. Shebeen queens were "cultural brokers" in that they provided the physical venue of the shebeen, brewed the liquor, and often hired the musicians.<sup>170</sup> Women were also ordinarily the organisers of "nice-time" parties: extended social occasions centred on music, dancing and the consumption of large quantities of alcohol.<sup>171</sup> The atmosphere of a "nice-time" party

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170 See Mary Rörich, "Shebeens, Slumyards and Sophiatown", p. 85.

171 A "nice-time" was the term generally used for such events in the fifties. By the sixties the term "gumba-gumba" was more popular.

can be sensed from the invitation card to such an event organised by the shebeen queen of one of Sophiatown's most famous shebeens, the Back o' the Moon:

HALLO! HALLO!! HALLO!!!  
A GRAND NICE TIME PARTY  
will be given by  
ESMERELADA PHAKANE, known as FATSY  
at Number 153, Gerty St. Sophiatown  
On Friday 1st, Sat 2nd, Sun 3rd April 1952  
Plenty Stag Foam and Juice, come and enjoy.  
Admission 6/-<sup>172</sup>

However, although women essentially created shebeens, a service much utilised by the community, attitudes towards women involved in shebeen culture were generally negative. There was great polarisation between (what in popular modern parlance are termed) the "madonnas" and the "whores" and a very fine line to tread between the two roles. Dikobe's novel "The Marabi Dance" deals with a dilemma central to the lives of many women trying to make sense of their predicament within the urban context: the temptations and attractions of shebeen culture versus "traditional" values and the need to be respected within the community.<sup>173</sup> The conflicts of changing moral values are exposed in the words of the *kwela* composition "78 Patha" performed by Spokes Mashiyane and the Four Lads:

*Umntakwethu wangishiya ngedwa ekhaya, wabaleka. [x2]*  
*Uhambe washiya abazali bakhe. [x2]*  
*Mama thina sizothini ngaye lomntwana onje? [x2]*  
*Uhambe washiya abazali bakhe. [x2]*

*Uyise nonina bamlanda waphinda wabaleka. [x2]*  
*Uhambe washiya abazali bakhe. [x2]*  
*Mama thina sizothini ngaye lomntwana onje? [x2]*

(My dear one left me home alone, and she ran away. [x2]  
She went and left her parent. [x2]  
Mother what shall we say about a child like this?  
She went and left her parent. [x2]

Her father and mother brought her back, but she ran off again. [x2]  
She went and left her parent. [x2]  
Mother what shall we say, about a child like this? [x2])<sup>174</sup>

172 Antony Sampson, *Drum*, p. 77.

173 See Modikwe Dikobe, The Marabi Dance.

174 Translated by Concord Nkabinde.

The cultural role of alcohol is even more ambivalent than that of women. Perhaps the most negative aspect of shebeen culture was its encouragement of alcoholism. La Hausse quotes an anonymous contemporary writer as saying that shebeens provided "an excellent way of escaping from the realities of everyday life. In a haze of whisky, one could easily forget the rising cost of living, the embarrassing rentals and the difficulties of feeding a family."<sup>175</sup> Shebeens themselves were obviously not a cause of alcoholism: they merely provided easily accessible drinking venues. Accountability for the high alcoholism rate must be accepted by those social and political structures which made black urban existence such a struggle. In his short story "The Bottom of the Bottle", Can Themba captures the sense of futility and frustration which drove many to alcoholism:

For a moment, as I looked at those young men around me, the luxury of a mild flood of conscience swept over me. They had all at one time or another had visions: to escape their environment; to oppose and overcome their context; to evade and out-distance their destiny by hard work and sacrifice, by education and native ability, by snatching from the table of occupation some of the chance crumbs of the high-chaired culture. Lord, it struck me what a treasury of talent I had here in front of me. Must they bury their lives with mine like this under a load of Sophiatown bottles?<sup>176</sup>

Alcoholism a particularly common amongst musicians. The explanation most continuously offered,<sup>177</sup> is that musicians were driven to drink by the enormous frustrations which beset those trying to function professionally under the burgeoning onslaught of apartheid laws during the fifties and sixties.<sup>178</sup> Barney Rachabane explains:

... Lot of people drinking, lot of people died of drinking. I stopped fifteen years ago. I used to drink a lot man! It was frustrating - No money, no jobs but you got this art with you. It's frustrating, you end up in the shebeens, sit there all night because you don't know what's on tomorrow morning.<sup>179</sup>

Besides beer and spirits, shebeens also sold dangerous "concoctions" designed to provide a "quick kick". The most notorious of these "concoctions" was Barberton (also called buck-shot or *mamba*)<sup>180</sup> which, according to Can Themba was:

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175 Paul La Hausse, *Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts*, p. 58.

176 Can Themba, *The World of Can Themba*, p. 228.

177 For example: Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91; Ntemi Piliso. Author's interview, 4.9.90; Barney Rachabane. Author's interview, 16.9.89.

178 See Chapter V: The Political context of *kwela*.

179 Barney Rachabane. Author's interview, 16.9.89.

180 Moloi, *My Life*, p. 122; Can Themba, *The World of Can Themba*, p. 138.

... made of bread, yeast and sugar. Its main characteristic is that it is "raw" (swiftly prepared) liquor. One of its commonest effects is against the skin which peels off and sallows. People get red lips and purulent black pimples on the face. But it has made those who have drunk it for a long time raging madmen, especially in fights.<sup>181</sup>

Barberton was laced with methylated spirits which resulted in madness and finally in death. Speaking of Barberton Elias Lerole maintained, "that one - it kills. If you drink it for six months you die."<sup>182</sup> His brother Jake said, "You die that's all. It takes them quite long time before it gets them.... Barberton - it's bad bad bad!"<sup>183</sup> Recording as the Black Mambazos, the Lerole brothers produced a *kwela* number titled "Iya Bulala I Nice Time" which, literally translated, means "Nice Time kills".

Musicians and their music linked with women and alcohol on various levels in the formation of shebeen culture. Primarily musicians were financially dependent on shebeen queens and the consumption of alcohol to provide employment opportunities. The corollary was, however, also true: many musicians became addicted to alcohol and drank their earnings away in shebeens. On a different level alcohol, and its affect on relationships between men and women, form the subject matter of many compositions. The lyrics of "Ishayisa Mfana", performed by the Skylarks with Miriam Makeba and Spokes Mashiyane, exemplify a typical scenario:

*Uhlez' uphuz' utshwala nje, ngifun' imali yami. [x2]*

*Iph' imali yami? Leth' imali yami. [x2]*

*Ulibele ngotsotsi bathi, "Huzet, Huzet, Huzet?" [x2]*

*Shayisa mfana, leth' imali yami. [x2]*

(As you sit there drinking beer, I want my money. [x2]

Where is my money? Bring my money. [x2]

You are busy with tsotsis as they say, "How's it, How's it, How's it?" [x2]

Over here boy, bring my money [x2])<sup>184</sup>

The spoken introduction and song text of "Time Square" by Peter Makana [Cassette B:3, Appendix II:1] illustrate further treatment, within the *kwela* repertoire, of typical problems between drunken husbands and their wives.

181 Can Themba, *The World of Can Themba*, p. 139.

182 Elias Lerole. Author's interview, 16.2.90.

183 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

184 Translated by Concord Nkabinde.

The importance of alcohol in the lives of *kwela* musicians is reflected in the frequency with which mention of liquor is made in *kwela* recordings. Some examples of alcohol-based *kwela* titles are: "Skokiaan"<sup>185</sup> and "Skomba"<sup>186</sup>, both names of alcoholic concoctions; "Phuza Spokes"<sup>187</sup> meaning "drink Spokes"; and "Gaya Ntombi"<sup>188</sup> meaning "brew some beer lady". The short spoken introductions which open many *kwela* recordings are often humorous sketches of drunken behaviour. "Manyathela" by Spokes Mashiyane provides a comic example:

*Oh, vele nguwena Spokes, Kunjani?  
Hayi kuya lunga khehla.  
Unlaphi?  
Hayi ngivela kamama ngizi dledla izinto zakithini.  
Awu, that is why ingathi nibathathu nje.  
Eyi sibathathu nje, sishaya ne mpondo zakitheni.  
Awungishaye  
Awu kanti uya kwazi. Awu bashayele eshisayo.  
Wozane bafana siba shayele, simkhombise.*

(Oh! it's you Spokes, how are you?  
It's all right old man.  
Where are you from.  
I am from Mama's place. I've had some liquor there.  
Is that the reason why you seem like three people?  
We are three indeed, we have got our horns as well.  
Play me something.  
You know how to play this. Come play a hot number.  
Come boys lets play something for him.)<sup>189</sup>

Perhaps the most important cultural function fulfilled by shebeens was that they provided for the symbolic enactment and expression of identity. Largely as a result of their rather romanticised portrayal by the fifties generation of Drum journalists,<sup>190</sup> shebeens (shebeen queens, alcohol and music) came to represent township culture and identity.

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185 By Spokes Mashiyane and his Rhythm.

186 By Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Bright Boys.

187 By Spokes Mashiyane.

188 By John Pilane.

189 Translated by Zami Duze.

190 For example: Casey "Kid" Motsisi, "Kid Hangover", Casey & Co., p. 14; Can Themba, "Let the People Drink", The World of Can Themba, p. 158.



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### The Relationship between Tsotsis and Music in the Formation of Township Culture

*Tsotsis* and gangsterism were romanticised by Drum journalists in much the same manner as shebeen culture. In some ways *tsotsis*' activities did materially benefit township residents (for instance stolen goods were made available at low prices),<sup>191</sup> although more generally *tsotsis* worsened the quality of most ordinary people's lives. Nevertheless some gangs, particularly the "Americans" in Sophiatown, were admired for their ability to "work the white system" and for their sense of style. *Tsotsis* challenged the status quo in two ways: their slick urban sophistication contested re-tribalization and their criminal activities defied law and order. Albeit unconsciously, the Drum journalists glamorised the anti-establishment activities of gangsters in the formation of a black urban identity. In retrospect Bloke Modisane remarked:

My characters were invested with a contempt for the law, their efforts were directed towards a flaunting of the law; my heroes were social maladjusts in a society where heroism is measured by acts of defiance against law and order. I did not then recognise the sociological significance of what I was doing, that with a central idea behind them I could use my stories as a reflection or a study of our society.<sup>192</sup>

For their refusal to bow to the social dictates of apartheid, *tsotsis* became cultural anti-heroes. Chapman points out that "Modisane's *tsotsi* recalls an ancient precedent: the trickster-figure of folklore, where guile provides a psychic escape from convention while acting as a warning of anarchy. In the 'city experience' the older lessons are lost, and the new code demands the triumph of the superior cheat."<sup>193</sup>

In their search for a non-tribal urban image, Sophiatown *tsotsis* drew heavily on popular American culture. The main Sophiatown gang called themselves the "Americans" and were strongly influenced by Hollywood's gangster movies.<sup>194</sup> Perhaps the most obvious American cultural import was dress style. According to Huddleston, the word "*tsotsi* is a corruption of 'Zoot suit'", the most distinctive aspect of which were "tight-fitting drain-pipe trousers". Moloi claims that at the end of the Second World War a narrow-bottomed trouser style became fashionable. He remembers:

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191 See earlier in this Chapter, p. 161.

192 Michael Chapman, ed., "More Than Telling a Story", p. 205.

193 *Ibid.*, p. 201.

194 See Antony Sampson, Drum, p. 101.

...boys looked good in their black *tsotsi*, white shirt out, black-and-white shoes and a straw hat. The Panama. The girls looked good in their white wedged-heel shoes, red or blue German print dresses with white stripes around the hem and neck. This style was known as kalamazoo of *nwazisa*, later *seshoeshoe*, and was worn with berets or Mexican straw hats. That was the time of the Jim Jam Jive and the Jitterbug.<sup>195</sup>

By the fifties this style was associated with *tsotsis*. Sampson describes the typical "*tsosti* rig" as "very narrow 'sixteen-bottom' trousers, a long floppy coat, a bright scarf tucked into it, and a slouch hat."<sup>196</sup>

In the minds of many, pennywhistlers were closely associated with *tsotsis*. Ntemi Piliso, for instance, declared, "These boys were muggers at night but sat around during the day playing penny whistles and looking innocent".<sup>197</sup> White entertainer, musician and satirist, Jeremy Taylor, recorded a composition (with Lemmy Special Mabaso) entitled "Tsotsi Style" in which a *tsotsi*, recently released from prison, decides to "go straight" and earn his living by making *kwela* recordings. The text of the last verse is:

"So when I got out I was freezing  
there wasn't much I could do  
so I bought a Bb penny whistle  
learnt to play a tune or two  
very soon I was making records  
for Gallotone, Africa  
Making legalised money  
as a top penny whistle star  
soon I was swinging in  
Tsotsi style ..."<sup>198</sup>

Pennywhistlers themselves fostered the image of their close association with *tsotsis*. The spoken introduction to "Tom Hark", for example, portrays a group of street gamblers who whisk out their pennywhistles on the appearance of a police van as though, as Jake Lerole explains, they "are just innocent youngsters".<sup>199</sup> *Kwela* musicians also frequently used a township slang language known as *tsotsitaal* or *flytaal* in their spoken introductions, in song texts, and as titles. The spoken introductions of

195 Godfrey Moloi, *My Life*, p. 12.

196 Antony Sampson, *Drum*, p. 98.

197 David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, p. 156.

198 Muff Anderson, *Music in the the Mix*, p. 39.

199 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90; See also Chapter II pp. 55-56.

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both Elias Lerole's "Tom Hark" [Cassette A:11, Appendix II:3] and Peter Makana's "Time Square" [Cassette B:3, Appendix II:1], are in *tsotsitaal*.

In reality, none of the pennywhistlers I interviewed led a second existence as a *tsotsi*. In townships during the fifties, writers, musicians, and the image-conscious breed of *tsotsis*, bonded together in a co-search for identity. Each group respected the other's role in the formation of an incipient fringe urban culture, and cross-referenced their activities in an effort to form a cohesive alternative to the cultural boxes being created for black people by the State.

## CHAPTER V

### THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF KWELA MUSIC

In this chapter I explore the relationship between *kwela* musicians, their music, and South African politics of the fifties. I set the scene with a description of the main political events which occurred during the fifties, tracing the onslaught of apartheid and the reactions of anti-apartheid forces. The main body of this chapter is devoted to the ways in which certain apartheid laws directly effected musicians and their music. The legislation considered is: the Liquor Act, the Native (Urban Areas) Act, the Group Areas Act, the Separate Amenities Act, and the Immorality Act. This section is prefaced with an examination of the relationship between township residents, particularly musicians, and the police because the latter were responsible for the enforcement of apartheid's "unjust laws". Finally, I explore the response of *kwela* musicians to their socio-political context, and examine the ways in which they used their music to reflect, make sense of, or escape their socio-political circumstances. I investigate the ways in which *kwela* was used to make overt political statements, and the ways in which the music, either covertly or unintentionally, had a political effect.

#### The Political Climate of the Fifties

The political atmosphere of the fifties was dominated by a continuous altercation between the state and the people. With the coming to power of the Afrikaner Nationalists in 1948, racial segregation, exploitation and injustice, which had until that point been merely common practice, became law. The political response of the black population to this legislation characterised, reflected, and perhaps even defined the essence of what later became known as "the fifties era". Figure 1 tables the laws and events marking the onslaught of apartheid, and the response of anti-apartheid forces to these measures.

Black political mobilisation during the fifties was based on the premise that eventually justice and fairness would prevail. Leaders like Chief Luthuli believed that through steadfast renunciation of apartheid legislation, white people could be convinced of its injustice and be persuaded to make changes on moral grounds.

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Throughout the decade the ANC espoused non-violent protest, a method inspired by Mahatma Gandhi.

In January 1952 the ANC called for the repeal of six unjust laws. The government refused and June 26 saw the beginning of one of the most successful protests in the history of black South African organised resistance. It became known as the Defiance Campaign. The unjust laws concerned were: the pass and curfew laws; the stock limitation regulations; the Group Areas and Suppression of Communism Acts of 1950; and the Bantu Authorities and Separated Representation of Voters Acts of 1951.

During the next five months eight thousand people defied the unjust laws and went to prison for one to three weeks. They walked into prohibited areas without passes and left after curfew. They "travelled in European railway coaches, entered stations by European entrances. Everywhere they marched quietly and did what they were told by the police, singing hymns with their thumbs up."<sup>1</sup> Acts of defiance were disciplined, peaceful and confident, for as Nkosi explains:

It was a time of infinite hope and possibility; it seemed not extravagant in the least to predict then that the Nationalist Government would soon collapse, if not from the pressure of the extra-parliamentary opposition, certainly from the growing volume of unenforceable laws.<sup>2</sup>

However, early in 1953 parliament passed two laws designed to crush the Defiance Campaign: the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Public Safety Act. The latter gave the government the power to declare a "state of emergency", during which government appointees could override existing laws and impose penalties, whilst those arrested would have no recourse to a court of law. The Criminal Law Amendment Act made passive resistance illegal. Civil disobedience, particularly the breaking of a law as an act of protest, became a criminal offence. Conviction could result in penalties as severe as a fine of up to £500, five years imprisonment, ten lashes, or a combination of two of the above.

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1 Antony Sampson, *Drum*, p. 134.

2 Lewis Nkosi, *Home and Exile and Other Selections*, p. 23.

Fig. 1. Political Events of the fifties and early sixties.

<b>Establishment of Apartheid</b>		<b>Anti-Apartheid Politics</b>
Nationalist Party wins elections	1948	
Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act. Eiselen Commission on "Education for Natives as a Separate Race"	1949	Youth League Programme of Action adopted by ANC
Population Registration Act Immorality Act Group Areas Act Suppression of Communism Act	1950	Bus Boycotts on the Reef
Bantu Authorities Act Separated Representation of Voters Act	1951	
Abolition of Passes Act Native Laws Amendment Act	1952	ANC Defiance Campaign Chief Luthuli elected president of the ANC Congress of Democrats and Coloured People's Organisation formed
Criminal Law Amendment Act Public Safety Act Bantu Education Act Reservation of Separate Amenities Act	1953	Launch of Multiracial Liberal Party
Natives Resettlement Act	1954	Adoption of the "Women's Charter" and launch of the Federation of South African Women
Start of Sophiatown removals 156 activists charged with treason	1955	Congress of the People adopts the "Freedom Charter"
"Coloureds" lose the vote	1956	Treason Trial of 156 Activists starts
Start of the Treason Trial	1957	Alexandra Bus Boycott
Verwoerd becomes Prime Minister	1958	
Bantu Self-Government Act and establishment of homelands	1959	PAC formed under Robert Sobukwe
Establishment of Radio Bantu by the SABC	1960	Anti-Pass campaign Sharpeville shootings
South Africa becomes a Republic Unlawful Organisations Act Liquor Amendment Act	1961	End of Treason Trial ANC and PAC banned
<b>Independence</b> of the Transkei	1963	Rivonia Trial

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Although the Defiance Campaign was effectively terminated by these laws, the ANC had become a mass movement during its course: by the campaign's close the ANC boasted a membership of approximately 100 000.<sup>3</sup> The spirit of resistance was not crushed and throughout 1953 and 1954 civil disobedience "was replaced for the time being by boycotts of one form or another, demonstrations, and non-cooperation, all technically within the confines of the law."<sup>4</sup>

In 1955 three thousand people from all over the country converged on Kliptown to attend the Congress of the People. On June 26, exactly three years after the start of the Defiance Campaign, the Freedom Charter was tabled. The government responded on December 5, when 156 people were arrested and charged with treason. Mattera recalls: "The high treason charge set the country agog with wagging tongues and the running of frightened feet. Never in the history of this land did the word treason evoke so much debate."<sup>5</sup>

The opening of the Treason Trial, in January 1957, coincided with one of the primary subsistence protests of the fifties, the Alexandra Bus Boycott. The boycott was sparked by a penny rise in the single bus fare from Alexandra to the centre of Johannesburg. This rise would have substantially increased the financial strain experienced by township dwellers, for transport was already the second highest expense on the average family budget. However, "it was not simply the cost of transport that was an issue in bus boycotts. In 1943 the complaints of Alexandra commuters had included such matters as routing, overcrowding, departures from schedule, danger, unsheltered terminals, and rude staff. Fourteen years later there had not been much improvement."<sup>6</sup>

On January 7 fifteen thousand people walked nine miles to work in Johannesburg. Boycotts also started in Sophiatown and Pretoria where there was a similar fare increase on buses run by the same company, PUTCO. Altogether sixty thousand people stopped using PUTCO buses. Sympathy boycotts occurred in other places which had neither fare increases nor used PUTCO buses. According to Lodge, the boycott "received a reasonably favourable press. There was considerable sympathy for

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3 Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p. 75.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 68.

5 Don Mattera, *Memory is the Weapon*, p. 128.

6 Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, pp. 155-156.

the boycotters among the white community", and many people offered lifts to the walkers. In order to get to work "the boycotters had to cross nine miles of white residential areas along a busy main road. For a while the black people of Alexandra had become visible to the affluent northern suburbs of Johannesburg." The police harassed boycotters and lift-givers as much as possible: they stopped cars carrying boycotters, "subjecting them to checks on minor traffic regulations. Five hundred people (mainly illegal taxi operators) were detained after breaching such rules."<sup>7</sup>

The importance and extent of the Alexandra Bus Boycott is reflected in the fact that it inspired two pennywhistle recordings, for it was extremely unusual for *kwela* recordings to be directly political. Significantly, these recordings, "Azikhwelwa" and "Alexandra Special", were made by a "pick-team" called the Alexandra Casbahs so that individual musicians could not be identified. "Azikhwelwa" contains descriptions of the boycott in a spoken introduction in English, and in spoken sections in Zulu during the music:

Ladies and Gentlemen, it was on Monday morning the 7th of January 1957 when everybody was shouting Azikhwelwa! This was in Alexandra, Sophiatown and Selbourne in Pretoria. Now here are the Alexandra Casbahs walking nine miles into town playing their flutes.

*Uma uhamba eLouis Botha, Ungabon' izimanga.  
Izicathulo ziphelile.  
Abantu bakhumul' amabhantshi.  
Kuyashisa bahamba ngezinyawo, bay' emsebenzini.  
amabhas' awahambi, Izimoto azihambi.*

(When you walk down Louis Botha, you could see wonders.  
Shoes are worn out.  
People are taking their jackets off.  
It is hot, and people are walking on foot to work.  
There are no buses, no motor cars.)<sup>8</sup>

*Azikhwelwa! Ha di Palangwe! Ha di Palangwe! Azikhwelwa!*<sup>9</sup>

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 160-164.

8 Translated by Concord Nkabinde.

9 "Azikhwelwa!" "Ha di Palangwe!" translate as "do not ride" in Zulu and Sotho respectively. "Azikhwelwa!" has since come to mean "stayaway".



A conversation which takes place in *tsotsitaal* during "Alexandra Special" reveals the boycott experience from a different perspective:

woman: *Ek sê bra Thiza, E bra Thiza hoor hier man. Asseblief man bra Thiza.*

(I say brother Thiza, Hey brother Thiza listen here man. Please man brother Thiza.)

man: *Ja, Ja, Ja - vertel ons man.*

(Yes, Yes, Yes - tell us man.)

woman: *Hoor hier man, he mfo! Is alle potoutjies. Mense dak skaars met busse, skaars met taxis. Is shandis wat al die braastis. Is ander jiet by township.*

(Listen here man, Hey brother! everything is a mess. People go with no buses, no taxis. The whole thing is mixed up. Another mess in the township.)<sup>10</sup>

The boycott lasted three months, generating much hardship and suffering - but it was successful and stands as one of the most effective mass actions in South Africa's history. Can Themba explains the empowering effect of the boycott:

What was actually happening was that the African ... was indeed discovering that he has a way to make himself heard. This boycott which was almost thrust upon me in my economic lot by the gods, has shown me a weapon I have not until now dreamt of!<sup>11</sup>

The boycott "served to bring home to people the extreme poverty of Alexandra residents, the urgent need for a revision of wages of Africans, and a realisation that efficient and cheap transport for workers living so far from the city was the responsibility of the white electorate."<sup>12</sup> June 1957 saw the introduction of the Native Services Transport Bill which proposed giving the Minister of Transport the power to "increase the levy paid by employers for the transport of their African workers."<sup>13</sup>

10 Translated by Concord Nkabinde.

11 Can Themba, *The World of Can Themba*, p. 128.

12 Zea Zimmerman, "A History of Alexandra Township", p. 12.

13 Edward Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*, p. 398.

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The Alexandra Bus Boycott was one of the last effective occurrences of the mass passive resistance which characterised the fifties *Zeitgeist*. Nkosi explains:

The fifties were important to us as a decade because finally they spelled out the end of one kind of South Africa and foreshadowed the beginning of another. Sharpeville was the culmination of a political turmoil during a decade in which it was still possible in South Africa to pretend to the viability of extra-parliamentary opposition.<sup>14</sup>

The pivotal year was 1960. On March 26 police fired upon an anti-pass demonstration in Sharpeville killing sixty seven people and injuring a hundred and eighty six. The era of non-violent protest was over. A "state of emergency" was declared on March 30 and widespread arrests were made. Radio Bantu was established, tightening the State's ideological and cultural control over the black population. In 1961 the Treason Trial ended with an acquittal for all the accused. However, the ANC and PAC were quickly banned under the Unlawful Organisations Act. In 1963 Nelson Mandela, with other key ANC leaders, was found guilty at the Rivonia Trial and sentenced to life imprisonment.

### **Direct Political Oppression and its Effect on the Development of Kwela Music**

Certain apartheid laws disrupted the lives of *kwela* musicians to such an extent that their creative output was altered, even completely curtailed. Apartheid legislation impacted directly in that it affected or destroyed the ability of musicians to earn a living through their music. This mostly occurred through the limitation of access to performance spaces, or by making it so difficult to use those spaces that both musicians and audiences eventually gave up. The remainder of this chapter is concerned with the ways in which particular laws impacted upon the lives of musicians and affected their music.

The physical enforcement of apartheid laws was largely accomplished by the police force. Therefore the threat, and effects of, police action were a constant menace in the professional lives of *kwela* musicians. As a general rule black people were harassed rather than protected by the police. Verbal and physical abuse was commonplace; as Mattera reports, it was sometimes taken to extremes:

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14 Lewis Nkosi, Home and Exile and Other Selections, p. 8.

Black women arrested for not having the night pass special were taken for rides to lonely spots by black and white policemen for sex in exchange for release.... It was also common to see African men being grabbed by their trousers in full view of their wives and children and ordered to produce their passes.<sup>15</sup>

Not surprisingly, therefore, the attitude in the townships towards policemen was one of fear and loathing. According to Mattera, children spat when policemen passed, and on occasion policemen were actually killed, "victims of crowds angered by these officers' callous disregard for human dignity."<sup>16</sup>

✂ Musicians were particularly vulnerable to police intimidation because their profession required that they travel at night, to localities requiring different passes, and often that they perform where illegal alcohol was sold. Many musicians report being stopped by police and forced to perform, either to prove their identity or simply for the latter's gratification and entertainment.<sup>17</sup> Duzi Magwaza recalls: "The SAP [South African Police] used to come grab us, take us to the police station. Let us play "Skokiaan" for three four hours for nothing."<sup>18</sup> Police intimidation of musicians was far from new: Ballantine reports instances of such harassment during the thirties and earlier.<sup>19</sup> The fifties, however, saw a large increase in the frequency and brutality of police intimidation, and, as a result of much new oppressive legislation, the police could harass blacks over many more issues.

Ralulimi points out the importance of keeping popular Afrikaans songs in one's repertoire, for they were frequently demanded by police under such circumstances. Some white policemen also developed a taste for *kwela* music and Ralulimi tells of an exploitative "arrangement" between his group and officers at the Yeoville police station. His group was arrested on a suspected pass offence and after entertaining at the police station until four in the morning, they were taken home to Alexandra in a police van. Thus their addresses became known to the police and, Ralulimi reports, "Now we became victims of their weekend activities. Whenever one sees that his girlfriend is putting up a party, they used to come and grab me and Jerry to go and

15 Don Mattera, *Memory is the Weapon*, pp. 52-53.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

17 *Drum*, February 1961; *Star*, March 26, 1988; Miriam Makeba with James Hall, *Makeba*, pp. 53-54.

18 Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

19 Christopher Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, p. 63-74.

play just for their entertainment." Ralulimi's group was never paid for their services but it was arranged that they could busk freely without fear of arrest.<sup>20</sup>

*Kwela* players were even more vulnerable to police harassment than other musicians because most of their revenue was earned playing in public places. *Kwela* musicians report frequent arrest on the grounds that they were causing a "public disturbance". As a result, they spent much of their time fleeing the police. Kubik claims that after 1960 *kwela* musicians were actually "banned from playing in public places so as not to disrupt the traffic."<sup>21</sup> Although this was not a new pretext for the arrest of musicians (Nathan Mdledle reports being arrested in the mid-thirties for disrupting the traffic with a street performance),<sup>22</sup> it occurred with ever increasing regularity from the late-fifties onwards.

Recordings occasionally contain references to the accusation that *kwela* groups cause a "public disturbance". The spoken introduction to Peter Macontela's "Little Bob" is a case in point:

man: *Ke bo mang basantse barasa mole, baboa ditaba tsama gunda gundane? Ke eng?*

(Who are these people that are making a noise here? What's going on?)

Woman: *Ehe Frans jy se die mense hulle maak a nus, hulle maak nie gerus nie, hulle slaan goedes wat shaya.*

(No Frans, these people are not making a noise, they are just playing their instruments.)<sup>23</sup>

Some of the words sung during Lemmy Mabaso's "Mama Ndiyeke" provide another example of musicians being characterised as riotously asocial:

*Habo bani labo abatshuna ikayfatsi?  
Sebe ya hamba batshuna kayafatsi.*

(Who are these people that are causing trouble?  
They are now going - the trouble-makers.)<sup>24</sup>

20 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.

21 Gerhard Kubik, "Afrikanische Elemente im Jazz," p. 3.

22 Dambuza Mdledle, "20 years in Show Business," *Bantu World* supplement, January 16, 1954.

23 Translated by Zami Duze.

24 *Ibid.*

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Treatment of *kwela* musicians on arrest seems to have varied: at one extreme stood such protective-exploitative arrangements as was made with Ralulimi; at other was violent physical abuse, as experienced by Jake Lerole when police beat him up and broke his jaw.<sup>25</sup> Sometimes *kwela* players were actually charged and fined, although it seems that the police's behaviour was generally calculated to intimidate and frighten. Macontela reports that the police broke the tea-box bass, bent the pennywhistles and threw the players into the police van only to release them a few streets away.<sup>26</sup> Jake Lerole remembers: "If you refuse to board it [the police van] they say 'Kwela! Kwela!' and they kick your backside. They just catch you by scruffs, with your belt, and they just pick you waist high."<sup>27</sup> In 1961 Drum ran a sardonic photo-article covering the treatment of *kwela* musicians by the police (see figure 2).

The relationship between pennywhistlers and the police is ironically canonised in the name of the pennywhistlers' musical style: *kwela*. As discussed in Chapter II, pennywhistle music became known as *kwela* after the success of Elias Lerole's "Tom Hark" because the spoken introduction in this recording prominently features the township term for a police van, a *Kwela-kwela*.<sup>28</sup>

### Prohibition and its Effect on Music

The Liquor Laws probably affected musicians, and their ability to earn a living, more than any other single aspect of apartheid legislation. In 1896, legislation prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquor to blacks was passed in Natal, similar laws were passed in the Transvaal in 1897, and in the Cape in 1898.<sup>29</sup> These laws were consolidated by the Liquor Act 30 of 1928, which made it illegal for black people to buy, sell or drink any alcohol other than beer sold at municipal beer halls. A whole subculture, centred on the shebeens, grew up around the illicit brewing, selling, and drinking of beer and other alcoholic concoctions. For decades the greater part of police activity in the townships centred, not on combating escalating crime and violence, but on enforcing the liquor laws. La Hausse reports the following statement which was made in 1931

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25 Sunday Tribune, September 1, 1974; and Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

26 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

27 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

28 See Chapter II, p.55.

29 Paul La Hausse, Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts, p. 11 and p. 19.

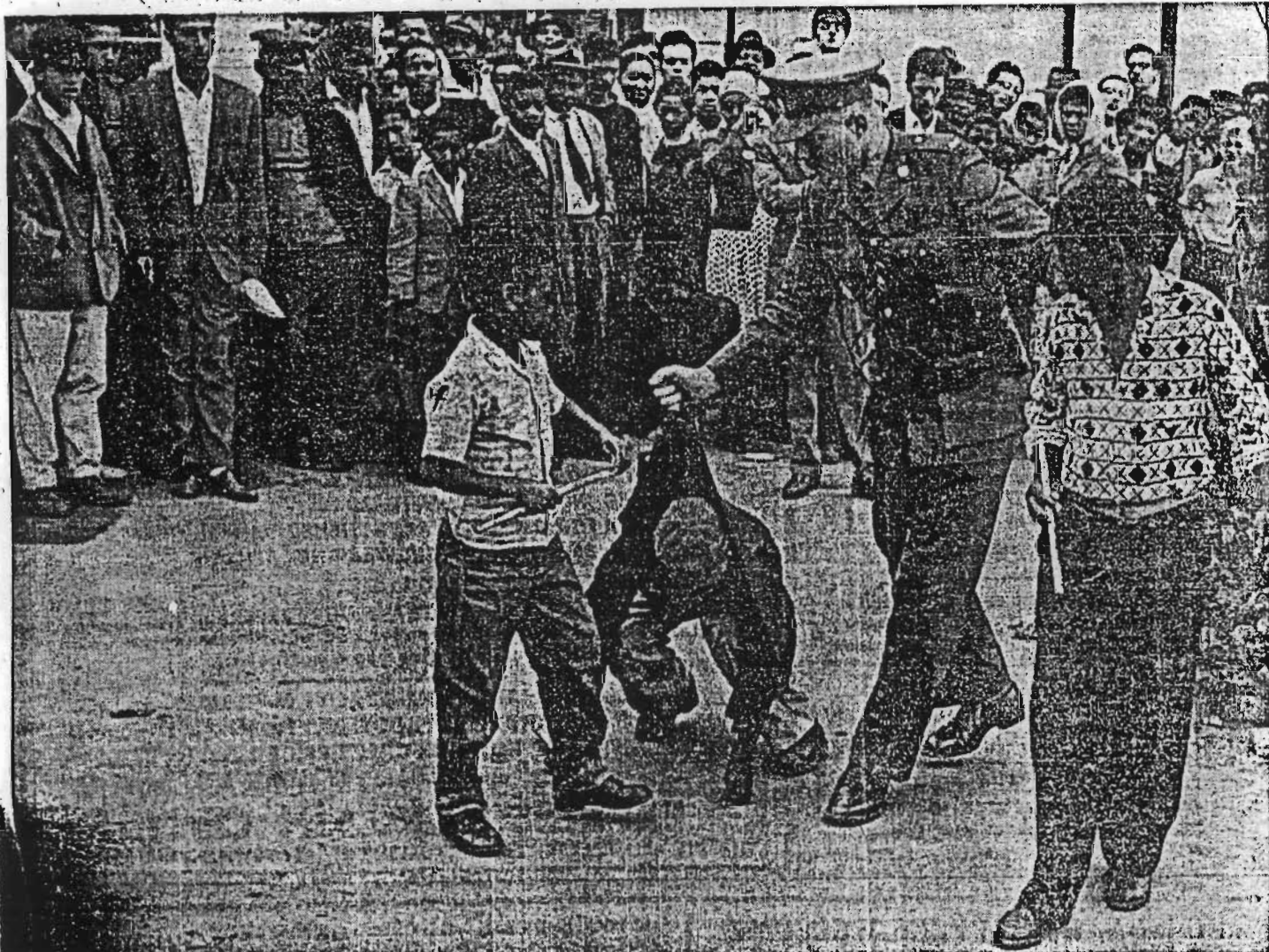
Fig. 2. The relationship between kwela musicians and the police.<sup>30</sup>

# DANGEROUS CHARACTERS TAKEN INSIDE



When there's a dangerous, illegal gathering, the police must move in to clear it up. It just depends on what you call an illegal gathering. Here five penny-whistle boys got together on Grand Parade, Cape Town. The crowd gathered and threw pennies. Drum photographer Emili took these shots as the cops intervened.

**GONE — BUT SUBVERSIVE** Five real gone characters get with the rhythm. You can tell they're dangerous and it's an illegal gathering — but they're soon to learn that crime doesn't pay...



**WHISTLER RESISTS** The law is at hand to remove the danger. Quickly, with the speed needed to clean up such a threat to peace and security, the police move in. Startled, a hardened criminal falls to his knees. But he can't evade the force of law and order that way — Hmml resisting arrest, too. The crowd is puzzled...

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by the Chief Detective of the C.I.D. in Johannesburg: "During the past thirty years, we have manufactured about 100 000 criminals relative to the contravention of the liquor laws."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, according to a 1954 Report of the Bureau of Census and Statistics, sixty-two percent of all prosecutions, and sixty-five percent of all convictions, were for liquor and habit-forming drugs.<sup>32</sup>

Shebeen queens paid children to keep watch for the blue *kwela-kwela* van; if police were sighted the signal was given, drinks were hurriedly hidden and people fled. Drinking under such conditions inspired the title of one of Ntemi Piliso's African Jazz compositions, "Sip and Fly." Being caught with illegal liquor could be expensive: Can Themba had to pay a £5 admission of guilt fine for possession of a bottle of brandy,<sup>33</sup> and Frederick Maphisa was charged £10 for a bottle of spirits intended to fuel his Primus stove.<sup>34</sup>

Police raids formed an integral part of the hazards of professional musicianship, for liquor was consumed at all township venues. In the shebeens and at *stokvels*, weddings, picnics, concert and dances, music and alcohol were inextricably linked to the generation of a "good time."

More damaging to the livelihood and careers of musicians than the inconvenience of constant police raids were the regulations barring black musicians from performing in venues where liquor was sold.<sup>35</sup> The 1928 Liquor Act provided that when a licence was issued to premises, it would define the age, race group, and gender of people to whom liquor could be sold. Blacks could not be employed to work in licensed premises unless they were male, over the age of eighteen and employed exclusively for the purpose of cleaning and carrying.<sup>36</sup> In other words, black musicians could not be employed in white jazz-bars and night-clubs where earnings were generally far higher than township venues. In practice, however, such regulations were occasionally side-stepped: Spokes Mashiyane and his King Kwela Trio performed in white night-clubs in the late fifties, as did Jake Lerole who explains: "We could play but we couldn't drink."<sup>37</sup>

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31 Paul La Hausse, *Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts*, p. 3.

32 Can Themba, *The World of Can Themba*, p. 164.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

34 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

35 David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, p. 164.

36 Section 102 of the Liquor Act 30 of 1928.

37 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

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The prohibition of alcohol for blacks ended with the Liquor Amendment Act of 1961. Finally any black person over the age of eighteen was legally able to buy "white liquor" from holders of off-consumption licences, although "separate entrances and shopping areas had to be available for black patrons."<sup>38</sup> Wine and spirits could be obtained from government-owned bottle-stores, of which most of the profits went to the Department of Bantu Administration. Two-thirds of this money was reserved for housing schemes, the balance for welfare. The Liquor Amendment Act was passed for both political and economic reasons. The government recognised that the liquor laws had "led to an almost country-wide rebellious reaction". Also, constant liquor raids were expensive and distracted police from the higher political priority of pass-law enforcement. Economically, it was hoped that shebeens would be forced out of business by government liquor-stores, which supposedly provided better drink at lower prices. However, the most powerful force in the ending of alcohol prohibition for blacks was that of capital: the Cape wine farmers coveted a larger market.<sup>39</sup>

### The Pass Laws and their Effect on Musicians

The pass laws were probably the most hated and protested single aspect of racist legislation in South Africa's history. Although the pass laws became a particular issue under apartheid, legislated influx control stretches as far back as the 1820s. In terms of Ordinance 49 of 1828, Xhosa immigrants were permitted into the Cape Colony only to the extent that their labour was required by colonial farmers.<sup>40</sup> The Stallard Commission of 1921 stated that "natives (men, women, and children) should only be permitted within municipal areas in so far and for so long as their presence is demanded by the wants of the white population."<sup>41</sup> Thus Afrikaner Nationalist policy was only continuing an established tradition when the Sauer Commission of 1947 stated that the "Native in the urban white areas must be regarded as a visitor, who comes to offer his services for his own benefit and for the benefit of the whites."<sup>42</sup>

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38 Muriel Horrell, Race Relations as Regulated by Law in South Africa, p. 59.

39 Paul la Hausse, Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts, p. 64.

40 I am indebted to Nick Smythe of the Department of Public Law at the University of Natal, Durban, for locating and explaining many of the statutes referred to in this chapter.

41 Transvaal Local Government Commission (Stallard) 1921, para. 267, p. 47.

42 Kleurvraagstuk Kommissie van die Herinigde Nasionale Party (Sauer) 1947, para. 32.



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The philosophy of influx control was consolidated in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act 25 of 1945. Section 10(1) stated that no black person could remain more than seventy-two hours in a prescribed area unless that person:

- a) had been born there and had resided there continuously since birth; or
- b) had worked there continuously for one employer for ten years, or had been there continuously and lawfully for fifteen years and had thereafter continued to reside there, and was not employed outside the area, and while in the area had not been sentenced to a fine exceeding R100 or to imprisonment for a period exceeding six months; or
- c) was the wife, unmarried daughter, or son under 18 years of age of an African falling into classes (a) or (b), and ordinarily resided with him, and initially entered the area lawfully; or
- d) had been granted a permit to remain, issued by a labour Bureau.<sup>43</sup>

In terms of the Native Labour Regulation Act 15 of 1911, and the Native (Urban Areas) Act 25 of 1945, all unemployed blacks over the age of fifteen (who were allowed to be in an urban area) were required to register as work seekers at the local labour bureau. Such people, along with those permitted to remain in the prescribed area in terms of section 10(1)(d), would be issued with a permit "indicating the purpose for which and the period during which such Black may remain in that area, the person by whom and the class of work, if any, in which such Black may be employed and any other conditions which may have been imposed in granting such permission."<sup>44</sup>

On registration, a work seeker would be given a "Special Pass" granting permission to be in the prescribed area for a certain period (usually between two and fourteen days). If employment was not found within that time, it was necessary to apply for an extension or leave the area. If employment was found, the person would return to the labour bureau and be granted permission to remain in the prescribed area for the duration of that particular job.<sup>45</sup>

The stringent application of these regulations made work-seeking very difficult, considerably raising unemployment numbers. Alexandra Township was not part of

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43 Muriel Horrell, *Race Relations as Regulated by Law in South Africa*, p. 70.

44 Native (Urban Areas) Act 25 of 1945, section 10 (2).

45 Permission granted in terms of Section 10 (1)(d).

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the prescribed area of Johannesburg; therefore even people born in Alexandra had no automatic right to seek work in the city. The difficulties experienced by Alexandra's illegal immigrants were even greater, and the rising crime rate was directly proportional to increasing unemployment. Jake Lerole articulates the relationship between crime and the pass laws: "The way I suffered under the pass laws, if it were not for music I would be a very hardened criminal. A lot of people became criminals. You couldn't get a job anywhere wherever you want."<sup>46</sup>

Not only did the pass laws turn people into criminals for economic reasons, but the drastic penalties for breaking the pass laws weakened the effect of punishment for real crimes. Can Themba expressed the lack of social stigma attached to a prison sentence: "But sometimes you got to go to jail. Then you go. It does not matter. Almost everybody you know has been to jail."<sup>47</sup> Moreover, influx control actually protected gangsters from the law because police energy was diverted from crime control to pass-law enforcement and, as Huddleston points out, "the real criminal always has a pass - he can buy one for £15 any day of the week."<sup>48</sup>

The amount of police time and effort spent on pass laws was excessively high. The number of pass convictions increased by 13,7% from 1951 to 1952 and steadily increased throughout the fifties.<sup>49</sup> A newspaper report in the early fifties claimed that "in one year, of 72 000 Africans convicted, more than 45 000 fell within the category of pass-law offences... one fifth of the time spent by the police on criminal proceedings... was spent simply on pass-law offences... [and] over half the time in magistrates' courts."<sup>50</sup> In 1986 a government minister admitted that between 1916 and 1981 approximately 17,12 million blacks were arrested for pass law offences.<sup>51</sup>

In 1952 the Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act replaced passes with reference books (which essentially fulfilled the same function). From February 1958 it became compulsory for all black males between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five to carry their reference books at all times. From February 1963 this regulation also applied to black females. Black persons not able to produce their reference book

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46 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

47 Can Themba, *The World of Can Themba*, p. 77.

48 Trevor Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, p. 31.

49 Douglas Hindson, *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat*, p. 64.

50 Trevor Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, p. 33.

51 *Star*, July 24, 1986.

on demand committed a criminal offence. Persons arrested for a pass law offences were assumed guilty until proven innocent.<sup>52</sup> Brigadier Coetzee of the Pretoria Police Headquarters stated that pass-law crimes "are the only type of statutory offence which requires no docket to be opened, no witnesses to be questioned and no statements to be taken. Non-production of a pass, of a pass out of order is generally proof in itself that an offence has been committed..."<sup>53</sup>

Not only was police treatment of pass offenders frequently physically abusive and degrading,<sup>54</sup> but all people applying for a Special Pass were required to go through a particularly demeaning procedure popularly known as the *tausa* dance. In order to pass the required medical examination applicants had to stand in line stripped naked and then one after the other leap into the air.<sup>55</sup>

The penalty for a first time pass offender was commonly a thirty shilling fine or a ten day prison sentence. However, those pass offenders convicted as "idle or undesirable" under Section 29 of the Native (Urban Areas) Act were treated harshly. Such convicts could be endorsed out of the urban area, or given a prison sentence of up to two years, but in practice were most often sent to work on farms for a nominal fee. "This system was exposed in the press, and in the 1950s court cases resulted when workers' bodies were found buried in shallow graves. Evidence showed that workers were locked up at night in overcrowded filthy barracks, given little food and beaten in the fields to keep them working."<sup>56</sup> Jake Lerole, who was convicted under Section 29, was sent to a farm in the Bethal district. His testimony completely corroborates the reported appalling conditions of forced farm labour.<sup>57</sup>

✕ Musicians were particularly vulnerable to being declared "idle" under Section 29 (2)(a)(i) because their profession was not considered "gainful employment".<sup>58</sup> According to Jonas Gwangwa, black musicians were treated as semi-professional because they performed after hours. Some musicians (for example Spokes Mashiyane

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52 Section 10 (5) of the Native Urban Areas Act 25 of 1945.

53 Trevor Huddleston, Naught For Your Comfort, p. 33.

54 See Chapter V, pp. 180-181.

55 Themba, The World of Can Themba, p. 144. A photograph of the *tausa* dance, which appeared in Drum, has been reprinted in Jurgen Schadeberg, The Fifties People of South Africa, p. 92.

56 Douglas Hindson, Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat, p. 66.

57 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

58 David Coplan, In Township Tonight!, p. 162.

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and Zacks Nkosi) took menial day-time employment with their record companies in order to obtain valid passes.<sup>59</sup> The record companies could have saved many musicians an enormous amount of trouble by registering those musicians who held recording contracts with the labour bureau. However, the Native Services Levy Act 64 of 1952 required that a tax be paid by employers for each black employee and, according to Jake Lerole, record companies were not prepared to pay this "bantu levy" (between £2 and £3 per month) for their contracted musicians.<sup>60</sup>

The only way to obtaining a pass if not employed by a white person was to become registered as "self-employed". Unfortunately, since professional musicianship was not considered "gainful employment" by the labour bureau, "self-employed" passes were not available to musicians. By the mid-fifties, however, even businessmen and professionals, who were entitled to carry "self-employed" passes, were required to register at the labour bureau and this pass was denuded of much of its value.<sup>61</sup>

The difficulties experienced by musicians in trying to obtain valid passes had a direct and devastating impact on the development of urban black music: many musicians were forced to take other jobs in order to remain in the cities and frequently stopped playing altogether. Jake Lerole laments, "There were lots of pennywhistlers. They gave up and went to work, they can't play any more.... because of pass laws." Further, Lerole explains how those musicians who did not take other employment paid heavily for their tenacity: "I stayed in gaol for many many times because I was too lazy to go and look for work. I schemed I wasn't born to go and work you know, I was born to be a musician."<sup>62</sup>

Musicians suffered further under the pass laws because they were constantly required to travel at night and had to obtain valid "night passes". Under Section 31 of the Native (Urban Areas) Act 25 of 1945, the Governor General could impose a curfew in any municipal area. Between certain hours, blacks were prohibited from any public place unless in possession of a written permit signed by their employer, an officer of the local authority, or a police officer. Anyone not able to produce a "night pass" on demand was liable for a £2 fine or one month's imprisonment. The penalty for a

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59 Jonas Gwangwa, "The Melody of Freedom", p. 149.

60 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

61 Can Themba, *The World of Can Themba*, p. 144.

62 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

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second conviction was a fine not exceeding £10 or a prison sentence not exceeding three months.<sup>63</sup> The curfew regulations adversely affected musicians on two counts: their chances of arrest increased, and their earnings decreased because it was more difficult for audiences to travel to evening performances.

The problems induced by curfews were dealt with in a variety of resourceful ways. Joe Mogotsi of the Manhattan Brothers explains, "We'd put aside a certain amount of money for emergencies, so that when people got arrested, we could pay the fine."<sup>64</sup> Following the arrest of cast members, every person involved in the musical King Kong was issued with a "King Kong pass" permitting night travel. In addition, "special passes were also issued, in the foyer, to members of the audience who found themselves without passes."<sup>65</sup> The most creative solution to the night curfew, however, was the institution of an event known as a "Concert and Dance" which lasted throughout the duration of the curfew, generally from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. The concert was "characteristically a vaudeville entertainment from 8 p.m. to midnight, followed immediately by a dance which ended at 4 a.m."<sup>66</sup>

The pass laws further undermined the ability of musicians to earn a living and foster their careers by making touring very difficult unless under the auspices of a white entrepreneur. Freedom of movement was further restricted by the great reluctance with which the government issued black people with passports, which made international touring excessively difficult. During the fifties there were many newspaper articles citing the difficulties of obtaining passports, and reports of musicians anxiously waiting to see if the lack of a passport would destroy their opportunity of performing abroad.<sup>67</sup> An example of the way in which musicians' careers could be jeopardised is that Lemmy Mabaso was invited to appear on the Steve Allen Television show in the United States, but the opportunity was lost because his passport arrived too late.<sup>68</sup>

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63 Section 31(3) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act 25 of 1945.

64 Chris Stapelton and Chris May, African All Stars, p. 194.

65 Cape Times, April 3, 1959.

66 Christopher Ballantine, Marabi Nights, p. 12.

67 For example see: Golden City Post, November 30, 1958; Star, April 15, 1957.

68 World, May 4, 1960.

### Segregation Policies and their Effect on Music

Perhaps the most fundamental segregation laws within the apartheid system were those restricting residential rights. The Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Group Areas Consolidation Act of 1957 legislated completely separate residential areas for blacks, whites, Asians, and "coloureds". Black areas were further divided and people separated according to tribe or ethnic group. One consequence was that it was illegal for a domestic servant to sleep with his or her spouse on the employer's property, which would be in a designated residential white area. In this case both the domestic servant and the householder committed a criminal offence.<sup>69</sup>

Areas inhabited by blacks which were surrounded by white residential areas were declared "black spots" and black residents were forcibly removed and relocated in townships further away. The Urban Areas Act of 1923 resulted in "removals" as early as 1924 in Johannesburg.<sup>70</sup> By the mid-thirties the densely populated yard areas of Doornfontein, Prospect Township and Bertrams, along with parts of Malay Location, Ferreirastown, Vrededorp, and Fordsburg, had been completely destroyed.<sup>71</sup> The bulldozing of Sophiatown, which was legislated by the Western Areas Resettlement Act of 1953 and began in January 1955, actuated the most infamous instance of removals, but there were many other occurrences. Although the "black spot" of Alexandra Township was never "removed", many people (including Jake Lerole and Ntemi Piliso) were forced to move from Alexandra to Meadowlands and Diepkloof in Soweto.<sup>72</sup>

There were hopes in some quarters that the removals would result in safer and better living conditions:

... Are we not leaving behind the rusty tin shacks and crowded hovels? Nights of terror and uncertainty? Nights of death? Perhaps in the new place called Meadowlands it will be different. Perhaps our sons will become men before being cut down by violence and gangsterism. Perhaps our daughters will not become mothers before their time. Perhaps we will make love without the children peeping and laughing through the curtains

69 Edward Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*, pp. 372-373.

70 Christopher Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, p. 66.

71 Eddie Koch, "Without Visible Means of Subsistence", p. 169.

72 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90; Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 26.7.85.

dividing the room. Perhaps there will be peace of mind and escape from the cruel hands of the police. Perhaps, perhaps, Lord perhaps.<sup>73</sup>

In practice, however, the quality of life for most people deteriorated. Lack of transport serving the remote new townships, the expense of such transport when available, and the extra time spent travelling, were some of the additional hardships. In the opinion of many psychotherapists, the trauma of displacement is classed second only to the loss of a loved one.<sup>74</sup> Fredrick Maphisa articulates some of the emotional and psychological suffering caused by the removals:

They disturbed, this Group Areas Act. That somebody had to go there, that somebody had to go there. That somebody became lonely, isolated ... with different people with different way of thinking - disturbs your originalization. They destroy your origin and you become nothing.<sup>75</sup>

Such removals had a profound and devastating effect on black urban culture. As several researchers have argued,<sup>76</sup> urban musical styles in South Africa were frequently produced within, and were reflections of, very specific geographical locales and social, political and economic circumstances. The destruction of these locales, of the physical and cultural spaces which nurtured certain musical styles, proved fatal for those styles in each case. *Marabi* disappeared with the clearance of the slumyards of Doornfontien and Prospect Township, and the destruction of Sophiatown and the Western Native Areas is often cited as a major reason for the death of South African big-band jazz.<sup>77</sup> The demise of *kwela* is directly related to the removals of the fifties. Most *kwela* musicians lived in one of the "black spots" which were, by definition, close to the cities and white residential areas. The survival of *kwela* as a commercial enterprise relied on easy and relatively cheap access to areas where white patrons could be attracted. Pennywhistlers who were moved to Soweto had less access to the city of Johannesburg and its lucrative northern suburbs than they had had from Alexandra Township. Most major relocations on the reef were accomplished by the early sixties. The change in locale was accompanied by a change in music: *kwela* and big-band swing gave way to *mbaqanga*.

73 Don Mattera, *Memory is the Weapon*, p. 140.

74 Diana Simson (Clinical Psychologist), personal communication, November 26, 1993.

75 Fredrick Maphisa. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

76 See Christopher Ballantine, "A brief history of South African popular music"; David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*; Eddie Koch, "Without Visible Means of Subsistence."

77 See Christopher Ballantine, "A brief history of South African popular music," p. 308; David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, p. 164.

### Racial Segregation and its Effect on Music

The Group Areas Act and related laws of segregation most directly affected music by making white patronage of black bands even more difficult than it had been in the forties. This essentially removed the most lucrative portion of many musicians' earnings, driving bands into amateur status and finally to collapse.

\* Black musicians' struggle for performance space started in the early 1930s when black bands such as the Merry Blackbirds started to play for white audiences. Incensed by such competition white musicians mobilised to have black bands prohibited from playing for white patrons. In the early forties, for example, the Merry Blackbirds were refused a contract at a white club on the grounds that they were not members of the Johannesburg Musicians' Union. However, when the Merry Blackbirds applied for membership they were turned down. The other blow for black bands in the early forties was the enforcement of the Liquor Amendment Act of 1934. As a result, black musicians could not be employed at a liquor-licensed premises because they were not employed for the purpose of "cleaning" or "conveying".<sup>78</sup>

Prior to the fifties South African law courts upheld the principle that "if segregation based on race were imposed in public places or in regard to the use of public conveniences, the facilities must be substantially equal." However, in 1953 the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act was passed. This Act "legalised the provision of separate buildings, services, and conveniences for people of different racial groups" and stipulated that such provision could not be invalidated "on the grounds that provision had not been made for all races, or that the separate facilities provided for the various groups were not substantially equal."<sup>79</sup> In terms of this legislation halls were designated for the use of whites only, without the provision of alternative venues (of equivalent size and quality) for displaced black musicians and patrons.

According to Ian Bernhardt, such legislation "succeeded very early in making people very frightened, and a lot of people who owned private halls were dead scared to do

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78 See Christopher Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, pp. 70-74.

79 Muriel Horrell, *Race Relations as Regulated by Law in South Africa*, p. 49.



anything." With the assistance of a few sympathetic Johannesburg city councillors, however, the City Hall and the Selbourne Hall remained available to black musicians and audiences for a few years longer.<sup>80</sup> By 1958, however, conservative forces within the city council managed to enforce the banning of black and "coloured" persons from Johannesburg's main municipal halls: the Duncan, Selbourne and City halls thus became unavailable. The alternative venue for black shows was the Donaldson Orlando Community Centre in Soweto. Many black patrons considered the distance to Orlando too far and the journey too dangerous, besides which the hall was small and inferior in comparison to the inner city venues.<sup>81</sup> The only other city venue available was the Bantu Men's Social Centre, which was also small and inadequate. After 1958 the Union of Southern African Artists (USAA) used the University of the Witwatersrand's Great Hall to stage its black musical productions.

\* Although *kwela* musicians generally earned their income from recording, street busking, and entertaining in township shebeens, some pennywhistlers did participate in the large variety shows which were adversely affected by the segregation laws.<sup>82</sup> These large variety shows (for instance Alf Herbert's African Jazz and Variety and USAA's Township Jazz) were performed by all black casts, for black and white audiences which were segregated in two ways. The first method was to hold separate shows for audiences of different races. For instance, a newspaper article about the 1956 production of Township Jazz states, "The show opens at the Selborne Hall on Monday August 6 for Whites. Non-Whites will see the show on Tuesday August 7 and Thursday 9."<sup>83</sup> Todd Matshikiza virulently criticised this method of segregation:

So if this Union claims to champion the cause of us blacks ... why the segregation? ... So the veld fire that was Teejay (Township Jazz), raged on. Teejay was a baby that belonged to us. Teejay was the baby Euros jes can't have. He's black an' brown an' green an' gold an' everything but white. Raise Cain, raise hell, raise blood an' thunder, keep Teejay at home. Don't expose him to a segregated show.<sup>84</sup>

The other method of segregation was to seat members of different race groups on separate levels where possible, and where not, to rope off sections of the auditorium.

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80 Ian Bernardt. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 14.1.86.

81 World, August 13, 1958.

82 See Chapter II, pp. 47-50.

83 World, August 4, 1956.

84 Drum, August 1956.

This system was also unsatisfactory as the following incident (which provoked a joint protest statement issued by Albert Luthuli, GM Naiker, and Alan Paton) suggests:

Segregation at performances of King Kong in the Durban City Hall is causing a stir among non-Europeans. Some Native Chiefs and leading Indians who paid top prices for seats - which would have placed them among Europeans - are said to have been asked to take places reserved for Non-Europeans.<sup>85</sup>

The strict enforcement of apartheid policies made the production of King Kong particularly challenging. The only rehearsal space available was an old warehouse, and performances venues were equally difficult to come by. In Pretoria the production was refused the use of the Pretoria Boys Club,<sup>86</sup> the University of Pretoria's auditorium, and the City Hall. In lieu of the latter, the city council suggested that the musical be "staged in a tent at the Showgrounds."<sup>87</sup> The "Afrikaans Kultuurraad" in Pretoria expressed appreciation and thanks to those organisations which barred King Kong from their premises. The following extract from a newspaper article exposes the world-view behind the apartheid system:

"The Bantu is free to give full expression to his spiritual possessions", says a letter from the Kultuurraad to the City Council. "But definitely he should do it among his own people and in his own areas. We do not in any way want to stand in the path of the Bantu in the development of his culture - if, in the instance concerned, it can be called culture". Productions by Natives for White audiences clashed with the country's traditional ideas, "regardless of Government policy".<sup>88</sup>

Segregation was as strictly enforced on the stage as in the audience. For instance, a separate side stage was constructed for the Solven Whistlers and the King Kwela Trio when they played for a white dancing competition in the Selbourne hall.<sup>89</sup> In the 1964 Cold Castle Jazz Festival three bands from Cape Town were disqualified because they included white musicians.<sup>90</sup> In a discussion about racial segregation on the stage, white musician Dan Hill justified the situation by referring to similar a

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85 Sunday Times (Durban), May 1959.

86 Star, March 22, 1959.

87 Pretoria News, February 13, 1959.

88 Star, February 20, 1959.

89 Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

90 World, September 22, 1964.

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situation in the United States in which Artie Shaw cancelled a tour because Billy Holiday was not permitted to sit closer than fifty metres from his band. With regard to the difficulties experienced by black musicians in finding venues under apartheid, Dan Hill expressed a convenient attitude for a white musician:

I think if they had talent and they wanted to play they'd play. They'd find somewhere to play, I don't think that affected them. I mean there were plenty of shebeens and things where they played.<sup>91</sup>

In 1959 Nationalist city councillors spearheaded a campaign to "stop Native musicians from playing under contract in cafes and restaurants in the White areas of the city."<sup>92</sup> The Nationalist's leader claimed, both to the city council and to the press, that:

It might not be illegal for an African band to play at an annual dance for Whites but if they played every day at one place it was unlawful. He added: "Of course I object to any function where Blacks entertain Whites or Whites entertain Blacks."<sup>93</sup>

Questioned on the possible enforcement of the ban a police spokesperson replied: "At present, it appears that the Minister of the Interior could simply issue a proclamation banning non-White musicians and singers from White premises," and that the possibility of invoking the "Church Clause", Section 9 of the Native Laws Amendment Act, was also being considered.<sup>94</sup>

However it was legally accomplished, it seems that the councillors achieved their goal, for the approach of the sixties saw the enforcement of racial segregation to the extent that performers of one race were prohibited from entertaining an audience of another. Not only were black musicians denuded of the final vestiges of white patronage, all audiences were deprived of entertainment other than that provided by people of their own race. In 1959, black patrons in Kimberly were prohibited from hiring "coloured" or Indian bands for their dances or shows, despite the lack of equivalent black dance bands. Mourned one show promoter, "we shall just have to forget about entertainment for our people."<sup>95</sup>

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91 Dan Hill. Author's interview, 5.9.90.

92 Rand Daily Mail, September 30, 1959.

93 World, October 7, 1959.

94 Rand Daily Mail, October 10, 1959.

95 World, January 24, 1959.

*Kwela* players were directly affected by the segregation clampdown. Before it occurred some musicians were earning well playing for white audiences. For instance, a 1958 press report claimed that Spokes Mashiyane was "playing month after month in white night-clubs, top society parties, concerts and cinemas."<sup>96</sup> In 1957, the King Kwela Trio played regularly for Arthur Murray dance classes, and obtained a lucrative six-month contract at Ciro's nightclub in central Johannesburg.<sup>97</sup> Barney Rachabane and Jake Lerole also obtained contracts with nightclubs during the fifties.<sup>98</sup> *Kwela* musicians earned more at white nightclubs than at any other venue: Spokes Mashiyane, for instance, was paid £10 for participating in one of USAA's variety shows, and £20 per night at Ciro's nightclub. The only other avenue to white patronage was entertaining at weddings and other private functions in Johannesburg's wealthy Northern Suburbs.<sup>99</sup> Such engagements were well-paid but were too erratic to be solely relied upon as a way of making a living. As well-paying white venues became inaccessible, live performance became a financially unviable method of earning a living. Musicians were forced to choose between giving up music or becoming dependent on exploitative record companies.

Racial segregation in the performing arts was finally consolidated in the mid-sixties. Proclamation R26 of 1965 prohibited mixed audiences and mixed casts at places of public entertainment, even when separated physically, unless a permit was obtained. In rare cases where mixed audiences were permitted, it was insisted that "separate entrances, seating, toilets, and facilities for refreshment should be available."<sup>100</sup>

Racial segregation in the performing arts invoked a fair amount of protest, the most publicised objections being voiced by the international cultural community. American clarinettist Tony Scott expressed anger when he discovered that Indian jazz musician Pumpy Naidoo and his fans were not permitted to greet him at the airport with the white jazz fans.<sup>101</sup> British pop singer Adam Faith caused a row when he "refused to sign a declaration that he would perform to segregated audiences" and compatriot

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96 Drum, December 1958.

97 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

98 Barney Rachabane. Author's interview, 16.9.89; Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

99 For example: Peter Macontela. Author's interview, 13.7.90; and Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 19.5.91.

100 Muriel Horrell, Race Relations as Regulated by Law in South Africa, p. 56.

101 Golden City Post, September 15, 1957.

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Dusty Springfield "was deported after her first performance in Cape Town."<sup>102</sup> In 1956 members of the British Musician's Union agreed "not to visit South Africa without giving performances to non whites."<sup>103</sup> However not until the tight cultural boycott of the eighties did such protests make any real impact on South Africa's ruling elite.

### The Impact of the Immorality Act on Kwela Music

For over a decade white musicians enlisted the power of racist legislation to root out their competition, and black bands were gradually driven from the most profitable venues. However, it was hints of infringement of apartheid's most revered law, the "Immorality Act", which caused the greatest furore in the public domain. Sexual relations between people of different races was prohibited by the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950 and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949. Interracial socialising in public places (for instance restaurants, cinemas, and beaches) also became illegal.<sup>104</sup> The instance in which such legislation directly affected *kwela* musicians was the much-publicised struggle for control over Sunday festivities at Johannesburg's Zoo Lake.

The Zoo Lake park was the only viable recreation space available to domestic servants working in the Northern Suburbs. Activities in the black section of the park included football, hair dressing, gambling, church services, and the vending of foods such as "mealies, meat and porridge, fish, ginger beer and eggs."<sup>105</sup> According to Albert Ralulimi, "People used to carry their gramophones along to Zoo Lake, each and every one playing his own record lying under those shades of the trees."<sup>106</sup>

In 1954 Spokes Mashiyane and France Pilane were just two ordinary domestic workers who went to Zoo Lake to play music since they could not risk making a noise on their employee's premises.<sup>107</sup> Mashiyane continued to play at Zoo Lake on Sundays for years after he achieved star status. However, in 1958 Mashiyane's *kwela*

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102 World, September 29, 1964.

103 World, April 21, 1956.

104 Michael Chapman, ed., "More Than Telling a Story", p. 184.

105 World, January 7, 1963.

106 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

107 *Ibid.*

music drew white teenagers into the black section of the grounds and Basil Bikitsha describes the consequences:

... these whites did not hesitate to rock 'n roll and to jive 'n gyrate in the fiercest modern tradition. Someone wrote an indignant letter to a Johannesburg newspaper about the "goings on" at the Zoo Lake, where white boys and girls were "jiving disgustingly" to the music of a black flute-player. The newspaper subsequently published a picture of such dancing. Then the fat was in the fire. Outbreaks of holy horror were expressed by various people in the press, so the authorities had to move. Penny whistle music was banned - and so was dancing.<sup>108</sup>

The authorities filled the customary dance floor (the children's paddling pool) with water and the pennywhistle band moved to another section of the grounds. The white *kwela* fans searched the area until they found the music and started to dance. However, "after the Africans had pleaded with them not to come dancing in the African section of the grounds, as this would cause trouble with the authorities," the white teenagers left voluntarily.<sup>109</sup>

Nationalist elements within the city council attempted to use the energy generated by the horrors of multi-racial dancing to ban blacks from the Zoo Lake grounds altogether. They proposed that "ground should be bought next to Alexandra Township as a recreation centre. Playing fields would be laid out and picnic sites and toilet facilities would be provided." Once this facility is completed "both the Zoo Lake grounds and the Zoo will be closed to Non-Europeans." For the meantime, these councillors proposed that separate days be allocated for different race groups to visit the Zoo, with the probable result that blacks would not be able to use the facilities on Sundays.<sup>110</sup> These plans were not implemented, however, and although 1959 saw the introduction of an entrance fee to the Zoo, access to the Zoo Lake grounds remained free.<sup>111</sup> The Zoo Lake struggle was still being fought in 1963 when the Johannesburg City Council was again pressurised by "the police and the Government to take action about the large number of Africans who spend their leisure time at the Zoo Lake on Sunday." However the City Council was "not in favour of Africans being barred from the Zoo Lake grounds. 'We want the status quo to be maintained,' maintained their

108 Drum, October 1958.

109 World, August 30, 1958.

110 World, August 13, 1958.

111 World, April 4, 1959.

spokesman."<sup>112</sup> The ban on *kwela* music at Zoo Lake did not last long,<sup>113</sup> as the following description of the "status quo" in 1963 suggests:

A little distance from the gambling, cooking and praying set, is a reserved patch of ground for Spokes Mashiyane and his band. ... He draws a regular crowd of African and Whites. There is jiving, twisting and all the latest dances from the townships. Police cars zoom past unconcerned. The revellers - and they are there too - don't even bother about police on this day. Everybody forgives and forgets on a Sunday at Zoo Lake.<sup>114</sup>

### **The Relationship between Politics and Kwela Music**

The relationship between *kwela* music and politics operates on several levels. The obvious surface relationship is that between musicians and overt political activism: to what extent do musicians consciously use their skills to further a political aim? On a secondary level a covert relationship exists between politics and *kwela*: those ways in which, although unintentionally on the part of its creators, the music has a political effect. Related to this, but on a still deeper level, music fulfils a political function when it creates or embodies a sense of identity other than that prescribed by a repressive system.

#### **Kwela and Overt Political Activism**

Many people are not inclined to become politically active unless their own personal needs are unfulfilled or threatened. Black South Africans during the fifties were no exception for, as Lodge points out:

The extent to which the ANC interested itself in questions of everyday life was in the ultimate analysis more important in sustaining its support than its attitudes towards whites, socialism or the Cold War. Only if such issues could be shown to have an immediate relevance did they have much popular significance.<sup>115</sup>

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112 World, January 23, 1963.

113 See newspaper picture of pennywhistlers at Zoo lake five months after the bann: World, February 18, 1959.

114 World, January 7, 1963.

115 Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, p. 76.

The introduction of draconian legislation (of the ilk discussed elsewhere in this chapter), however, impacted so directly and destructively on the lives of all black South Africans that the mass of ordinary people became highly politicised. The ANC's Defiance Campaign was well supported precisely because the "unjust laws" it protested against adversely affected the everyday lives of ordinary people. The Alexandra bus boycott was the most successful mass action of the decade because its *raison d'être* was subsistence, rather than a political ideal. Musicians, along with everyone else, were conscientized by the oppressive laws and the severity of the penalties, and forced to become more politically aware than they might otherwise have been.

Very occasionally, musicians were political activists. According to Albert Ralulimi, Shume Ntutu (a saxophonist and former member of the Big Five and the Elite Swingsters) "served fifteen years on Robben Island for politics - sabotage or something."<sup>116</sup> Periodically, musicians or bands allied themselves with political organisations through the provision of music at high-profile events. The most publicised occasion of this kind patronised by a *kwela* musician, was Spokes Mashiyane's appearance at a Treason Trial Defence Fund fund-raising concert in September 1958.<sup>117</sup> Sometimes, as in the case of the Alexandra All Stars' support of ANC parties and fund-raising occasions,<sup>118</sup> the participation of musicians was driven by ideological conviction. However, as Ballantine points out, musicians more often "took a 'professional' attitude to such assignments." Peter Rezant, for example, was "not prepared to see his band espouse 'political leanings' that would have been detrimental to its 'success'". A definite, if artificial, line was drawn between functional support provided by musicians at a political event, and ideological support of the occasion's politics.<sup>119</sup> This partition was as keenly espoused by musicians in the fifties as in Rezant's day: Spokes Mashiyane's contribution to fund raising for the Treason Trial Defence is a case in point. According to Albert Ralulimi, Mashiyane was "a shy guy",<sup>120</sup> and tended to avoid publicity, particularly if it were of a political nature and there was the possibility of trouble. After the problems caused by white teenagers' dancing to his music at Zoo Lake, a newspaper reported:

116 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

117 *World*, September 20, 1958; *Drum*, December 1958; Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.

118 Ntemi Piliso. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 26.7.85.

119 See Christopher Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, p. 53.

120 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.



Now, Mashiyane is doing his damndest to avoid his flute getting mixed in shindigs with white kids as it might land him in a political pot, "and that is not in my line. I've even had to refuse a lot of requests from white families asking me to teach their children the pennywhistle."<sup>121</sup>

*Kwela* musicians seldom made direct statements of political protest through their music, an expedient choice at a time when protest was met with such violent repression.<sup>122</sup> Notably, as already pointed out,<sup>123</sup> two of the most overtly political *kwela* recordings ("Azikhwelwa" and "Alexandra Special") were made under the pseudonym of the Alexandra Casbahs. The government operated an effective censorship mechanism through the SABC. The latter would not give air-play to music imbued with anti-apartheid innuendoes; the record companies refused to record material which would not be played on the radio, claiming that it would not sell well. Thus, as Hugh Masekela explains, "for Black musicians *ekhaya* (at home) it is difficult to be an activist because in the end you no longer record. You close shop and then have to find a job as a backyard mechanic or something."<sup>124</sup>

However, although they seldom made direct political statements, musicians often indirectly referred to topical events or aspects of their socio-political circumstances, either in a composition's title, in a spoken introduction, or in song text. Irene Menell remembers, "every time anything happened there were dozens of 78's. It was real folk music. Bus boycott or King Kong's death, a lot of somebodies would do songs and they would go and cut records."<sup>125</sup> Examples of political references in *kwela* recordings are: Jake Lerole's composition "Pass Office Special", which he recorded under the pseudonym of Aaron Shonwe (AFC 341);<sup>126</sup> and "Orlando" recorded by Spokes Mashiyane and the Four Lads. The words of the latter, which alludes to the removals, are:

*Ngangise Orlando, Orlando, Orlando.* [x3]  
*Sebengithathile Bangise Orlando.* [x3]  
*Ngangise Orlando, Orlando, Orlando.* [x3]  
*Sebengithathile Bangise Orlando.* [x3]  
*Orlando* [x16]

121 *Drum*, December 1958.

122 See earlier in this Chapter, p. 175.

123 See Chapter V, pp. 178-179.

124 Hugh Masekela, "Trumpeting the Black Musicians Cause," p. 85.

125 Irene Menell. Author's interview, 3.9.90.

126 *Bantu World*, September 24, 1955.

(I was in Orlando, Orlando, Orlando. [x3]  
 After taking me they brought me to Orlando. [x3]  
 I was in Orlando, Orlando, Orlando. [x3]  
 After taking me they brought me to Orlando. [x3]  
 Orlando.) [x16]<sup>127</sup>

Sometimes *kwela* titles refer to social conditions, as, for example, in "Back to the Shelters" by the Solven Whistlers ("shelters" was the term used for squatter shacks).<sup>128</sup> Often the short introductions to *kwela* compositions were small cameos of township life. In the spoken introduction of Aron, Elias and Zeph's "Hamba Naye", for example, one voice says he has just come from the beer hall and is looking for *dagga* [*marijuana*]. Another voice replies, offering some *dagga* on condition they both go and listen to the real guys playing their pennywhistles. The most well-known example of this type of introduction is that in Elias Lerole's "Tom Hark".<sup>129</sup> Jake Lerole offered the following explanation for such introductions:

You know before we used to sell records with gimmicks as well. Before we start we had to say something. You know telling other people, the public. Not to say we were protesting, but we are reminding them of our day by day life.... I have seen lots of sad things happening around me. I compose music that fits in that situation, but I don't say - I'm just protesting silently but in music.<sup>130</sup>

The aesthetic of celebration, as well as that of criticism, of the "traditional" praise song is commonly evoked in *kwela* introductions or song texts. The following extract, from the introduction to Spokes Mashiyane's "Ishayisa Mfana", is typical of the adulatory introductory remarks made about *kwela* musicians:

*Ha! UMiriam Makeba nezintombi zakhe,  
 Kanye nensizwa epheth' umbhlaba wonke, mmhu  
 uSpokes Mashiyane!*

(Ha! It is Miriam Makeba and her girls,  
 together with the young man who rules the whole world,  
 that's Spokes Mashiyane!)<sup>131</sup>

127 Translated by Concord Nkabinde.

128 See Chapter IV, p. 144.

129 See Chapter II, p. 55.

130 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

131 Translated by Concord Nkabinde.

The introduction to "Mahlalela", performed by Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five, exemplifies *kwela* musicians fulfilling a praise poet's role, exhibiting insight and assuming the license to criticise asocial behaviour:

*Awu! Mfowethu, awungitshela, bashayani labafana?  
 Bashay'ingom'ekhuluma ngawe.  
 Bathi wen'uwumahlalela.  
 Wewu! Kwabuhlungwana ke lokho.  
 Ya bayabaz'abantu, sure.*

(Oh! Brother, just tell me, what are these boys playing?  
 They are playing a song about you.  
 They say you are the lazy one.  
 My! That is painful.  
 Yes, they do know people, sure.)<sup>133</sup>


### The Covert Political Effects of *Kwela* Music

Thus far I have discussed only the overt political or social references in *kwela* - those contained in words attached to the music, be they titles, spoken introductions or song texts. But, *kwela's* political potency lies more fundamentally in its musical sounds and the associations attached to those sounds by different groups of people.

*Kwela's* success and immense popularity, internationally and across the colour-bar in South Africa, generated substantial political repercussions. Although quite unintentionally, the young musicians who brought their self-expression out of the townships onto the streets in white urban areas were committing a profoundly political act. They were economically motivated to play in white areas where the financial rewards were more substantial than in the townships. But the political effect was that they offered their culture to whites to share, enjoy and appreciate. This defied the most basic premises of apartheid: separateness and racial segregation. The results were what the fathers of the regime feared above all: because *kwela* invoked a similar physical and emotional response (a need to dance) in some white adolescents as it did in blacks, a bond of commonness, however tenuous, was discovered between people of different race groups.

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Perhaps even more subversive was *kwela*'s successful expression of urban black culture. For black and white South Africans *kwela* exemplified the vibrancy and permanence of township life, directly contradicting government policy which regarded all blacks in the urban areas as temporary residents. The international recognition of *kwela* brought township culture unprecedented recognition and prestige.

 At a deeper level, *kwela* was politically effective because it provided a vehicle for the personal empowerment of people generally denied the opportunity to express individuality and creativity. Pratt suggests that under such conditions "personal" needs such as those for self-esteem, dignity, and self-actualisation become politically relevant social issues. For oppressed people, "music is a way of speaking. To create a unique musical 'voice' or 'sound' or style is to create a potential instrument of power. To speak musically with that instrument is to achieve a form of power (or at least give voice to the powerlessness)."<sup>134</sup>

The ability of *kwela* music to provide a sense of identity for different interest groups had profound political implications on many levels. These implications, and the meaning of *kwela* for its creators and its audience, are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

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134 Ray Pratt, "The Politics of Authenticity in Popular Music," p. 58.

## CHAPTER VI

### IDENTITY AND MEANING

The study of popular music, then, should be the study of the *meaning* of music to those creating and consuming it. ... It is important for a sociologist of music to show how, as a world of symbols, music expresses the images, visions and sentiments of the people who find significance in it; as well as how such music reflects the values and norms of the larger social system or the ideology of a social class.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter examines the nature of the search for meaning and identity which characterised township culture in the 1950s. It explores the contribution of *kwela* music to the development and expression of black urban identity, and investigates how the style came to simultaneously embody different meanings for various other interest groups.

The use of music in the formation of identity has been widely noted in studies of popular musics in Africa.<sup>2</sup> Tagg proposes that as a result of most music's "intrinsically collective character", it is "capable of transmitting the affective identities, attitudes and behavioral patterns of socially definable groups".<sup>3</sup> In its simultaneous embodiment of different meanings for a diverse range of interest groups, *kwela* music sustained a particularly complex relationship with the expression of identity. The ensuing exploration of the interface between *kwela*, meaning, and identity focuses on the following areas: the need for the formation of black urban identity and the role of the press in its formation; the meaning of *kwela* for its exponents and its audience; the relationship between *kwela* music and the expression of identities of class and of African Nationalism; the meaning of *kwela* for white South Africans; and finally what *kwela* has come to mean in retrospect.

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1 George Lewis, "Popular Music", p. 184.

2 See: David Coplan, "The emergence of an African working-class culture", pp. 116-121; Mary Rörich, "Shebeens, Slumyards and Sophiatown", p. 88; Christopher Alan Waterman, *Juju*, pp. 3-8.

3 Philip Tagg, "Analyzing popular music", p. 40.

### The Role of Kwela in the Formation of Black Urban Identity

#### The Need for Urban Black Identity and the Role of the Press in its Formation

Respecting one's music "is an encouraging step toward respecting one's self".<sup>4</sup>

One of the most insidious results of the rejection and degradation experienced by blacks under apartheid was the psychological internalisation of messages of negative self-worth by the black population. In an article entitled "Mental Corrosion", Nat Nakasa wrote that the government "appears to be unaware of the human being beneath the black skin in its dealings with Africans. ... The tendency to treat Africans as labour and not as individuals, human beings with human sentiments and desires, is devastating."<sup>5</sup> Sampson stated in 1956 that "of all the things that whites have taken from blacks, confidence has been the most valuable, and it is confidence that will be hardest to restore."<sup>6</sup> Under such conditions, cultural agents who create an alternative sense of identity both fulfil a profoundly positive psychological role, and are agents of powerful social and political resistance. During the fifties such cultural brokers (for instance musicians and writers, even shebeen queens and *tsotsis*)<sup>7</sup> consciously and unconsciously sought alternatives to government-prescribed identity. Lewis Nkosi articulates the yearning for the formation of a meaningful, relevant, urban, black cultural identity:

... as a generation we longed desperately for literary heroes we could respect and with whom we could identify. In the moral chaos through which we were living we longed to find a work of literature, a drama or film, home-grown and about us, which would contain a significant amount of our experience and in which we could find our own attitudes and feelings.<sup>8</sup>

Nkosi's dream was partially realised by a group of young black journalists (of which he became a member) who worked for Drum, a monthly publication which quickly

4 Louise Meintjies, "Paul Simon's Graceland", p. 63. Meintjies quotes from Morakile Shuenyane's article "Music in Exile" in Pace 8/12 (1985): 89-94.

5 Nat Nakasa, The World of Nat Nakasa, p. 35.

6 Antony Sampson, Drum, p. 162.

7 See Chapter IV, pp. 166-173.

8 Lewis Nkosi, Home and Exile and Other Selections, p. 8.

became the mouthpiece for popular township culture in the fifties.<sup>9</sup> According to Chapman, under its first editor Bob Crisp, Drum "adopted an educative, even a moralising air. It included features on religion, farming, and soil conservation, as well as cultural articles on African art and 'Music for the Tribes'." Crisp, however, resigned towards the end of 1951 and was replaced by Henry Nxumalo.<sup>10</sup> The latter quickly became the dashing investigative journalist known as "Mr. Drum", and directed the publication towards an ethic of racy accessibility and relevance to the lives of ordinary people. In retrospect, Mphahlele sums up Drum's role in the formation of urban black cultural identity:

... Drum was publishing stuff that appealed to a black proletarian readership. The writers used an English style that was well understood by the township reader. The imaginative writing courted no political confrontation: it spoke of the drama of Black life, its triumphs and defeats, survival, its culture and sub-cultures, the police terror and legislated restrictions it was subjected to. The black writer was asserting his sense of permanence in an urban ghetto life where he was being told he was a mere migrant worker with no hope for security of tenure in his municipal box house. The writers helped fashion a township culture and gave it literary expression the music and dance that had a distinctive flavour and beat, the rituals of birth and death and marriage and church activity, the pass laws, the violence, shebeen life which became such a culture that long after prohibition has gone...<sup>11</sup>

For the most part, Drum avoided overt political commentary. As Chapman points out, Drum "often presented the 'events' of cultural life as opposed to an analysis of historical causes, this defined its purpose as an illustrated periodical, and ensured its popular appeal." After its initial issues, Drum "managed to combine a commercial image with journalism of heightened awareness."<sup>12</sup> Chapman also quotes the following statement by A. P. Mda which confirms the importance of the black press in the affirmation of self-worth and the formation of identity:

When people begin to realise their own intrinsic importance as human beings, they are on the road to full nationhood. It is only a little step to a consciousness of rights, and to an awareness of the anomalous position under which vast sections of the people are denied elementary democratic rights. No doubt the monthly journals and pictorials have served in no small way to destroy the sense of inferiority and futility which have eaten into the very vitals of our national life, generation after generation.<sup>13</sup>

9 Other members of this group were Todd Matshikiza, Arthur Maimane, Bloke Modisane, Casey Motsisi, Nat Nakasa, Henry Nxumalo, and Can Themba.

10 Michael Chapman, ed., "More Than Telling a Story", p. 185.

11 Es'kia Mphahlele, "Landmarks", p. 12.

12 Michael Chapman, "More Than Telling a Story", p. 185-186.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

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The only available contemporary reports from which may be gleaned a sense of the identity held by *kwela* musicians and their working-class patrons were written by journalists with relatively middle-class aspirations. Thus, in the interpretation of *kwela*'s meaning for various interest groups, it is important to be aware both of the general context and world view of such journalists, and of occasions in which the writer's agendas may overlay those of his subject.

### The Meaning of Kwela for Musicians

The initial function of pennywhistle playing for most *kwela* musicians was one of private creative fulfilment and the expression of personal and collective identity. Prior to Spokes Mashiyane's recording success late in 1954, pennywhistling for the most part belonged in Storm Roberts' category of "personal music, in which one or maybe two people play largely for their own self-expression and amusement".<sup>14</sup>

Once *kwela* became popular, one of the most important aspects of the style was the financial rewards its performance could bring. Most pennywhistlers came from impoverished backgrounds, and the money they earned fundamentally altered the quality of their lives and frequently the lives of their families.<sup>15</sup>

Black intellectuals, who in later years interpreted *kwela* as a mouthpiece for township culture,<sup>16</sup> expressed righteous indignation when *kwela* musicians placed financial gain before artistic authenticity. However, commercial appeal was a primary component from *kwela*'s genesis in the activity of street busking. The commercial versus creative dialectic was always present in the music: for its exponents, *kwela* was as much a response to economic conditions as it was an expression of identity.

The status of pennywhistle music changed three times during its period of popularity, each shift affecting the meaning of the style for its creators and patrons. Each advance was catalysed by the association of the style with international recognition, or

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14 John Storm Roberts, *Black Music of Two Worlds*, p. 241.

15 See Chapter IV, pp 147-148.

16 See, for example: Nat Nakasa, "The Magic Piper: Masterpiece in Bronze", *Drum*, December 1958.



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with a medium which indirectly connoted achievement on a cosmopolitan level (See figure 1).

The popularity of pennywhistle playing amongst black youth was initially catalysed in 1951 by the participation of pennywhistler Willard Cele in the second all-black film to be made in South Africa, The Magic Garden. Cele featured prominently in this film, providing the greater part of the background music, and was assigned star billing in all the publicity. Given the prestige amongst township dwellers of American culture in general, and film in particular, Cele's success in this genre changed the symbolic associations of the pennywhistle overnight: the instrument became a potential key to the ghetto gate.

As far back as the early thirties, music was viewed as a vehicle for social mobility by certain sectors within black society.<sup>17</sup> The "rags to riches" illusion was cultivated by much of the journalism about *kwela* in the fifties and early sixties.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the most insidious perpetuation of this myth was the publication, in the children's column, "Dear Gang", of a fairy-tale entitled "Poor Richard and his Flute". The tale tells of a young man who "in spite of his poverty was ambitious and intelligent" and whose one prized possession was a flute. He wins the favours of a princess by hiding inside a painted wooden bird and playing "the most beautiful music on his flute." As a result "the King congratulated Richard on his cleverness, and soon the princess and he were married."<sup>19</sup>

After Willard Cele's initial success, aspirations of social and economic advancement were rekindled late in 1954 when Spokes Mashiyane made his first pennywhistle recordings. These became extremely popular, brought him widespread fame, and inspired a plethora of other pennywhistle recordings. However, the style's final graduation was its international recognition in 1958 when *kwela* became popular in Britain, and visiting American jazz musicians made recordings with local pennywhistlers. For its exponents *kwela* music promised fame and fortune, and pennywhistlers took to the streets in droves.

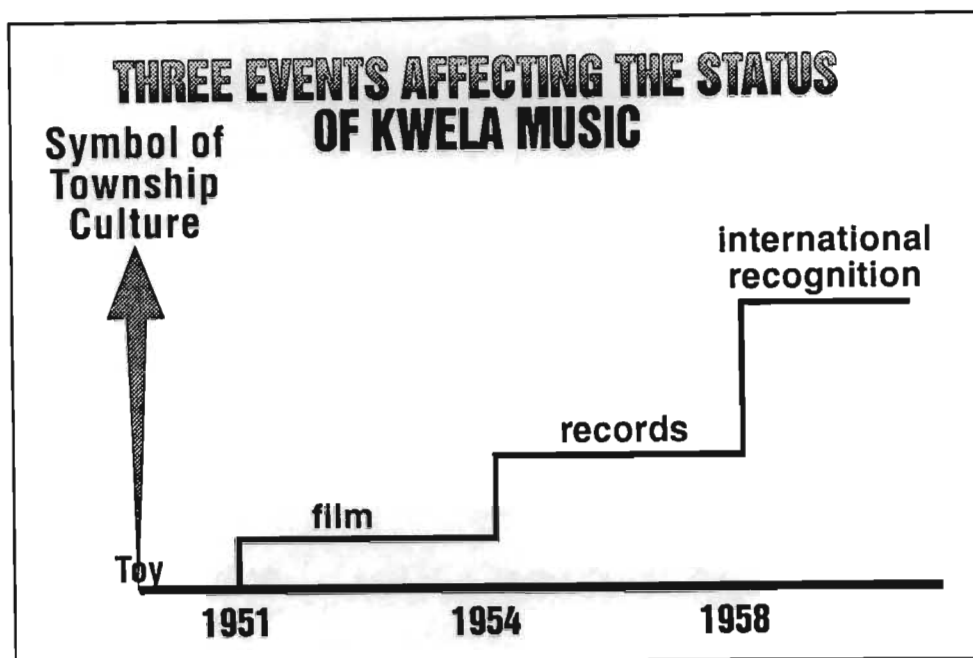
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17 See Christopher Ballantine, Marabi Nights, p. 44.

18 See for example: Drum, March 1951; Post, March 5, 1961.

19 Golden City Post, July 13, 1958.

Fig. 1. Shifts in status of the pennywhistle.



### The Meaning of Kwela for its Audience

One of the primary functions of *kwela* for its township audience (besides furnishing dance music for occasions which often functioned as an escape from wretched social conditions) was its embodiment of black urban identity. In a treatise on the relationship between politics and music, John Street categorises the "politics of social identity" as an aspect of the "politics of consumption" which traces "the politics of the music from the explicit or implicit political interests of the consumers."<sup>20</sup> The politics of social identity entails:

... the way in which the consumption of popular music reflects a set of social or political values: it claims to answer the questions about why different social groups adopt different forms of music... the politics of the music lies in the way it helps people to make sense of, or accompanies, their predicament. The politics of the music do not lie in the fact that it is "working-class", or that it has a working class following, but rather in the way that it provides a symbol for private or public experience.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> John Street, "No Satisfaction" p. 17-18.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14-17.

It has frequently been bemoaned that researchers claim a strong relationship between music and identity but fail to explain exactly how a certain style expresses the identity aspired to, or espoused by, a particular interest group.<sup>22</sup> During the period of its popularity, *kwela* music boasted a large and heterogeneous following: different, occasionally opposing, interest groups were able to articulate the musical sounds of *kwela* with their outlook on life, and find it meaningful.<sup>23</sup> Two factors made this possible: firstly, the status of *kwela* changed three times during its reign (see figure 1), each shift securing recognition from a new interest group; and secondly, the syncretic nature of the styles' internal musical structure allowed interest groups to select certain musical elements which, for them, had particular meaning, and to articulate these elements with their identity concerns.

Syncretism is defined by Melville Herskovits as "the tendency to identify those elements in [a] new culture with similar elements in the old one, enabling the persons experiencing the contact to move from one to the other and back again, with psychological ease".<sup>24</sup> This requires reinterpretation, defined by Herskovits as the process "by which old meanings are ascribed to new elements or by which new values change the cultural significance of old forms".<sup>25</sup>

*Kwela* was the current style in a long tradition of syncretically-formed urban black South African music stemming from *marabi* [see figure 2]. *Marabi* was the cultural response of black workers to the upheaval of industrialisation, precipitated by the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in the 1880s. The processes of urbanisation and westernisation provoked an identity crisis for the new black proletariat. Musically, a new identity was negotiated through the syncretic amalgamation of two stylistic traditions, namely: African-American music, and music of South Africa's pre-

22 See John Street, "No Satisfaction", p. 18; Charles Hamm, review of *In Township Tonight!*, by David Coplan, in *Popular Music* 6/3 (1987) p. 354; and Louise Meintjes, review of *African Stars* by Veit Erlmann, p. 379.

23 I use the term "articulate" in a theoretical sense as defined by Richard Middleton in his article "Popular Music, Class Conflict and the Music-Historic Field," p. 33. Middleton argues that "while elements of culture are not directly, eternally, or exclusively tied to specific economically determined factors such as class position, they *are* determined in the final instance by such factors, through the operation of articulating principles which *are* tied to class position. Those operate by combining existing elements into new patterns or by attaching new connotations to them.

24 Herskovits[1945] 1966:57-58 quoted in Christopher Alan Waterman, *Juju*, p. 9.

25 M. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, New York, 1948, quoted in David Coplan, "The urbanization of African music," p. 119.

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colonial past. (Hereafter these categories will be termed American and African respectively.) The dialectical tension between these two areas of influence is evident throughout the history of *marabi*-derived music.

The complexity of identities drawn from the African/American dialectic in music of the *marabi* tradition is possible because the syncretic process of its synthesis entails the amalgamation of previously unconnected elements. In other words, because syncretic music is internally contradictory, it is possible for the same musical elements to simultaneously connote differently for different interest groups.

### Class, Identity, and Kwela Music

Throughout this work I make very broad use of such categorisations as "working-class" and "petty bourgeoisie", recognising, as have many others,<sup>26</sup> that mutually exclusive classes do not exist in urban black South African society. The severity of race discrimination under apartheid meant that, in effect, members of the black middle classes experienced few material benefits over the working masses. Race became an impenetrable barrier to economic and professional advancement. Lodge points out that because all black people were forced to live together in townships which did not display a "geography of class", "many petty bourgeois Africans in the 1950s had intimate personal experience of the poverty and insecurity most people lived in." Lodge quotes Magubane's explanation: "The few who escape from the ranks of unskilled labour cannot develop separate 'class consciousness' because they are forced to live with and among proletarians and share their disabilities."<sup>27</sup>

However, the use of class categorisation is valid in so far as it reflects class distinctions experienced by black South Africans, even if only in aspiration and the expression of attitudes. Journalism and literature of the fifties frequently reflects the elite aspirations of its writers, even if frequently it is only to bewail their inability to place sufficient distance between themselves and the labouring classes. Working-class

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26 See, for example, Christopher Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, p. 12; Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (eds), *Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa*, p.2; Tom Lodge, "The Destruction of Sophiatown", p 338; Kelwyn Sole, "The Study of South African Working-Class Culture," p. 69.

27 Tom Lodge, "The Destruction of Sophiatown", p 338.

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recognition of such attempts at class division is indicated in the construction of the term "situation", "a term of abuse for members of the African petty bourgeoisie trying to 'situate' themselves above the masses".<sup>28</sup>

Although always ill-defined, during the fifties class divisions were in a particular state of flux. The onslaught of apartheid was forcing the black petty-bourgeoisie (teachers, nurses, and clerks for example) to align themselves with the very people they privately wished to rise above. Such re-alignment was clearly enacted politically in the conversion of the ANC from an elite to a mass-based organisation. The confusion arising from such a contradiction between the aspirations and material reality of the nascent black petty-bourgeoisie is clearly reflected in fifties journalism. In an attempt to consolidate an identity, journalists swung from placing themselves above, to aligning themselves with, the ordinary working people. Finally, the young group of Drum journalists placed themselves in a classless fringe society inhabited by other groups (for instance musicians and gangsters) who did not earn wages from white employees and who were refused the status and benefits of the professional classes. From such a vantage point these voluntary outsiders observed, reflected, and participated in the formation of cross-class urban black cultural identity.

Can Themba expressed the lonely predicament of himself and his colleagues in the following way:

I think the rest of African society looked upon us as an excrescence. We were not the calm dignified African that the Church so admires (and fights for); not the unspoiled rural African the Government so admires ... Neither were we tsotsis in the classical sense of the term, though the tsotsis saw us as cousins. ... We were not "cats", either; that sophisticated group of urban Africans who play jazz, live jazz and speak the township transmigrations of American slang. We were those sensitive might-have-beens who had knocked on the door of white civilisation (at the highest levels that South Africa could offer) and had heard a gruff "No" or a "Yes" so shaky and insincere that we withdrew our snail horns at once.<sup>29</sup>

Themba also explained how individual writers reacted to the frustrations and ambiguities resulting from their social displacement:

Sobukwe's [voice] is that of protest and resistance. Casey Motsisi's that of derisive laughter. Bloke Modisane's that of intellectual contempt. Nimrod

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28 Michael Chapman, "More Than Telling a Story", p. 206.

29 Can Themba, The World of Can Themba, p. 228.

Mkele's that of patient explanation to be patient. Mine, that of self-corrosive cynicism. But Nat told us, "There must be humans on the other side of the fence; it's only we haven't learned how to talk".<sup>30</sup>

Musicians tended to share such dilemmas of class identity. With a few notable exceptions (for example Barney Rachabane, whose father was a church minister) most *kwela* musicians were born into working-class families. However, a person's economic class of origin had little impact on his or her social position, compared with the social repercussions of choosing to become a professional musician. Musicians were generally assigned to the fringe class of social marginals and regarded with considerable suspicion by anyone with aspirations towards respectability and economic advancement. Musicians frequently complain of parental disapproval regarding their chosen careers, and report considerable difficulties in proving their acceptability as marriage partners.<sup>31</sup> Duzi Magwaza spoke of his problems over the latter issue:

If you were a musician in those days and you want to get married, you've got to pay lobola - roughly £100. You've got it. They say to her, "What are you going to do with that loafer, because this guy is not working, he is playing guitar. Do you think there is any future?" So the next thing you want to get married, you going to leave music and work.... Because the people used to believe if you play music you don't want to work. They have never accepted music as a talent, they have never accepted you can live out of it. ... Nobody wants her daughter to marry Mduduze a musician ... You put that £100 down they don't want to take it.<sup>32</sup>

The disreputability of professional musicianship affected aspirant women performers perhaps even more than their male counterparts. Queenth Ndaba speaks of her parent's attitude:

I was a singer, but you know with our tradition one has to go out at night as a woman. My parents were very strict, I used to try to duck and dive but at the end of the day I had to abandon the road, to become a dress designer.... Not to be at home at night - it was bad. Girls would admire you, parents - pfft! Because at school we used to be encouraged to have school concerts. The parents would go because it was a school thing and respect it, but if you have to do it out of school, they wouldn't like it.<sup>33</sup>

30 Can Themba, *The World of Can Themba*, p. 219.

31 Barney Rachabane. Author's interview, 16.9.89; Jack Lerole, video made for the SABC TV3 program *Mino* by Joubert & Van Dyke Productions.

32 Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

33 Queenth Ndaba. Author's interview, 6.9.90.

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In a strong reaction to the social marginalization of musicians, Hugh Masekela declared "I think the buying public should wear off the idea that musicians are irresponsible, immoral and drunkards. They must realise that these people represent their culture. They express their aspirations. They are the chroniclers of their feelings."<sup>34</sup> Magwaza reports, however, that the advent of television in South Africa has raised the status of musicians concurrent with the recognition of their ability to provide financially:

I will say it's only now there is TV people start 'checking', "Ah, it is nice to be a musician." ... Before it was very difficult because they ask who's got a car? Who's got a house? And musicians didn't have anything really. Today they've got [such assets].<sup>35</sup>

Ballantine and Meintjies propose that there is no simple correlation between social class and musical genre in South Africa.<sup>36</sup> Whilst I agree that musical genres may be appreciated across social classes, and that interest groups within one social class support different musical genres, I suggest that some aspects of musical style preference do reflect class consciousness. For instance, all the styles within the *marabi* tradition incorporate African and American musical elements in various proportions. In very general terms, class affiliation is expressed in the choice to patronise a style dominated either by African, or by American, musical elements. Ordinarily, the degree of Americanization of a style is directly proportional to the upwardly aspirant class consciousness of that style's public. Figure 2 illustrates the dialectical relationship between African and American musical elements within this tradition, and the relationship between musical style and class identity.

Another connection between class identity and musical style was the use of the names of styles to categorise a person's social standing. Koch declares that middle-class people used the term *marabi* "to refer distastefully to the working and lumpen classes of the slumyards," and quotes *marabi* musician Ernest Mochumi who explained, "sometimes when you quarrel with a guy who's not of your type, not your kind of guy,

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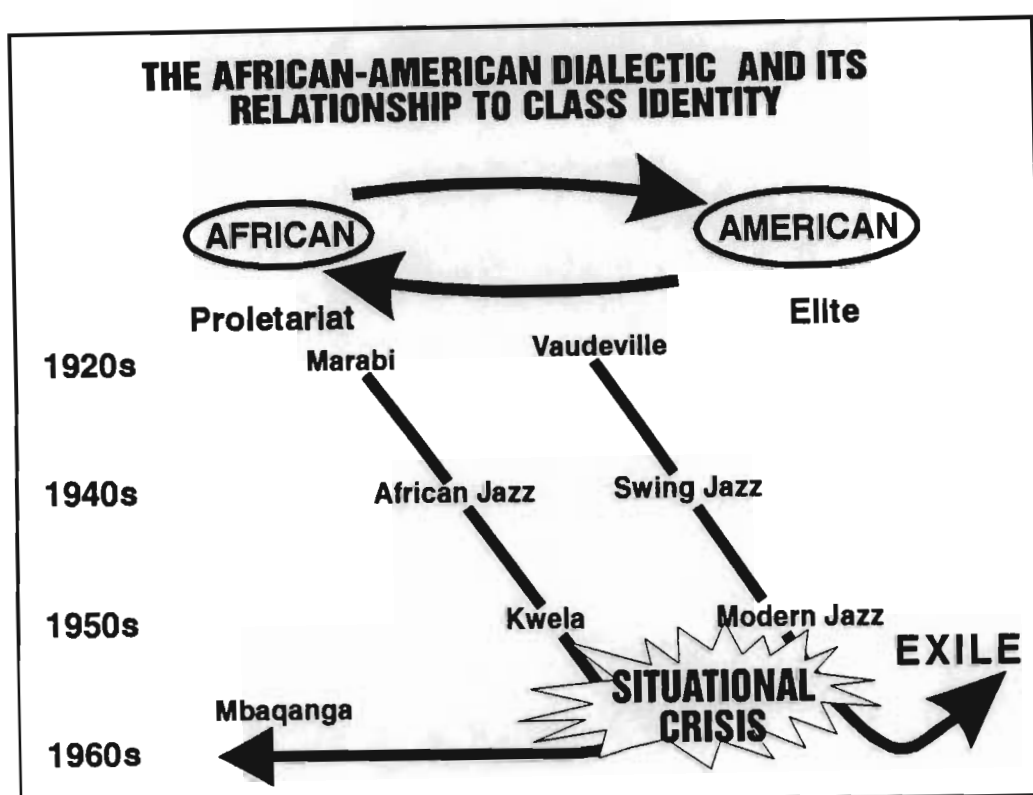
34 Hugh Masekela, "Trumpeting the Black Musicians Cause", p. 86.

35 Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

36 Christopher Ballantine, "Concert and Dance", p. 121; Louise Meintjies, "Paul Simon's *Graceland*", p. 185.

then he says to you, "You Marabi, leave me alone you Marabi".<sup>37</sup> Likewise, Coplan reports that the phrase "*Ke tsaba tsaba*" was used to refer to a woman "of inferior character or morals".<sup>38</sup> *Tsaba-tsaba* was a marabi-derived style popular in the late thirties.<sup>39</sup>

Fig. 2. African and American musical elements in styles stemming from the *marabi* tradition.



Musicians who played American jazz, or music strongly influenced by American jazz, considered themselves superior to those of their colleagues who played styles more strongly influenced by African music. This split started in the thirties between big-bands who read arrangements and those who played by ear. By the fifties, such polarisation was enacted in the *kwela*-versus-jazz debate, in which class attitudes were

37 Eddie Koch, "Without Visible Means of Subsistence", p. 159.

38 David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, p. 154.

39 See Chapter I, pp. 17-20.



encoded in the comments made about the opposing faction's music. Speaking as a jazz musician Godfrey Moloi states:

The good musicians were always reluctant to play this kind of shit, calling it rubbish or *mnyama phambili*.... The gates of fortune were since that time opened for the excited country boys, most of them working in the city as domestics, kitchen or garden boys. These wanted to be heard on record never mind what they played or earned.<sup>40</sup>

Presenting an opposing point of view, *kwela* musician Albert Ralulimi declares that jazz players "who left the country and went into exile - those are the guys who thought raw type of music like pennywhistle and solo saxophones is really hindering their progress." Ralulimi purports that there is no point trying to copy American jazz when recordings by American artists are available: "You can't buy something of a lower quality ... just to say it's locally manufactured." He also points out that, once abroad, jazz artists like Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela started to play styles more strongly influenced by South African musical elements:

Those who left the country are those who said, "Ah no! This *mbaqanga* music has taken the country by storm!"... But they did not take the music away with them. No, the 'mbqangists' were really blossoming by then, there was no room for them in the market."<sup>41</sup>

As the following statement by Mzamane suggests, class identities embodied in particular styles were also noted by music patrons:

Khulu, Monty and I drank at Shirley Scott's shebeen, so called because she only played jazz. It was one way of keeping out the township riff-raff, who preferred *mbaqanga* and considered jazz as music for "situations", meaning those who liked to situate themselves above ordinary township folk.<sup>42</sup>

As a result of the shifts in the status of *Kwela* music [see figure 1],<sup>43</sup> the relationship between this style and the embodiment of class identity is particularly complex.

For the first three years of *kwela's* popularity, its record-buying public consisted primarily of the urban black working-class. Albert Ralulimi suggests that the reason

40 Godfrey Moloi, *My Life*, p. 215.

41 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 12.2.90.

42 Mbulelo Mzamane, *The Children of Soweto*, London: Longmann, 1982, p 11, quoted in Chris Stapelton and Chris May, *African All Stars*, p. 186.

43 See Chapter VI, p. 212.

for Spokes Mashiyane's enormous success as opposed to that of Willard Cele (the former pennywhistle star) was that Cele played the blues whilst Mashiyane re-interpreted popular township songs. Mashiyane's success lay in his amalgamation of the known with the new. Ordinary township residents could identify his style simultaneously as their own, and as fashionably up to date. The primary musical elements which would have enabled township residents to identify *kwela* as "their own" are: the harmonic structure consisting of the cyclical repetition of a two- or four-bar chord progression; and the melodic motifs which, if not actually extracted from popular township songs, follow a similar melodic structure. The shuffle rhythm<sup>44</sup> and resultant "swing feel" endows *kwela* with American, and thus "hip", associations.

During these early years, *kwela* music was not taken seriously by the aspirant middle-class (in so far as it can be assumed that this class is represented by contemporary journalism). In reviews and articles the pennywhistle was frequently identified as the "poor man's instrument". For instance, a 1955 Bantu World record review states, "The tin whistle, the poor man's instrument has been thoroughly tested but in these recordings the Jungle Boys excel themselves. There is nothing particularly striking about either side except in knocking out an instrument with a limited range of notes."<sup>45</sup> A review of Lemmy Special's participation in a Township Jazz show declared, "As the poor man's musical instrument it has no peer. Even the mouth organ - made famous by Larry Adler, takes the shade."<sup>46</sup> Writing for the more populist publication, Drum, Gideon Jay's approach is less patronising:

... this South Africa of ours must be the only country in the world where music is made on these modest instruments, or, I should say music of a serious nature. When I say serious, I don't mean it in the Classical sense, but in the sense that these boys are playing their penny whistles like real musical instruments ... and the more I hear them, the more I am amazed at the music that comes out of those pipes.<sup>47</sup>

In a search for status, and an explanation for the popularity of such a lowly instrument, journalists periodically equated pennywhistle performances with "classical" music, evidently regarded as the pinnacle of "high" culture. One journalist

44 See Chapter III p. 81, fig. 30.

45 Bantu World, December 7, 1955.

46 World, May 25, 1957.

47 Drum, January 1955.

claimed: "I predicted it a long while ago. That some day the common penny whistle will take its place among other dignified orchestral instruments".<sup>48</sup> The most elaborate comparison of this kind, however, is the following review by Bloke Modisane:

... It was a near riot as they cheered the superb artistry of Rangkus Maphisa and Sonny Molomo on the penny whistles. They got out notes and sounds foreign to the penny whistle.... Music lover and critic, Walter Nhlapo, raved loud and long "They are miles ahead of everybody with a penny whistle. They're so good they could do Mozart's Clarinet Concerto." In a way Willard Cele and Spokes Mashiyane have nothing to worry about, Rangkus and Sonny don't play penny whistles...they have them sound like clarinets.... The complicated exchanges between the two had composer Davashe both shocked and proud at the scope the penny whistlers gave his song. ...He must have wished he had written it the way the penny whistlers played it that night. With respect to the composer, the artists should have called it the "Concerto for Penny Whistle" based on a theme by MacKay Davashe.<sup>49</sup>

The press also inferred a growing demand for status by pennywhistle players themselves. The Golden City Post claimed that Barney Rachabane wanted "to make the penny-whistle an accepted musical instrument - not just a jazz gimmick but a real serious instrument."<sup>50</sup> Recounting the arrival of King Kong in London, Todd Matshikiza reported: "They asked Lemmy to play his famous pennywhistle. He said, 'I call it a flute now, you know.'"<sup>51</sup> In fact the pennywhistle was, and is, often called a flute in the townships, but this remark suggests the solicitation of prestige.

Until 1958, when *kwela* received international recognition, a distinct class snobbishness was evident in the journalism about pennywhistle music. Although records were favourably reviewed, the tone of such articles tended to be quite condescending. A review of recordings by Peter Makana, for instance, stated "His whistle had a delicate tone but tends to be too repetitive. But if you like this sort of stuff that's the disc for you."<sup>52</sup> Two months later the same newspaper admitted, "the sound of the whistle is a favourite in the townships. But it has never impressed jazz

48 Golden City Post, April 15, 1956.

49 Golden City Post, November 3, 1957.

50 Golden City Post, September 21, 1958.

51 Drum, April 1961.

52 World, June 29, 1957.

critics."<sup>53</sup> Occasionally critics were more direct: for instance, a review of the show Township Jazz complained:

The Spokes Mashiyane tin whistle group was rather boring and should either be removed from the programme or given fewer appearances. They are a novelty and should be treated as such. Too much of their music distracts the audience.<sup>54</sup>

The repetitive nature of *kwela*, so complained of by elite critics, results from the style's cyclical structure. Not surprisingly, it is one of the most African aspects of *kwela*'s musical structure, and is arguably one of the elements responsible for the style's popularity amongst the proletariat. It is equally understandable that, for a class whose aspirations towards inclusion in cosmopolitan society were greater than their need for an African identity, *kwela* could sound retrogressive. However, as soon as *kwela* obtained the very international status desired by the black elite, pennywhistlers and their music received almost excessive positive publicity from the press. Besides an efflorescence of favourable record reviews and small articles about pennywhistle music and musicians, Drum ran two feature articles on *kwela*,<sup>55</sup> and Spokes Mashiyane was awarded a place in the Drum column, "Masterpiece in Bronze", written by Nat Nakasa.

It has been suggested that "the very act of naming a genre ... may ... be a declaration of cultural consolidation."<sup>56</sup> The term *kwela* was used after the British success of the pennywhistle composition, "Tom Hark". The word was extracted by the British media from the number's *tsotsitaal* introduction and used to designate township pennywhistle music.<sup>57</sup> The label was consequently adopted by South African record companies and the media. Although white foreign interests were responsible for the naming of the style, the alacrity and ardour with which the term was adopted by the black press does indicate a particular type of cultural consolidation: the realisation on the part of black elite that their need for recognition would be fulfilled more easily through the consolidation of cultural identity along lines of race than those of class.

53 World, August 24, 1957.

54 World, June 28, 1956.

55 Mike Phahlane, "Feature: Kings of Kwela", Drum, November 1958; Nathaniel Nakasa, "Penny Whistle is Big Time Now", Drum, April 1958.

56 Charles Keil, "People's music comparatively: style and stereotype, class and hegemony," Dialectical Anthropology, 1985, 10:126, quoted in Christopher Alan Waterman, Juju, p. 8.

57 See Chapter II, p. 55.

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This brought many interest groups, such as the young black journalists, more directly into line with the African Nationalist movement.

### African Nationalism, Identity and Kwela Music

The formation of the ANC Youth League in 1944 marked the political consolidation of New Africanism, a philosophical and cultural movement of the late thirties.<sup>58</sup> Exclusion of blacks from positions of privilege and power on grounds of race, weakened class boundaries within black society. One of the fundamental results was that the elite formed a political alliance with the masses, and the two classes mobilised together for common recognition. The concept of "African-ness" formed the basis of a new ideology which, for the first time, assigned positive value to being African, and demanded political and social recognition of that value.

This ideological metamorphosis carried deep implications for the potential expression of social and political identity through music. In fact, cultural forms such as the period's music and literature did not simply reflect this change, but were active agents in the dissemination of the new philosophy. The popularity of African Jazz in the forties reflected the wide-ranging appeal of assigning value to that which was African, and proselytised the new philosophy further by successfully embodying African identity within a cosmopolitan popular form.<sup>59</sup>

Thus by the fifties a re-articulation had taken place amongst the politicised intellectual black elite. The incorporation of African elements into cultural forms strengthened African national identity across class barriers, and advanced the African Nationalists' political aims. Can Themba describes this process, exposing the desire for Pan-African solidarity as a substitute for the cosmopolitan identity previously desired by upwardly-mobile class-conscious blacks:

... Africans were everywhere debunking tribalism and contemplating each other as "Africans", themselves as a "nation" - whatever the guide-books of the State Information Office say. And this African view of themselves does not confine itself to South African blacks. It identifies itself with all the black people of Africa; it breathes out the African Personality; it

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58 See Tim Couzens, The New African, 1985.

59 For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between music and the philosophy of New Africanism see: Christopher Ballantine, "Music and Emancipation" in Marabi Nights, pp. 39-62.

palpitates in time with the heartbeats of Accra. It strives hard to make itself vacuum enough to receive the winds of change from the North.<sup>60</sup>

An indicator of the importance and power of aspirant identities in a society, is the extent to which commercial interests associate their products with the achievement of those identities in their advertising campaigns. An attempt to harness the pro-African lobby (and articulate the product with *kwela* music's success), for example, was made in the following newspaper advertisement:

Fig. 3. The pro-African lobby in advertising.<sup>61</sup>



Issues of identity embodied in the African/American dialectic within urban musical styles were further complicated by the rising to power of the Afrikaner Nationalists in 1948. Apartheid policies superficially concurred with African Nationalist philosophy in terms of suppressing black class consciousness, and encouraging the expression of African identity in cultural forms. However, the government, fearful of the threat to

60 Can Themba, *The World of Can Themba*, p. 235-6.

61 *Post*, May 21, 1961.

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white superiority posed by a black class of educated elites, classified all blacks into one economic class and, to avoid the political power of a united black force, re-divided the black population along "tribal" lines. As the African identity prescribed by Afrikaner Nationalists was tribal and rural, the identity solicited by African Nationalists was necessarily non-tribal and urban.

Syncretic musical styles within the *marabi* tradition perfectly embodied the ideals of such Africanist identity. Through the syncretic process, older African and foreign musical elements were melded together to express urban, non-tribal, African identity.

*Kwela* evoked particularly strong associations of successful urbanity still in touch with its roots, and those roots were pan-African rather than "tribal". The playing of flutes by young cowherds was a cultural practice common to all of South Africa's ethnic groups. The sound and timbre of the pennywhistle therefore connoted rural roots and youth similarly to all blacks, regardless of their so-called "tribal" origins. The cyclical structure of *kwela* is common to much pre-colonial Southern African music as are other African musical elements such as the practice of call-and-response. Musical elements originating from foreign, particularly black American, sources (such as the remainder of the instruments in a *kwela* band, the functional harmonic use of the primary chords I IV V, and most importantly the shuffle rhythm) connoted cosmopolitan sophistication. Record companies, it seems, recognised that *kwela* could not be tribally classified because, although other recordings were categorised as, for example, Zulu or Sotho in advertisements, the caption in an advertisement for two of Spokes Mashiyane's recordings read: "For all nations, Spokes Mashiyane's latest..."<sup>62</sup>

Subsequent to *kwela*'s international success, journalists started to refer to the style as an ambassador of black urban culture. Nat Nakasa was one of the first to claim a direct relationship between *kwela* and township identity. In 1958 he wrote:

His tunes are mostly projections of his feelings. Like one of his hits, "Mamlambo", which got on to wax shortly after Spokes had escaped being stabbed in a brawl. He was grieving that someone had let him down. There is also that melodic howl of sorrow he figured out after an uncomfortable night in jail for playing on a street corner too long and too loud. Takes you right into that grim-faced cell, it does. That, then is the

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62 Golden City Post, March 25, 1956.

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story of Spokes Mashiyane, the man who can translate a knife squabble into song, a life into a symphony of lilting melodies.<sup>63</sup>

By 1963 *kwela* had become a symbol for the townships, as the following comments by an "African Correspondent" suggest:

... Whenever I play a pennywhistle record I can almost smell the hot sweat, the stench of stale liquor in the townships and locations. I can almost see the open gutters, the gangsters, the hungry, the train queues, and feel the suffering and the bottled-up emotions of the African. And it captures the Zest of African life.<sup>64</sup>

### **The Meaning of Kwela for its White Audience**

Besides providing a prime vehicle for urban black South African identity, *kwela* also provided a soundscape with which people who were not black South Africans could identify. *Kwela* was the first black South African musical style to achieve international recognition and to gain a substantial white following within the country. During the height of its popularity there are also indications in the press that *kwela* had a following amongst Indian youth.<sup>65</sup>

Perhaps the principal reason for *kwela*'s success across the previously unsurmountable racial barrier, was exposure. The young buskers who hawked their music in the city centres and white residential areas exposed large numbers of whites to township music for the first time. White South Africans were introduced to music and dance variety shows performed by black artists during the Second World War when Ike Brooks organised the Zonk show to entertain troops. Both Alf Herbert's African Jazz and Variety, and various shows organised by the Union of Southern African Artists, played to white audiences throughout the fifties. However, it was the *kwela* musicians who consistently brought township music into the white areas so that, by the mid-fifties, pennywhistle music was a familiar part of white Johannesburg's soundscape. Pennywhistle music thus came to be identified by white South Africans as a manifestation of their own cultural identity.

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63 Nat Nakasa, "The Magic Piper", Drum, December 1958.

64 The Star, July 11, 1963.

65 World, December, 1958; Drum, January 1962;



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*Kwela's* white audience may be roughly divided into three interest groups: young rock 'n' rollers; *boeremusik* fans; and conservatives and liberals who found ways of using *kwela* to buttress their respective political ideologies. Each group was able to articulate *kwela* music with their own interests and concerns and find the style meaningful. The identities embodied in the patronage of *kwela* for each group were, however, entirely different.

### The Relationship between Kwela and Rock 'n' Roll

During the late fifties, *kwela* became very popular with a section of the white youth. In a few cases young whites wished to play *kwela*. Allegedly, Spokes Mashiyane was frequently asked to give pennywhistle lessons to white children,<sup>66</sup> and in 1958 a black journalist reported seeing a white youth playing the pennywhistle in the Johannesburg suburb of Malvern East:

I stopped and listened. The chappie was playing Spokes Mashiyane's "Kwela Claude". Not only that, but he held the instrument just like they do it in the townships ... I must hand it to this *Kwela* craze. It's breaking all those silly barriers some people waste a lifetime dreaming up.<sup>67</sup>

For the most part, however, *kwela's* young white patrons appreciated the style as dance music. As aforementioned,<sup>68</sup> a furore was caused by young whites dancing to *kwela* music at the Zoo Lake. Furthermore, Albert Ralulimi claims that by 1957 the King Kwela Trio had a "very large white following." He boasts, "We had conquered the whole of Johannesburg: north, south and eastern suburbs. We had followers who could fill up the Johannesburg City Hall.... Most of our followers were students and the young working-class."<sup>69</sup> Irene Menell (one of the organisers of the musical, King Kong) broadly corroborates Ralulimi's categorisation of *kwela's* young white patrons, claiming that they were mostly "the 'swingers' - the young Hillbrow people who went to clubs".<sup>70</sup>

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66 Drum, December 1958.

67 World, October 11, 1958.

68 See chapter V, pp. 199-201.

69 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

70 Irene Menell. Author's interview, 3.9.90.

There was, however, a substantial overlap between white *kwela* supporters and rock 'n' roll fans. As Elsa Nell, the secretary of the Official Elvis Presley Fan Club of South Africa, declared: "We all used to go to the Zoo Lake in our stove pipes, and we would get up on tea boxes and play pennywhistles with the black guys there."<sup>71</sup> Mode of dress was an indicator of the overlap between the patronage of these two musical styles, and it seems that the wearing of "stove-pipe" jeans distinguished both rock 'n' roll and *kwela* fans from other sectors of the white youth. Albert Ralulimi recounts some of the tensions between these different white interest groups in the following account of the first live performance of *kwela* in Brakpan, an event he titles "The Brakpan Fiasco":

... guys who came from places like Nigel, Brakpan - they used to be called the "Bell-bottoms". The people who jived to our *kwela* type of music used to wear the stove-pipe type of pants.... So our friends here in Johannesburg had accompanied us to attend the show at Brakpan. So the "Stove-pipes" and the "Bell-Bottoms", they did not really share one time of peace. So else our guys here could dance to the *kwela* music and those fellows there were really behind with the adoption of the times. They became jealous and a fight broke out. Everything just went haywire, whereby we were even attacked by those guys. We came back to Johannesburg here bruised after we were assaulted by those farmers that end, because surely they didn't like the Johannesburg guys grabbing their girls. Girls always went for those who could dance this *kwela* music to be shown the proper positions - so that's when the fight started.<sup>72</sup>

The following recollection of prominent white singer-songwriter, David Marks, which explains his personal experience of the connection between the two musical styles, is representative of identification held more broadly by white rock 'n' roll fans of his generation:

When I was small in Jo'burg I used to be really turned on by the *kwela* groups.... I used to love watching these little bands play, just follow them around. So when I got older, and into rock 'n' roll, I always wanted to combine the two.<sup>73</sup>

*Kwela* clearly signified differently for its young white fans than it did for its black audience. It is unlikely that the white rock 'n' rollers who "bopped" to *kwela* had any

71 The Weekly Mail, August 24 to 26, 1990.

72 Albert Ralulimi. Author's interview, 15.7.90.

73 Muff Anderson, Music in the the Mix, p. 79.

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sense of the style's position in the identity debates over race and class which concerned black South African society. The use of *kwela* as dance music suggests the nature of the style's appeal for its young white fans. For this group, patronage of *kwela* signified the same rebellion of youth as did patronage of rock 'n' roll. *Kwela* was, in one sense, simply South African rock 'n' roll.

Certainly conservatives within the South African establishment reacted as fervently against rock 'n' roll as they did against white patronage of *kwela* music. Hamm reports an article in the *Star* which suggested that "rock 'n' roll sounded like nothing more than 'beating on a bucket lid' and identified its audience as those 'hordes of sloppy, aggressive, be-jeaned louts and their girl friends who cause so much trouble in South Africa.'"<sup>74</sup> Two years later, the *Star* published a letter from twenty citizens who objected to rock 'n' roll on the grounds of its supposed connection with "primitive" music. The letter claimed, "The exact same ritual and war dances may be seen at less cost, and in greater safety, at our own mine compounds."<sup>75</sup> Hamm also reports that Reverend D.F.B. de Beer (Transvaal Secretary for Morals) issued a statement on behalf of the *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK: the Dutch Reformed Church) in which he took "strong exception to rock 'n' roll, dancing and music exhibition, [which exert a] demoralising influence on youth and aggravate the youth problem. We are now sowing the wind and will reap the whirlwind".<sup>76</sup>

The sexuality of dance styles inspired by the articulation of African with American musical elements seems to have illicited the same response of holy horror from the aging establishment on both sides of the Atlantic. In South Africa, the establishment's reaction to white youths' appreciation of *kwela* was further fuelled by the crime of inter-racial dancing.<sup>77</sup> It is possible (although I have found no documentary evidence of such) that the rebellious identity expressed by young whites in their patronage of *kwela* could also have included defiance of the race laws, in addition to their assertion of sexual and personal freedom.

What seems beyond doubt, however, is that white adolescents responded positively to *kwela* because it was musically akin enough to rock 'n' roll to accommodate a similar

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74 *Star*, December 16, 1956.

75 *Star*, January 10, 1958.

76 Charles Hamm, "Rock 'n' roll in a very strange society", pp. 159-163.

77 See Chapter V, pp. 199-201.

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dance style. In terms of fulfilling the function of dance music, the most important element common to the two styles was the fast shuffle rhythm. The primary differences, namely the instrumentation and the harmonic progression, would not have interfered with the dancer's movements. Furthermore, *kwela* musicians did record rock 'n' roll -type numbers. The first pennywhistle recordings to gain fame (namely Willard Cele's "Penny Whistle Blues" [Cassette A:7] and "Penny Whistle Boogie") were, in fact, fast numbers in the twelve-bar blues form with a shuffle beat. In 1951, when these numbers were recorded, Cele's American model would have been "rhythm and blues", one of the styles from which rock 'n' roll directly descended. A good example of a later rock 'n' roll-based pennywhistle number is Spokes Mashiyane's "Phenduka Twist" [Cassette B:12]: a twelve-bar blues which includes a guitar solo stylistically influenced by country-and-western music. (It is possible that this number is a cover version of a rock 'n' roll number, since the composer's credits on the record label are indicated as "arr. Mashiyane".) Other examples are: Ben Nkosi's "Ben's Hawk", a fast double-flute blues number with a prominent walking base [Cassette B:11]; and "Time Square" by Peter Makana [cassette B:3, Appendix II:1]

*Kwela* was also seen by black journalists as South Africa's equivalent of, or answer to, rock 'n' roll. Ilanga claimed: "South Africa's pennywhistle *kwela* music, invented by Africans, may eventually replace rock 'n' roll. It is fast growing international fame."<sup>78</sup> Golden City Post declared: "'Tom Hark' is the hottest thing in England. It is shattering all box-office records, shouldering aside 'rock 'n' roll' (Hurray!) and the skiffle."<sup>79</sup> A review of two recordings by the Pace Makers stated: "This is *kwela* on the up beat. The rhythm is infectious and even if you are not fond of *kwela* you'll rock!"

Rock 'n' roll had a following amongst black South Africans during *kwela*'s reign, namely the second half of the fifties. In 1959 a journalist noted their simultaneous demise: "A story doing the rounds in some music circles is that *kwela*, like rock 'n' roll, is on the way out..."<sup>80</sup> Another connection between the two musical styles, and between fans across the race barrier, was that their youthful followers were often described as dressed in blue jeans. The wearing of jeans seemed to indicate rebellion and was generally mentioned in disgust by members of the establishment. As implied

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78 Ilanga, April 26, 1958.

79 Golden City Post, July 13, 1958.

80 World, June 6, 1959.

in the fore-mentioned statement by Elsa Nell,<sup>81</sup> young white *kwela* followers wore "stove-pipe" jeans and, as the following description suggests, young black rock 'n' rollers wore jeans:

I go to the back of the house, where there's a tent pitched for "rockagers" who now and again want to shake a leg.... A busty young girl in jeans slides a disc on the battered gramophone, and some rockagers begin to dance while the Elvis of Presley accuses each and everyone of being "Nothing but a Hound Dog".<sup>82</sup>

When asked if he ever played rock 'n' roll, Jake Lerole replied, "Ya, I did play rock 'n' roll as well. I did like rock 'n' roll. Like with that guy Holly something, Elvis Presley, Little Richard.... Yes, we used to enjoy the music: we loved it! That's when the jeans, you know these denims came in fashion."<sup>83</sup>

Hamm claims that rock 'n' roll was not popular with black South Africans. However, he seems to refute his own claim by prefacing it with an analysis of opinions expressed in the black press: he cites seven positive and one negative responses to rock 'n' roll in the years 1956 and 1957. Additionally, Hamm notes that from the end of 1956, "many new releases by local performers were identified, in advertisements or reviews, as being examples of indigenous rock 'n' roll", and that throughout 1957 "Zonk, Drum, and Hi-Note! continued to carry reviews of newly-released discs advertised as rock 'n' roll music."<sup>84</sup>

I would like to propose a modified assessment of rock 'n' roll's reception amongst black South Africans. Rock 'n' roll evidently was enjoyed by black South Africans, but for a limited period as compared with whites and other young people elsewhere in the world. Hamm reports that rock 'n' roll was unfavourably reviewed in the black press from 1958 onwards; however, this does not negate its popularity before that date. Hamm also bases his assertions purely on reviews written by black journalists who (as discussed earlier)<sup>85</sup> cannot always be assumed to be reflecting the views of the majority of black working people.

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81 See Chapter VI, p. 228.

82 Drum, May 1958.

83 Jake Lerole. Author's interview, 13.7.90.

84 Charles Hamm, "Rock 'n' roll in a very strange society", pp. 166-168.

85 See Chapter VI, p. 210.

Hamm supports his claim that rock 'n' roll was not popular with black South Africans with three arguments, all of which are problematic.<sup>86</sup> Firstly, he maintains that because all early rock 'n' roll discs available in South Africa were by white artists and because visiting rock 'n' roll artists were whites, black South Africans "apparently took this music to be an exclusively white product", and were therefore uninterested. Clearly, however, the above statement by Jake Lerole indicates that he had access to, and admired, both black and white American rock 'n' roll stars. Furthermore, as the following statement by Barney Rachabane suggests, Elvis Presley was idolised by some young blacks regardless of his race:

One day we went to the bio and Elvis Presley was on the screen in some flick called "Loving You". I watched the guy swinging and swaying and loading it over just like he was the greatest thing in the world. I burned to do the same.<sup>87</sup>

Secondly, Hamm maintains that rock 'n' roll could not compete with the enthusiasm for jazz which "was peaking in the 1950s and early 1960s", and that jazz was ideologically more in accord with the rising black nationalism. Both the latter statements are true, although the popularity of jazz is unlikely to have severely affected the impact of rock 'n' roll because the jazz audience was, for the most part, different from that of rock 'n' roll. Contemporary press reports and comments made by interviewees suggest that patrons of the latter were generally younger and less educated.

Thirdly, Hamm alleges that rock 'n' roll was rejected because "black musicians in southern Africa were forging an indigenous urban popular style which drew important elements from their own traditional music."<sup>88</sup> Using the term "Jive", Hamm collapses all the musical genres which I have grouped as styles within the *marabi* tradition.<sup>89</sup> Throughout the history of urban black popular music, the current American popular music style has been merged with African musical elements to form the latest style within the *marabi* tradition. In such a merger, the current popular American music style was generally, to use Ballantine's phrase, "creatively appropriated".<sup>90</sup> The above examples of pennywhistle rock 'n' roll illustrate that some black South African

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86 Charles Hamm, "Rock 'n' roll in a very strange society", pp. 169-172.

87 *Golden City Post*, January 4, 1959.

88 Charles Hamm, "Rock 'n' roll in a very strange society", p. 172.

89 See Chapter VI, Fig 2., p. 218.

90 Christopher Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, p. 38.

musicians appreciated rock 'n' roll enough to appropriate various musical elements from it, and incorporated them into the current urban popular style which was, in this case, *kwela*.

### The Relationship between Kwela and Afrikaans Folk Music

A fair amount of confusion exists about the relationship between *kwela* and Afrikaans folk music. This results primarily from the development of the *kwela* dance amongst the Cape "coloured" population, a style that enjoyed popularity concurrent with pennywhistle *kwela* in the mid-fifties. The issue was confused further when *boeremusiek* recordings were issued incorporating the word *kwela* (using this spelling) into their titles: for example, "Carnival Kwela", "Jamboree Kwela", and "Kalahari Kwela", by Nico Carstens and the Penny Serenaders.<sup>91</sup> A newspaper review of "Laura Kwela" and "Handy's Samba" by Bobbie's Ballroom Orchestra stated: "This is a typical "Capie" or "Kapenaar" recording with the usual line-up of lead alto-sax, accordion, banjo and piano. Both sides offer very little musically but the rhythm appeals to dancing."<sup>92</sup>

In a discussion about his brand of *kwela* music, Nico Carstens said: "They had a rhythm which we called *kwela* in the Cape, but it was more like a *klopse*<sup>93</sup> and it was very akin to Latin rhythms, the Samba and the Salsa etcetera.... I quite honestly can't tell you where is the dividing line between a *vastrap* and a *kwela*."<sup>94</sup> In 1956, Todd Matshikiza explained the new style:

...something different happened among the Coloured bands. They've stopped playing "Squares a speciality." A new style, the *Quela* (pronounced *kwela*), has evolved. *Quela* is the brainchild of the squares and the modern samba, so that you get a *vastrap* which is both South African and yet continental. You can dance the squares to *kwela* and you can also samba to it. Example, "Shuel se Kwela" on Phillips SC 14 by Mike Adams's Dance Band.<sup>95</sup>

91 Columbia (Carnival Series) TSA3 side (b), TSA7 sides (a) and (b) respectively.

92 Bantu World, November 16, 1955.

93 Cape "Coloured" songs generally sung at carnival time.

94 Nico Carstens. Author's interview, 12.7.90.

95 Drum, April 1956.

Another newspaper stated that the "*Quela* is a cousin to the jive. But you dance it to faster music, and it gives you a break to do as many dancing tricks (including acrobatics!) as you wish."<sup>96</sup>

The Cape *quela* and pennywhistle *kwela* were completely separate styles, played by different musicians for different audiences. Pennywhistle *kwela* did, however, contain some musical elements akin to those of *vastrap* with which followers of Afrikaans folk music were able to identify. John Leyden of Mango Groove (a contemporary band which derives its musical idiom strongly from *kwela*) claims that elderly Afrikaans people form the largest sector of their market. He exclaims, "We have sold to people who normally buy Bles Bridges. It's unbelievable - we have sold to the mainstream Afrikaner!"<sup>97</sup> In the late forties, Jake Lerole was invited to the house of an Afrikaans musician in Lyndhurst to play *boeremusiek* on the pennywhistle and accordion. He explains:

I used to sleep there with white people. And here they didn't want my people. But I, they used to welcome me.... I go and I play this Afrikaans music ... Then I eat beautiful food, just because they, they keeping nice food there. Then I just go every time, every Saturday I go there.... I used to play around with the Afrikaners you know. Cause they loved my penny whistle."<sup>98</sup>

A few recordings were made of the type of pennywhistle-*vastrap* Jake Lerole describes. "Die Wapad" and "Haak Vrystaat" by Chris Smit *en Sy Pennie Fluitjie*, for example, are songs from the *boeremusiek* idiom, but the instrumentation includes a pennywhistle in addition to the typical *boeremusiek* instrumentation of accordion, guitar, string base, and drum-set.<sup>99</sup>

Many of the styles within the *marabi* tradition have incorporated musical elements from Afrikaans folk music. Ballantine states that "types of 'coloured'-Afrikaans and white-Afrikaans dance music known as *tikkie-draai* and *vastrap*, as well as the *ghommaliédjies* of the Cape Malays" influenced "the melodic and rhythmic structures of *marabi*".<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, Rycroft claims that "African dance-hall music in the

96 Golden City Post, March 25, 1956.

97 John Leyden. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

98 Jake Lerole. Interviewed by Christopher Ballantine, 15.1.86.

99 Protea P.A. 205 sides (a) and (b).

100 Christopher Ballantine, Marabi Nights, p. 27.



smaller South African towns, and even such town dances as the *Tsaba-tsaba* of the Rhodesias, owe much to the *Vastrap*."<sup>101</sup>

The most important influence of *boeremusiek* on *kwela* was the addition of the banjo to the backing section. The musician who introduced the banjo into *kwela* was Saul Malahela from White River in the Eastern Transvaal. He was given his banjo by an employer who was a farmer and *Boereorkes* musician. The effect of the banjo on *kwela* music is discussed in detail in Chapter III.<sup>102</sup> One of the best examples of *vastrap-kwela* is "Phesheya" performed by Spokes Mashiyane and his All Star Flutes [Cassette B:11, Appendix II:2]. The melodic structure of "Phesheya" is that of a folk tune rather than the repeated melodic motifs typical of *kwela*. The tempo is very fast (crotchet = 224), and the banjo backing figure is strongly influenced by *vastrap*.<sup>103</sup>

#### The Meanings of Kwela for White Liberals and White Conservatives

*Kwela* was patronised, or at least utilised, but some sectors of the white population not as a result of their response to the music itself, but because it could be usefully articulated with their political agendas.

In 1953, the multi-racial Liberal Party was formed by a group of whites whose liberal political ideals could not be accommodated by the official opposition United Party. Lodge states that:

... the Liberal Party's chief importance was in helping to shape African political perceptions, firstly as a result of the friendships which existed between some of its principals and Congress politicians, and secondly as a source of hope and inspiration for the conciliatory brand of nationalism characteristic of the Luthuli era.<sup>104</sup>

Patronage of black culture was a distinct political statement for white liberals and radicals since any multiracial activity "was in itself an act of defiance in a society where inter-racial contact invoked official disapproval."<sup>105</sup> Music was frequently

101 David Rycroft "The New Town Music of South Africa", p. 55.

102 See Chapter III pp. 101-104.

103 See Chapter III, figure 39, p. 102.

104 Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, p. 87.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

utilised in facilitating inter-racial contact, and *kwela* was the most popular contemporary dance music. A 1958 newspaper, for example, carried a picture of white woman dancing, the caption of which read: "Mrs Sonia Bunting 'does the *Kwela*' at party at home of Adv. J. Slovo to celebrating the withdrawal of the indictment against the ninety-one treason trialists during the week." As black people were present, the party was later raided by police on the pretext that liquor was being illegally consumed.<sup>106</sup> Pat Williams (co-author of the script for the musical King Kong) explains the euphoria, excitement for white liberals engendered by socialisation across the race barrier:

... everyone was terribly hopeful. I think why was because this interface between black and white had just started. We were mixing socially, which had happened very little in the previous generation, except amongst very serious political people. Suddenly it was happening socially, and King Kong actually accelerated that in the sense that for the first time ever I can remember, there were black celebrities and white "whoopies". You know - that had never happened before. But when we went off to parties there was this marvellous feeling of - god we're doing it, you know, it's happening and it's going to happen more and more.<sup>107</sup>

The liberal agenda in the patronage of such shows as King Kong was clearly recognised by conservative whites. A person who signed him/herself as an "Afrikaans theatre goer", claimed the following in a letter to the press: "Surely, the success of these South African plays can be attributed, in large measure to the fact that they are in tune with the political feelings of the English speaking section, the protesting opposition."<sup>108</sup>

The co-optation of *kwela* and other contemporary black musical styles by conservative forces did, however, occur. The South African Information Service, for example, produced a film about removals, entitled The Condemned are Happy, in which *kwela* was used as the background music for every township scene.<sup>109</sup> In 1959, Miss J. Coertze, head of the Cultural Section of the Information Service, announced that "copies of the LP record of the all-Native musical King Kong have been bought by the South African Information Service for sixteen of the Union's Embassies and Legations". King Kong was to join "Lionel Bowman, Mimi Coertze, Moira Lister,

106 Golden City Post, October 19, 1958.

107 Pat Williams. Author's interview, 17.1.90.

108 Rand Daily Mail, April 1, 1959.

109 The Condemned are Happy presented by the South African Information Services. Produced and Directed by Jamie Uys film productions, Johannesburg.

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Cato Brink, and *boeremusiek*" in the government's representation of South African culture.<sup>110</sup>

*Kwela*'s major tonality and fast swing beat infused the style with its irrepressibly happy spirit. It was thus easily utilised in support of the "happy Africa" myth which was perpetuated by both white liberals and conservatives for different reasons. Liberals wished to convince the rest of white South Africa that blacks were cheerful, creative, un-threatening, and pleasant to be with. Sampson (one of the few whites involved in the production of *Drum*) claimed: "Bitter though some moments are, Africans have not yet turned to hating: they have a resilience, a gaiety and humour and vitality, and a capacity for suffering and patience that will not easily turn to despair."<sup>111</sup> The conservative agenda in the cultivation of the "happy Africa" image, on the other hand, was the reasoning that if blacks were always singing and dancing they must be reasonably content with their lot. The conditions of their lives were obviously not that bad and they didn't need anything better in order to be happy.

### **CONCLUSION:**

#### **The Meaning of Kwela Today**

The mid-eighties saw the formation of a multi-racial pop band, called Mango Groove, which drew heavily from the *kwela* idiom. Mango Groove became very popular, particularly with white adolescents. One explanation for the popularity of *kwela* with today's young white South Africans could be similar to Pratt's explanation of the popularity of the blues with contemporary Americans. Pratt suggests that white Americans are "seeking 'authenticity' in a society in many ways organised to frustrate and deny it." Pratt quotes black Chicago blues singer KoKo Taylor as saying "white audiences will let me do my own thing all night long, which is blues"; however, many blacks "deny the blues because they're ashamed of their past. They won't admit even if they really like blues - until they've had a few drinks." According to Chicago blues

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110 *Star*, March 11, 1959.

111 Antony Sampson, *Drum*, p. 256.

saxophonist Eddie Shaw: "The blues are saying something and the Whites are picking up on it; the Blacks don't need to, they *already know it - they've been there*."<sup>112</sup> Duzi Magwaza, Mango Groove's pennywhistler and saxophonist, makes a similar point: "It's funny, we have got more followers in whites than in blacks. I would say that it's because the black people say 'Agh! - we know this music."<sup>113</sup>

Another reason for contemporary white patronage of *kwela* is that their identification with, and enjoyment of, *kwela* music reinforces and validates their sense of South African identity. This is particularly true for older generations who experienced the pennywhistle as an integral part of the soundscape of their South African youth. In her study of Paul Simon's album Graceland, Meintjies similarly points out that white South Africans:

... have embraced Graceland because of the link it offers them to indigenous Black tradition. By expressing a claim on this tradition, they are able to legitimate their own identity as local and to construct a history for this local identity. The cementing of local identity is a politically important move for Whites. By incorporating traditions and other signs of indigenous, subordinated groups into their own identity, they not only establish a place for themselves in South Africa, but they also diffuse the potency of those traditions and signs for the subordinated groups.<sup>114</sup>

Since the mid-eighties, black music has been "met by an increasing White audience seeking roots, identity, and a future in Africa",<sup>115</sup> and *kwela*, along with other black urban musical styles such as African Jazz and *mbaqanga*, has found a new and appreciative audience.

*Kwela*, and other styles within the *marabi* tradition, have also enjoyed a renaissance of appreciation amongst certain sectors of South Africa's black population. The Soweto Uprising of 1976 marked the start of a period of political mobilisation which catalysed a cultural renaissance in the concern for "the people's roots". One manifestation of this search for identity was the Black Consciousness movement; another was a deep nostalgia for, and glorification of, the fifties. After twenty years of extraordinary repression, the fifties took on an aura of being that last decade when hope for a new order still existed. That time when the majority of South Africans believed that

112 Ray Pratt, "The Politics of Authenticity in Popular Music," pp. 55-62.

113 Duzi Magwaza. Author's interview, 11.3.90.

114 Meintjies, Louise. "Paul Simon's Graceland, p. 51.

115 *Ibid.* p. 51.

peaceful protest could bring change; that unjust laws could not be enforced; that leaders of the people could not be silenced. That time when there was some interaction between black intellectuals and liberal whites; and when vibrant black urban culture first obtained some recognition on the world stage.

For its black audience *kwela* has, in retrospect, been re-articulated with a romanticised nostalgia for the fifties, and the pennywhistle has become not only "one of the symbols of black South African music",<sup>116</sup> but an icon for the whole decade and all its idealised possibilities. One township resident reminisced: "Although Shanty town [shacks in Orlando West] was a ghetto in the true sense of the word, my memories are of drumbeats, penny whistles and all that jazz."<sup>117</sup>

The internal musical components of *kwela* lend themselves to symbolic association. The timbral qualities of the pennywhistle (when blown with the *kwela* embouchure) subscribe to the African timbral sensibility of incorporating a "buzz". The sound of the pennywhistle seems simultaneously to connote both personal introspective expression, and communal celebration; innocent rural simplicity, and "hip" urban vibrancy. Elements stemming from "traditional" musical sources such as cyclicity, call-and-response, and melodic structure, allowed township dwellers still adapting to urban life to identify *kwela* as their own, whilst influences from black American musical styles, notably *kwela*'s swing rhythm, encouraged aspirations towards a more cosmopolitan identity.

For present-day black musicians, *kwela* has come to represent their cultural roots: as a black jazz student at the University of Natal proclaimed, "*Kwela* - that is our blues".<sup>118</sup> Ntemi Piliso elaborates further on the style's aesthetic power and symbolic significance:

... I don't know: it's got something, I can't explain it. I can only play it. It's got the message, sort of, this *kwela*.... It's like you feel you are in a serene mood you know, it seems you have got the blues. You know the blues have got a message - now with *kwela*, maybe it depicts something like hardships, it can mean many things. You are a herd boy, you are sitting all alone, and you want the cows to come home, you want to talk to them, you don't know what to say. I don't know, it's something like that. It's got some message.<sup>119</sup>

116 Jonas Gwangwa and Fulco van Aurich, "The Melody of Freedom", p. 151.

117 Joyce Dube, "Surviving through the 50s", *Vrye Weekblad*, 28 June - 4 July, 1991.

118 Monde Futshane, Author's interview, 10.12.92.

119 Ntemi Piliso, Author's interview, 4.9.90.

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For its exponents, *kwela* offered fame and fortune: for African Nationalists *kwela* sang of township culture. The style became important to the black intellectual elite of the fifties when it achieved international recognition and popularity across the race barrier. For the young white "swingers" who danced their rebellion, *kwela* was a South African form of rock 'n' roll. For blacks and whites involved in leftist politics of the eighties, *kwela* expressed the hope and freedom that had been smashed by apartheid's sledge-hammer in the early sixties. The extraordinary range of meanings embodied by *kwela* was possible because of the syncretic nature of style's internal musical structure, its popularity at that particular period in South Africa's history, and because, to quote Pratt's paraphrase of John Berger: "the *way* we hear is affected by what we know and what we believe."<sup>120</sup>

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120 Ray Pratt, "The Politics of Authenticity in Popular Music," p 59.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **ANALYSED KWELA RECORDINGS**

- "Ace Blues" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane & his Rhythm, Quality TJ 24.
- "African Pennywhistle song"(-) Tony Scott & his African Penny Whistle Serenaders, Rave RMG 1129.
- "Alexandra Special" (Mafuya, Thobei) Alexandra Casbahs, Troubadour AFC 429.
- "Allen's Taps-taps" (A. Kwela) Allen kwela & his Band, Winner OK 042.
- "Amagoduka" (Dhlamini) The Black Hammers, USA 51.
- "Amatjaha" (Pilane) The Shandies Brothers, USA 31.
- "American Style" (Ngubane) Piliso's Sax Quartet, Troubadour AFC 560.
- "Azikhwelwa" (Mafuya,Thobei) Alexandra Casbahs, Troubadour AFC 429
- "Background" (Gobezi) The Dosas Rangers, USA Records (African record) USA 45.
- "Back to the Shelters" (Nkosi) Solven Whistlers, Decca LK 4292.
- "Baile Batho" (H. Mathaba) Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Special, Gallo New Sound GB 3029.
- "Bal La Ekhaya" (arr. Stamford) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo New Sound GB 3399.
- "Banana Ba Rustenburg" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo GALP 1049.
- "Banjo Special" (R. Msomi) Spokes Mashiyane and his All Star Flutes, GB 2964.
- "Bashimanyana" (J. Moagi) Swing-tone Whistlers, Columbia YE 196.
- "Basimane" (Spokes Mashiyane and Frans Pilane) Spokes Mashiyane and Frans Pilane, Rave RMG 1129.
- "Beitstraat Se Ding" (P. van Buuren) The Mascots, Troubadour TCM-7801
- "Bennies 2nd Avenue Special" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane, Rave RGM 1192.
- "Ben's Bounce" (B. Masindi) Tony Scott with Benjamin Masindi, RCA Popular Record 31 104.
- "Ben's Hawk" (Ben Nkosi) Ben Nkosi and his Double Flutes, HMV JP 622.
- "Ben's Special" (-) Ben Nkosi, LP Rave RMG 1047.

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- "Lemmy's Jump" (L. Mabaso) Jimmy Pratt with Lemmy Special, Decca LK 4292.
- "Little Bob" (P. Mokonotela) Soft Tone Whistlers, Zonk TV 165.
- "Little Kong" (Matshikiza) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallotone New Sound GB/2938.
- "Little Kong Kwela" (Matshikiza) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo GALP 1049.
- "Little Lemmy" (Hill) Little Lemmy & Big Joe, Gallotone Jive GB 2774; also Gallotone GALP 1246.
- "Little Lemmy Kwela" (Hill) Little Lemmy & Big Joe, Decca LK 4292.
- "Lona Na Lona" (T. Ramadi) Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five, New Sound GB 3189.
- "London Special" (Mabaso) Lemmy Special, Gallotone GALP 1246.
- "Look Out Boys" (Ben N'kosi) Ben N'kosi One Man 2 Flutes and Rhythm, L 5184 DR 78
- "Lova" (-) Ben Nkosi, LP Rave RMG 1047.
- "Maci Special" (Mhlungu) Rolling Forties, AFC 699.
- "Madala Kwela" (Nicky Parker, Artie Davis) Artie Davis and Nicky Parker's Band, Columbia Carnival Series TSA 35.
- "Mahlalela" (P.Rametshi) Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five, New Sound GB 3003.
- "Mahlalela" (D. Slinger) Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five, New Sound GB 3269.
- "Mama Ndiyeke" (L. Mabaso) Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Bright Boys, Gallo New Sound GB 3479.
- "Mambo Spokes" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo SGALP 1049.
- "Mamlambo" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane, Rave RMG 1192.
- "Mamsomi" (Mhatshwa) Alexandra Apaches with Chorus and Accompaniment, Troubadour AFC 494.
- "Mangalisa Blues" (J. Ndlovu) Jerry Penny Flute, HMV JP 2023.
- "Mangamanga" (S. Molepo) Tony Scott and the Alexandra Dead End Kids, RCA Popular Record 31 104.
- "Manotcha" (Jill Desmond) Spokes Mashiyane and Robert Cele, TJ 213.
- "Manyatela" (Spokes Mashiyane, L. Mabaso) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo GALP 1049.
- "Mapetla" (R. Msomi) Spokes Mashiyane, New Sound GB 3002.
- "Maraba Helele" (Kid Moncho) The Sewer Rats, USA Records African Records USA 137.



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- "Maseru Special" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane and his New Sound Band, Gallotone New Sound GB 2967.
- "Mashashane" (D. Ramosa) Aron, Pieter and David, HMV JP 514.
- "Matsetse" (F.Pilana) Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Special, New Sound GB 3045.
- "Mdala" (A. Lerole) Aron, Pieter and David, HMV JP 514.
- "Meadowlands Boogie" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane & France Pilane, Quality TJ 56B.
- "Mekoalaba" (-) Spokes Mashiyane & his all Stars, Gallotone New Sound GB 2938.
- "Meva" (-) Spokes Mashiyane and his Rhythm, Quality TJ 21.
- "Mfana Ka Nkosi" (P. Makana) Peter "Blues" Mkakana, Envee NV 3069.
- "Midnight Party Jive" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane and his Magic Sax, Quality (Special) TJ 505; also Rave RMG 1192.
- "Mkhekhelezi" (Monaheng, Songxaka) Spokes Mashiyane & his Big Five, New Sound GB 3149.
- "Mkwenyana" (C. Songxaka) Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five, New Sound GB 3189.
- "Monate" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo GALP 1049.
- "Moreletsane" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane and his Golden Sax, New Sound GB 3249.
- "Moreneng Matsieng" (Spokes Mashiyane, J. Monaheng) Spokes Mashiyane and his Golden Saxophone, Gallo New Sound GB 3233.
- "Mosupa Tsela" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo GALP 1049.
- "Motoang" (P. Mokonotela) Soft Tone Whistlers, Zonk TV 165.
- "Mtaka Mama" (R. Msomi) Spokes Mashiyane and Reggie Msomi, New Sound GB 3271.
- "Mtohegen" (Sonny Boy) Benoni Flute Quintet, Tropik D-C DC 744.
- "Nantso Madoda" (King Jury) King Jury and his Rhythm, Zonk TV 128.
- "Ndiya Goduka" (King Jury) King Jury and his Rhythm, Zonk TV.128.
- "New Jive Blues" (L. Moncho) Spokes & His Ragtime Boys, New Sound GB 3232.
- "New Sound Flying Rock" (D. Slinger) Spokes Mashiyane and His Big Five, New Sound GB 3110.
- "New York Special" (Ngubane) Piliso's Sax Quartet, Troubadour AFC 560.

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- "Ngiyabonga" (Jerry Ndhlovu) Jerry Penny Flute, JP 2017.
- "Nika Nika" (C. Coke) Spokes Mashiyane and His Big Five, New Sound GB 3270.
- "1961 Taps-taps" (Kwela) Allen Kwela and his Band, Winner OK 142.
- "No Name Kwela" (B. Nkosi) Jimmy Pratt with Solven Whistlers, New Sound GB 2788.
- "Nozintaba" (Ben Nkosi) Ben Nkosi and his Double Flutes, JP 843.
- "Nuya Ngwani" (-) Ben Nkosi, LP Rave RMG 1047.
- "O Brother 'F'" (Maphisa) F. Maphisa, Zonk TV 207.
- "O.K. Radio" (S. Vilakazi, Spokes Mashiyane) Gladys Setai and Spokes Mashiyane, Winner OK 077.
- "One Man Two Flutes" (Ben Nkosi) Ben and Pal, GB 3559.
- "One More" (Arr. R. Msomi, H. Mathaba) Mashiyane & Msomi Double Five, New Sound GB 3248.
- "Orlando" (R. Msomi) Spokes Mashiyane and Four Lads, New Sound GB 3142.
- "Ou-Dhlahla" (Trad.) The Alexandra Dead End Kids, RCA African Records RCA 66; also RCA Popular Records 31 104.
- "Penny Penduka" (G. Kente) The Pretoria All Blacks, Meritone Big Beat Series.
- "Pennywhistle Concerto" (Ben N'kosi) Ben N'kosi One Man 2 Flutes and Rhythm, 5184 DR 78.
- "Phakamisa Spokes" (J. Monaheng) Spokes Mashiyane and his Golden Saxophone, New Sound GB 3128.
- "Phansi" (M. Mabaso) Lemmy Special, New Sound GB 3124.
- "Phatha Nova" (S. Ntutu) Spokes Mashiyane and His Big Five, New Sound GB 3110.
- "Phazamiza Zacks" (I. Nkosi) Alexandra Shamber Boys, His Master's Voice JP 2064.
- "Phehello" (Arr. Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo New Sound GB 3402.
- "Phenduka Twist" (Arr. Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo New Sound GB 3402.
- "Phesheya" (H. Tau) Spokes Mashiyane and his All Star Flutes, New Sound GB 3001.
- "Phesheya Elandani" (M. Mabaso) Lemmy and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys, New Sound GB 3267.
- "Phiri" (Lipondo) The Dube Satellites, USA 8.
- "Phola Grace" (Zeph) Aron, Elias & Zeph, His Master's Voice JP 2067.

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- "Phuza Spokes" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane and his Golden Saxophone, New Sound GB 3128.
- "Pick and Choose" (Ben Nkosi) Ben and Pal, GB 3559.
- "Prinsloo Street Special" (-) Christopher Songxaka, Rave RMG 1129.
- "Qo Petsa" (-) Spokes Mashiyane and his All Stars, Gallotone GB 2941.
- "Rockin in Rhythm" (Ellington, Carney, Mills) Jimmy Pratt with Lemmy Special and Miriam Makeba, Decca LK 4292.
- "Ry-Ry" (R. Lerole) Elias and his Zig-Zag Jive Flutes, Columbia YE 164.
- "Samson and Dehilah" (-) Spokes Mashiyane, LP Rave RMG 1047.
- "Sanny Boy Special" (E. Mtsima) Benoni Flute Quintet, JP 2069.
- "Sea Breeze" (Mhlungu) Rolling Forties, AFC 699.
- "See You Later" (Hill) Little Lemmy Special & Big Joe, Gallotone Jive GB 2774.
- "Se Hong-Hong" (Spokes Mashiyane, J. Monaheng) Spokes Mashiyane and his Golden Saxophone, Gallo New Sound GB 3233.
- "Selby Special" (Gobezi) The Dosas Rangers, USA Records African Records USA 45.
- "77 Phatha" (J. Monahen) Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five, New Sound GB 3303.
- "78 Phatha" (J. Monaheng) Spokes Mashiyane and Four Lads, New Sound GB 3142.
- "SGup Kwela" (B. Nkosi) Ben Nkosi, BT 328.
- "Shame Special" (M. Mabaso) Lemmy and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys, New Sound GB 3268.
- "Shelela" (L. Special) Lemmy Special and the Alexandra Bright Boys, Gallo New Sound GB 3484.
- "Sheshisa! (Be Alive!)" (Mashiyane) Claude Williamson Trio with Spokes Mashiyane, Quality (Special) TJ 222; also Rave Records REP 4.
- "Sheshisa Twist" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane, Rave RMG 1192.
- "Shisa Phatha Phatha" (R. Msomi) The New Sounds with Spokes Mashiyane, New Sound GB 2975.
- "Short Skirts" (B. Nkosi) Ben Nkosi, BT 328.
- "Sibasa Street Kwela" (S. Vilakazi) Maria Mudau with Chest and his Band, TV 383.
- "Simple Simon" (Jill Desmond) Spokes Mashiyane and Robert Cele, TJ 213.

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"Six Down" (L. Mabaso) Alexandra Junior Bright Boys with Lemmy Special, Decca LK 4292; also Gallotone GALP 1246.

"Skodi Phola" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane and his Rhythm, Quality (Special) TJ 565.

"Skokiaan" (-) Spokes Mashiyane and his Rhythm, Quality TJ 21.

"Skokiaan"-African Dance Band of the Cold Storage Commission, Leader: August Msarurgwa.

"Skomba" (L. Mabaso) Lemmy Special with the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys, Gallotone GALP 1246.

"Solo Jump" (S. Rampura) Specks Rampura, Decca LK 4292; also Gallotone GALP 1246.

"Solven's Hoch" (Mokonta) Solven Whistlers, Gallotone GALP 1246.

"Something New from Africa" (Mokonotela) Solven Whistlers, Decca LK 4292.

Something New from Africa, Decca LK 4292.

"Sondela Mntwana" (S. Buthelezi) The Buthelezi Flutes, USA Records African Records USA 31.

"Sondelani" (Pilane) The Shandies Brothers, USA Records African Records USA 31.

"Sondela Ntombi" (-) Spokes Mashiyane, LP Rave RMG 1047.

"Spokes Jump" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five, New Sound GB 3270.

"Sponono Ndiye Bhai" (-) Ben Nkosi, LP Rave RMG 1047.

"Sporta Mok" (D. Slinger) Spokes Mashiyane and his Big Five, New Sound GB 3269.

"Steak & Porridge" (Madondo) Themba Madondo, Goli RA 158.

"Strong Tea" (S. Bengu) Soul Explosions, MX 32331/32.

"Sweet Dhladhla" (Dhlamini) The Black Hammers, USA Records African Records USA 51.

"Sweet Sax" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane and his Magic Sax, Rave RMG 1129.

"Sweet Strings" (J. Lema) Spokes Mashiyane and the Big Five, New Sound GB 3518.

"Tamatie Sauce Swing" (Arr. Daniel Rankofi) African Dizzy Fingers, Envee NV 3010.

"Thaba Bosiu" (Spokes Mashiyane, F. Pilane) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo GALP 1049.

"The Fastest Gun Alive" (-) Christopher Songxaka, Rave RMG 1229.

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- "The Third Street" (E. Mnguni) Benoni Flute Quintet, JP 2069.
- "Tien Jarr" (Bunny Rachabane) Little Kids Lex and Bunny, JP 512.
- "Time Square" (P. Makana) Peter "Blues" Makana, Envee NV 3069.
- "Tobetsa" (Daniel Rankofi) African Dizzy Fingers, Envee NV 3010.
- "Tom Hark" (R. Bopape) Elias and his Zig-Zag Jive Flutes, Columbia YE 164.
- Tony Scott in South Africa: Tony Scott with the Tony Scott South African Quartet and the Alexandra Dead End Kids, RCA Popular Record 31 104.
- "Tozi's Jive" (Sonny Boy) Benoni Flute Quintet, Tropik D-C DC.744.
- "Tropik Blues" (Michael Simandla) Benoni Flute Quintet, DC 741.
- "Tsaba Tsaba" (J. Marunga) Swing-Tone Whistlers, Columbia YE 196.
- "Tsamaea" (M. Mabaso) Lemmy Special, New Sound GB 3232.
- "Tshoura Tshoura" (A. Tladi) The Sewer Rats, USA Records African Records USA 137.
- "Twatwa" (S. Buthelezi) The Buthelezi Flutes, USA Records African Records USA 31.
- "Two-One Special" (Ben Nkosi) Ben Nkosi & his Double Flutes, HMV JP 622.
- "Umtha Kathi" (M. Makeba) The Skylarks with Miriam Makeba and Spokes Mashiyane, New Sound GB 2910.
- "Uthomile" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane and his Golden Sax, New Sound G3249.
- "Vela Bahleke" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo GALP 1049.
- "Vula Ndlela" (Arr. Stamford) Spokes Mashiyane, Gallo New Sound GB 3401.
- "Wedding Kwela" (Trad) The Beauty Flutes, Zonk TV 119.
- "Who's That Girl?" (Mafuta Amahlope) Basin Tone Drifters, Melody Music VC 1.
- "Without Milk" (S. Bengu, J. Lerole) Soul Explosions, MX 32331/32.
- "Wozanayo Boger" (E. Lerole) Alexandra Shamber Boys, HMV JP 2064.
- "Woza Ekhaya" (Molepo) Tony Scott, RCA Popular Records 31 104.
- "Woza Woza" (H. Tau) Spokes Mashiyane and his All Star Flutes, New Sound GB 3001.
- "Xmas Jump" (-) Spokes Mashiyane, LP Rave RMG 1047.
- "Xmas Night Jive" (A. Kwela) Allen Kwela, Winner OK 072.

"Year 1962 Blues" (A. Kwela) Allen Kwela, Winner OK 072.

"Yimlo" (Ben Nkosi) Ben Nkosi and his double flutes, JP 843.

"Zoo Lake Jive" (Spokes Mashiyane) Spokes Mashiyane and his Magic Sax, Rave RMG 1129; also Quality TJ 204.

"Zulu Boy Kwela" (Hill) Toko Tomo & The Bachelors, Decca LK 4292.

"Zulu Khayalami" (Arr. R. Msomi, H. Mathaba) Mashiyane & Msomi Double Five, New Sound GB 3247.

# APPENDIX II

## TRANSCRIPTIONS<sup>1</sup>

### 1) "Time Square"

Performer: Peter "Blues" Makana  
Composer: P. Makana  
Record: Envee NV 3069  
Instrumentation: solo pennywhistle, guitar and drum-set.  
Structure: 12-bar blues form

Spoken introduction:

HUSBAND: *Ek soek my vrou manne asseblief, because ek was nou, nou saam met die manne entlik. Asseblief wit my, wit my Peter man.*  
(I am looking for my wife man please, because I've been with the men. Please tell me Peter man.)

THANDI *Ja jy het weer gekook, ek moet myself a beter ou kry man. Hoe het jy so gekook? Maar ek vertel you Bab man daar is nie a beter man, julle kook maar al man. Kyk, kyk waar is die meiring?*

(Yes you are drunk again, I must get myself another man. Why did you drink too much? But I tell you there is no better man, you are all drunkards. Look, look, where is the money now?)

*Hulle het my meiring gevat.  
Hulle het al my meiring, gevat my Baba  
Bakufake isizathu sonny!*  
(They have taken my money.  
They took all my money, my father.  
Come to your senses sonny!)

ONLOOKER *Ek se Thandi?*  
(Hey Thandi?)

THANDI *Wat?*  
What?

ONLOOKER *Yini umikzapha ne owu entle ntwana man?*  
(Why are you shouting at this handsome guy?)

---

1 These transcriptions do not pretend to be comprehensive representations of the recorded works. As the limitations of staff notation preclude any such undertaking, they attempt to provide only a general sense of each composition. For instance, minor pitch alterations and ornamentation of the basic motifs are not always notated. Furthermore, these transcriptions are intended to illustrate particular points made in the main body of the thesis. It is therefore necessary in some cases (notably numbers 5 and 6) to provide a full rendition of all the parts, whilst in others (numbers 3 and 7) a full rendition of the solo parts only is required. As a general impression is required from the remaining transcriptions (see numbers 1, 2, 4 and 8), a representative portion of the backing parts is provided along with a complete rendition of the solo parts.

THANDI *Hoer hier my mtwana. Hai jy set my af sonny man.*

(Listen here my boy. You make me mad.)

ONLOOKER *A ou soos ek mtwana man.*

A handsome guy like me.

THANDI *Hai it's non of your business man.*

Huh, It's non of your business man.

*Kyk hier, daar is nie a beter ou man. Julle ouens julle kook almal. Waar gaan a beter ou ... Bamfake iskeer izizathu sonny. Hy is lui. Kyk hoe luk hy. Al the same ngizavele ngicule nje ngesdak wa sam.*

(Look here, there is no better guy amongst you. You are all drunkards. Just look at him, he is so tired. All the same I will just sing about my drunk husband.)

*J = 152*

guitar 4/4 B<sup>b</sup>6 B<sup>b</sup>6 B<sup>b</sup>6 B<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>7

ride cymbal

side drum

E<sup>b</sup>7 B<sup>b</sup>6 B<sup>b</sup>6 F7 F7



Musical notation system 1, measures 15-19. Treble clef, bass clef, key signature of two flats, 7/8 time signature. Includes guitar chord diagrams for B<sup>b</sup> and B<sup>b</sup>7, and the instruction "continues throughout".

Musical notation system 2, measures 20-24. Treble clef, bass clef, key signature of two flats, 7/8 time signature. Includes triplets in the treble staff.

Musical notation system 3, measures 25-29. Treble clef, bass clef, key signature of two flats, 7/8 time signature.

Musical notation system 4, measures 30-34. Treble clef, bass clef, key signature of two flats, 7/8 time signature. Includes triplets in the treble staff.

Musical notation system 5, measures 35-39. Treble clef, bass clef, key signature of two flats, 7/8 time signature. Includes triplets in the treble staff.

First system of musical notation, measures 37-40. The treble clef staff contains a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and slurs. The bass clef staff contains a bass line with quarter notes. A measure number '40' is boxed in the top right of the system.

Second system of musical notation, measures 41-45. The treble clef staff features eighth-note runs with slurs and triplets. The bass clef staff continues with quarter notes. Measure numbers '45' and '3' are boxed in the top right of the system.

Third system of musical notation, measures 46-50. The treble clef staff includes a triplet of eighth notes and a half note. The bass clef staff has quarter notes. Measure numbers '3' and '50' are boxed in the top right of the system.

Fourth system of musical notation, measures 51-65. The treble clef staff contains eighth-note patterns with slurs and triplets. The bass clef staff has quarter notes. Measure numbers '65' and '3' are boxed in the top right of the system.

Fifth system of musical notation, measures 66-70. The treble clef staff features eighth-note runs with slurs and triplets. The bass clef staff has quarter notes. Measure numbers '3' and '70' are boxed in the top right of the system.

2) "Phesheya"

Performers: Spokes Mashiyane and his All Star Flutes  
 Composer: H. Tau  
 Record: New Sound GB 3001  
 Instrumentation: solo pennywhistle, pennywhistle chorus, banjo, string bass and drum-set.  
 Structure:

solo+chor 2x8    solo 2x8    solo+chorus 2x8    solo 2x8    fade

$\text{♩} = 224$

The musical score is written for a pennywhistle, banjo, and brush (drum-set). It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a pennywhistle staff, a Banjo staff, a Brushes (drum-set) staff, and a bass line staff. The second system includes a pennywhistle staff, a Banjo staff, and a bass line staff. The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 224$ . The key signature has one flat (Bb). The structure is divided into five sections: solo+chorus (2x8), solo (2x8), solo+chorus (2x8), solo (2x8), and fade. The banjo part includes specific chord changes: Bb, E, Bb, F, Bb. The drum set part includes brush work patterns and the instruction "rhythm continues throughout".

The image displays a handwritten musical score for a piece in B-flat major, consisting of eight systems of staves. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and performance instructions. Key features include:

- System 1:** Measures 10-18. Features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 18.
- System 2:** Measures 19-25. Includes a triplet of eighth notes in measure 22 and a fermata in measure 25.
- System 3:** Measures 26-32. Includes a fermata in measure 32.
- System 4:** Measures 33-39. Includes a fermata in measure 39.
- System 5:** Measures 40-48. Includes a fermata in measure 48.
- System 6:** Measures 49-56. Includes a fermata in measure 56.
- System 7:** Measures 57-64. Includes a fermata in measure 64.
- System 8:** Measures 65-72. Ends with the instruction "fade".

\* Upper part omitted first time

## 3) "Tom Hark"

Performers: Elias and his Zig-Zag Jive Flutes  
 Composer: Elias Lerole<sup>2</sup>  
 Record: Columbia YE 164  
 Instrumentation: solo pennywhistle, pennywhistle chorus, banjo, string bass and drum-set.  
 Structure: solo over ostinato.

Chorus pw (x)  $\text{♩} = 138$  x4

Solo pw. 17 25 37 45 49 57 x3

pw chorus (x) throughout

\* Lower parts omitted first time.

4) "Jika Dinto"

Performer: Spokes Mashiyane  
 Composer: Spokes Mashiyane  
 Record: Gallo GALP 1049  
 Instrumentation: solo saxophone, solo pennywhistle, banjo, string bass and drum-set.

Structure:

SS sax + ryth-----										pw + ryth-----									
a	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	mod	a	b	a	b	sol	b	a	b	sol	b
1	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2

Spoken introduction:

*Ke salle nua morena luna. Jwale kiya jika dinto be. Nimameleng ke tla letsa flute le saxophone. Mamelang banna riya tsamaya.*

(It's me again. Now I am going to turn things around. I am going to play flute and saxophone. Listen people, we are starting now.)

$\text{♩} = 148$

The musical score is written for four instruments: Saxophone, Bass, Guitar, and Drum-set. The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 148$ . The key signature has one flat (Bb). The time signature is 4/4. The saxophone part begins with a melody in the first measure, followed by a first ending marked (a) in the fourth measure. The bass line is mostly rests, with a melodic line starting in the fourth measure. The guitar part has chords F, Bb, C, and F. The drum set part shows a pattern of eighth notes in the fourth measure.

5 (a) (b)

Sax

Bass

Guitar

Drum-set

F B<sup>b</sup> C F F B<sup>b</sup> C F

9 13 17 21 27 33 39

(b) (a) (b) (a) (b) (a) (b)

49 (a)

pw

Bass

Guitar

Drum-set

F A B<sup>b</sup> C B<sup>b</sup> D B<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> F B<sup>b</sup>

The first system of the score consists of four staves. The top staff is for piano (pw) in treble clef, showing a melodic line with two phrases labeled (a) and (b). The second staff is for bass in bass clef, providing a harmonic accompaniment. The third staff is for guitar, with chord symbols B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, F, and B<sup>b</sup> written above the staff. The bottom staff is for drums, indicated by 'x' marks representing hits.

A single staff for guitar in treble clef. It features a melodic line with fret numbers 51, 53, and 57. There are two repeat signs, each labeled 'x1' and 'x2'. The notes are grouped into two phrases, (b) and (a).

A single staff for piano (pw) in treble clef. It contains a melodic line with triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a group of notes) and a 7/8 time signature.

A single staff for piano (pw) in treble clef. It features a melodic line with triplet markings and two phrases labeled (a) and (b).

A single staff for piano (pw) in treble clef. It includes fret numbers 67, 69, and 73. There are two repeat signs labeled 'x1' and 'x2'. The notes are grouped into two phrases, (b) and (a).

A single staff for piano (pw) in treble clef. It includes fret numbers 79, 83, and 87. There are two repeat signs labeled 'x2'. The notes are grouped into two phrases, (b) and (a).



5) "Tsamaea"

Performer: Lemmy "Special" Mabaso  
 Composer: M. Mabaso  
 Record: New Sound GB 3232  
 Instrumentation: solo pennywhistle, guitar, string bass and drum-set.  
 Structure:

guit intro      x      x      psolo      guitsolo      x fade  
 2x2            2x4      2x4          2x9          2x4

*J* = 104

Lead guitar

Right guitar

Drum-set

bass

continues throughout

continues throughout

pw

guitar

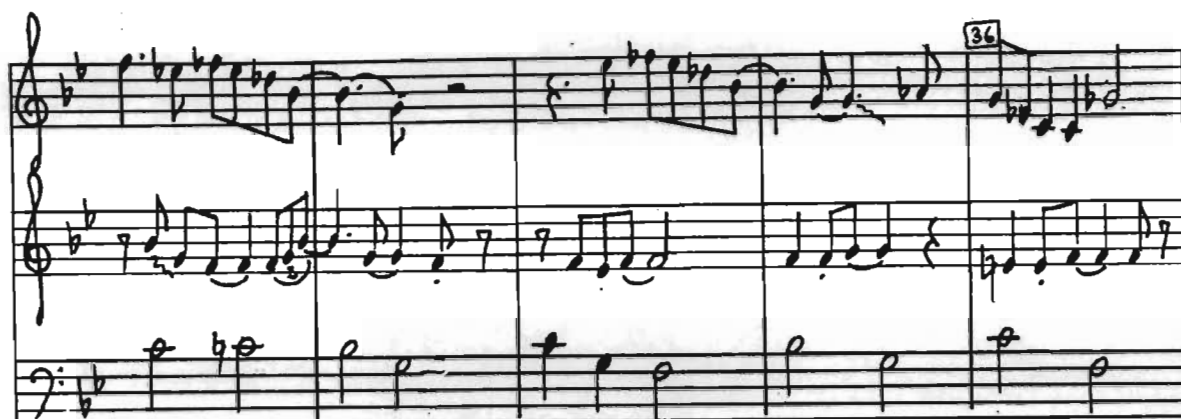
bass

Handwritten musical notation system 1, measures 12-14. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 12 is marked with a circled '12'. The middle staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and accidentals.

Handwritten musical notation system 2, measures 15-17. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats. Measure 17 is marked with a circled '20'. The middle staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. The music continues with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some triplets and accidentals.

Handwritten musical notation system 3, measures 18-20. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats. The middle staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. The music features complex rhythmic patterns with many sixteenth notes and some accidentals.

Handwritten musical notation system 4, measures 21-23. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats. Measure 21 is marked with a circled '28'. The middle staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. The music continues with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some triplets and accidentals.



Handwritten musical notation system 1, measures 32-35. The system consists of three staves: a top staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats, a middle staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats, and a bottom staff with a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. Measure 36 is marked with a circled number '36' in the top staff. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks.



Handwritten musical notation system 2, measures 36-39. The system consists of three staves: a top staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats, a middle staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats, and a bottom staff with a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks.



Handwritten musical notation system 3, measures 40-43. The system consists of three staves: a top staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats, a middle staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats, and a bottom staff with a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. Measure 44 is marked with a circled number '44' in the top staff. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks. The text "quit Solo" is written above the middle staff in measure 42.



Handwritten musical notation system 4, measures 44-47. The system consists of three staves: a top staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats, a middle staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats, and a bottom staff with a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks.

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The image shows a handwritten musical score for three staves, likely for guitar, in the key of B-flat major. The score is divided into six measures. The first measure is marked with a box containing the number '52'. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second and third staves also use treble and bass clefs respectively, with the same key signature. The piece concludes with 'fade' markings on the first, second, and third staves in the final measure.

## 6) "Hlalanaye"

Performers: Lemmy and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys  
 Composer: M. Mabaso  
 Record: New Sound GB 3268  
 Instrumentation: solo pennywhistle, pennywhistle chorus, female vocals,  
 electric guitar, string bass and drum-set.

Structure:

pchor	V+psol	pchor	psol+pchor	pchor	V+psol	pchor	psol+pcho
a	b	a	a	a	b	a	a
1	4	3	4	1	5	1	4

Song text:

*Molo bhuti, molo sisi.  
 Hawe mama, hawe tata.*

(Hullo brother, hullo sister.  
 And you mother, and you Father.)

*Siyanibingelela, Siyanibingelela, Siyanibingelela molo bhuti.  
 Siyanibingelela, Siyanibingelela, Siyanibingelela molo sisi.  
 Siyanibingelela, Siyanibingelela, Siyanibingelela nawe mama.  
 Siyanibingelela, Siyanibingelela, Siyanibingelela nawe tata.*

(Greetings, greetings, greetings, brother.  
 Greetings, greetings, greetings, sister.  
 Greetings, greetings, greetings, and you mother.  
 Greetings, greetings, greetings, and you father.)

6) "Hlalanaye" By Lemmy and the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys

$\text{♩} = 148$

(a)

pws

lead guitar

Rhythm guitar

drum set

Bass

4/4  $B^b$   $E^b$   $B^b$  F continues throughout

4/4 x x x x x x x x x x x x continues throughout

pws solo

Vocals

Bass

mo lo bhuti mo lo si si na we mara

solo pws

Vocals

Bass

na we ra ta mo lo bhuti mo lo si si

Solo pw

Vocals

Bass

17

na we ma na

na we ra ra

Solo pw

pw chorus

Bass

33

(a)

(x)

Solo pw

pw chorus (x)

Bass

37

41

Solo pw

Solo guitar

Bass

45

The musical score is written in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. It consists of four systems of staves, each with three parts: a lead instrument (piano solo, lead guitar, or solo piano), a vocal part, and a bass line.

- System 1:** Features a piano solo part with triplets and a lead guitar part. A bracketed section starting at measure 49 is marked "x1" and contains a guitar chord diagram for a "Dorato si yami" chord.
- System 2:** Includes lyrics: "bingele la si yami binglela si yami binglela molo bfuli si yami bingle la si yami". Measure numbers 53 and 57 are indicated.
- System 3:** Includes lyrics: "bingele la si yami bingle la molo si si si yami bingle la si yami bingle la si yami". Measure number 61 is indicated.
- System 4:** Includes lyrics: "binge la la molo mama si yami binglela si yami bingle la si yami bingle la". Measure number 65 is indicated.



69 (not swung)

Solo pw

Vocals

Bass

mo lo pa pa si ya mi bin ge le la si ya mi bin ge le la si ya mi bin ge le la mo lo pa pa

73 x4

Solo pw

Chorus pw

Lead guitar (y)

Bass

(a)

(y)

81

pw chorus and lead guitar (y)

85

93

## 7) "G-String Kwela"

Performers: The Blackjack Hitters

Composer: Strike<sup>3</sup>

Record: Decca LK 4292

Instrumentation: solo pennywhistle, violin, guitar, string bass and drum-set.

Structure: No clear repetition of motifs.

♩ = 152

The musical score is written for pennywhistle (pw) and violin. It consists of five systems of staves. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 152. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings. Boxed numbers 5, 9, and 13 indicate specific measures. The violin part features intricate triplet patterns throughout.

pw

violin

pw

pw

pw

Violin

Violin

This musical score is a transcription for Violin and Piano. It consists of ten systems of staves. The top staff in each system is for the Piano (P), and the bottom staff is for the Violin (Violin). The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 7/8. Measure numbers 17, 21, 25, 29, 33, 37, and 41 are indicated in boxes above the staves. The score features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs. The final measure of the bottom staff is marked 'fada'.

8) "Laughing Kwela"

Performer: Jake Lerole and his Rhythm  
 Composer: J. Lerole  
 Record: Quality TJ 210  
 Instrumentation: solo pennywhistle, banjo and drumset.  
 Structure:

	a	b	c	a'	d	c'	a	d'	fade
2*	4	3	2	4	4	4	2	2	

*♩* = 132

Solo pw

Rhythm guitar: B $\flat$  E $\flat$  F B $\flat$

Drum-set: x . x . x . x .

Bass

Continues Throught

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A musical score consisting of four staves of music. The first staff begins with measure 43, marked with a circled '43'. The second staff begins with measure 47, marked with a circled '47', and contains three triplet markings. The third staff begins with measure 51, marked with a circled '51', and contains a second circled '51' marking. The fourth staff begins with measure 59, marked with a circled '59' and a 'x2' multiplier, and ends with the word 'fade'.

## **APPENDIX III**

### **KWELA CASSETTE**

#### **Side A**

1. "Sponono naMarabi" - Griffiths Motsieloa And Company.
2. "Sponono Ndiye Bhai" - Spokes Mashiyane
3. "Tsaba Tsaba" - Jazz Maniacs
4. "Izikhalo Zika Zuluboy" - Jazz Maniacs
5. "Skokiaan" - August Msarurgwa
6. "Tomatie Sous" - Harlem Swingsters
7. "Penny Whistle Blues" - Willard Cele
8. "Ace Blues" - Spokes Mashiyane
9. "Ngiyabonga" - Jerry penny Flute
10. "Kwela Claude" - Spokes Mashiyane
11. "Tom Hark" - Elias and his Zig-Zag Jive Flutes
12. "Jika Dinto" - Spokes Mashiyane

#### **Side B**

1. "Tsamaea" - Lemmy Special Mabaso
2. "Hlalanaye" - Lemmy and the Alexandra Bright Boys
3. "Time Square" - Peter "Blues" Makana
4. "G-String Kwela" - The Blackjack Hitters
5. "O.K. Radio" - Gladys Setai and Spokes Mashiyane
6. "Laughing Kwela" - Jake Lerole
7. "Something New From Africa" - Solven Whistlers
8. "Two-One Special" - Ben Nkosi & his Double Flutes
9. "Copper Avenue" - SM and LS
10. "Phesheya" - SM and his All Star Flutes
11. "Ben's Hawk" - Ben Nkosi & his Double Flutes
12. "Penduka Twist" - Spokes Mashiyane

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- Matshikiza, Pat. Author's interview, Durban, 13.3.90.
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### **NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES**

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26.6.85; 12.8.85; 26.4.89.

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Golden City Post, 1954-1959.

Ilanga, 1954-1958.

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Star, 15.4.57; 20.3.61; 11.7.63; 10.10.63; 27.11.63; 18.2.72; 26.3.88.

Umteteli Wa Bantu, 1954-1955.

Vrye Weekblad, 28 June to 4 July, 1991.

Weekly Mail, August 24 to 26, 1990.

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## FILMS

Come Back Africa. Written by Lionel Rogosin with Lewis Nkosi and William Modisane. Produced and directed by Lionel Rogosin, 1959.

Dirty Linen. Screenplay by Sigrid Grönbauer. Filmed by Werner Grönbauer.

The Condemned are Happy. Presented by the South African Information Service. Produced and directed by Jamie Uys.

Zonk. Presented by African Film Productions. Written and produced by Ike Brooks Baruch. Directed by Hyman Kirsten.

Song of Africa. Presented by African Film Productions. Directed by Emil Nofal.

## VIDEOS

Jack Lerole, video made for the SABC TV3 program Mino by Joubert & Van Dyke Productions.

Flutes For Africa, video of a concert held at the University of Natal on 17.5.91., Housed in the Eleanor Bonner Music Library at the University of Natal.

Lemmy "Special" Mabaso, video made for the SABC TV3 program Mino by Joubert & Van Dyke Productions.

Barney Rachabane, video made for the SABC TV3 program Mino by Joubert & Van Dyke Productions.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Catalogues for the GB, AFC, HMV, JP and YE record labels, (undated).

Cession of Copyright of "Buya Spokes" and "Kwela Eric" by Spokes Mashiyane.

"Flutes For Africa": Concert held at the University of Natal on May 17 1991.

Letter from the Union of Southern African Artists to Fredrick Maphisa.

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