

INTRODUCTION TO BOOK SERIES

ALL JAZZ RADIO INTERNET RADIO

Since the beginning of All Jazz Radio Internet Radio (AJR) in 2012, AJR's owner, Eric Alan Wannenburg has wanted to expose worthy emerging music within the 'jazz' genre. His vision for All Jazz Radio was to be *South Africa, Africa and the World's pre-eminent Internet Jazz Social Lifestyle Radio Station and an essential broadcaster of good jazz music in all its various forms with South African Jazz, Blues, Latin and World Jazz being an integral part of the broadcast mix, enriching the social, cultural, educational and community experience of the listening audience.* This meant broadcasting via Internet for 24 hours daily, 7 days a week. When presenting on several terrestrial radio stations for decades previously, Alan had struggled through the one or two hour a day time slots he was given. This was not enough time allocation, he felt, for the wealth of albums available. There needed to be more exposure. Simple.

I jumped on board to write in the Blog section on the All Jazz Radio website while Alan handled volumes of audio files and albums sent to him by music promoters who specialize in what became known on AJR broadcasts as "South African and African Jazz, Blues, Latin and World Jazz." Several presenters from South Africa, Germany, Britain, and the USA held program slots weekly along with local presenters. When I could, I posted my articles about every 3 weeks plus, or as the music lifted my keen spirits. As a past Board member of SAJE, I saw Audience Development as well as Artist Promotion as key to enhancing the AJR's digital community. Writing stories was one way. Two websites - alljazzradio.co.za and jazzconnection.co.za - were set up for this. Sadly, AJR as a radio station had to shut down after founder Eric Alan passed away in 2022. Subsequently, Jazz Connection, set up to cover the Muizenberg Jazz Festivals in 2017-2019, also shut down in 2024.

Stories from Songsters

Over this 12 year period (2012 – 2024), I posted some 200 articles about musicians, their lives, music, albums, their interviews with me, their woes during Covid, the festivals and conferences which we both attended, and jazz education issues faced by all. My mandate was to employ a free and jolly attitude and coverage, with an eagerness to support local musicians whose voices were not being heard adequately, particularly the women musicians, or who were producing worthy and internationally recognized music of a South African nature. I enjoy writing – not the critiquing, or judging, or investigatory style of journaling artists' lives and products – but with a simple compassion and interest to promote their voices and intentions in their music. That's my goal.

Over the past decade, as younger musicians enter the live performance scene, many of those trained have chosen to enter educational institutions for gainful employment. Others have chosen a primary job skill in other industries, but enjoy contributing their musicianship on the side. Many in this book series have settled into the creative trenches of composition and performance as their *métier*, with all the punches, struggles, and joys that come with that chosen profession.

A major focus of the collection talks about those South African and Pan-African/World influences that represent how jazz is 'breaking out' into streams and tentacles that grasp contemporary moods and styles from various sources. Many artists are more and more

projecting their voices on political worries faced both at home and globally, and seek collaborations that strengthen their voices. The importance of music education and sharing skills through conferences, workshops, and festivals reigns loud and clear amongst the intergenerational mindsets of musicians.

A NOTE ABOUT WOMEN ARTISTS

While at first I thought I would dedicate a theme just to women artists, I felt this 'isolation' did not reflect how their contributions were growing in all themes along with their male counterparts. Some women chose to lead their own bands, while others became session performers with various bands. And many have added their much needed skills to the music teaching pool in high schools and tertiary institutions. All were growth opportunities for both the women and men artists.

A number of young, world-travelled and trained South African women musicians have emerged from the early 2000s, tuning our ears with exploratory sounds and beats that excite what "South African jazz" is becoming. Thanks to current recording technologies and available studios, the viral Covid-19 Lockdown fortunately could enable some artists, having no paying audiences or live concerts, to convert their unemployment blues into albums. From the interviews and exposures with women artists highlighted in this Book series, their messages present themes prevalent in their music industry: of sexist portrayal, male hierarchical attitudes, and even gender-based violence issues. Some artists cut ambitious debut albums which were bluesy and sonically innovative. The interviews and discussions presented seek rather to highlight the musicians' journeys in improvisational jazz expression that represents the various 'moods and styles' they personally encounter and put forward.

One hears them use linguistic dynamics that carry political sentiments about how settler colonialism marginalized the less resourced peoples in South Africa and elsewhere. Those artists coming from overseas often joined in Jazz Festivals and performed alongside South Africans with similar messages calling for personal and political freedoms. Performing songs in home languages gave tributes to the importance of 'home' and cultural legacies, remembering those 'struggle' years of Apartheid and post-Apartheid years. These women also took pride in supporting traditional and indigenous artistic expressions and their various musical instruments. I feel extremely privileged to have been part of hearing and understanding some of the exploits these women have shared.