CHAPTER EIGHT

WHEN TWO CULTURES KISS

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

Children are children – innocent, yet curious. A young boy was sent by his mother to the shop, but you know how they walk, stop, listen, watch or maybe touch and then proceed with the journey. As his mother was anxiously waiting for the bread, he was diverted by the sound of a guitar on a street corner. He curiously approached the man who was absorbed in his guitar strumming. The man was Charlie Mzila. Charlie was a caretaker at a nearby building. This was the beginning of a life-long journey for the young boy, **Johnny Clegg**. He was born Jonathan Clegg in Manchester in the UK in 1953, brought up in Zimbabwe, migrated to South Africa, moved to Zambia, and migrated back to sunny SA. His encounter with Mzila was the beginning of a mentoring process in which “Mandlebe” (Johnny) would be taught Zulu culture, dance and language. At the risk of being caught he frequented Mzila’s sessions until in 1969 he met a younger boy, **Sipho Mchunu** who worked as a gardener and played a self-made guitar. Wemmar Hostel became the centre of Johnny’s cultural initiation. Due to his karate experience the Zulu warrior dance routines were not that difficult for him to master. Although the police reprimanded little Johnny so many times about mixing with the wrong crowd, the passion was just too powerful for him to obey their orders. The boys simply called their music group Sipho and Johnny.
With the help of producer/publicist Hilton Rosenthal the two finally released their debut album under the name Juluka. The name, “sweat”, was inspired by the perspiration during their dance. These dudes were so refreshingly popular as they presented a desired world in the dreams of most South Africans, especially blacks. I was privileged to compère their life performances in the days of the Lion Lager Road Show. They were usually billed towards the end of the show because theirs was a mixture of heavy dance routines, Zulu cultural displays and political slogans that would work the crowd up into a frenzy. A moving experience from a world yet to come. Most of their songs were banned for preaching about a new order. They taught many people including blacks about Zulu rituals and mythology. As Johnny Clegg was a lecturer of Anthropology at Wits University, he dug deep to understand the culture. His understanding and appreciation of the spirit of the Zulu warrior is also encapsulated in the song Bullets For Bafazana. Juluka’s albums include African Litany, Ubuhle Bemvelo, Work For All, Universal Men, The International Tracks, Musa Ukungilandela as well as compilations like The Best Of Juluka. Some of their big hits were the following: Scatterlings Of Africa, African Sky Blue, Thula Mntanami, Walima Mabele, Woza Friday and Impi. Juluka 1 ended in 1985 when Sipho went back to rural Kranskop in KwaZulu-Natal to farm. Johnny Clegg went solo backed by a new band, Savuka (We Have Risen), which included old Juluka artists like Dudu Zulu (percussion) and Derek de Beer (drums). Other members were Steve Mvuso, Solly Letwaba and Keith Hutchinson. Keith’s experience included a project with well-known jazz bass guitarist Danny La Louette in 1983. The two released a self-produced six-track album titled Warrior featuring two instrumental tracks, Batlanga Day and Batlanga Nights. It was engineered by Andre Herbst on the Wea label featuring Eugene Savage on vocals.

Johnny Clegg’s manager was Roddy Quin and most of his shows were organised by Big Concerts. Savuka released Third World Child engineered by Bobby Summerfield on the Minc label with his producer Hilton Rosenthal. Some tracks on the album like Tell Him Again, New Earth and Are You There? (Ukhona na?) challenged the status quo and encouraged activism. In 1988 Johnny’s wish to perform in the Nelson Mandela Freedom Festival in London could not be granted due to the cultural boycott of the time. At one stage he toured France and became very popular internationally. He was so big in France that when he had a show on the same day with Michael Jackson, media reports said Wacko’s concert had to be put on hold as the French joined Johnny in huge numbers. The French press is quoted to have quipped that it seemed like the French preferred a white man who wanted to be black than a black man who wanted to be white. Johnny Clegg was nicknamed “La Zoulou Blanc” by the French. As much as local audiences are important, we are part of a global village and it is crucial to be a player in that market. In a 2005 interview with Rob Brown of Club magazine, former Springbok Nude Girls star Arno Carstens said the
following about this issue: “People get odd when you say you are going overseas to try and make it. It’s like you have to stay in South Africa and suffer for your art. But those that stay are never cool enough, never as cool as imported acts. It’s ridiculous. South Africans will never let you down, but as a muso in this country you just slowly rot until you are just a corpse.”

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

Beyond the year 2000 Johnny was involved in two memorable events. He participated in Dr Nelson Mandela’s new struggle, the 46664 HIV/AIDS Concert. Johnny is also an ambassador of the campaign. The campaign was launched in 2002 and involved a number of international musicians including Annie Lennox of Eurythmics fame who described Aids as a “genocide”. Annie and Peter Gabriel were still headlining the campaign’s 5th instalment on 1 December 2007 at Johannesburg’s Ellis Park stadium. Jonathan also staged a show celebrating his years in music titled Johnny Clegg: A South African Story. I attended the show at the Nelson Mandela Civic Theatre in Johannesburg. What a presentation! It was a combination of a lecture on Zulu culture and mythology,
music performance on stage and off the screen, as well as the introduction and tribute to those individuals who crossed his musical path over the years. He danced with Sipho Mchunu and “Big Mama” Mandisa Dlanga. Breathtaking stuff! In 2006 he released One Life, which includes the track The Revolution will Eat its Children dedicated to Zimbabwe. The album won SAMA 13’s Best Adult Contemporary Album: English category. In July 2007 Jonathan was awarded an honorary doctorate in music by his alma mater, Wits University. The superstar who completed his masters degree at Wits University impressed his promoters with his contribution in the struggle for multiculturalism and a non-racial society through music. By 2008 a compilation CD of his songs covered by various musicians was released. It was titled The Power of One: The Songs of Johnny Clegg. In that year he came up with a musical production titled Heart of The Dancer showcasing the various dance moves of his career. The name of the musical kaleidoscope was the title of one of his tracks from Juluka’s third album.

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

Hotline was another phenomenon of the eighties. Fronted by PJ Powers, they took the local music scene by storm. Born Penelope Jane Dunlop, PJ grew up in KwaZulu-Natal. Playing with the local Zulu kids made her fluent in the language. She later became a member of a female group, Pantha, in Durban. Following the dream of recording their music, they travelled to Johannesburg where they joined MFM. Later the group split and in 1981 Penny joined another rock band in the stable called The Gymslip. With the additional new female member who called herself PJ Powers they adopted a new name, Hotline. The line-up of the band was: PJ Powers (lead vocals), Alistair Coakley (lead guitar), George van Dyk (bass guitar), Bones Brettell (keyboards) and Larry Rose (drums). Their debut album, Burnout (MFM, 1981) included a crossover track, You’re So Good to Me, which was about a secret love affair. It so appealed to black audiences that the demand for their performances in townships was difficult to ignore. They released Help (MFM, 1982) and Music For Africa (MFM, 1983). It was during their township performances that at one of their sell-out shows at Jabulani Amphitheatre the Sowetans gave her an African name, Thandeka (the one we love). My main man, Collins Mashego, was the compère of the day. By
1984 it was clear what they were about – a South African bridge-building band. They released Jabulani (1984), dedicated to the people of Soweto. It featured eight solid tracks and was produced by Bones Brettell, Greg Cutler and Alistair Coakley. Its launch was accompanied by a “One Day, Three Cities” roadshow, which flew them to Kimberly, Durban and Tshwane on a private Learjet. In November 1984 the band was on the road with the Lion Lager Road Show promoting songs from the album. By July 1985 the album had gone triple gold. Some of their other albums include Wozani (1985) and Current (1986), but as Ecstacy, Passion And Pain’s song goes, “Good things don’t last forever”. Some of their biggest hits included Help, The Lion Sleeps Tonight, Music For Africa, Jive Pantsula and Sanbonani. In 1988 a compilation album titled Best Of PJ Powers and Hotline was released.

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

Bones Brettell embarked on other projects like the 1984 maxi single The Sneezing Song, co-written and produced with Bernie Millar using the name Hey Fever. In 1985 they produced Starlite’s Celebrate Our Love. Then followed the 1987 mini album Mathambo co-produced with Godfrey Nzuza. It featured two original instrumental hit tracks Join Hands and Everything Is Possible as well as the South African classic, The Lion Sleeps Tonight, produced with the assistance of Greg Cutler and Alistair Coakley. Another project of this production machine was a character dressed in a traffic officer’s uniform. The success of the concept was boosted by a hit titled Hoi Chacklas on the MFM labelled debut album. The frontman was commonly known as Mr Chacklas. The 1987 follow-up album was Chackalackado still produced by the production trio of Bones Brettell, Bernie Millar and Godfrey Nzuza. The music was written by Sipho Mshazi. In 1988 they released Everybody Likes Me. Mr Chacklas was very popular with festival revellers who just loved to dance in front of the traffic cop, without any fear of speed trap tickets. Even those who had had one too many knew he would not ask them to stand on one leg or “blow in here”. His backing band was Casino, which also
had its own records. One should remember that before joining Hotline, Bones played with Clout and Bernie Millar’s band, Circus. After that he went into production where he worked with Greg Cutler. Alistair who is a rock axeman to the heart became a rock guitar “mercenary” as on the 1992 albums People Don’t Talk, So Let’s Talk (Ray Phiri) and Khululani (Stimela) as well as Bibi Msomi’s What Kind Of Love Is This? (1987).

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

In 2005 the hit Doo Be Doo by a young seven-piece Afro-pop group called **Freshlyground** reminded me of the early music of the mango that we used to groove to in the eighties. The membership of the group formed in April 2002 in Cape Town includes Zolani Mahola (vocals, acoustic guitar), Josh Hawks (vocals, bass guitar), Aron Turest-Swartz (vocals, keyboards, percussion), Kyla-Rose Smith (violin), Simon Attwell (flute, mbira, harmonica), Justin Tonkin (electric guitar, acoustic guitar, sax), Peter Cohen (drums). Lead vocalist Zolani
grew up in KwaZakhele and New Brighton in Port Elizabeth. She got involved in acting at Trinity High School and proceeded to study it at the University of Cape Town. This is where she was spotted by Aron Turest-Swartz and joined the band. The group released their debut album *Jika Jika* in 2003. It was their second studio album titled *Nomvula* that brought them to the attention of the nation. The album went gold within a few months of its release and was nominated in MTN SAMA’s Best Duo or Group. In 2005 the band won the Metro FM Music Awards’ Best Group category. The title track is a cross between Judy Modisapudi and Joan Armatrading’s sounds. In November 2006 they won the Best African Act category of the coveted MTV Europe Music Awards at a glittering ceremony held in Copenhagen, Denmark. On 3 September 2007 they released their follow-up CD titled *Ma’Cheri* (Sony/BMG), which was produced by Victor Masondo and JB Arthur. Featuring the hit *Pot Belly*, by the last week of October the album had already gone platinum. Besides outperforming its predecessor, it won the 8th Metro FM Music Awards’ Best African Pop Album and Best Group category, pitted against Jozi, Malaika, Mafikizolo and a relatively new group, Ntjapedi (Ha e hlolewe ke sebata) from Sharpeville. The group’s highlights include opening for Robbie Williams during his South African tour in 2006, for John Legend at the Positive Rocks Concert in Sun City and performing at the FIFA World Cup Closing Ceremony in Germany. Their world-wide popularity was also boosted by the new technology of mobile music in the form of downloads as ringtones and wallpapers, a trend also taken advantage of by musicians like Danny K, Springbok Nude Girls, Lira and others. This popular group was nominated in five categories of the 2007 SAMA’s for their CD *Ma’Cheri*. They made a clean-sweep as they walked away with awards in the following categories: Best Duo/Group, Album of The Year, Best Adult Contemporary Album: English and Best Engineer (David Langemann). The awards were held at the Sun City Superbowl on Saturday, 3 May 2008.

In 1984 a Cape Town group *Bright Blue* released a maxi single, *Living in Africa*, with lyrics written by Robin Levetan and produced by Greg Cutler on the Jive Wire label. The band’s membership was Peter Cohen, Ian Cohen, Tom Fox, Dan Heymann and Robin Levitan. The group that had moved to Johannesburg in the 1980s followed up with a massive historical crossover hit, *Weeping* (1987). The lyrics were inspired by the fear of the regime for the freedom fighters, and its background melodies blended SCM chorus harmonies with the struggle’s unity hymn, *Nkosi Sikelel’ i-Afrika*. Yes, a humble yet compelling prayer for the liberation of the masses of South Africa. The song was composed by Dan Heymann in 1986. It was first recorded in 1987 at the Orange 338 Studio in Orange Grove, Johannesburg, by Phil Audoire and David Moloele. They followed the trend and in 1988 released their album *The Rising Tide*. Just before the 1994 first national non-racial democratic elections they wrote *Wouldn’t Miss It for The World*, a song written while they were abroad expressing their determination to
come home for the historic event. Bright Blue was nominated in the SAMAs 97’s Best Single category for their song *Open Your Eyes*. Besides their albums *Bright Blue* (Jive Wire, 1984) and *The Rising Tide* (EMI, 1988), a compilation album of their work was released titled *The Best So Far: Every Now And Then* (1984–2001). Some of the musicians who worked with the band include Scorpion Madondo, Louis Mhlanga and Simmi Zeko. Though the spirit of the band is still alive, its members are also busy with their own projects. In the 1990s Peter Cohen worked with the group Mango Groove and later Freshlyground, Dan Heymann worked in New York as a computer programmer, Robin Levitan went into the architectural business, while Tom Fox formed a group called The Usual: James Stewart, Yoyo Buys and Paul Tizzard. The group that recorded three albums was nominated in SAMAs 3’s Best Rock Performance category for *Six Songs From The Inside*. The Usual’s hits include *Like A Vision* and *When I Look In Your Eyes*.

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

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

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

A February 1985 studio concept resulted in a massive hit titled *Lifesaver*. Its chorus had a line “I’m Suffering”, which appealed to the suffering black masses of South Africa, especially after Jimmy Cliff’s hit *Remake The World*, which had
a line that went “Too many people are suffering”. After that studio concept in February, the musicians parted ways to pursue own interests, some went as far as the USA and Europe. The success of Lifesaver, which featured the distinct voice of Dan Tsietsi Motijoane (Coyote), made them think about the possibility of forming a band. Kenny Mathaba, who followed Malopoets to Switzerland in 1983, returned home and discussed the idea with Greg Francis. The result was the birth of a group that became known as Ozila. According to Kenny, the name was inspired by a West African musician, John Ozila. They approached Teal Record Company and recorded a mini album titled Wola Wola written and produced by Kenny Mathaba on the Teal Sound label. The original Ozila line-up was Greg Francis (drums/percussion), Jerome Francis (percussion), Kenneth Mosala (bass guitar), Jack Ngoka (lead vocals), Eddie Adams (lead vocals), Kenny Mathaba (guitar/harmonica/keyboards/congas), Gavin Poonan (guitar). The band was popular with festival revellers, especially when they performed I’m Suffering. Another factor that appealed to music fans was their multiracial composition in a segregated state. In 1987 they released SOS “Save Our Souls”, an album once again written, produced and arranged by Kenny Mathaba. It included Wola Wola and their debut single Life Saver in the people’s chosen title, I’m Suffering. The band was reduced from the original membership of seven to six. Pat Mokoka and Herbie Buys joined in when Kenneth Mosala, Jack Ngoka and Gavin Poonan left. However, the Shayela Phansi band did not stand the test of time.

Perhaps I should pay tribute to the co-founder of Ozila, Kenneth Mathaba, who is one of South Africa’s rare talents. Kenny’s father, Ernest Sepiri Mathaba grew up in the Mokopane area, moved to Nelspruit, got married to Maserame Phylista from Witbank (now eMalahleni) and went to settle in Orlando West in 1957. That is where Kenny was born on 19 January 1957. He was born into a family of six brothers and one sister. His late elder brother, Mike Moruti Mathaba, used to play keyboards. Kenny started playing lead guitar around 1968 inspired by Witbank (now eMalahleni) Mpaqanga groups. In 1972 he and his brother played for the Mad Dogs in Dube. Later he was with various bands like Balopi, Black Hawks, Twilight Band and Babsy Mlangeni’s band. At one stage he was a member of a resident band at the Pelican Night Club in Orlando. In 1983 he flew to Europe to join Malopoets in Switzerland and returned in 1985 to form Ozila. After the band’s SOS album he went into studio production where he produced artists like Charm, Olive Masinga, Thoko Ndlozi, Thandi Seoka and Lydia. Due to his rare skills, Ray Phiri requested him to assist in his solo projects, whereafter he became director of the Shell Road To Fame talent search. Kenny wrote music scores for Oliver Schmidt’s films like Mapantsula, Location Culture, Hi-jack Stories and COSATU’s 10 Years documentary. Mapantsula won the coveted Vita Award featuring Thomas Mogotlane. By the way, actor and director Mogotlane, who was born on 10 June 1953, passed away on 3 December 1993.
after a short illness and is buried in Ga-Rankuwa, Tshwane. Kenny also wrote the soundtrack for Mark Angels’s *Endangered Species*. Kenny served as a member of The Johannesburg Youth Orchestra board, as well as panel adviser of the National Arts Council. As a freelance artist he also worked with PJ Powers and Jonas Gwangwa. He said the biggest honour of his career was to produce Jonas Gwangwa’s two albums, *A Temporary Inconvenience* (1999) and *Sounds From Exile* (2000). The night I met him he was playing a Fender “Stratocaster”, but this left-handed guitar maestro’s ideal guitar is the mahogany wood-made Gibson 355. Amongst his peers he has the greatest respect for guitarist Lawrence Matshiza. Kenny is one of South Africa’s best-known harmonica players. Maybe I should mention that professional players of the instrument are few. Continentally we have musicians like Ismael Lo, while on the international front Kenny informed me that the number one harmonica star is Jean Toots Thielemans. Stevie Wonder is also an excellent player.

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

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

Sibongile passed her matric at Meadowlands High School and proceeded to do her BA(Mus) at the University Of Zululand (now KwaZulu-Natal). In 1980 she graduated and became a lecturer at the same university. She later
joined FUBA as head of the Music Department. In 1983 Sibongile obtained her BA(Hons) History Of Music at Wits University. She also holds a Higher Diploma in Personnel Management (Wits University). In 1985 she married the late theatre director/producer, Siphiwe Khumalo. Between 1986 and 1989 she was the Funda Arts Centre Co-ordinator and later head of music at the Madimba Institute Of African Music based at the Funda Arts Centre.

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

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

Sibongile released her debut album, Ancient Evenings (1996), through Sony Music South Africa. It was strategically launched as South African Airways sponsored her tour of Johannesburg (Civic Theatre), Cape Town (Baxter Concert Hall) and Durban (Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre) scheduled for three days at each venue. The shows were directed by the man who used to affectionately call her “Sunshine” – her late ex-husband, Siphiwe Khumalo, assisted by musical director Themba Mkhize. Ancient Evenings won SAMA 3’s Best Vocal Performance: Female and Best Adult Contemporary Performance categories. It also won Motsumi Makhene a SAMA in the Song Of The Year category. Her CD Sibongile Khumalo: Live At The Market Theatre (1998) was SAMA’s Best Adult Contemporary Album winner. Immortal Secrets (2000) was nominated for SAMA 7’s Best Producer category.
In 1986 I was invited to a welcome party at Sibongile’s new home in Mondeor. The family had just moved out of their Dobsonville house. She is a “rooted” individual who strongly believes in cultural values. When the IBA issued broadcast licenses to new radio stations in the new democratic South Africa, Sibongile co-presented a programme on Gauteng’s Kaya FM with fellow musician Hugh Masekela on whose album *Sixty* (1999) she’s featured on the track *Mbombela*. This made her a favourite with radio listeners as witnessed on Women’s Day 2005 when the nation woke up to her Sound Of Breakfast on Metro FM’s. It was part of a special programme schedule that featured various female personalities as presenters. Sibongile featured as a soloist in Mzikazi Khumalo’s *Ushaka: An Epic in Music and Poetry on Shaka, Son of Senzangakhona* (Sony Music Entertainment, 1997) which celebrated the life of one of the most powerful leaders in Africa. She featured in the recording of *The Best Of Allen Kwela* to pay tribute to one of the champion guitarists of our time. She won the Best Female Artist category of SAMA 9 for Quest (2002), which was also nominated for Best Producer. In October 2005 she followed up with a self-titled classical album. Having earned respect from her peers in the industry, Sibongile was appointed chairperson of the National Arts Festival in 2006. Perhaps 2007 should go down history as one of her best years. As she celebrated her 50th anniversary on the banks of the Vaal river, she also launched her record label, Magnolia Vision Records. In 2008 she was featured in a tribute to Letta Mbulu on Letta’s 60th birthday at the Grahamstown Arts Festival with Ringo Madlingozi and Mimi Ntenjwa.

Sibongile’s protégé, Wendy Mseleku, was born to Zaza and Langa Mseleku of Lamontville, Durban in 1974. The Mselekus are a known music family. Her vocalist father Langa’s siblings included the late singer and Cape Town film commissioner Pinkie, pianist Bheki, and Millicent. Wendy grew up with brother M’Du and sister Andile who encouraged her to focus on her dreams. Wendy also had a theatre background as she had toured with Mbongeni Nkema’s Sarafina cast and acted in *The Lion and the Lamb* at the Market Theatre with Dr John Kani. Backing musicians like Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, Vicky Sampson and Sibongile Khumalo was a valuable experience that prepared her for even greater things. In 1995 she released the mini album *Wendy With Friends* (Sony Music South Africa) featuring The Family Factory Choir. It was co-produced by Lindelani Mkhize and Mthunzi Namba. In 1996 followed *All In One*, a ten-track CD composed and produced by Mthunzi Namba including two tracks from her 1995 mini album. I had the honour of facilitating the launch of her third album *The Powerhouse* at Jack Botes Hall in Polokwane. The attendance was so huge that we nearly experienced a stampede. The album was nominated in FNB SAMA 5’s Best African Pop Album category pitted against Jabu Khanyile’s *Umathimula*, Brenda Fassie’s *Memeza*, Mahube’s *Music From southern Africa* and the category winner, Bongo Maffin’s *The Concerto*. Her untimely death on
21 August 2000 robbed the industry of one of its few schooled musos. It hit me badly because it wasn’t long after she’d been to my house visiting my daughter, Mokgadi. She couldn’t cross the dreaded river of 27. For me, her evergreen hit will remain Umnculo Wasekhaya (Ding Dong), a reflection of her deep appreciation of her fellow South African artists. By 2007 her sister, Andile who studied music at the University of KwaZulu-Natal was a budding jazz singer.

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

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

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

In February 1995 the award-winning Imilonji Kantu Choral Society recorded
the album *Flower Of Soweto/Blomster I Soweto* with international muso, Marianne Antonsen. It was recorded at Downtown Studios, Johannesburg under the directorship of the choir conductor, George Mxadana. This celebration of the new South Africa was released in 1997 by Gallo Record Company. Featuring some of South Africa’s best traditional songs, it was co-produced by Erik Hillestad and Thapelo Khomo.

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

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

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