CHAPTER FOURTEEN

JOY OR JAZZ

The late 1980s saw the emergence of a new regiment of young musicians who blended traditional South African rhythms with elements of traditional jazz to create a uniquely South African sound. Some of them had been session musicians who have mastered their particular instrument of trade while some have studied music up to tertiary level. They had been inspired by senior master musicians like Dr Philip Tabane, Allen Kwela and Themba Mokoena on guitar; Julian Bahula and Gabriel Segwagwa Thobejane on drums; Joseph Makwela and Victor Ntoni on bass guitar; Sankie Chounyane and Abdullah Ibrahim on keyboards; Hugh Masekela on trumpet; Jonas Gwangwa on trombone; Kippie Moeketsi on saxophone, as well as Dolly Rathebe and Miriam Makeba’s vocal prowess. They ushered in an era of a new Afro-fusion sound ranging from the guitar-strumming fingers of Selaelo Selota and Jimmy Dludlu, the drum-beating hands of Sello Galane and Tlale Makhene, the traditional instruments of Pops Mohamed, the double-bass of Mlungisi Gegana and Musa Manzini, the keyboard-stroking fingers of Themba Mkhize, Sylvester Mzinyane, Don Laka, Paul Hanmer and Moses Taiwa Molelekwa to the captivating voices of Judith Sephuma, Gloria Bosman, Linda Kekana, Simphiwe Dana and Zamajobe Sithole. The return of the glory of jazz was boosted by the passion and professionalism of these young musicians and the unwavering support of local initiatives like the Standard Bank Joy Of Jazz. Both young and old flooded back to legendary big concert venues like Moretele Park in Mamelodi to experience the magic of musicians like Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, Caiphus Semenya, Miriam Makeba, Letta Mbulu, Don Laka and many others.

The launch of the Puisano Jazz Programme in November 2007 with the
aim of promoting jazz performances in communities added momentum to this movement. Is it joy or jazz?

The Afro-jazz renaissance movement was led by the late composer and piano genius, Moses Taiwa Molelekwa. Before his tragic untimely death he raised the bar and took the South African jazz music to another level, leaving his peers to continue with the race at a pace never dreamt of before. Moses Taiwa Molelekwa was born in 1973 into a musical family in Tembisa, near Johannesburg. His grandfather was a pianist and his father, Jerry, was a jazz enthusiast whose love for the music of Thelonius Monk earned him the nickname “Monk” among his peers, most of whom were collectors of jazz music. Moses did his piano studies at FUBA where he was the first to receive the institution’s Best Student Award in 1987. Before long he was performing in Johannesburg’s respected clubs with established musicians. He was a founding member of the award-winning bands Brotherhood and Umbongo. They showed their true colours in the Gilbey’s Music Of Africa Competition held in 1991 and 1992.

Molelekwa’s debut album Finding One’s Self (B&W, 1995) won him FNB SAMA 2’s Best Traditional Jazz Performance as well as Best Contemporary Performance categories. It was produced by Pops Mohamed Ismail. For one album to win for both the old and the new can only reveal the master blender behind it, a genius who can fuse the sounds of two worlds and times to set a new standard for future musicians of the genre. Moss was a world-class pianist who could play anywhere, anytime with the world’s best. The line-up of musicians on his album Genes And Spirits is not only a clear testimony of the respect he had for his profession of choice, but also the high esteem with which his peers world-wide regarded him. On the album he dedicated one track, Spirit Of Tembisa, to one of the fastest growing townships in Gauteng – Tembisa. Most old residents of this location used to live in Alexandra township, including my paternal uncle, Edward Mojapelo (Moedi Section) and my friend, Moses Matlalepoo (Hospital Hill). The album was nominated in FNB SAMA 5’s Best Producer and Best Male Artist categories, and won the Best Contemporary Jazz Performance section. At that gala event he set the stage ablaze with TKZee and Loyiso Bala. Taiwa’s improvising skills made him so versatile.

As much as he could journey between the traditional and the modern, he could also cruise smoothly between jazz and kwaito. When respected former head of FUBA School of Music Geoff Mapaya recorded his Afro-fusion album, Thobela Mnirwa (2001), he invited one bright former student of the institution to sit behind the keyboards on two tracks, No Idea and Ya Warang. Moss excelled! He also made a valuable contribution to Sibongile Khumalo’s album in the form of his composition titled Free Spirit. As a musical mercenary his assignments included Stimela’s regrouping album Don’t Ask Why, Jimmy Dludlu’s Echoes From The Past and Kabelo Mabalane’s Everybody’s Watching. Like that US jazz pianist and composer, Thelonius Monk who influenced the development of bebop in
response to swing, Taiwa was already developing a characteristic pianistic style of his own that was destined to change Afro-jazz as we know it.

On 13 February 2001 the nation learned with shock that the bodies of both Moses and his wife/manager, Florence “Flo” Molelekwa (née Mthobo) were discovered in their Johannesburg offices. They are survived by a son who at the time was six years old. Moses Taiwa Molelekwa lived his brief stay with us so fast and vast, so fruitful and fertile that his musical globe trotting will take a privileged few among us a life-time to match. After his departure his other works were released on two albums, *Wa Mpona* and *Darkness Pass*. Besides “Shaluza” Max Mntambo, other peers/admirers who dedicated a track or album to him as a salute to his pioneering spirit include:

- Geoff Mpaya – *Thobela Mmiroa* (2001)

This is just to mention but a few. The most precious gift with which the new South African nation can reward Moses Taiwa Molelekwa is to react positively and with vigour to his plea – finding ourselves. In memory of Moses, Jerry established the Moses Taiwa Molelekwa Arts Foundation in Tembisa. The development of the jazz art form at the centre gave birth to the Taiwa Jazz Band. By 2008 the band whose founder member and manager was Joe Mkhombo was so much in demand at live shows that for instance, it was billed for the 2008 instalment of the festival, which was started by the Grahamstown Foundation in 1974, the Grahamstown National Arts Festival (26 June–05 July), Ekurhuleni Arts Festival (27–28 June) as well as another show at Germiston Lake.

Guitarist **Selaelo Selota** was born on 3 January 1965 in Sekuruwe, Moletji near Polokwane in Limpopo. The first band he saw perform was The Young Masters from Mogoto in Zebediela. The group was performing in Polokwane. As a student he excelled in athletics, the sport he later continued with as a mine worker in Carletonville for three years. A nasty experience during a big strike at the mine made him think twice about his future. Selota, whose passion for music was fuelled by working as an usher at The Market Theatre and cleaner at Kippies Jazz Club, followed his dream and studied music through the FUBA Academy. In 1994 he followed the dream to the University of Cape Town where he ended up lecturing to music students. On completion of his music studies he was ready to conquer the world playing his guitar, writing songs and fondling the microphone. Selota had bought his first guitar in 1988 to perfect his skills until he could comfortably use it in composing songs. The obvious need arose to form a band, and in 1996 Taola was born. This experimental band consisted of Selota himself on lead guitar, Sylvester Mazinyane (keyboards), Sello Galane
(percussion), Maxwell Vadima (bass), Frank Paco (drums) and lead vocalist, Judith Sephuma.

In 1997 Selaelo won the Adcock Ingram Music Award for Jazz. As if that was not enough, he went on to win the Old Mutual Jazz Into The Future’s Instrumental category in 1999. Keith Lister’s BMG Records saw huge potential in him and in 2000 released his debut album, *Painted Faces*. The album shamed the prophets of doom as public reception was awesome. It went on to win SAMA 7’s Best Newcomer and Best Contemporary Jazz Album categories. In 2001 he released his second album, *Enchanted Gardens*. From the start BMG allowed him room to move because only he understood the sound he wanted to champion; as such, he wrote and produced his albums. His second album was recorded with Tuli Mike Masoka (bass), Nkanyezi Cele (drums), Sylvester Mazinyane (piano), Godfrey Mgcina (percussion) and Xolisa Dlamini (vocals on two tracks). He led with his two lethal weapons – his guitar and vocal cords. The album was nominated in the Best Producer category of SAMA 8 and achieved gold status.

In 2004 I met him at Meropa Casino during the Limpopo Morula Awards where he was honoured together with fellow musicians Caiphus Semenya, Thomas Chauke and Shalati Joseph Khoza. Shalati is a respected choral music composer whose works include the 2008 Kruger National Park 110th birthday song. The awards, organised by the Maesela brothers, Letepe and Raleigh, were meant to honour and celebrate the achievements of sons and daughters of Limpopo Province. Selota launched his own label, C-Lota Records in 2005 and released the third album, *Stories Lived And Told*. Later on he launched a new label called “Live@TheShack” through which he released his follow-up CD *The Azanian Songbook* also featuring his 14-year-old daughter, Tebelelo on the track *Ordinary Day*. Tebelo’s mother is Judith Sephuma. Selaelo is one of the musicians I admire so much for his ability to revisit his childhood days with his guitar. There is a vivid village in his music. As Letta Mbulu says, “in the music the village never ends”. On stage he is fireworks and exudes so much energy that regularly renders him “topless”. The guitarist who wrote the soundtrack for the television series *Nomzamo* also entertains writing film scripts. In 2005 he was quoted to have said he was planning to release a 100% instrumental album in the near future.

Selota’s production and songwriting skills also gave birth to Judith Sephuma’s triple platinum CD, *A Cry. A Smile. A Dance*; the late Umanji’s *O Baba o Re Ha!* and Labella’s *Child Of The Soil*. He also produced the music of groups like Ziyaduma whose *Phelandaba* was released with Sheer Sound in 2005; the Limpopo boys trio Muzo’s CD *Nnete* (*The Truth*) as well as Paledi Malatji’s *The First Prince*. By the way, the Malatji’s are of the Baphalaborwa royal blood up in the north-eastern part of the Limpopo Province, near the Kruger National Park. At an early age Malatji who was brought up by his traditional singer granny, “Koko
Mangwako” was fascinated by the gravel voices of the sangomas. He later sharpened his musical skills playing in a school band in Orange Farm.

**Lungiswa Plaatjies** was born in Langa township, Cape Town, in 1973 and grew up among influential music practitioners like her traditional doctor grandfather, Dr Shadrack Plaatjies, Dizu Plaatjies of Amampondo and violinist, Monde Plaatjies. She prepared herself for the music career by studying at Music Action for People’s Progress (MAPP) in Cape Town.

At a relatively young age she travelled far and wide, especially with Amampondo as a backing vocalist and dancer in the eighties. This resulted in the release of their debut album, *Uyandibiza* (1983). It is interesting and impressive to note that she mastered the art of playing the traditional mbira and marimba musical instruments at a young age. She released her self-titled debut album through MELT 2000. Her music is deeply embedded in the cultural and spiritual wealth of our ancestors. In 2002 she released *Unonkala* (Sony Music) with the help of producer Donald Mahwetša Laka who also composed the music and added his nifty guitar work. Don engineered and mixed it at his Lakdon Studio and shot the photos for the cover. Lungiswa wrote the lyrics, played kalimba and mbira and sang both lead and backing vocals. Multi-instrumentalist Pops Mohamed added a continental touch to the album with his kora strumming nimble fingers.

She has other albums as member of Amampondo and collaborated with Madala Kunene and Max Lasser on a project called Madmax, which was recorded in Switzerland. The project was repeated in 2004. Other projects she featured in include *Madosini, Skeleton* and *Tribal Ethno Dance*.

In 1990 **Loading Zone** came to the attention of the public as a backing band. They backed the late Brenda Fassie, but what was not known to many was that it was one of South Africa’s energetic and versatile groups that would produce young lions like Jimmy Dludlu. After their impressive performance at The Market Theatre’s Kippies, they became a resident band at Hillbrow’s Cotton Pub. They mostly played popular cover versions of musicians like Al Jarreau. Their credibility saw them back greats like Miriam Makeba. It was during their Namibian tour that the DRC’s Papa Wemba requested them to be his backing band. At home they worked with Sello Twala, Marcalex and Mike Mkhalemele. Some of its members recorded with big local and international stars like Stimela, Sibongile Khumalo and Toto. All the members of the band lived in Cape Town, mostly students at the famous UCT College of Music. As already alluded to, they worked with another UCT product, Jimmy Dludlu, and recorded *Echoes From The Past* (1997) with him. In 2000 when they released *Overdue* their line-up was Frank Paco (drums), John Hassan (percussion), Lucas Khumalo (bass), Allou April (guitar), Sylvester Mazinyane (keyboards) and Jack Ngoka (vocals). In 2005 they released another album titled *Takin’ Off*.

Mozambique-born **Jimmy Dludlu** is without doubt another master guitarist of my time. At the age of 13 he fell in love with the guitar after listening to the
American maestro George Benson playing on radio. On a borrowed guitar he practiced day and night to improve his skill. At a later stage he realised that besides George Benson there were other good international musicians like West Montgomery and Charlie Christian. As he gained more insight into the music, he understood that in order to succeed he first had to understand the music of his own people, African jazz. This urged him to follow the music of greats like Zacks Nkosi. For commercial reasons at the time, Jimmy worked mostly with pop musicians like Dr Victor’s CC Beat, Spho Mabuse and others.

After playing with Loading Zone who did jazz-fusion covers, he became a guitar toting mercenary who spent most of his time around the Market Theatre like a lion waiting for prey by the side of the river. That is where he met fellow session musicians most of whom would later feature on his CDs. At a concert in Botswana he met another South African guitar giant, Themba Mokoena, whose guitar-playing style blew him away. In South Africa he became Mokoena’s protégé. In 1994 during the annual Grahamstown National Arts Festival he was playing with Herb Ellis when he was booked to play with gospel group, Friends First. That was a revelation to him; he realised how still lacking he was in the trade. Within no time he had enrolled with the UCT’s College of Music where he spent four years studying. That is where he met some of his peers like Selaelo Selota, Musa Manzini and Judith Sephuma who were also there to equip themselves for the industry. He became leader of C-Base Collective, a band whose members were UCT students. On completion of his studies Jimmy took the music industry by storm with the release of his debut album, *Echoes From The Past* (Gallo/Polygram, 1997). He dedicated the CD to his late father. Besides specialist musicians like bassist Fana Zulu, keyboardist Themba Mkhize and percussionist John Hassan, he also featured Capetonian, Mark Goliath as keyboardist, co-producer and co-writer. His association with the Mother City was also reflected by his management company, Making Music Productions. In 1999 he released *Essence Of Rhythm* (Universal Music). Like the debut, it was self-written and self-produced. A track from the album titled *Winds Of Change* won SAMA 7’s Best Single category. Track number five on the CD *Mr Mokoena* is dedicated to his mentor, former Pedlars member Themba Mokoena.

Today Jimmy is a respected musician who has won a number of SAMAs and Metro FM Awards. He is in demand and features in most of South Africa’s major jazz festivals. His next album was titled *Afrocentric* (Universal Music, 2002), featuring the Soweto String Quartet, Hugh Masekela, Ernie Smith and Bebe Winans. My indulgence on the album is *Africa Africa* as it was very much in line with the sound I was promoting as a station manager. It also makes you feel very proud to be an African. The album carries two dedications, *Basil Goes To Church* to Basil “Mannenberg” Coetzee and *River Of Lost Dreams* to Moses Taiwa Molelekwa, featuring the captivating voice of that cultural activist and catalyst, Duma ka Ndlovu. To expose the album to the international community,
its release in England, Holland and Germany was followed by a European tour. The self-produced album, *Afrocentric*, won him the Best Male Artist, Best Contemporary Jazz Album as well as the Best Producer categories of SAMA 8. Jimmy’s 2005 offering was *Corners Of My Soul*, which saw him win SAMA 12’s Best Male Album and Best Jazz Album categories. In 2007 he dropped his fifth CD, *Portrait*, which won SAMA 14’s Best Contemporary Jazz Album section. Now that he’s been through college, travelled the world and performed in front of kings and queens, his dream is to rise to the level of champion guitarists like Luiz Sallinas of Argentina.

**Prince Kupi** was born in Diepkloof, Soweto. After attending school at Giyani Primary School and Fidelitas High, it looked like he would end up being a medical doctor. It was when he heard the music of guitar masters like George Benson that he followed music as a career. He was introduced to the instrument by Rankitseng Ramela. Prince who studied music at Soweto’s Funda Centre also became Professor Darius Brubeck’s student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. While in Durban he led a jazz band known as Ba’Agisane and later played with The Brown Rock Band from Mozambique. Some of the local master guitarists he performed with include Jimmy Dludlu, Selalelo Selota and Louis Mhlanga who influenced most of his future works. Dancer and choreographer Nomsa Manaka’s brother, Kupi featured in various recordings and live performances. His album *Loxion* (2002) was dedicated to his “teacher”, Mr Ramela. Produced by former US muso Andy Narell, the CD was nominated for SAMA 9’s Best Newcomer, Best Contemporary Jazz Album and Best English Album. An unfortunate car crash took Prince (36 years) and his theatre actress wife Zandile Ngcobo (32 years) away from us on Sunday, 8 June 2008. The couple’s Volkswagen Polo overturned on the N3 near Heidelberg Road, Johannesburg. At the time of his death, Prince, who also performed with stars like Caiphus Semenya, Tlale Makhene and Sibongile Khumalo, was a member of the Letta Mbulu band. After a memorial service at the Bassline in Newtown, Johannesburg on Thursday, 12 June 2008 and a funeral service at Funda Centre in Diepkloof, Prince Kupi was laid to rest at West Park Cemetery on Saturday, 14 June 2008. His wife, Zandile was buried the next day in Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal leaving behind their five-year-old child, Bohlokoa.

Durban-born bass guitarist and composer, **Musa Manzini**, grew up in Cape Town. He realised early in his life that he had to get the right education for his career. He is a member of the UCT class of jazz who wants nothing less than excellence in music. Having worked with most of his peers both in recordings and live performances, by 2005 he had three albums to his name: *New Reflections* (2000 SAMA 7’s nominee), *Tributes And Memories* (2003), as well as *My Bass* (2005). Some of the most impressive music scores he wrote include those for Mfundi Vundla’s *Generations* and *Backstage* as musical director, a project he was engaged in for four years.
Marcus Wyatt, who worked a lot with Jimmy Dludlu, is a gifted trumpet blower who was born in Cape Town in 1971. He grew up in the Eastern Cape’s friendly city of Port Elizabeth. His love for jazz was inspired by his participation in the South African Naval Band. But this also opened his eyes to his shortcomings and he decided to equip himself better at UCT’s College of Music where he obtained a degree in music compositions and arrangements. His talent won him the Southern Comfort Jazz Scholarship (1994) and the Adcock Ingram Jazz Soloist category (1995). In 1996 he was a runner-up in the SAMRO Overseas Bursary Competition. Other bands he played with were Blues Broers, Cape Town Jazz Orchestra and the Marcus Wyatt Quartet. Wyatt’s debut album, Gathering, featured the cream of SA Jazz and was nominated for SAMA 7, a contestant in the same category as Africa Oye’s Moment Of Truth. Marcus has travelled the world with big names and returned home for the recording of Africans In Space (Sheer Sound, 2002), an album featuring tracks devoted to Alexandra jazz legend, Zacks Nkosi. It also features the voice of Nontuthuzelo Pouane. As a producer Marcus’s projects include Momentum, a 2001 album by Heavy Spirits. The album, which was released by Sheer Sound contain 13 original tracks. The Heavy Spirits line-up was Gershwin Nkosi (cornet), Mokowe Mashiane (alto saxophone), Paul Vranas (tenor saxophone), Vincent Molomo (electric bass) and Garland Selolo (drums). In 2007 Wyatt’s CD, Language 12 was nominated in Metro FM Music Awards’ Best Jazz Album category.

Tribe is a hot Cape Town quartet of established jazz musicians. The band consists of Kesivan Naidoo (drums), Charles Lazar (bass), Mark Fransman (pianist) and Buddy Wells (saxophone). Kesivan is a UCT graduate who completed his BA Mus. (Jazz Performance and Arrangement) and furthered his music studies abroad through SAMRO’s scholarship programme. He played with the UCT College Jazz Ensemble, pianists Idris Hotep Galeta, Jack van Poll and Bheki Mseleku. Lazar is a graduate of Berklee College of Music in Boston. Fransman was on Jimmy Dludlu’s C-Base Collective and composed Winds Of Change for Jimmy’s 1999 album Essence Of Rhythm, a composition later reworked as a collaboration with Bongo Maffin. Wells worked with Manu Dibango, Miriam Makeba and other big names. In 2003 they released an album titled Our Language. The list of music stars with whom they recorded includes David Leadbetter, Winston Mankunku Ngozi, Virtual Jazz Reality, Trully Fully Hey Wow Band and Kaolin Thomson.

Although guitarist Geoff Mapaya’s cultural roots can be traced back to Limpopo Province, he grew up in Tembisa. He prepared himself for his career for 12 years: three doing the arts at FUBA, four doing music at UCT, one doing education method and four doing his masters at Wits University. He has not only earned respect from his peers and students because of his tutorship at FUBA School Of Music, but also as the head, and he contributed immensely to the development of the South African music industry as an executive member.
of MUSA. The seasoned musician and academic’s debut album was Thobela Mmiroa (Universal Music, 2001). The guitarist featured former Fubists, Moses Molelekwa and Nontuthuzelo Pouane on the album. Besides his own songs, he included his colleague Magalane Phoshoko’s composition Rebone as well as guitarist Lawrance Goreoang’s I Love Ikageng. This spirit of brotherhood and generosity that allows others to shine in his work is best described by percussionist Sello Galane on the sleeve cover: “This capacity to acknowledge greatness is in itself a hallmark of greater character in his role as a composer, producer of his own work and the music written for him by others.” Mapaya’s other albums include Black Maria showcasing his command of the strings and Statements, which was released through Universal Music in 2005. By 2007 the talented musician was a lecturer at Univen and was also in charge of various music learnerships.

The first time I heard Zim Nqawana’s solo initiative I found myself attached to the radio during a Sunday jazz programme, hoping for more. The track was the laid-back Qula Kwedini. The ‘zimocracy’ man, Zim was born in Port Elizabeth in 1959. He started playing flute at the age of 21. His skills were sharpened by Prof. Darius Brubeck at the University of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal). It was as a member of the university-based Jazzanians that he went to the International Association Of Jazz Educators Convention in the USA. This resulted in scholarships to the Max Roach/Wynton Marsalis jazz workshops. Subsequently, he received a Max Roach scholarship to further his jazz studies at the University Of Massachusetts. The scholarship was named after the world-renowned champion jazz drummer who sadly passed away in August 2007. Zim returned to the “kwantunent” at the beginning of the nineties and worked with some of South Africa’s big names in jazz.

Nqawana’s efforts to develop young musicians and form jazz groups include the 100-piece drums For Peace Orchestra, which performed during the inauguration of Dr Nelson Mandela as the first black president of the new “zimocratic” South Africa. His music is rooted in traditional percussive sounds blended with Indian and western classical music. The first time I witnessed his magic on stage I was very much impressed by the unity of sound within his eight-piece band, Ingoma. This multi-instrumentalist’s album, Zimology (1998) received an award as the Best Packaged Album (SAMA 5). His 2000 release Ingoma won SAMA 7’s Best South African Traditional Jazz Album category. The Peter Pearlson-engineered album, Zimphonic Suites received more nominations than any in SAMA 8 and won the Best South African Traditional Jazz Album, Best Album Packaging and Best Engineer categories. Nqawana’s other albums include San Song and Vadzimu, which won SAMA 10’s Best Male Artist and Best South African Traditional Jazz Album categories. As a producer Zim was nominated as SAMA 9’s Best Producer for Hotep Idris Galeta’s Malay Tone Poem.

George and Ivy Bosman’s daughter, Gloria Bosman, is a tigress whose vocal
talent connects the past to the present; no wonder, at her young age, she was featured with some of the country’s most matured musicians like Dorothy Masuka, Thandi Klaasen, Abigail Khubeke, Sibongile Khumalo and Sylvia Mdunyelwa for the 2005 Melodi International Jazz Festival in Sun City, North West Province. Gloria Bosman was born in Mofolo, Soweto to a Xhosa mother and a South Sotho father. She grew up in Pimville and started singing in church choirs. Her dynamic voice led to her 1993 participation in the production SA Love at the Market Theatre. This resulted in a scholarship from two banks to study opera at Technikon Pretoria. Thereafter she was involved with various productions including Jubilation, Woman In Spirit as well as The Lion And The Lamb. She later spread her wings and entered the music industry. Her debut album was Tranquillity (Sheer Sound, 1999). It was produced by master pianist, Paul Hanmer of Trains To Taung fame and recorded with musicians Menyatso Mathole and Louis Mhlanga (guitars), Herbie Tsoaeli (bass), Basi Mahlasela (congas and percussion), Paul Hanmer (piano) and Rob Watson (drums). Fernando Perdigao was behind the desk and also co-produced. She became so much in demand for live performances and inspired a whole new regiment of female jazz vocalists. Her follow-up was The Many Faces Of Gloria Bosman (Sheer Sound, 2001) still working with Hanmer, but with new musicians here and there like Zolile Bacela (guitar), Godfrey Mgcina (percussion), Valentia Ferlito (piano) and the two bassists, Concord Nkabinde and Lucas Senyatso. Her 2002 release, Stop And Think was nominated for SA Ma 9’s Best Female Artist and Best Jazz Vocal Album categories. It was followed by Nature Dances and the self-produced CD, Emzini. Gloria has blessed many important occasions like Artes Radio Awards and corporate functions. Due to the popularity and respect she’s gained from the broader public she also presented e-tv’s jazz show, Jazz Indaba.

Sylvia Ncediwe Mdunyelwa is a jazz singer and actor from Langa in Cape Town. Her interest in showbiz at a young age landed her in Victor Ntoni’s sextet in the seventies. She has paid her dues working with seasoned musicians of the Cape like Winston Mankunku Ngozi of Yakhal’Inkomo fame as well as the Ngcukana brothers. Her passion to pass on jazz music to the youth urged her to bring together young musicians and expose them to the wider world of music. In the early 1990s she led a youth group to Canada where they participated in the International Children’s Jazz Festival. Subsequently, the Educational Opportunities Council awarded her a scholarship to further her music studies in the US. Some of the highlights of her performances are the Berlin Festival in 1994 and her 1997 show in Bogota, South America. Besides her performances she also presented “Voice Of Jazz” on P4 Radio. By the way, P4 Radio Cape Town was launched on 1 September 1997 as a “smooth jazz” station. Sylvia’s recordings include Ingoma (2000 Sama nominee) with the All Star Jazz Band as well as African Diva – Live In Africa.

Judith Sephuma, a former student of MC Sehlapelo Primary and Kgaiso High
School in Polokwane, possesses one of the most powerful female voices in the industry. It is the voice that made her a finalist of the 1994 Shell Road To Fame talent search. To fully equip herself for the music industry, she completed a Performers Diploma in Jazz at UCT’s College of Music in 1997. By 1998/99 she was touring Europe with Jack van Poll, a Dutch jazzman. Later on the South African government requested her participation in a performance for the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund in Europe. She was backing Jimmy Dludlu in 1999 at President Thabo Mbeki’s inaugural festivities. To crown it all, she won the Old Mutual Jazz Competition 1999 award for Best Jazz Vocalist. Four years after graduating from UCT she released her debut album, A Cry. A Smile. A Dance (2001) produced by guitarist Selaelo Selota. The album became a big hit and is a collector’s item, also available in the Kenny G version. It won SAMA 8’s Best Female Artist and Jazz Vocal Album categories. In 2002 Judith won the Kora All Africa Music Awards’ Best African Female Artist category. She also won two Metro FM awards. In 2003 she received a platinum disc as the album hit the over-50 000 sales mark. After four years she released her follow-up album, New Beginnings (2005). The album was a product of Judith and former Thetha guitarist Lawrance Matshiza who also produced Siphokazi’s Ubuntu Bam. She dedicated the track Mme Motswadi, to her mother, Miemie Sephuma. Another track, Re A Lotšha, was co-written by Judith and super percussionist Sello Galane. The CD won SAMA 12’s Best Female Artist category for Judith, Best Producer for Lawrance as well as Best Engineer for Jasper Williams. As if that was not enough, it scooped the Metro FM Music Awards’ Best Jazz Album in 2006. She is married to Siphiwe Mhlambi.

Another Limpo-woman who blew a storm with her trumpet is Kgaogelo Mailula. The Mailula people are found in ga-Mamabolo, Limpopo province. Their village is aptly named ga-Mailula. “Kgao” released her debut album titled La Mogale. It was recorded with her band Kgalala. She also belongs to the new generation of schooled musicians. With the support of hubby Magalane Phoshoko one hopes for greater things to come. By 2007 she was one of the chosen few teachers to groom a new generation of female leaders at Oprah Winfrey’s institution in South Africa.

Phinda Mtya entertained many music lovers as a backing vocalist for the likes of Oliver Mtukudzi and Suthukazi Arosi. She grew up in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape singing in school and church choirs. While busy with a Social Science degree at Fort Hare University, the music fraternity enticed her with lucrative offers. In 1992 the late Brenda Fassie brought her to Johannesburg after seeing her perform in an East London club. A year later she met her hubby, Morgan Matlala. Her debut solo album, Into Yam (1996) did not perform well in the market. Amongst her other projects, she sang in Mafube as well as playing the role of Rafiki in the Lion King for two years in Canada. After 11 years she released Mbheka Phesheya (2005), produced by Steve Dyer, which
won SAMA 12’s Best Adult Contemporary Album category. In 2007 she went into the studio with the same producer and followed up with *Yithi Paha*, an album that was nominated for SAMA 14’s category she had won in 2005. It is interesting to note that she moonlights as a tow-truck driver since the family owns a tow-truck business.

Son of Mary Kate and Ernest Smith in Durban, **Ernie Smith**’s guitar could easily be mistaken for that of Cape Town’s superstar Jonathan Butler by some uninitiated ears. Ernie who grew up in Wentworth stormed onto the music scene with his self-written, arranged and co-produced debut album, *Child Of The Light* (Sheer Sound, 2001) and the continent’s premier awards, the Kora All Africa Music Awards crowned him the Most Promising Male Artist. The album also won SAMA 8’s Best Newcomer and Best Adult Contemporary English Album. Jasper Williams engineered, mixed and co-produced it. The recording line-up was Ernie Smith (lead guitar), Karim Darris (percussion), Godfrey Mgicina and Kwazi Shange (drums), Roland Moses, Themba Mkhize, Valentia Ferlito and Neil Gonsalves (keyboards), Marcus Wyatt (trumpet) as well as Henry Leggard and the jazz section winner of the 2006 Standard Bank Young Artist Award, Concord Nkabinde on bass. His 2002 release, *Lovely Things*, won SAMA 9’s Best Adult Contemporary English Album. In 2005 he left Johannesburg for his hometown Durban and took a break to reflect on his personal life. A year later he released his follow-up album titled *Beautiful Woman* (2006). In 2008 as he and his wife Lucretia welcomed their daughter Israela into this world. Ernie also released the long-awaited CD, *Everything Around Me*. The devout Christian’s record label was aptly named “Child Of The Light”.

The first time I met Tshwane songstress, **Linda Kekana**, she was the main artist at a Women’s Day celebration in Polokwane. She performed songs from her SAMA-nominated debut album, *Rebirth*. The album title and the music revealed her to be a renaissance musician who wants to revive and instil African moral values into the nation. The Kekana couple compose songs together; Linda sharp with lyrics, and “the tiger” Ephraim providing the music and playing the guitar. Inspired by the historic “I Am An African” speech by the then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, the Atteridgeville-born star released an album of the same title through Gallo Records in 2002, which was produced by Dumisani Dlamini. It won SAMA 9’s Best Jazz Vocal Album section. On the album she worked with Sello Manyaka (saxophone), Isaac “Mnca” Mtshali and Kwazi Shange (drums), Mlungisi Gegana, Fana Zulu and Herbie Tsoaeli (bass), Godfrey Mgicina and Peter Masilela (percussion), Dumisani Dlamini, Themba Mkhize and Andile Yenana (piano), Lawrance Matshiza, Oupa Makhubela and Ntokozo Zungu (guitar). This is one of the few CDs that carry the Aids helpline tollfree contact number. In her live performances she was backed by the group, Siyaya, whose members included Sewela Selamolela, Jake Naniki Selamolela, Thato Lenake, Joseph Rasego and Johnny Motuba who also played drums in Vusi Mahlasela’s Proud
People’s Band. Her next album, *Kodumela*, was produced by Thapelo Khomo.

While Queenstown is known for being the hometown of President Thabo Mbeki, it is also home to some of South Africa’s great musicians like Todd Matshikiza, Margaret Singana, Mongezi Feza and Stompie Mavi. In the early seventies another young man in that Eastern Cape neighbourhood by the name of **MLUNGISI GEGANA** had his life changed by the arrival of a new musician neighbour called “Matenesana”. From there, Lungi never looked back. Amongst his influences he cites Tete Mbambisa, the Ngcukana brothers, Alvin of the Dyers music family, Zim Ngqawana, McCoy Mrubata and Feya Faku. His session musicianship exposed him to the right connections in jazz circles and earned him a lot of respect amongst his peers. He is one of the few double bassists in the country and features on many recordings for this speciality. In 2004 Mlungisi released his self-written album, *One Step Forward* (Gallo Records) through Sheer Publishing. The line-up included the who’s who of today’s South African jazz music like Jasper Cooke, Valentia Ferlito, Godfrey Mgicina, Sam Mataura, Percy Mbonani, Kesivan Naidoo, Johnny Chonco, Basi Mahlasela, Vusi Khumalo, Louis Mhlanga and Andile Yenana.

Born in King William’s Town, Eastern Cape, **ANDILE YENANA** was the 2005 Standard Bank Young Artists’ Award winner. He is a product of Natal University’s Centre for Jazz And Popular Music under guidance of Professor Darius Brubeck. Having paid his dues as a freelancer, he released his debut album *We Used To Dance* (2002 SAMA nominee) through Damon Forbes’s Sheer Sound. The album was so well-received that he was encouraged to release his follow-up, *Who’s Got The Map*, which featured local musicians like saxophonist Sydney Mnisi. The album dominated SAMA 12’s nominations as it featured in the categories Best Male Artist, Best Instrumental Album and Best Jazz Album. Many musicians have featured him on their albums as their pianist of choice, but he remains a member of Zim Ngqawana’s band. Many jazz fans have experienced his live performance magic at various concerts including the Grahamstown National Arts Festival where he shared the stage with the Duke Ngcukana Quintet in 2005. He also featured in the Standard Bank Joy Of Jazz Joburg International Festival sharing the platform with that US wizard of the strings, Stanley Jordan as well as Lee Ritenour, Dave Koz and Dianne Reeves. Andile was nominated Best Producer for Suthukazi Arosi’s *Ubuntu* album in the Standard Bank SAMA 8. He co-produced *Abantwana Be Afrika* with the great Winston Mankunku Ngozi. In 2007 he was invited by Univen to lecture in Music. Andi played for Voice, a quintet that was formed to preserve the rich heritage of the music of greats like Nick Moyake, Kippie Moeketsi, Johnny Dyani and Dudu Pukwana. In 2001 the outfit released *Quintet Legacy Volume 1* through Sheer Sound. Who were the other members of Voice?

Tenor saxophonist, **SYDNEY “ACE” MNISI** who hails from Tembisa. He is a product of both FUBA Academy in Newtown and Pretoria Technikon. He
has toured with various musicians and recorded with the likes of Sylvester Mazinyane, Andile Yenana and the late Dennis Mpale.

Bass specialist, **Motlatsi Herbie Tsaoeli** is a Capetonian who credits Prof. Merton Barrow of Jazz Workshop as his mentor. The talented guitarist who plays both electric and acoustic bass with ease has featured on great musicians’ albums including Gloria Bosman, Mankunku Ngozi, Suthukazi Arosi and Linda Kekana. His musical home is Zim Ngqawana’s band, *Ingoma*. He was nominated in the Standard Bank SAMA 8’s Best Producer category for Suthukazi Arosi’s album, *Ubuntu*. The other members of Voice who need no introduction were trumpeter Marcus Wyatt and the late drummer, Lulu Gontsana.

**Fezile “Feya” Faku** is a self-taught trumpeter from New Brighton in Port Elizabeth. He grew up listening to the sounds of bands like the Soul Jazzmen who used to play in the hall opposite his home. He later did a Performers Diploma in Jazz Studies at the University Of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal). His early influences include the late pianist, composer and arranger Tete Mbambisa, saxophonist Christopher Columbus, “Mra” Ngcukana as well as George Tyefumani who inspired him to play flugel horn. A man of quintets, he worked with Mankunku Ngozi’s quintet and the Paul van Kemenade Quintet. He also led his Durban-based quintet, The Core. His mentor on drums was the late Lulu Gontsana. He is a member of Mahube whose album was nominated in the 5th FNB SAMA’s Best African Pop Album category. Mahube was a Steve Dyer-directed collaboration show consisting of Oliver Mtukudzi, George Phiri, Suthukazi Arosi, Phinda Mtya, Scorpion Madondo, Barry van Zyl, Andile Yenana, Herbie Tsaoeli and Sean Fourie. Fezile who also worked with Abdullah Ibrahim and Bheki Mseleku boasts albums such as *Homage* and *The Colours They Bring*.

**Concord Nkabinde**’s bass guitar skills saw him work with musicians like Ernie Smith, Family Factory, Gloria Bosman, Johnny Clegg and the Grassroot Project. This talented muso’s independently released albums include *The Time The Season* and *This Is My World*. Besides his local itinerary he has toured countries like Germany, France, Switzerland and the US with Johnny Clegg from whom he says he has learned a lot about the industry. Concord’s knowledge and talent were also recognised with his involvement in teaching music students across South Africa on the Standard Bank National Youth Jazz Festival programme. His music draws from across various genres like rock and Spanish, but the “Sowetoness” always comes through the “worldness”.

Another hot bassist, **Lucas Senvatsa** released his debut CD on 7 July 2006. Having worked with stars like Hugh Masekela, Gloria Bosman and Judith Sephuma, it was time for him to show the world what he’s made of. The CD was titled *All of Me* and was nominated for SAMA’s Best Contemporary Jazz Album. It was launched at a Birchwood Hotel jazz evening shared on stage with guitarists Ray Phiri as well as Oupa “Poy Poy” Makhubela who was presenting
his second album, *Stand Up*. Afro-jazz lady, Nombulelo Maqetuka’s debut CD, *Essence of Love* was also launched that night.

Counted amongst the talented young bass guitarists of South Africa is Oupa “Poy-Poy” Makhubela. He started his music career in 1975. Some of the bands he played with before joined the Don Laka crew was The Young Movers. I personally took note of the musician as Don Laka’s bass guitarist. He later went on to release his own solo debut titled *Unity*. It was followed by African Spirit. In 2006 he released his third CD titled *Stand Up*.

Guitar wizard, Bheki Khoza grew up in Chesterville, KwaZulu-Natal Province. He started playing guitar at the tender age of six. Though his passion was soccer, the influence of a neighbourhood guitarist uncle Robert aka Spirit won the day. His informal training was later complemented by music studies at the University of Hartford, US in 1991. While playing in Mbongeni Ngema’s plays in Durban, Mbongeni advised him to move to Johannesburg where he could widen his scope. The versatile guitar maestro who plays jazz, pop, fusion and reggae styles teaches music at Wits University and Damelin College. Besides featuring on various musicians’ recordings, this former shop steward of the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU) has also played for bands like Jazz Pioneers and Thayima. I experienced his stage magic while he was with Sello Galane’s Free Kiba band playing side by side with the late Steve Zulu. He also composed the music score for the movie *Sophiatown*. His 2006 CD *Getting To Heaven Alive* received three SAMA 13 nominations and won the Best Instrumental Jazz Album award. The left-handed Mseleku’s productions include Simphiwe Dana’s *The One Love Movement On Bantu Biko Street*, winner of four SAMA 13 awards.

In February 2008 he represented South Africa at Cuba’s Havana International Jazz Festival. His band, the Bheki Khoza Quartet, which was made of Jimmy Mngwandi (bass), Nkanyezi Cele (drums), Mncedi Kupa (piano) and himself on guitar performed at Casa de la Cultura de Plaza before he could return home to wife, Nomvula and concentrate on the material of his next album.

Former Musical Roots trumpeter, Richard “Wadada” Ramolefe has embarked on a successful solo career. The hornman known to jazz lovers as Richie Ramolefe is highly in demand for live performances. His debut album, *Uzongikhumbula* includes Alan Silinga’s all-time favourite composition, Ntyilo Ntyilo. I first saw the Tshwane-based musician perform at the popular open-air jazz venue, Moretele Park in Mamelodi, Tshwane.

The first time I heard the voice of Labella it reminded me of Letta Mbulu’s powerful yet controlled renditions. Labella Dani from Gugulethu, Western Cape was one of Selaelo Selota’s first artists on his record label, C-Lota. How do you like the sound of that – Labella for the new label. She grew up listening to the music of stars like Anita Baker. When she first met Selaelo, she was participating in the Shell Road To Fame talent search with her group. Later at UCT she met Judith Sephuma who invited her to join her as backing vocalists
for Jennifer Jones. This Afro-pop and soul lady of song sang for 11 years before she could record, gaining valuable experience backing stars like Sibongile Khumalo. Her debut album was titled *So Lonely*. It was followed by *Child Of The Soil* produced by Selota.

**Rachel Kwenzekile Nhlabathi** aka Rae was born in Dlamini, Soweto. Having started as member of Tattoo in 1999, she is another promising artist whose debut *Kwenzekile* was released through Gallo Records in 2006. It was recorded at Downtown studios by Neil Kuhn and produced by Siphiwe Dhlamini. She co-produced, co-wrote and co-engineered the album. The gem was nominated for the Best Female Artist and Best Vocal Jazz Album categories of SAMA 2006.

IKS communication systems leader, the drum remains one of the most fascinating musical instruments. Not every musician can maximally express himself through these “hollow” talkers of various shapes and sizes. In 1999 I was captivated by the skills of a young man who was part of the stage band for the 5th SAMA in Sun City, North West Province. His name is **Tlale Makhene**. Afro-jazz champion percussionist/drummer, Tlale is the son of Mpho Twala and the late film star, Ramolao Daniel Makhene. Growing up in a showbiz environment, he was exposed to many jazz albums and musicians at a young age. Instead of following in the footsteps of his multi-award winning father and singer/actress mother, he chose the ancient African communication instrument. He learned this fine art of communication from his granny. The church and school gave him the opportunity to practice his beating skills, which have turned him into something of a drum god. Among the musicians who inspire him are Segwagwa Gabriel Thobejane, Sello Galane, Vusi Khumalo and Danish drummer Lars Stork. He has featured on many musicians’ albums including Judith Sephuma, Ringo Madlingozi, Sylvester Mazinyane and Heavy Spirits. His debut album *The Ascension Of The Enlightened* (2004) was the winner of the 11th MTN SAMA's Best Contemporary Jazz Album, a category won by Dondo for *Changing Times* in the previous year’s awards.

Ga-Mashashane is not only ancestral home to legendary trombonist Jonas Gwangwa, but also to another Northern Ndebele son, percussionist par excellence and cultural activist, **Sello Galane**. Watching him in action he always reminds me of a member of Youssou N’Dour’s Etoile de Dakar, tama player Assane Thiam. Sello was born to Maeke and Cecilia Moaki Galane on 28 September 1966 and grew up in Leboneng, in Temba-Hammanskraal. Son of a Kiba lead dance – *malokwane*, he grew up surrounded by township *trupa* dancers of neighbouring villages of Majaneng and Ramotse, and spent his formative years listening to his mother’s singing of Lutheran Church hymns. He sang in a family choir. Sello developed a keen interest in his father’s tutelage and legacy of Kiba-Dinaka. Later he got introduced to the haunting music of Philip Tabane by Selaelo Selota. Together with fellow musicians Selaelo Selota, Magalane Phoshoko and Judith Sephuma, Galane graduated from the University of Cape
They had started off, in 1990, using Kiba rhythms to enrich jazz music. When they each went their separate ways in 1991 to embark on solo careers, Galane reversed the experiment by enriching kiba music with various elements from jazz and pop. He chose to embark on a research project to define a music discourse of Kiba and to grow its repertoire beyond the confines of a single tribal tradition. He later dubbed this creative approach and genre – Free Kiba. In 1993 he attended workshops at the Ethnomusicology College of Zimbabwe in Harare.

From Zimbabwe, with a deeper understanding of African music, and together with Judith Sephuma, Sylvester Mazinyane, and Clement Benney, he was part of Selaelo Selota’s 1996 project, Taola. Taola fused Nguni and Bapedi idioms with jazz. The project was performed internationally at the Fin de Siècle la Johannesburg in France. Galane took his project of Kgapanan-women dance group to perform in Nantes and Paris in France the same year. In June of the same year he presented the Mapostola group at the 35th Festival of American Folklife’s Sacred Sounds Stage. These experiences and experiments enriched the Free Kiba movement as we know it today. He describes it as “a tradition of music making and cultural communication of the Amandebele of Moletlane, the Bapedi and is akin to the vhaVenda Tshikona.”

When his father passed on, he decided to take the baton and continue with the race. To achieve this, he went up north to the heartland of Kiba music – Limpopo Province. This is where as a teacher at Kagiso High School he met his protégé, Judith Sephuma. His quest for Kiba placed him in an ironic situation: Sello, a lecturer at Kwena-Moloto Teachers College came face to face with his mentors – simple rural women without a book, pen or chalkboard. For almost nine years they schooled him into a Kiba music graduate. Due to his academic background, his researched interpretation of the art form resulted in a sound never heard before – Free Kiba. He freed the music from the mountains, valleys and village streets of Limpopo into the corridors of power at the South African State Theatre, the Market Theatre and world stages.

Today Sello and Basadi Ba Kgapan Ensemble are proud of their tireless efforts to promote what many in the industry thought to be a waste of time. Due to industry scepticism, the activist established his own company, Kgapanan African Music Records (KAMR). Glad to have returned to his father’s place of birth, Sello made Polokwane his home where he lives with his family. Having been to his home several times, I can without any fear of contradiction say the man lives the music. Cultural to the bone, spiritual to the soul, the upbringing of his children is a true reflection of his vision. His business offices are in Tshwane at the South African State Theatre. Galane the academic, together with Marcus Ramogale, researched the origin and religious expression value of the ZCC’s Mokhukhu dance in a 1997 project titled Faith In Action. He has travelled extensively especially to African countries in his quest to find similarities in
the continent’s ethnic sounds. Besides the “200+ Years of Kiba Music of South Africa” celebration roadshow and recordings of his CDs and DVDs, in 2005 he was the musical director of *Mother of Rain – Mapula*, Aubrey Sekhabi’s musical starring Vusi Kunene. Sello was also part of “Jazz Meets Symphony 2005”, an innovation of the Jazz Foundation of South Africa. One of his greatest achievements was his contribution towards the recognition of Dr Philip Tabane for his pioneering spirit by the University of Venda.

Musicians Sello has worked with on his Free Kiba Live series available in both CD and DVD include Luyanda Madope (piano), Kwazi Shange (drums), Lawrance Matshiza (acoustic guitar), Bheki Khoza (guitar), Sandile Jwaai (bass), Ricky Sekhale (soprano/alto sax). Galane plays sekgokolo (father drum), kgalapedi (mother drum) and matikwane (small twin drums) and lead voice in all his recordings. The backing vocalists he has worked with in his recordings most regularly are Ofentse Montshiwe, Nombulelo Maqetuka and Thembeka Mavuso. By 2006 he had recorded *Free Kiba 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6*. The last four CDs carried titles *New Modern Classics* and *Sounds of the Diaspora* series, *A Modern Village of Clay*, *Sacred Sounds of Free Kiba 5* and *Echoes of Mapungubwe*, respectively. The last three CDs made history in the industry as they were all recorded in one show and released on the same day in 2006. The releases were accompanied by DVDs. In the same year he founded the Free Kiba Music Development Foundation. Galane has been honoured with two awards, The OT – Onkgopotse Tiro Award, and Smithsonian Institute Recognition for contribution to the diffusion of knowledge and culture that enrich the world. The highlights of his career include theme song of *Mapungubwe* for the Presidential National Orders Awards (2006) and the Nelson Mandel Birthday Celebrations (2007, 2008). Galane sits on the board of the National Arts Council of South Africa (2007–2009) and the NEPAD committee of Culture Education on behalf of the National Department of Education. I hope to live to witness the day he receives both the SAMA and Kora awards.

Another Tshwane multi-instrumentalist is *Tlokwe Sehume*. Born in Lady Selbourne, his family was later moved to Atteridgeville where he was inspired by the Atteridgeville hostel dancers’ dinaka music. He studied music at UNISA but dropped out when he discovered the lack of traditional African music in the content. Tlokwe plays a blend of traditional and western music that has become known as Mmino Wa Thaba (Music of the Mountain). His debut album, *Naga Ya Fsa* (The Land is in Turmoil) was initially released in 1995 but was re-released later in 2001 with additional new tracks.

Having known him first through hard-hitting lyrics like *A re kwe tša gago*, I first met him at the launch of Sello Galane’s “200+ years of Kiba Music of South Africa” concert, at the South African State Theatre where I was requested to read a paper on the subject. After our meeting he sent me some of his work for my comment and I was impressed and appreciated his passion for the
origins of the Kiba music styles. Tlokwe, like Galane and Philip Tabane, is a songwriter, composer, singer and multi-instrumentalist who plays guitar, mbira, mvet, flute and percussion. His 85-piece ensemble of African and western musical instruments, Medu-Nakeng, has been part of workshops sponsored by the Mmino South African–Norwegian Education and Music Programme. The project that continues to swell with new artists from previously disadvantaged communities was in its 3rd year in 2005. Some of the groups in the show included the Northern Sotho traditional music groups like Dihlanhlagane, an all ladies ensemble from Ga-Matlala as well as Magana Go Bušwa, a Dinaka dance group from the rural villages of GaSekhukhune in Limpopo. There was also a Botswana music group, Serampheshane, from Moruleng near Rustenburg, as well as a Basarwa (San) group from Kgalagadi.

Through his Medu Promotions Tlokwe continues to research various aspects of South African indigenous music. He has performed outside the borders of South Africa including the rest of the African continent, Europe and India where he was accompanied by members of his band, Medu, which he founded in 1985. In 2004 it comprised by the following members: Motshepe Kgawane, Lucas Komane, Segopa Sekgobela, Thabo Rapoo and Edwin Nkomo. Sehume, an expert on the Cameroonian chordophone called mvet, was invited for a presentation on the instrument at the Moses Taiwa Molelekwa Arts Foundation in Tembisa, among other places. His albums include Naga Ya Fsa (Gallo, 2001) which won the Best Pedi Music category of SaMa 8, Ba Utlwile (Gallo, 2002) which received two SAMA nominations, Mmino Wa Thaba (Gallo, 2003), a collection of his live performances as well as Serunya (2005).

A 1999 meeting between Collins Chabane and Bezil Makombe in Harari gave birth to the group, MOVEMENT. The inspiration behind the band was to integrate the Shona, xiTsonga and tshiVenda cultures and showcase traditional instruments like timbila/mbira and hosho. Bezil Makombe a Shona-speaking Zimbabwean, born in Seke in 1972. He started playing mbira at the age of five. Between 1990 and 1999 he toured extensively as a member of Thomas Mapfumo’s Blacks Unlimited. Collins Chabane is a Tsonga-speaking South African, born in Xikundu in 1960. While serving his sentence on Robben Island he played harmonica and co-ordinated a prisoners’ jazz band called Collective Sound until his release in 1990. After the 1994 democratic elections he became a Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of the Limpopo Provincial legislature. In 1999 he learned to play timbila. The duo compose, arrange and publish their music. Collins is the band’s producer. Their debut album Seke VS Xikundu is dedicated to their places of birth. Musicians who were involved in its recording were Percy Mfana, Chidodo Chinembiri and Washington Masango (lead vocals), Erina Wurayayi and Maruwa Chikwatari (backing vocals), John Ngwandangwanda (lead guitar), Washington Masango (bass guitar), Bezil Makombe and Chidodo Chinembiri (mbira), Collins Chabane (harmonica and
timbila), Lawrance Muparutsa (drums), Maruwa Chikwatari (hoshos) and Abraham Makhombe (congas). In 2001 they released Xai-Xai, dedicated to the people of Mozambique. New musicians in the line-up were Lazarus Williams (drums), Themba Kaseke (timbila), Thembani Mackauckau (rhythm guitar) and Khizhito Musodza (hoshos and congas).

I recently spent an evening of good music in the company of Meadowlands-born pianist, Sylvester Mazyanye. His Church background saw him fall in love with the piano. While busy with his matric, he attended piano lessons at Manu Technical College in Dobsonville. Thereafter, he did a music degree at the UCT College of Music. He has backed many stars in South Africa both as an individual specialist and as member of Loading Zone. This allowed him to mature with time, see faces and places and appreciate many sounds and songs until he felt ready to release his own work. No wonder his debut album Down South (2005) is the jewel it is. It is testimony to the wealth of experience the young man from Soweto has accumulated over the years of exposure to the tapestry of the cultural heritage of South Africa. The album features some of the masters of the game: Prince Lengoasa (trumpet), Nkanyezi Cele (drums), Bongani Sokhela (bass), Tlale Makhene (percussion), Sydney Mnisi (saxophone) and a member of Motswako who was also Classic FM’s presenter, Kutlwano Masote (cello).

Ngwako Manamela was born at Riverside and raised in Mamelodi. While performing with other bands he caught the sharp ear and eye of Hugh Masekela who encouraged him to embark on a solo career. The result was his debut CD, Ngwako Ramelodi. The professional vibraphonist and band leader was inspired by the American muso Milt Jackson in the 1970s. By 2007 he had established the Manamela Bokamoso School of Creative Art in Soshanguve. The school was sponsored by UNISA, while studio facilities were provided by Chissa Music.

Young saxophonist Moses Khumalo was born in Meadowlands, Soweto on 30 January 1979. At the age of five he was already singing in the Seventh Day Adventist Church Choir. After completing his matric at Pace Community College, he enrolled with Manu Technical College in Dobsonville. After his piano and saxophone courses between 1994 and 1998 he left the college equipped with a diploma in music theory. His first big concert was the Grahamstown National Arts Festival, where he performed with the Soweto Youth Jazz Band in 1995. Moses Molelekwa realised his talent and mentored him. Before long he was playing with big names in the industry and billed for the North Sea Jazz Festival in Cape Town. After serving his apprenticeship in the industry, he released his debut album Mntungwa (2002), named after his clan. The CD made him the winner of the 2003 SAMA’s Best Newcomer category, which said much about the future of the young composer and hornman in the music industry. Perhaps this was confirmation that he had worked with the best in the industry like Sibongile Khumalo, Hugh Masekela, Gloria Bosman, Khaya Mahlangu, Vusi Khumalo, Moses Molelekwa and Prince Lengoasa. He spent
many hours perfecting his act with his live band, Moses Khumalo And Friends. Then followed the CD *Ibuyile* (Sheer Sound, 2005). On Monday, 4 September 2006 he was found dead in his flat in Weltevreden Park, Johannesburg. It was a very sad moment that brought back the memories of the tragic death of his mentor, Taiwa Molelekwa, especially due to the age range. I believe that the most shocked were Xoli Nkosi and the late Prince Kupi with whom he was about to go into the studio for the recording of *The Young Lions* project. Why at the age of 27? Much too soon, Mntungwa! He was laid to rest at the Westpark cemetery on Sunday, 10 September 2006. The tragic unnatural deaths that cut short the lives of music stars like Special Cane Mahlelebe, Moses Molelekwa, Makhendlas, TK Mhinga, Lebo Mathosa, Gito Baloi, Johannes Kerkorrel, Moses Khumalo, Price Kupi and Tiny Siluma always leave me muttering to myself: “How much is enough? How soon is too soon?”

Identifiable by her head scarf trademark *Simphiwe Dana*, who was born to a priest in Gcuwa (Butterworth), Eastern Cape, in 1970, has a unique, refreshing and original style. In 1980 the family moved to Lusikisiki where she grew up with her three siblings. In 1997 she matriculated at Vela Private School in Mthatha. She also did Graphic Design at Port Elizabeth Technikon. Her debut album *Zandisile* (1st Years) was released by Gallo records in 2004. It was arranged and produced by ace producer Thapelo Khomo and engineered by Papi Seretse. It fuses a variety of genres to bring out a refreshingly peculiar product delivered predominantly in her home language, isiXhosa. Presented in the typical new South African lingo, the hit *Ndiredi* (I’m Ready) has turned her into a household name. It features some of the best musicians in the industry like Isaac Mtshali, Jabu Sibumbe, Victor Masondo, Godfrey Mgcina, Ntokozo Zungu, Bheki Khoza and Valentia Ferlito, who did justice to the end product. The simple look of the cover that resembles a school exercise book makes it even more extraordinary. The album went gold in a short space of its release and received four nominations in MTN SAMA 11 winning the Best Jazz Vocal Album as well as the Best Newcomer categories. I can’t remember any major concert that did not feature her magic, including the Cape Town International Jazz Festival and the Standard Bank Joy Of Jazz Joburg International Festival. She was nominated in the 10th Kora All Africa Music Awards’ Revelation Of The Year and Best African Video categories. In 2006 she released her second album, *The One Love Movement On Bantu Biko Street*, which won SAMA 13’s four categories of Best Female Artist, Album of the Year, Best Contemporary Jazz Album and Best Vocal Jazz Album. She started 2008 with a European tour and was nominated for the 2008 BBC Radio 3 Awards for World Music.

When I was invited to an evening of quality music, I could not believe my eyes when the star of the show was the diminutive figure of a young lass of 19. But once she opened her mouth, she took total control of the mainly elite crowd. She introduced herself as Zamajobe. *Zamajobe Sithole* was born in 1986 in
Frankfort, Free State, and grew up in Vosloorus, Ekurhuleni. At a young age she sang in choirs led by Pastor Benjamin Dube of the Praise Centre Church. She fell in love with the strings of Eric Clapton and asked her father to buy her a guitar. Her real music break came through M-Net’s Idols talent search in 2003. The competition revealed her real colours even to herself and inspired her to go for gold. Her debut album Indawo Yami (BMG) carries twelve well-written tracks. It was produced by Eric Pilani. Following its release she featured in many major jazz concerts. Her international recognition came in the form of a nomination in the 2005 MTV Europe Music Awards’ Best African Video category for Magic. However, the award went to Nigeria’s 2Face for African Queen. As if that was not enough, she was again nominated in the 10th Kora All Africa Music Awards’ Best African Video category. The video ended up winning Lara Hollis SAMA 12’s Best Music Video category. She’s featured in three songs on jazz maestro Lee Ritenour’s album Smoke ‘n Mirrors. Her first award came from the 2006 Channel O Spirit of Africa Music Video Awards. She won the Best Urban Jazz Video for Indawo Yami.

Swazi Dlamini is from Kwa-Mashu in Durban. She is a product of the Joyous Celebration project. She appears on many jazz albums in South Africa as a backing vocalist. When she went solo, she released My First Love (2003), an album that won her the 2004 SAMA’s Best Female Artist category as well as the Kora All Africa Music Awards’ Most Promising Female Artist section. In 2005 she married violinist Tshepo Mngoma and released her second album Dance With Me. Her stage performance is out of this world. By 2008 she had moved from Johannesburg to her hometown, Durban from where she launched her own company, Swazitainment Productions.

Lindiwe Maxolo started singing in gospel choirs at the age of 14. This brilliant vocalist in 1998 enrolled with Johannesburg’s Fuba School Of Music for a three years course. On completion she continued to the UCT College of Music in 2001 where she did a jazz degree and worked with various bands of note. This was not new to her as she had toured with Joyous Celebration and worked with Geoff Mapaya, Kgaogelo Mailula and Sello Galane while at Fuba. Lindiwe is the winner of the 2002 Old Mutual Jazz Encounters contest.

Paul Hanmer was born in 1961 in Cape Town. He is another product of the UCT’s College of Music. After three years at UCT he went out to practice what he’d learnt and exposed himself to various music styles. He went to Johannesburg in the late eighties. Paul is a highly polished pianist who has worked with a myriad of musicians including Khaya Mahlangu. He is a founding member of the fusion band Unofficial Language, which was formed in 1987. The other members of the band were Ian Herman and Pete Sklair. Some of the band’s albums are Primal Steps (1994) and Move Moves (1998) featuring the voices of Wendy Oldfield, Waddy Jones and Frank Opperman. In 1997 he shook the music industry with the release of his self-composed masterpiece Trains To Taung (Sheer Sound),
which featured Denis Lalouette (electric bass), Jethro Shasha (drums), Louis Mhlanga (electric guitar) and Basi Mahlasela (percussion). The album’s three SAMA nominations and continuous good sales are testimony to his amazing musicianship. His self-written/composed and arranged live recording _Window To Elsewhere_ is a must for serious collectors. In 2000 he released another self-written/arranged/produced album, _Playola_ (Sheer Sound), on which he worked with McCoy Mrubata, Ian Herman, Marcus Wyatt, Kevin Gibson, Mark Duby, Jasper Cooke, Linda Muller, Denis Lalouette and Louis Mhlanga. The album was engineered by Peter Pearlson who also co-produced it. It won the Best Producer section of SAMA 7. SAMA 8 nominated his CD _Naivasha_ in the Best Contemporary Jazz Album category pitted against Hilton Schilder’s _No Turning Back_. Paul was nominated Best Male Artist by SAMA 2006 for his CD _Accused No.1 Nelson Mandela_. Bands he played with include Wired To The Floor and Sheer All Stars, Damon Forbes’s brainchild whose album _Dance With Me_ was nominated three times by SAMA 9. Paul’s album _Water + Lights_ was nominated in MTN SAMA 11’s Best Contemporary Jazz Album.

When Lucas Mahlakgane of Sony Music raved about a new jazz band called **Four Forty** that would change the face of jazz, for some reason I expected it to be a quartet but no, it turned out to be a trio from Daveyton, Benoni in Gauteng Province’s Ekurhuleni. The jazz combo was formed by three musicians in 1989. They were Vuyisile “Vee” Sabongo (saxophone), Mvuso Dimba (piano) and Steven Mabona (bass). As a group they were inspired by one of the most powerful jazz bands from the then East Rand (now Ekurhuleni), Jazz Ministers. As an individual musician, Vuyisile was influenced by Ezra Ngcukana. He holds a Performance Jazz Diploma from Natal University’s Centre for Jazz and Popular Music where he was guided by jazz giant, Darius Brubeck. He played with established saxophonists like Morris Goldberg, Hotep Galet, Duke Makasi and Mike Mkholemele in a saxophone extravaganza dubbed “Sax Appeal” at Sun City. While Mvuso is a self-taught pianist and versatile musician who was locally influenced by Abdullah Ibrahim, Steve was inspired by his guitarist stepfather. It took them almost ten years of night club sessions before they could release their 11-track self-written and produced debut album _Messages_ (Sony Music, 2000). They guide young jazz students at Johnny Mekoa’s Music Academy Of Gauteng. The flagship of the academy is the Johnny Mekoa Big Band whose members in 2005 were Malcolm Jiyane (trombone), Nthabiseng Mokoena (alto saxophone), Mapule Tshabalala (saxophone), Xolani Dhlamini (trumpet), Tebogo Nguza (trumpet), Mthunzi Mvubu (piano), Steven Mabona (electric bass) and Walter Kotu (drums). **Johnny Mekoa** is a respected jazzman I met when I got involved in promoter Peter Tladi’s Standard Bank Jazz. Johnny was workshopping young jazz musicians as part of the show concept. His passion in the development of the music genre was very clear. After all, he’s been in the industry for many years
and played with the who’s who of jazz. Many people will remember him as part of the Jazz Ministers of the East Rand under the leadership of Metro FM Music Awards Lifetime Achiever, the late saxman Victor Ndlazilwane. Victor whose cultural roots led me to KwaMlungisi in Queenstown also led the Woody Woodpeckers. He was father to Nomvula, one of the youngest pianists in the eighties. The Jazz Ministers rose to international prominence when they took the Newport Jazz Festival by storm. They had a number of great tunes but I guess most of us will easily remember Zandile from the album of the same name in 1981. There is a community centre named after the great Vic in Daveyton, Benoni. It is this passion of “ministering” through jazz that led to Johnny Mekoa’s resignation from his day job in 1986 to prepare himself for a bigger mission. He registered for Jazz Studies at the University Of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal). It was at that point that he became a member of the Jazzanians, a university-based jazz band under the leadership of keyboardist Professor Darius Brubeck. The band membership included today’s musicians like Zim Ngqawana, Victor Masondo and the late Lulu Gontsana. They toured extensively and ultimately released the album We Have Waited Too Long (Umkhonto Records, 1988). In 1992 Johnny was awarded the US Fulbright Scholarship to study towards a masters degree in jazz music at Indiana University in the USA. With the support of his wife Margaret he was able to accomplish all these assignments that equipped him for the historic venture of his life – the Music Academy Of Gauteng. He is the founder and director of this institution that was started in 1994. I remember that it was officially launched in 2005 because Awareness Creation Marketing invited me to the glittering occasion. For all his hard work and commitment to the development of jazz, “Bra Johnny” was invited to Ornskoldsvik in Sweden on 15 May 2005 to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Swedish Jazz Federation. It will not be an exaggeration to say Johnny Mekoa’s life is jazz.

Pianist Professor **Darius Brubeck** was born into a musical family. His father, Dave Brubeck is an internationally celebrated jazz icon remembered by many for *Take Five* with the Dave Brubeck Quartet. Darius’ brothers Chris and Dan are also into the family culture. The family’s album *In Their Own Way* was released in 1997. Darius initiated jazz studies at the then University of Natal (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Durban and today he is Professor of Jazz Studies at the institution as well as director of the Centre For Jazz And Popular Music. Some of his projects as a jazz musician include *Tugela Rail* (Right Track, 1984) featuring Barney Rachabane on saxophone. Other musicians on the project included Sandile Shange (guitar), Gabriel Thobejane (percussion), Marc Duby (bass guitar) and the late Nelson Magwaza (drums). In 1988 he released *We Have Waited Too Long* with his first nationally recognised university-based jazz band, The Jazzanians. The membership of the band was Johnny Mekoa (trumpet/valve trombone), Victor Masondo (bass), Andrew Eagle (guitar),
Zim Ngqawana (alto sax/flute), Nick Paton (tenor and soprano saxes), Melvin Peters (piano/keyboards) and the late Lulu Gontsana (drums/percussion). The band was produced by Darius Brubeck and managed by Catherine Brubeck. It performed at the National Association Of Jazz Educators annual conference held in Detroit in January 1988. In 1989 the music professor formed the Afro Cool Concept with Victor Mhlei Ntoni, a band that undertook a world tour. As an expert in the genre he conducted countless workshops world-wide and performed with university-based bands. Brubeck who also performed with the London Symphony Orchestra later led his band, Gathering Forces at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban in September 2001. His other works include Chaplin’s Back, Gathering Forces 1 & 2, African Tributes, Better Than Live – Larry Coryell And The Brubeck Brothers as well as Darius Brubeck And The Nu Jazz Connection.

Some of the mature jazzmen credited for mentoring most of today’s new breed of musicians include McCoy Mrubata. Young in age, rich with experience, McCoy is considered to be one of the leading figures who helped re-shape the sound of local jazz into what is today called Safro-Jazz. McCoy was born on 1 June 1959 in KwaLanga, Cape Town. As a youngster he used to listen to some of the world’s great jazz musicians from his family record collections. He was fascinated by Louis Armstrong’s trumpet. His mother noticed the music interest in her son and bought him a flute in 1979. McCoy wasted no time and soon joined a professional band, Fever. While invited to play with Louis and The Jive, he impressed Sipho Mabuse who recruited him to play in his band in Johannesburg. Some of his contributions during his stint with Sipho included his alto sax on the track Jika Jive, which was to be released as part of the album Chant Of The Marching (1989).

When Sipho went to the US in 1987 McCoy joined PJ Powers. In 1988 he formed his own band, McCoy’s Brotherhood, a group for which Jimmy Dludlu played as a session musician in 1990. Mrubata played for Stimela as a session musician during their 1989 tour of France. His mentors included Winston Mankunku Ngozi, Ezra Ngcukana and Duke Ngcukana. McCoy’s debut album Firebird was produced by seasoned master musician, Sabata Koloi Lebona. He has featured on many albums in South Africa including collaborations. He is part of his company’s initiative, Sheer All Stars; a member of Vivid Africa with multi-instrumentalist Greg Georgiades, Mlungisi Gegana and others; Kulturation with pianist Wessel van Rensburg whose Mother’s Daughter was nominated in the Best Producer category of the Standard Bank SAMA 8. Later in his career he worked with the band McCoy And Friends. Between 1994 and 1995 the multi-talented Mrubata directed Wendybrow’s Bloke, a musical production that paid tribute to literary giant William Bloke Modisane (1924–1986). He also toured the world with the late reggae superstar Lucky Dube, who also featured him on his album Trinity (1995). Two years later he released Tears Of Joy (Sheer
Sound, 1997), a self-composed/arranged/produced album that featured Vuyisile Sabongo, Prince Lengoasa, Themba Mehlomakhulu, Jasper Cooke, Andre Abrahamse, Bheki Khoza, Paul Hanmer, Barry van Zyl and Basi Mahlasela. His collaboration with Pops Mohamed called Society Vibes released the album A New Hope. Mrubata’s second album with Sheer Sound was titled Phosa Ngasemva (1999), adding Andile Yenana to a line-up he worked with on his previous album. The next CD Hoelykit? added Gloria Bosman, Dave Reynolds, Romeu Avelino, Morabo Morojele, Mandla Zikalala, Feya Faku and Isaac Mtshali to his usual line-up. One of the tracks on the album, Bra Kadudu’s Dream, paid tribute to Mr Kadudu Ndlela, a community leader and businessman who gave McCoy and Victor Ntoni accommodation for their music rehearsals back home in the early days of their careers. Mrubata has won three SAMAs including SAMA 9’s South African Traditional Jazz Album for Face The Music, as well as MTN SAMA 11 for his CD Icamagu Livumile in the same category. The latter was pitted against Steve Dyer’s Lifecycle and Peter Nthwane’s Back To Your Roots. His album African Baroque was nominated in the Best Instrumental Album category of the SAMA in 2004. It may also be fair to credit the saxophonist/fluitist with another SAMA he won as part of a collective, Sheer All Stars. Beyond the year 2000 the reedman spent some of his time with young music students, especially from Johnny Mekoa’s Music Academy Of Gauteng in sessions dubbed “Brasskap”. That relationship gave birth to the album The Brasskap Sessions Volume 1, which won SAMA 14’s Best Traditional Jazz category. We’re hoping for more volumes that will promote “brasskap” in music. Later in his career when McCoy Mrubata was disgruntled with and embarrassed by some ill-informed media people with their questions in interviews, he recorded Compliments And Insults. A committed family man, he is married to Zola.

Peter Nthwane, the trumpeter from Mangaung (Bloemfontein), launched his career in 2001 with the release of The Beginning of The Road. It was followed by Walk On Fire. The two CDs were released under his independent label. Peter’s next two CDs, Back to Your Roots and Devil In The House were released through the Sheer Sound label.

In 1968 I was doing my Form 2 (Grade 9) at Matladi High School in Zebediela, Limpopo Province. That was where I first saw a band perform live on stage. It was called Black Gold Band from Mokopane. It never got the opportunity to record music but survived as a dance hall performance band. Some of Mokopane’s music stars of the time were Alexandra Thema, Dandy Lebese, Lasco Molepo, Kid and Chester. My schoolmate Benjamin Tsebe would spend hours giving me the profile of the band as well as the general music scene in Mahwelereng, Mokopane where he came from. His elder brother Boy was a jazz music collector and that would always keep us up to date with new trends in that music genre. Among the local jazz musicians he’d tell me about was a man called Mankunku. Back home at Matome village my family did not have a radio. I would walk to
the Tladi household, about a kilometre of bushy and rocky narrow path in the
evenings to listen to Radio Bantu programmes until late in the evening. My
cousins would accompany me home at around 22h00. Some of the memorable
tunes that still rang in my head as I knocked on the door for my mother to
open for me was a signature tune of one of the late night programmes. I knew
only later that the title of the signature tune was Yakhal’Inkomo by the man my
friend would tell me about at high school – Mankunku.

**Winston Monwabisi Mankunku Ngozi** was born on 21 June 1943 in Retreat,
Cape Town. He started playing piano at the age of ten. At the age of 12 he
bought a tenor saxophone. In the early sixties he went professional when he
joined Alf Herbert’s African Jazz Revue And Variety Show. He later met Cape
Town bassist, Midge Pike. In 1968 he released an album that would propel him
to international fame – Yakhal’Inkomo. The album was dedicated to one of his
heroes, John Coltrane who had just passed away. The evergreen title-track is
about a “bellowing bull” that mourns the loss of another. It is a very deep and
painful cry. He recorded the album with The Early Mabuza Trio: Lionel Pillay
(piano), Agrippa Magwaza (bass) and Early Mabuza (drums). In 1968 his album
*Spring* was recorded with the Chris Schilder Quintet: Philip Schilder (bass),
Gilbert Matthews (drums), Gary Kriel (guitar), Chris Schilder (piano) and Ngozi
himself on tenor saxophone. Maybe I should remind you that Chris Schilder
later changed his name to Ebrahim Khalil Shihab. Ngozi’s works include his
and *Abantwana Be Afrika* (2006), which he co-produced with Andile Yenana.
The album, which is dedicated to the late saxophonist Duke Makasi, features
Mankunku Ngozi (tenor/soprano sax), Prince Lengoasa (flugel horn), Andile
Yenana (piano), Herbie Tsoaeli (acoustic bass) and Lulu Gontsana (drums).

**Hornman Robbie Jansen** grew up in Harfield, Cape Town, where as a young
man he did “coon carnivals” that the Mother City is known for. His father was
a member of the Salvation Army. One of his childhood friends was guitarist
self-taught musician ended up composing and arranging for himself and other
musicians. The tenor saxophonist who started as a singer encouraged originality
amongst youngsters. He visited Cuba to fully understand their salsa, but only
used it to enrich his goema brand of jazz mostly influenced by the traditional
Malay sounds. In the seventies he worked with Ezra Ngcukana and Mankunku
Ngozi. He also played with the bands Pacific Express, Spirits Rejoice and Dollar
Brand. One of the many young musicians he groomed was Allou April who
later released his own albums like *Bringing Joy* and *Colourful World*. On the social
front, he started an arts centre called the Community Arts Project with Errol
Dyers and Basil Coetzee in 1977. Robbie played alto saxophone and flute for a
group called Movement In The City in 1981. He also contributed to the struggle
by performing at the political rallies of the eighties with his band. Those were
the days of Music and People’s Power. The band, Sabenza, was his brainchild with Basil “Mannenberg” Coetzee. It toured the country extensively. Other members of the band were Ezra Ngcukana and Jack Momple. By 2005 his band was Sons Of Table Mountain. The saxman’s albums include District 6 (1986), Vastrap Island (1989), The Cape Doctor (2000) and Nomad Jez (2005). God be praised for giving him a second chance after his two months in a hospital bed at Tygerberg in April/May 2005 for lung problems. At the time he was 55 years old. Interviewed by Pepsi Diphapang Pokane of Afro Café, Jansen said he was nicknamed “the bad boy of jazz” by his peers because of his “bad” (extremely good) blowing of the horn.

Robbie’s long-term musical friend, the late Basil Coetzee earned the name “Mannenberg” for his major role in Abdullah Ibrahim’s hit of the same name. Basil’s other contributions include Tshona (1975), Did You Tell Your Mother (1979), District 6 (1986), Sabenza (1987) and Jazz In Africa Vol. 2 (1992).

The Cape Jazz self-taught guitarist Errol Dyers was inspired by Abdullah Ibrahim. As indicated above, in 1977 he was part of the Community Arts Project. His debut album was Sonesta (1997). In 1990 he toured the UK with his childhood friend Robbie Jansen, and Basil Coetzee where he played with Abdullah Ibrahim. Like Robbie, his music was to a large extent influenced by goema. Errol’s other albums include Kou Kou Wa (1999) and The Best Of Errol Dyers And Friends (2003).

Mamelodi location in Tshwane has produced many musicians in various genres, but the most obvious influence was that of traditional music. Moses Mogale was born in Bolobedu, Ga-Mojadji in the province of Limpopo. He grew up surrounded by traditional music from his Rainmaker’s village to the traditional dances of hostel dwellers in Mamelodi. In Mamelodi township, Tshwane he was also inspired by two marabi music troubadours, Frans Maake and Charlie Thobejane. The guitar and penny whistle of the two drove people crazy at wedding ceremonies and Moss just wanted to be like them. At a later stage his scope was widened by the music of Philip Tabane, Ernest Motlhe and Geoff Mphakathi. Moss played with various jazz musicians including Barney Rachabane, Lefifi Tladi, Bheki Mseleku, Stompi Manana, Kippie Moeketsi, Allen Kwela, Duke Makasi as well as the band Four Sounds Plus Three. In the seventies he formed his own band, the Moss Mogale Unit. The quintet consisted of his younger brother, Jesse Mogale (guitar and double bass), Mmabana Cultural Centre product, Albert Brewin (drums), Son of Themba Mkhize, Afrika Mkhize (piano), former Zuzuma Jazzmen flutist/percussionist, Mbulero Marwanqana and the master guitarist himself, Moss.

Some men are blessed with many talents, some are just adventurous while others are hard workers. When I first heard about the achievements of Lefifi Tladi I did not know where to place him. This great son of the soil was born in Lady Selbourne, Tshwane in 1949. He became a jazz musician, poet,
painter, sculptor and philosopher. Lefifi’s contribution to the music fraternity includes the Malombo Jazz Messengers, which later became Dashiki, a band he co-founded in 1969. Together with groups like Medupe they inspired young firebrands like Vusi Mahlasela and Lesego Rampolokeng with their poetry and music performances. Due to his involvement with the Black Consciousness Movement the Ga-Rankuwa activist was targeted by the apartheid regime, arrested and eventually forced out of his land of birth into Botswana. In that country together with his peers they formed the Tuka Cultural Unit with the aim of promoting artistic expression in southern Africa and beyond. At the time of writing this book Lefifi was based in Sweden and was invited to perform during The Jazz Poets in Conversation with Biko show in South Africa. The show was staged at the Market Theatre Laboratory in Newtown, Johannesburg on 24 and 25 August 2007 coinciding with other national cultural activities like the Joy of Jazz Concert and the Moshito Conference and Exhibition.

**Madala Kunene** is without doubt one of South Africa’s ethno-music stars. He was born in Cato Manor (Umkhumbane) in 1951 and grew up in Kwa-Mashu where his parents were forced to move. You see, the place was named after Durban’s first mayor, George Cato. After clashes between blacks and Indians the authorities built four-roomed houses for blacks in Kwa-Mashu. Later other housing projects followed in Umlazi for blacks, Chartsworth and Phoenix for Indians while Wentworth was for the coloured community. It was against this background that Madala started playing guitar at a young age and performed in street corners. A soccer player who was a member of African Wanderers, he later bought a guitar in 1963 and focused on his music.

Through Sipho Gumede Kunene went to Johannesburg where among others he played in Doc Mthalane’s band, Songamasu. In the eighties he was back in Durban playing soccer with his club. His love for the sport is reflected in his compositions like *Mangobozi*. He later embarked on a solo career. I was introduced to his music while we were building a new sound for the radio station I was working for. The station’s music committee listened to his album’s tracks several times without commenting, but it was clear that we were all hooked on one tune. The hauntingly beautiful track was titled *Ubombo* from his album *Kon’Ko Man* (1996), which was produced by Pops Mohamed and Airto Moreira. Some of the musicians featured on the album included Gabriel Thobejane, Busi Mhlongo and the late Mandla Masuku. Madala was writing, singing and playing for Woza Afrika in the early nineties. In 1996 he joined the late Doc Mthalane in London and recorded Doc’s last album, *Respect*. Kunene’s other 1996 project was *King Of Zulu Guitar Live Vol. 1*. He was named “King of Zulu guitar” by his music fans in the UK. Madala’s 2002 project was titled *First Double 1 & 2* on which he worked with Baba Mokoena Serakoeng. It was nominated SAMA 9’s Best Zulu Music Album in a category also contested by Bambata for *Ukhandampondo* (poll tax). He featured on projects like *Freedom*
Countdown (1993), which was produced by Sipho Gumede. One of his most publicised works was his music score for the soundtrack of the international isiZulu language film Yesterday featuring Leleti Khumalo. The film is about the touching story of a girl child named Yesterday. Shot in rural KwaZulu-Natal, the movie was part of South Africa’s war against HIV/Aids. He was later involved in a collaboration project titled Mad Max, which was recorded in Switzerland with Max Lasser.

During the 1950s era of big band great musicians like Kippie Moeketsi, Mackay Davashe, Ntemi Piliso, Peter Rezant and Wilson Silgee believed in music literacy. They spent many hours at Dorkay House in Eloff Street reading and perfecting their skills. To them jazz music was like a religion. In their early glory days jazz fans’ voice was an organisation called the Jazz Appreciation Society Of South Africa among whose presidents was the late Ray Nkwe. Those were the days of Ntemi Piliso’s Alexandra All Star Band, the days of the African Jazz Pioneers. The marabi sound of Alexandra All Stars was later re-released in 1991 on the Teal Sound label under the logo, Township Jive! All the tracks were composed by the late Ntemi Piliso and produced by the late David Thekwane.

One of the greatest men of the era was **Kippie Moeketsi**. I first saw his name on the jazz album I bought with my first salary as a young teacher in 1975 – Tshona. I remember buying it together with Leon Haywood’s single Believe Half Of What You See (And None Of What You Hear). It was a Pat Mtshikiza album. Pianist Pat who was groomed by the late Gideon Nxumalo had come to Johannesburg from the Cape and led various combos like the Pat Matshikiza Trio. The album also featured the late Basil “Mannenberg” Coetzee and I unwittingly bought it under the impression that one of the tracks would be the hit Mannenberg. Well, I settled for the title track and Umgababa. But having said that, my interest in the man was kindled and later when I worked for the SABC I searched the whole record library for his solo albums and got none. He was a great musician who featured on many great works of or with others. Jerry Kippie Moeketsi was born in 1925 and started playing the clarinet at the age of 20 before he could change to saxophone.

The first band he played for was Band In Blue, which played in shebeens. Inspired by Charlie Parker, Kippie played with various bands from the forties including Harlem Swingsters, Mackay Davashe’s Jazz Dazzlers and the Shanty Town Sextet, a band in which he played with Dollar Brand who had substituted Todd Matshikiza in 1954. But the band that most people will always associate him with is the Jazz Epistles with Hugh Masekela, Dollar Brand, Jonas Gwangwa, Makhaya Ntshoko and Johnny Gertze. He left a lasting impression on the young Dollar Brand who’d in future be an international figure called Abdullah Ibrahim. Kippie was from the era of musicians whose musical home was the Bantu Men’s Social Centre. Those who worked with him say he used to call everybody “Morolong” and in turn the name stuck to him. Of course he was
a Morolong. This jazz maestro of the 20th century passed away in 1983 at the age of 58 after a long battle with the frustrations and depressions caused by the challenges of the industry. He was laid to rest at Croesus Cemetery. The greatest honour bestowed on him by South Africa was to name an international jazz club at Newtown Cultural Precinct after him. Glenn Ujebe Masokoane documented the life of this legend in Blues For Kippie. In the documentary various musicians who worked with him were interviewed including Snowy Radebe of The Pitch Black Follies from the 1940s.

One of Moeketsi’s peers, pianist and composer, Pat Vuyisile Matshikiza, arrived in Johannesburg in 1962 from Queenstown. He first came into prominence as member of Mackay Davashe’s Jazz Dazzlers, a band whose membership included Kippie Moeketsi (alto sax), Blythe Mbityana (trombone), Dennis Mpale (trumpet), Makhaya Ntshoko (drums) as well as singers Thandi Klaasen and Letta Mbulu. In the seventies and eighties he was mostly performing at the Amatola Sun in Bisho, former Ciskei (Eastern Cape Province). His works with producer Rashid Vally in that era include Tshona, Sikiza Matshikiza as well as Pat Matshikiza and The Americans. Pat is still very active as a performer in some of Johannesburg’s clubs and classy hotels. In 2005 at the age of 63 he shared the stage with Judith Sephuma and Khanyo Maphumulo in the East Comes Alive concert at Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg. He was promoting his recently released CD Seasons, Masks And Keys, which featured musicians like trumpeter Feya Faku.

When the big band era faded into the history pages in the sixties, some of the seasoned musicians of the days (pioneers) including Ntemi Piliso, Queeneth Ndaba and Peter Rezant of The Merry Black Birds fame felt that the “old timers” should re-group and keep the spirit alive. Legend has it that jazz singer Queeneth Ndaba was paid a visit by her late brother Zacks Nkosi in a dream. He instructed her to gather family musicians to revive jazz of the 1950s. After a two-hour Sunday meeting in June 1982 at Dorkay House, bringing together musicians who pioneered African jazz in the past, a band was born – African Jazz Pioneers (AJP). Some of the first members of the band were Wilson Silgee, Tim Ndaba, Kippie Moeketsi, Shep Ntsamai, Stompie Manana and Ntemi Piliso. After a heavy rehearsal schedule, they performed at the legendary Roman Catholic Church in Alexandra Township. When I recently paid a visit to this “heritage site” there was a lot of urban renewal activity around it. Despite their day jobs they kept to their rehearsal routine. Some of the band’s memorable tours include the 1986 tour of Botswana and the Amsterdam CASA Festival in 1987. The membership of the band changed over the years and by 2000 the most conspicuous “old timer” of the group was saxophonist Ntemi Edmund Piliso. In 1989 the 11-piece band released their album titled African Jazz Pioneers (Gallo Records), produced by Koloi Lebona and engineered by Dave Segal. The album was dedicated to the late Alexandra tenor sax legend, Isaac “Zack” Nkosi.
Their other albums include *Live At Montreux Jazz Festival* (1991), *Sip ‘n Fly* (1993) and *Shufflin’* (1995). Ntemi Edmund Piliso passed away on the 18 December 2000. Among the foreign musicians with whom AJP recorded was Jamaican jazzman Ernest Ranglin, in 2002. After the death of the pilot, the group released a 15-track album titled *76 – 3rd Avenue* (Gallo, 2005) in honour of the old meeting place of the who’s who of jazz in the 1950s. That address was like the band’s headquarters. The album featured some of the new generation’s popular singers like Thandiswa Mazwai, Phuzekhemisi and Tsepo Tshola. Also featured was the late great Dolly Rathebe who led Strike Vilakazi’s composition, *Meadowlands*. The remaining members of AJP who recorded the album were Albert Khumalo (lead guitar), Filly Tau (bass guitar), Khanya Ceza (vocals), Madoda Gxabeka (drums), Xolani Maseti (keyboards), Sello Manyaka (alto sax), Mpho Sithole (alto sax), Brahms Hlabatau (tenor sax), Levy Kgasi (trumpet) and Makhosonke Mrubata (trumpet).

When I was still a young boy my cousins would always spend their school holidays in Alexandra Township, which they referred to as “Towncheap” or simply “Makgoweng” where their uncle Phineas Matlalepoo owned a coal yard at 15 18th Avenue. When the schools re-opened they would return home and teach me some dance styles and songs from Alex. Most of the songs were Dark City Sisters hits. But the most simple to sing along and dance to was a little song called *Maotwana’ Dikgogo*. I discovered only later that the song was composed by one of the great musicians of the time, the late Isaac “Zacks” Nkosi. This legendary saxophonist had composed many other songs. His popular band was City Jazz Nine, which boasted the talent of former members of the Jazz Maniacs. He had his own way of blowing the horn to create a unique African jazz sound. *Our Kind Of Jazz* (Gallo Records, 1975) was produced by Hamilton Nzimande and is a classic example of his originality. The album was recorded with some of the great musicians of the time: Zacks Nkosi (tenor sax), Barney Rachabane (alto sax), Banza Kgasoane (trumpet), Gilbert Matthews (guitar), Given Sabela (bass), Jackie Schilder (drums) and his son, Jabu Nkosi (keyboards). On other tracks there were also: Themba Mehломakhulu (trumpet), Enoch Mthalane (guitar), Sipho Gumede (bass), Peter Morake (drums) and Jerry Mtabatsindi (mouth organ). The CD version of the album was released as part of Gallo Record Company’s African Classics series in 1991. Other albums that pay tribute to the icon include *Tribute To Zacks Nkosi* as well as his son’s salute, *Remembering Bra Zacks*.

*Going West* was the track that introduced me to the late Ratau Mike Makhalemele’s music. Alexandra-born Ratau Mike Makhalemele was inspired by the horn of his neighbour, Isaac “Zacks” Nkosi and from there he embarked on a twenty-year music career that took him to various parts of South Africa and the world playing for kings and queens. Mike’s first band was The Drive, which he co-founded with Henry Sithole in the seventies. In the band he played with
one man who’d share his dream for a long time – Duke Makasi. The two were part of that Cultural Resistance Festival in Botswana. Some of Mike’s albums are *New Dawn, Peacemaker, Requiem, Walking Spirit, Soweto Sunrise, Peaceful Eyes, Searching For The Truth* and his most popular album *Thabang* featuring the hit *Soweto Dawn*. In 1980 Mike arranged and produced Fela Kuti’s *Shakara* (off *Africa 70*) for the local market on the RPM label. Another unique project he embarked on was *Mind Games: A Jazz Celebration of John Lennon* (PVB, 1990). It featured former members of the “South African Beatles”, Rabbit, to underline the SA–UK connection: Trevor Rabin (guitars and keyboards), Ronnie Robot (bass) and Neil Cloud (drums). The album was produced by Trevor Rabin and Patrick van Blerk featuring Winston Lennon’s hits *Mother, Mind Games* and one of John’s greatest creative works, *Imagine*.

The imaginative John was full of surprises; the welcoming note at the front of his New York house read: This Is Not Here. The album cover shows a photo of the late Beatles superstar in Cape Town with a South African. Among the visiting foreign stars that Mike backed in concert were the late gentle Curtis Mayfield and bluesman Champion Jack Dupree. He also travelled abroad to work with stars like Joe Henderson and Chick Corea, but his heart was always in South Africa despite the daily frustrations. His saxophone can be heard on many of South Africa’s music albums including Tu Nokwe’s *Inyakanyaka* (Teal Records, 1996). The South African music industry finally recognised Ratau’s contribution to the musical heritage of this country by presenting him with a SAMA. His legacy is compiled on an album titled *The Best Of Ratau Mike Makhalemele*.

His daughter, Veronica went into music and even released her own solo works. During our last meeting with “Bra Mike” he told me she was abroad and doing very well. Unfortunately, just as the industry started rating him as one of the best, he passed away on 6 May 2000 at his home in Meadowlands. At the time of his death he was still busy with an album, titled *Pathways Crossing*, collaborating with some of the great musicians in the business. After its release it was dedicated to the great Ratau Mike Makhalemele! You may now be seated.

Saxophonist **Barney Rachabane** was born in Alexandra Township. His early performances were mainly with the late master drummer, Early Mabuza. He has worked with most of our great musicians like Abdullah Ibrahim and Hugh Masekela. Some of the major projects he was involved in include Hugh Masekela’s recordings in Botswana, the historic Cultural Resistance Festival, Caiphus Semenya’s musical *Buwa*, the *Info Song* as well as Paul Simon’s Born At The Right Time tour. He worked bands like Afrozania and Afro Cool Concept. Barney also did collaborations with Bruce Cassidy including the album *Conversations*. Some of the albums credited to him are *Blow Barney Blow* (1985), *Barney’s Way* (1989), *Afro Cool Concept In New Orleans* (1990), *Roots* and *Special Mama*. Rachabane is so much in demand as a jazz musician that any major
project is unthinkable without him. An example of that was his hand in Victor Ntoni’s *Mzansi Sings a Tribute to OR Tambo*.

Tenor saxophonist **ROGER KLIZANIE XESU** put together a group of musicians to record a blend of music that compliments the Elite Swingsters and African Jazz Pioneers in maintaining the marabi sound. The project Safika released the 1995 album featuring Benny Khafela and Thami Madi (alto sax), Roger Klizanie Xesu (tenor sax), Christian Boyana and Reginald Tempi (trumpet), Samuel Mbatsha (trombone), Mac Mathunjwa (keyboard), Victor Masondo (bass), John Dlamini (guitar), Innocent Mathunjwa (drums) and John Hassan (percussion). All the tracks were original material.

In the late seventies two Alexandra musicians, bassist Glen Mafoko and pianist Livy Phahle formed *AFROZANIA*. They were joined by lead guitarist Eckie Eckhart and drummer Tony Mothibi. The band had one of the most flexible arrangements which allowed members to feature on recordings and concerts of other musicians for their expertise and return to the band once the mission was accomplished. One musician they backed regularly was Barney Rachabane who first worked with them in 1978. By the mid-eighties the line-up was Glen Mafoko (bass guitar), Eckie Eckhart (sax/lead guitar), Denzil Weale (piano), Vusi Thusi (guitar) and freelance drummer, the late Lulu Gontsana. The music of the band was written by Vusi, Glen and Denzil who was also the arranger. Though the band’s priority was live performances, their recorded work include *Requiem for Alexandra* (1979). By the way, Glen’s bass guitar wizardry saw him gather friends to release the CD *Amahlubi* (2004).

Humble and quiet **LULAMA “LULU” GONTSANA**, whose favourite drummers included Art Blakey, died at the age of 45 after a long illness and buried in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth on Wednesday, 21 December 2005. At a young age he had been influenced by local drummer Peter Jackson. Lulu whose grandfather was a church organist and father a trombonist for Banacal Beans started playing drums at the age of 12. After cutting his teeth playing with the local Soul Jazzmen, he left Port Elizabeth for South African musicians’ El Dorado, Johannesburg at the age of 21 where he was invited to play with Spirit Rejoice. Some of the jazz musicians he played with include Mankunku Ngozi, Abdullah Ibrahim, Jonas Gwangwa, Ezra Ngcukana, Mike Makhalemele, Duke Makasi and Zim Ngqawanana. It was through the Ronnie Madsenela Scholarship that he enrolled at the University Of Natal for the Jazz Studies Programme in 1983. In 1989 the hot drummer joined Afro-Cool Concept, a quartet that consisted of Darius Brubeck (piano), Barney Rachabane (saxophone) and Victor Ntoni (bass guitar). He toured countries like England, Italy, Madagascar, Korea, Greece as well as Thailand where he performed at the Thailand International Jazz Festival with the quartet.

In 2005 the Grahamstown National Arts Festival hosted “Beyond Limitations” (6–8 July), a show that celebrated the courage of jazz and traditional music star,
the late **Stompie Mavi**. Born Zakhele Mzingisi Patrick Mavi in rural Ngqamakhwe near Queenstown on 21 April 1955, he started performing at the age of seven. He cut his teeth with the Modern Jazz Sextet at the age of sixteen. In the late 1970s after a tour with reggae star Jimmy Cliff he released his debut album titled *Manyano* (Oneness). After a near-fatal stabbing attack in 1987, the star was left paralysed from the waist down. Though he became wheelchair-bound, he rose against the odds and performed for his many fans standing on crutches. He also continued to use his God-given talent by getting involved in various fund-raising events. Stompie’s other albums include *Tribute to Chris Hani*, *Phansi Intonga*, *Mbongo*, *Ithongo* and *Mama Africa*. In October 2007 the media reported that he was to retire from performances due to his deteriorating state of health. Mavi, who was first admitted to Port Elizabeth’s Livingstone Hospital with double pneumonia on 29 November 2007, passed away on Thursday, 17 January 2008 aged 52. He was buried in KwaZakhele, Port Elizabeth on Saturday, 26 January 2008. Mavi will be remembered for his classics like *Unomnganga*, *Nozamile* and *Umendo*.

When I recently walked into our local record bar I was pleasantly surprised to see on the shelf a new CD of an artist I admired but never got the chance to talk to, so near yet so far away – **Allen Kwela**. My uncle Jimmy used to tell me back in the early seventies that there were two guitarists who played the instrument as if it was an extension of self – Allen Kwela and Philip Tabane. He went on to say that each of them was something of an enigma as they never compromised their creativity and this did not make it any easier for record companies to deal with them. The CD on the shelf read *The Best Of Allen Kwela*. When I read the credit list I couldn’t help but nod my head as I saw the names of Barney Rachabane, Darius Brubeck, Pat Matshikiza, Sibongile Khumalo, Denzil Weale, Glen Mafoko, Bongani Sokhela, Vusi Khumalo and Lulu Gontsana. It reflected the respect and admiration of the man by his fellow musicians, peers and the industry as a whole. Though commercial appreciation is expressed in rands and cents, respect for one’s artistic expression is mostly reflected in the way one’s product is regarded by one’s peers.

Allen Kwela was born in Chesterville, Durban on 11 September 1939. After a traditional up-bringing of herding cattle and teaching himself to play a self-made tin-guitar, like most of his peers he moved to Johannesburg for better opportunities in the 1950s. He teamed up with the late Spokes Mashiane to perform kwela music at different venues. He composed most of their songs, but they parted ways when Spokes became big in kwela and Allen branched into jazz. He is the musician who recognised the talent of The Angels in their early days and featured them in his 1984 solo recording, *The Unknown*. His CD *The Broken Strings Of Allen Kwela* was nominated in the Best Contemporary Jazz Performance category of FNB SAMA 5. Sadly, this giant passed away in 2003 at the age of 64. I hope to see some of our bright young film makers take the plunge...
and research the life of the genius for the world and the next generations to see. Could any of our multi-millionaires buy his guitar for a cool million rand? If that is how a nation’s appreciation for its heritage is expressed, the Americans are leading. Remember what happened to Jimi Hendrix’s guitar?

When Sello Galane told me that one of Philip Tabane’s admirers had given him a snow white cow as a gift, this again confirmed what my mentor once told me. Philip Tabane has a personal touch on his admirers. Philip Nchipi Tabane was born in Tshwane where he started playing music at the age of 12 in 1950. His mother taught him the drumming styles of the Bapedi at a very young age. His kind of music is “malombo” because its source of inspiration is the spirits of the ancestors known as malombo in tshiVenda. His group, Malombo Jazzmakers rose to prominence in 1962 when they won the Castle Lager Jazz Competition in Soweto. Other founder members of the group were Julian Bahula (malombo drums) and Abbey Cindi (flute). However, the Mamelodi combo changed its line-up over the years. Later when Julian Bahula formed his own Malopo Jazzmakers, he was joined by Lucky Ranku in 1965. After Bahula had left the country for London, Lucky followed him in the mid-1970s. Abbey moved to Durban where he worked with various groups. One of his solo projects was January To December/Teach The Children, which was produced by Mac Mathunjwa and released on RPM’s Right Track label in 1986.

Though Tabane received many attractive offers to play with international bands and stay in foreign countries, he turned them down one by one. The longest he left South Africa was the five years he spent in America working with the likes of Miles Davis in the 1970s. During that time he also played with stars like Herbie Hancock, Herbie Mann, Charles Mingus and the Pointer Sisters. I attended a number of his spectacular shows and I can tell you, it’s magic! The man can play a number of flutes simultaneously while humming. The inventor of the guitar would be shocked to see how Phil wants it played. Once in a trance on stage he uses any part of his body to play it including his feet, teeth, fingers and elbows and accompanies it with groans and screams of someone in great pain with a contorted face. His other international performances include the African Arts Festival in Hamburg, Germany. Some of the South African groups at the event were Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Black Usuthu. The latter consisted of self-exiled musicians Duze Mahlobo and Dumisane Mabaso, complimented by Segwagwa Thobejane and Khaya Mahlangu of Sakhile fame.

In 1976 Malombo released Pele Pele (Tusk Music) co-produced by Tabane and Peter Davidson with engineer Nino Rivera. At that point it was a two-man band with multi-instrumentalist Philip playing guitar, bass, flute, penny whistle and singing with his nephew Gabriel Segwagwa Thobejane on African percussion. In 1978 when they released Sangoma (Atlantic), the band members were Philip Tabane (guitar/vocals), Franz Monareng (drums), Raphudu Phale
(drums), Alpheus Koloti (flute) and Amos Lebombo (bass). All the music was written by Nchipi, produced by Lofty Schultz and engineered by P. Cerronio. It featured one of his all-time greats – *Ke A Bereka*. In 1984 when Hendrick Sabata Lebona launched his record label Kaya, Malombo was amongst the first groups to sign up. They released a self-titled album featuring musicians like Motshile wa Nthodi on the kudu horn and Tabane’s late wife, Thuli. My personal favourite on the album is *Ke Kgale*. The album was co-produced by Philip and Sabata and engineered by Philip Audoire. In 1986 Malombo were part of the Montreux Jazz Festival. Poet and playwright Duma ka Ndlovu produced the 1996 album, *Ke A Bereka* (Tusk Music) with Philip backed by Oupa Monareng (malombo drums) and Raymond Motau (percussion). Some of the members of the band in the mid-eighties included Zimbabwean Thami Mahlambi. By 1998 the combo had released a total of seven albums including *Muvhango*. Some of the recognitions Philip Tabane received include the SABC’s Song Contest Award, Woza Afrika Music Award and SAMA’s Single Of The Year Award for *Ke A Bereka*. The most prestigious honour he received was from the University Of Venda when it conferred a doctorate on him in September 1998. Yes, Doctor Of Music – Dr Philip Nchipi Tabane! You may now sit down.

Let me pay tribute to the culture vulture that knows no boundaries – **DUMA KA NDLOVU**. Duma was born on 12 October 1954 in Orlando West. This is where he fell in love with films at a young age. His oratory was sharpened as he related the films to his peers. His father was a maskandi musician. The young Duma’s eloquence saw him occupy the position of Chairman of Debate and Culture Society at school. When he joined World as a reporter it was already clear that he would lead from the front. Together with Mothobi Motloatse, Ingoapele Malingoane and Molefe Phetoe they started a writers’ organisation known as Medupe in 1975. Through it they spread the poetry gospel within South Africa as well as in neighbouring countries like Lesotho. On his return from one of his missions to Lesotho he was shocked to find his newspapers World and Weekend World banned. In 1976 he was detained for political activism. He later left for Lesotho where he was already an established poet. While working with the likes of Zakes Mda to promote poetry, he received a scholarship to study in the US. After six months in the southern part of “the belly of the beast”, he moved to New York. Before long the Hunter College graduate was a major force in the US theatrical movement. Among the highlights of his career was taking Mbongeni Ngema’s Sarafina to the US. Based in Harlem, he took care of the musical’s public relations affairs. He also produced Asinamali on Broadway. After the unbanning of liberation movements by FW de Klerk he returned to his motherland through Lesotho in 1992. Back home he was inspired by a Radio Venda talk show in which callers talked about a fight for a corpse. A story of a Zulu woman who refused with a corpse of a Venda man gave birth to his “radio story made for television”, *Muvhango*, in 1996. He wrote plays like *The
Journey as well as Bergville Stories inspired by his days of yore in that part of KwaZulu-Natal, which won the 3rd annual FNB SAAMA’s Best Original Score For A South African Composed Soundtrack Or Musical. He’s been SAAMA’s chairman for ten years. He is Disney World’s South African casting director. This prolific prophet is a family man whose projects at the time of writing this book included the book When the sun is beautiful people and How Long?, based on the life of Mtutuzeli Gibson Kente for whom he also launched a foundation. As if that was not enough, he has also worked on a tribute to Brenda Fassie to be titled Memeza: The Brenda Fassie Musical.

As a young deejay, watching master musicians like Mory Kante and Andreas Vollenweider at work always left me with an impression that they were playing foreign instruments that had no place in our South African market. It was even worse when I was exposed to Jean Michel Jarre’s Images. I hardly knew that someday Jean would work with Mduduzi Masilela, Mory Kante would grace our Kora Awards stages and our very own Pops Mohamed Ismail would tour with Andreas Vollenweider’s band. Ishmael “Pops” Mohamed was brought up in Benoni, East Rand (Ekurhuleni). Inspired by the likes of Kippie Moeketsi and Abdullah Ibrahim, at the age of 14 he already had his own band, The Valiants. The next band, Children’s Society, released his first hit, I’m A Married Man. Pops collaborated with musicians like Movement In The City whose album was Black Teardrops (Gallo, 1981) featuring musicians like Robbie Jansen, Basil Coetzee and Sipho Gumede. Others were Black Disco, Inner City Funk and BM Movement. Besides keyboards and guitar, the widely travelled indigenous instruments specialist also plays the kora, mbira, didgeridoo, birimbau as well as the African mouth bow. As a producer his outstanding project will always be Moses Molelekwa’s award winning album, Finding One’s Self. His collaboration with Sipho Gumede under the name Kalamazoo was nominated Best Traditional Jazz Album for Kalamazoo 3 in the SAMAs. His albums include Kalamazoo 1, 2, 3 and 4 (New Crossings), Yesterday, Today And Tomorrow (SAMAs 9 nominee) as well as Ancestral Healing, a SAMA 3 nomination in Best Jazz Performance: Traditional Jazz, a category also contested by Dr Philip Tabane’s album Ke A Bereka. That was a battle of the titans of traditional instruments. His collaboration with Bruce Cassidy, Timeless (1997), won SAMAs 4’s Best Instrumental Performance.

One day in the eighties my uncle Jimmy came home so sad and very quiet. Having lived with him for a long time, I knew that usually when he sank into that mood there’d be very sad news from the music industry. Just before bed he said to me “Marks, I’m so shocked”. He never called me Max. He then asked me: “Do you know Ronnie Madonsela?” I replied that I had only read about him in the newspapers, whereupon he said “He is no more!” From that discussion I made it my duty to update myself on the musician whose death had left my uncle dumbfounded. Ronnie Madonsela was described as a “true blue” jazz and blues singer in media reports. He was compared to the late Ben Satch Masinga.
Ronnie whose 20-year career as an entertainer took him to Britain, Scandinavian countries, Sweden and the United States. As a cabaret singer he was a member of the “Cape Coons”. In the sixties and seventies the Umlazi star shared the stage with the likes of Durban singer Vivian Kinsley in Fred Langford’s Golden City Dixies. His friend and fellow jazz singer was Donald Tshomela who paid tribute to him by saying “Ronnie was an artist to his fingertips”. The tragic death of the jazz and blues king at the age of 52 left the music industry poorer. Ronnie who was laid to rest in Durban was survived by his wife Sylvia and five children. For many moons to come whenever his fans heard his favourite song, *Birth Of The Blues*. In 1986 Malombo were part of the Montreaux Jazz Festival. They would remember the adorable singer.

**Amampondo** is a Langa township traditional music group of international fame, started in 1979 by seven members led by Dizu Plaatjies. In 1983 they recorded their debut album, *Uyandibiza*. One of their memorable performances was on 16 December 1984 at the Mamelodi stadium when they set the stage on fire with their indigenous sounds. The crowd just fell in love with their sound and regalia. In June 1986 they appeared before the nation in the television series *Izandi Zasekhaya*. After the demise of Sakhile 1, Segwagwa Gabriel Thobejane collaborated with the band. At the time of writing this book the band membership was Dizu Plaatjies (leader), Mzwandile, Simphiwe, Michael, Mandla, Zandisile, Lungiswa, Nondzondelelo, Nonhle, Mantombi and Madosini. They featured on Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s celebration album – *Give Praise Where Praise Is Deserved* (1985). Their international stardom was further enhanced by their performance at Dr Nelson Mandela’s 70th Birthday Celebration in London. In 1994 they joined Robert Trunz’s MELT 2000 and recorded *Drums For Tomorrow* as well as *An Image Of Africa*. After South Africa had been re-admitted into all activities of the world community, the group performed at the opening ceremony of the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. The leader of this band, Dizu is also a tutor at UCT’s College of Music and has released his own solo works like the 2003 CD, *Ibuyambo*.

Soweto group, **Afrida Marimba Band**, plays a marimba style that draws inspiration from various township genres like kwela, mbaqanga and African Jazz. Fronted by Mpumi Nhlapi, they rose to prominence when they won the Old Mutual Jazz Encounters Award, an award also won by young vocalist, Lindiwe Maxolo. In 2001 they won SAMA 8’s Best Instrumental Album for *Buyela Ekhaya*. The respect they command saw them perform at the late ANC stalwart, Walter Sisulu’s 88th birthday party.

**Mpumi Dhlamini** is a wonder child who took the local music scene by storm towards the end of 2007. The 21-year-old vocalist from the Drakensberg Boys Choir began writing songs and playing musical instruments at the National School of the Arts. Having learnt a lot from Andile Yenana and inspired by the works of Moses Molelekwa, his debut CD was titled *Combined Elements*. The
multi-instrumentalist dedicated the track *Yenana* to his mentor and *A Journey With Taiwa* to his inspiration. Like his mother, who is a member of the Mahotella Queens, Mpumi will surely travel the world and entertain queens and kings!