

## Articles - The Politics of Living

### Every Month is for Women Jazz Musicians: the South African case (17 August 2020)

Presented are:

Thandi Ntuli  
Siya Makuzeni  
Amanda Tiffin  
Francesca Bioncoli

A number of young, world-traveled, South African women musicians have been emerging and tuning our ears to a decade of exploratory sounds and beats that excite what 'South African jazz' is becoming. Thanks to current recording technologies and available studios, the 2020 Covid-19 Lockdown has been able to fortunately convert some of those unemployment blues faced by artists without paying audiences into albums, some debut, and some not so bluesy but innovative. Women artists continue to be faced, also, with recurring themes in their industry of sexist portrayal, male hierarchical displays, and even gender-based violence issues. Let's see what some leading South African women jazz artists are doing or saying.

#### **Thandi Ntuli**

After her successful *Exile* album (2018), and debut album in 2014, *The Offering*, (see <http://www.alljazzradio.co.za/2015/02/26/cd-review-by-carol-martin/>) pianist **Thandi Ntuli** has followed up with *Live at Jazzwerkstatt* recorded and produced in Switzerland and released in March 2020. During her residency with jazz artists in Switzerland, Ntuli was able to gain more intercultural experience by navigating her new Swiss colleagues' sounds, particularly with a string quartet that she had barely played with while in Switzerland. This album is a bit of a surprise, combining different genres of Spoken Word, Electronic and World Music along with pointed lyrics. Her story talks about Exile, Black Love and its disappointments, but also a New Way, and Rainbows. Her bold exploration of orchestral arrangements augers well for what South Africans can envision and execute on popular stages. Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pquueFbolyc>

Here, she is discovering and applying a classical feel with strings, horns, and woodwinds performed by her European colleagues. But South African bassist, Shane Cooper, revs up the spirit with his bass slaps and beats, adding Afro-rhythms for the eager clapping hands of the young audience at that recording. Reworking songs from her *Exile* album, this compendium of orchestral jive does convince that Ntuli has been well on her way to compositional heights and meaningful collaborations.

#### **Siya Makuzeni**

Standard Bank Young Artist for Jazz 2016, singer and trombonist, **Siya Makuzeni**, pulls on board a seasoned sextet in her 2016 released *Out of This World* album which includes the Bank's 2017 winner for Jazz, Thandi Ntuli, on piano and keyboard. Besides playing trombone, Makuzeni also uses her vocal lyrics pedal to loop, sing and scat, portraying often wild, emoting sounds from her six compositions. A seventh song is **Bheki Mseleku's** 'Through the Years', arranged by another Standard Bank winner, **Afrika Mkhize**. Makuzeni has been known for her vocal acrobatics ranging from howls and high pitched whines to mellow, lower

register yowls which fuse her Xhosa sounds with some basic other roots of bebop and improvisational contemporary jazz.

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guUhdVFRUKE> And her journeys.....  
<http://www.alljazzradio.co.za/2016/07/05/ancestral-routes-in-jazz-a-journey-with-siya-makuzeni-standard-bank-young-artist-2016-for-jazz/>

### **Amanda Tiffin**

Singer, pianist, educator Amanda Tiffin's ***Facing South*** album haunts with lyrical, thoughtful ballads meant to storytell and warm the ear with soft Latin and South African rhythms and tones. Songs are collaborative: Brazilian Guilherme Ribeiro on piano, accordion, vocal/body percussion and Dutch double bassist, Hein Van De Heyn, now homed in Cape Town, contribute their specific wizardries to guitarist David Leadbetter and Tiffin's mix of lyrics and harmonies. Opening with 'Peregrino', a Latin clap percussion with guitar/piano harmonies sets the stage for this delightful mix of the musicians' own compositions. A synchronicity between Tiffin's vocals and Ribeiro's accordion in 'Akkerman' and 'Hermato' proves how expert these musicians can join their sounds at the right pitch and with believable emotions. The Tiffin/Leadbetter collaborations span over decades in Cape Town as one can hear in "Waiting for Stillness" and 'Desert Road'.

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jf7luiuE6M> And the delightful Portuguese lyrics with piano and guitar in 'Pes na Areia' (footprints in the sand) solidified with a subtle samba spark. This is a perfect album for any Lockdown – or liberation of spirit!



### **Francesca Bioncoli**

Italian-born singer Francesca Bioncoli who has made Cape Town her home, presents her debut album, ***Ikigai***, which rings out mellow and lyrical expressions in her love-lorn messages. "Everything changes and evolves, I am the ocean that crashes on the rock" in 'Hunter'; Bioncoli's voice over in most songs offers vocal conversations: "when the wind is blowing, it is hard to breathe" in 'Wind'. This album is listenable, casting a pop-ish sound, but with little change of rhythm. .... Listen on Spotify.

**Thanks, AJR, for saluting our women musicians!** (9 August 2016)

All Jazz Radio Internet Radio owner, Eric Allan, salutes our women musicians in this August of 2016)

Salute to all you South African women musicians out there – inside and outside South Africa – as AJR celebrates your Women’s Day today!! I have been listening to wonderful artists in the ‘jazz’ genre (since that’s my narrow niche) and applaud AJR Eric Alan for broadcasting women artists all day today! What other radio station in RSA is doing this, I wonder?

I’d like to also salute a few artists in particular. But there are so many; please forgive me if I left out other notables. Andreas Loven’s latest album, ***District Six***, contains double bassist **Romy Brauteseth**’s exceptional bass scats – her vocals as she plucks away. She is going far, performing with all sorts of domestic and international artists, and is far away as we speak – in Europe on tour.

I think of those Sisters in Sound (SIS) mentors of yesteryear who contributed their skills to the up-and-coming, one mentee being **Spha Mdlalose** who is growing her art. **Lisa Bauer**, drummer, vocalist, mentor, and teacher released in February 2015 her single, ***A Life That’s Lead***, which provides magic in her art, as does her earlier album, ***Finding a New Way***. Other SISs remembered are saxophonist and educator **Ronel Nagfaal** whose pianist daughter, **Nobuhle Mazinyane**, recently joined the National Schools Band 2016 during the Grahamstown National Arts Festival. **Monique Hellenberg**, pianist and vocalist, graciously gave her time and energy to the SIS program, also.

So many other fabulous women artists: musical families of the **Willie sisters** – bassist **Chantal** and singer **Denay**. The Standard Bank 2016 Young Artist for Jazz, **Siya Makuzeni**, trombonist and vocalist, featured nobly with her own compositions and arrangements at the NAF. Other young artists making their mark are singer **Zoe Modiga**, trombonist **Siya Charles**, and pianist **Thandi Ntuli** whose debut album ***Offering*** offers some interesting South African beats and twists.

Not to forget those South African women established elsewhere in the world. Norway-based saxophonist **Shannon Mowday** is cutting an album with brother Hylton and Dad Bob; London-based pianist/singer **Estelle Kokot** continues to ripen – listen to her ***The Sound of You*** album. Her solo tour in South Africa called, “The Jazz Feminine in Africa” kicks off in Johannesburg on 12 August and in Capetown on 17 August. Asia-based songstress **Brigitte Mitchell**, who has played with the greats, offers delectable sounds in her latest album, ***Let’s Call It Love***, released in Japan in March 2016.

There are so many others. Thanks again to All Jazz Radio based in Capetown for broadcasting such a generous tribute to many South African women jazz artists!!

## **Shannon Mowday fights stereotypes and sexist definitions** (July 2020)

Norway-based South African saxophonist, **Shannon Mowday**, gives an honest expose of what a female musician faces in the industry. Watch this 14 minute video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsU2YUQeotc>, courtesy of the Cape Town Music Academy (CTMA)( [www.ctma.co.za](http://www.ctma.co.za)). Capetonian Mowday specialises in saxophones and woodwinds as well as being a composer, director, educator and a mom. In her 4th of 5 very personal and insightful videos produced by CTMA, she talks about some frustrations and stumbling blocks she has experienced being a woman in the world of jazz when all she wanted to do was to play music. As Mowday was researching album covers of lead female saxophonists and musicians, she discovered the fantasy-orientated, sexist, and pictorial vulgarities of women posing (sometimes in compromising positions) with their respective instruments.

So she took to Facebook (June 18, 2020):

*"I'm working on my album cover and just for fun searched some images of 'saxophone covers' from yester-year. WOW!!!!!! ....and one 'wonders' why there are so many connotations of female saxophone players or how many 'battles' we have to fight before we have played a note .... Really???* Whilst the 'giants' of jazz were doing their thing and being all creative and such and setting the 'blueprint' for jazz, this was the 'image' created for a woman with a saxophone....Yeah!! let's have that 'Me Too' discussion again!!!!

<https://flashbak.com/sax-appeal-48-sexy-saxophone-album-covers-385460/?fbclid=IwAR2rgRP9qL8UDqKNGM7TpyH4jpv85SpRfaH5hLudlfWncnvkTuOXxQA-leY> is a really special site with so many more of all these horrors."

Mowday refers to another CTMA video with pianist and UCT Lecturer, Amanda Tiffin, talking about "Gender Dynamics in the Music Industry" on CTMA Moments with Masters One wonders how many women artists have remained silent, unlike Mowday, as they confront similar embarrassments and stereotypical annoyances when all they want to do is perform!

To the glee of Mowday, McCoy Mrubata presents her 'Women in Africa' as Track 8, written as a tribute to the brutal death of Mrubata's daughter in 2006. Mowday says on her Facebook page:

*"When experiences like this come into your 'inner circle', you are reminded of the harsh reality of SA having one of the highest rates of abuse against women and children. A fear that ultimately saw me leave my country. A song in her dedication flowed out of me- whilst upbeat and seemingly 'positive' – honouring women for the gift of life and nurturing mankind, overcoming all obstacles thrown at them with positivity; it also asks in return, how is it then that they are treated so unkindly, alluding to rape and murder."*



For more info on Shannon Mowday: <https://shannonmowday.musicaneo.com/> and follow her on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/shannon.mowday.1>

Mowday features in further discussions about 'patriarchy' in the cultural worlds and is highlighted in this Mail & Guardian article, **Patriarchy takes centre stage in the world of jazz** By Aarti Bhana, 11 August 2024.  
<https://mg.co.za/friday/2024-08-11-patriarchy-takes-centre-stage-in-the-world-of-jazz/>

**BLACK EARTH, BLACK IDENTITIES, AND AFROFUTURISM ring messages at CTIJF 2019:  
Flautist Nicole Mitchell and the Black Earth Ensemble.** (3 April 2019)

There are particularly moving and important themes in this year's Cape Town International Jazz Festival (CTIJF 2019) offerings which attracted this writer immediately after assessing the artist lineup. Telling, indeed, about our increasingly destabilising contemporary world and how music is becoming reactive. Various artists from Black identities brought ancestral histories and current struggles for equality and justice to the fore, not just in their sound – we're talking music, right? – but in their message.

Giving voice to the unheard profoundly resonated a truth, but with a sense of love and inclusiveness. ....cause we're all in this together..... Particular focus, I found, was on the Black female, the feminine in nature and spirit, the Earth as being the root of soul that Mothers all, and on her-stories about chained freedoms. African American flautist Nicole Mitchell's Black Earth Ensemble breathed message and emotion into her flute as her two female percussionists led the rhythms which detailed African rootedness, torture of separation from a motherland, and resolve in making the new land listen and take note of beautiful identities which honour spirit, tradition, and caring for all humanity to better sustain Mother Earth.



photo credit: Lauren Deutch

Collectively, Mitchell's purpose with poet/pastor/singer husband Calvin Gantt was to convey messages of peace, hope, and courage to the downtrodden, or what she refers to as "*Afrofuturist fantasies*" wedded with social activism.

During her press conference, Mitchell giggled about how her teenage journaling was influenced by African American futurist and science fiction author, Octavia Butler, whose works had also attracted Mitchell's mother to paint about futuristic fantasies, like black mothers with their babies sitting on Saturn. Butler's stories inspired three of Mitchell's music

projects, one dealing with a black woman on a space ship who wakes up, and then must deal with extra-terrestrials she encounters. *“So my music reflects all aspects of life – the horrors, struggles, joys, etc. – and is not always at ease with sound,”* Mitchell admits.

Another off-putting moment for her band was their performance a day after the USA elections of 2016 and how the band had to stay focused after the shock announcement that D. Trump had won the Presidential election. Their audience was seeking refuge and the band felt it must not become overwhelmed by the heartbreak and distain of their fellow Black and white communities brought about by this result. As Mitchell explained, *“I feel instrumental music isn’t enough for me; I feel I have to make lyrics about what’s going on in our humanity in order to provide some hope.”*

Regarding the question of the worthiness of music technologies and how it affects creativity, her points again addressed social justice issues. *“We focus too much on technology which is geared to making money. Rather, we should focus more on our humanity and the way we treat each other, recognize our human suicide, and support communities with ecological sensitivities.”* This resonates with why she chose the flute: *“As a child, I related to birds, bugs, and nature. The flute embodied this nature. My voice is the same range as the instrument, so using my voice is a way of leaving evidence that a woman was here, in music that doesn’t always celebrate women as it should.”*

Continuing with her take on tech: *“I try to embody or model in my music how we can bond together better, with different musical languages co-existing together. The Western way of doing things is coming to an end. Very few people benefit while many suffer. In this regard, I have explored electronics and am working on a CD as my first electronics venture.”*

Likewise, jazz education at university level can be a bit exclusionary: *“I think if you have a conservatory method, then you are automatically closing access to a lot of great talent which can offer other skills. You have to bring in the jazz musicians as teachers, and not just those who have academic credentials. I have seen students who audition for music school; some will prefer to show their improvisation skills; others will read their scores. Many schools will take the student who can read. This is a privileged position which many great musicians don’t have.”*

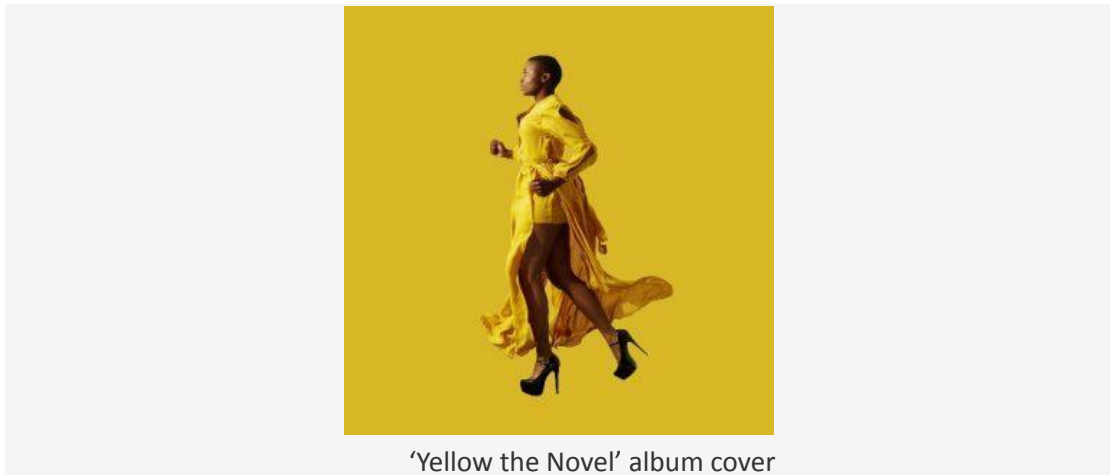


Mitchell’s Master class revealed talent galore in her 9 piece band, several being multi-instrumentalists and well educated in the industry. Mitchell herself boasts a number of awards and leadership service, including being the first Black female president of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) in Chicago. But ‘leadership’ is not what she intended; rather creative messaging to get the truth out there.

In their festival stage performance, her Black Earth Ensemble presented some ambitious, highly rhythmic self-composed songs in their festival performance, filling the stage with their energetic repertoire. The band concluded with a highly emotional incantation in gospel style by singer Avery Young in 'Save the Children'. The singer was actually in tears and received consolation from fellow singer, pastor Calvin Gantt, who proceeded to preach how we must save the street children of Capetown. While one can applaud such a noble message, it also strikes of typical American arrogance known too well to hosting audiences, especially coming from a first-time-visitor to Capetown, or for that matter, to 'Africa'. Well, as I listened, I was always looking for the music amongst the messaging. Percussion (bongos, congas, and drums) can easily overpower vocalists and instruments. I'm afraid this is what happened. Yet, Mitchell's mastery of the flute is jaw-dropping, as is her laudable attitude to make right what has gone horribly wrong in our world.

Nicole Mitchell's Black Earth Ensemble 2018 album, ***Mandorla Awakening II:Emerging Worlds*** can be heard at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP7FRucsNKc>

**Zoe Modiga's "Yellow the Novel", a story about self-awakening: a CD Review** (2017)



'Yellow the Novel' album cover

Twenty-three year old songstress, Zoe Modiga who hails from KZN, South Africa, has launched her debut album containing an ambitious and seriously orchestrated series of her compositions which highlight her sense of self-awareness and being-true-to-oneself. We are ever-changing, as portrayed in nature's Four Seasons, about which her band members eagerly chat on brief tracks, sparing about their favourite colours.

Often on South African stages with various other jazz bands and notable artists, Modiga has absorbed multiple influences that have now enabled her to branch out with her own band, which include these notables, most recently heard on the Capetown International Jazz Festival stage in March 2017. It is therefore no surprise, yet still remarkable that she has chosen to market her talents in this introductory album with two disks containing 23 tracks, all but a few being her own compositions. There's much to talk about in her **Yellow** album, yellow being her favourite colour, which connotes peace and love for her. One clearly hears these messages as band members participate in various playful banter which confirms more their comradery and joy in this music project, rather than any meaningful messaging. It's not clear, however, why her two discs have these verbal breaks which, for me, broke the flow of the increasingly engaging musical mood and temperaments which the songs offered.

Ms. Modiga hails from Kwa Zulu Natal, and completed her Jazz studies at Capetown's South African School of Music. Other successes found her 8th in The Voice SA competitions, a winner of the 2015 SAMRO Overseas Scholarship Competition for singing (Jazz); and a vocal score in the Oscar nominated movie, **Noem My Skollie**, scored by her highly talented pianist, Kyle Shepherd. Other band members, like bassist Benjamin Jephta (Standard Bank's 2017

Young Artist in Jazz) and pianist Bokani Dyer (Standard Bank 2011 Young Artist Award for Jazz, and recipient of the Samro Overseas Scholarship prize in 2013) feature in **Yellow**.



With guitarest Keenan Ahrends

**Yellow the Novel** is just that – a musical story with careful lyrics full of information, set to jazzy and melodic tunes. The listener is beckoned to listen carefully. Modiga sets the pace in Disk 1 with a lovely short African ballad, ‘Balele’, and then swings into the upbeat poppish ‘Abounding Within’ about our hidden peace morphing into jubilation. Yes, calls for peace feature abundantly in her two discs, in spite of low points. The song resolves into a slow meditative mood with the horns’ repetitious long notes. One learns how her sextet, with thirteen alternating musicians, eagerly follows her mood and direction without overpowering.

The novel unfolds musically, like a dramatic story, with forceful lyrics that advocate confidence, persistence, and hope. Modiga uses voice-overs and loops effectively to mimic a chorus. This is why her Disk 1 is uplifting; musically, she touches on a variety of improvisational styles, allowing the band to explore their own reaches. They introduce Track 8’s ‘Autumn’, again, with a carefree cacophony of mostly incoherent chats about their favourite colours. One muses, hearing the various South African accents from these mainly Capetown-based musicians.



Modiga occasionally falls into a vocal scat which calls out to the spiritual, such as in the melodic 'Healer', not requiring heavy messaging of a social nature like in her other songs. The power of God's love is again recognised, as in the haunting 'Love (Yahaweh)', when the world seems hopeless. This love translates into how Modiga loves different kinds of people in 'Would They' (get along well?). Recorded voice overs are effective here as the song queries if, in fact, saints and sinners, who are just ordinary people, could ever get along well with each other. A song for thought, indeed. An inspiring guitar carries this tune well. She is not 'Alone' as she takes chances, like everyone else, echoing her vocals through loops and repetitions, sometimes sarcastically because the world is asleep. This message returns at the end of Disc 1 with 'Shake the World' and a plea to get into your lane and wake up! This appropriately ends a winter season as the listener awaits for Spring to arrive in Disk 2.

Modiga breaks from English lyrics to pay tribute to the vernacular, particularly, to the legendary Winston Mankunku in his song, 'Yakhalinkomo', in a lovely arrangement with the guitar effectively adding a ballad mood. Sensuality and emotion punctuate other vernacular songs, like the moving 'Inganekwane' referring to fairy tales and myths we live with. 'Nantsi Ntsepe' offers lots of vocal chorus characteristic of morabi with a beautiful sax solo.



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Not all is rosy as a novel enters conflict zones. Disc 2 opens with a mournful philosophical bent about our worldly delusions and the life-is-not-rosy confusions we live with, hiding our inner tears, in 'And so it goes'. Lyrics again dominate the musical novel, with Winter having seemingly carried stories of woes and depression, like in 'One Litre Deep', a folksy satire, maybe about what dark winters can do to spirit. Hope resurrects, however. Spring explodes yellow flowers, like in 'Dandelion' which, as a relief, doesn't echo opinionated words of caution, but rather soft scat vocalisations by the singer in a childlike, carefree manner. Modiga ambitiously tries a wide range in her vocals, sometimes wandering erratically 'off key', as if dazzled by the emotions evoked by this intricate song. One wonders, should dandelions be that complex? Answers come in the last track, 'Yellow', which now explains what self-realization means, after hard work, an awakening of confidence hummed nicely by trumpet and piano, bringing the ear back to the spiritual and calm. It is a breath taking piece!

Disc 2 lyrics are softer, less contentious than those in Disc 1, implying that out of struggle comes yellow, aka peace and love. Modiga strongly believes in perseverance, and lives it,

building her talents through festivals, working with distinguished musicians in South Africa, and meticulously studying her art.



Having blessed a prestigious CTIJFstage recently, and slated for the upcoming National Arts Festival in Grahamstown in June 2017, Modiga is well on her way to extending her yellow hopes and loves that can impact on the South Africa's jazz music industry. It's rewarding to see her perform live; her songs speak directly to the audience with slinky, individualistic projections of who Zoe is. And her yellow cape is truly stunning!

Musicians that feature in the two-disk album are: Benjamin Jephta; Bokani Dyer; Claude Cozens; Frank Paco; Keenan Ahrends; Kyle Shepherd; Ludwe Danxa; Marlon Witbooi; Revan October; Robin Fassie Kock; Romy Brauteseth; Ruby Crowie; and Tim Mosh.

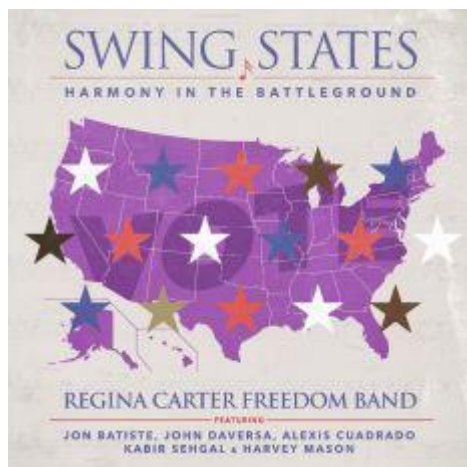
**Jazz Meets the Political: Women instrumentalists Seek Harmony in 2020** (2020)

**Regina Carter, Nubya Garcia, and Lakecia Benjamin** speak political swing, Afro-European identity, and social healing as bandleader instrumentalists moving musical boundaries during the turbulent year of 2020. Already discussed above is Nicole Mitchell's contribution to Black identities and Afrofuturisms which introduces philosophies of these three women here.

**Regina Carter's *Swing States: Harmony in the Battleground*** (Tiger Tune/eOne, 2020) talks Jazz and Social Justice



BeBop and Swing meet demographic shifts as jazz violinist Regina Carter playfully addresses the 2020 American political theatrics. Her Freedom Band eloquently splashes humour, remorse, and hope onto the palette of electoral uncertainties as a few States vie to 'win the election'. It's a screamingly awkward political process – with that complicated Electoral College determinant. But Carter presents a bouncy album, with pride, choosing well-known American songs to match with a State, such as Colorado ('Rocky Mountain High'), Louisiana ('You Are My Sunshine'), and Kansas ('Home on the Range'). Other songs merely portray a 'Pennsylvania' or 'Wisconsin' temperament.



Her excellently placed band members, who represent their State on the album, play in 'swing' style that jazzes up the current reality. New Orleans pianist, Jon Batiste, adds his flavour of cat-calls, and 'do ya dig it' quips that liven up the album as do the masterful John Daversa on trumpet and flugelhorn (talks about his Florida Everglades), Harvey Mason on drums (on Kansas), Kabir Sehgal on bass and percussion, and Alexis Cuadrado on double bass.

The opening piece, 'Welcome', layers a patriotic 'America the Beautiful' over Carter's narrative plea of appreciation for the ethnic and cultural diversity she grew up with her in her native Detroit. The rest of the album swings with hope – as long as you VOTE! Her rendition of 'Georgia On My Mind' mesmerises. 'On Wisconsin' expresses at first a carnival bounce and moves to a more remorseful tone, then resolve, with the violin mimicking the band laughing. Cynicism? Lost hope? Carter ends with 'Faygo' after her favourite faygo pop snack at her corner store.

Carter first gained attention with her **Straight Ahead**, an all-female jazz quintet, some 25 years ago. Her career has spiralled with inspiration for many female jazz artists as she has taught, performed, won awards, and composed and arranged her works with a multitude of colleagues. This is a fun album: occasionally carnival in tempo, sometimes serious in ballad, but always reverent to that fabric in a democracy – the VOTE!

She and her drummer husband, Alvester Garnett, are using this time of 2020 lockdown to explore their creative musical juices together.

See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDZ7C5xodmc> Noted for her instructional capabilities, she shows how improvisation works during her Kennedy Center performance, with Cuba-born percussionist, Mayra Casales:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8nagXne3pU> The National Jazz Museum in Harlem hosted an interesting discussion in September 2020 about Carter's album and voting challenges:

"Jazz and Social Justice: Regina Carter: Swing States, and Getting Out the Vote" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8A-JVICgiw>

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**Nubya Garcia explores her roots in *Source*** (Concord Jazz August 2020)



Out of London's young and exciting jazz scene comes saxophonist **Nubya Garcia** with her debut album, **Source**, which journeys through her family histories, folklore, afro-diasporic

connections, and global outlooks where she calls home: from London to Bogota to British West Indies. The album speaks to our capacity to overcome challenges, both individual and collective, in our modern day realities. Her trio of Joe Armon-Jones on keys, Daniel Casimir on bass, and Sam Jones on drums, with several vocalists, faithfully carry her sonic messages through the moving themes and heartfelt stories she seeks to evoke.

The title track, 'Source', being the longest on the album, gives evidence to Garcia's mood and tones, quiet to fiery, as she moves between reggae, soul, and improvisation. She talks of family in the soft ballad, 'Together is a Beautiful Place to Be', recalling her dear late stepfather. In 'Stand with Each Other', three female vocalists accompany various reggae rhythms and celebrate their collectivism – a female solidarity in the wider community. Latin rhythms in 'Inner Game' pleasantly move her temperament into 'La cumbia me está llamand' to celebrate her abstractions from Columbia's traditional music, chants and rhythms. Still excavating family histories, 'Before Us: In Demerara & Caura' presents an emotional longing for understanding Caribbean sources.



Born of a Guyanese mother and Trinidadian father, Nubya Garcia completed her studies at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music in the UK, and has explored musical horizons widely with the contemporary septet, Nerija. Even her 2017 debut EP vinyl, **NUBYA'S FIVE** sold out on vinyl within 24 hours. Presently, Garcia also boasts DJ skills through her popular radio residency on NTS, and continues to play a growing number of live sets across Europe. See her at New York City's Winter Jazzfest

2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPGxhQw80PQ&feature=youtu.be> (10 min 57 sec)

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**Lakecia Benjamin pursues the mystical healing of the Coltranes**



Lakecia Benjamin's latest album, ***Pursuance: The Coltranes*** (March 2020) boasts an impressive array of musicians who complement Benjamin's sizzling alto saxophone. These include bassist Lonnie Plaxico and trumpeter Keyon Harrold, the bass clarinet of Marcus Strickland, singer/guitarist Me'Shell NdegeOcello, singer Dee Dee Bridgewater's scats, and violinist Regina Carter. The song presentations alternate between compositions of John and Alice, giving an audio feel of how these two masterful legends seemed to influence each other. Watch her trailer:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwWVAgQXJuU&feature=emb\\_rel\\_pause](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwWVAgQXJuU&feature=emb_rel_pause)

While saxophonist John Coltrane needs no introduction, his wife, Alice Coltrane, born in 1937 in Detroit, was one of the few harpists in jazz history, along with her remarkable proficiency on keyboard and organ. She recorded many albums as a bandleader, beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s for **Impulse!** and other major record labels. She replaced McCoy Tyner as pianist with the John Coltrane quartet, married John in 1965, and continued to play and record with the band until John's death in 1967 which left her raising their four young children. Always experiencing a strong connection with the Higher Being, she journeyed a spiritual life in India, adopting her name as Turiyasangitananda (Transcendental Lord's highest song of Bliss). As Founder and Director of The Vedantic Center in 1975, she later established a spiritual community in the Santa Monica Mountains of Southern California. She passed away in 2007.

The Coltranes' respective compositions were chosen by Benjamin to express a common spirituality readily adaptable to our present day healing needs. Apparently, Benjamin listened to Alice Coltrane first while at school. Notable of Alice's chosen songs are: 'Walk with Me' with a gospel tone set by violinist Regina Carter; 'Going Home', a classical slow gospel ballad mellowed by Strickland's bass clarinet and Brandee Younger's harp, perhaps as Alice would have played it; 'Om Shanti' moves with backing vocals in a smooth groove of soul searching bordering on rock with expressive chops of bassist Me'Shell NdegeOcello.

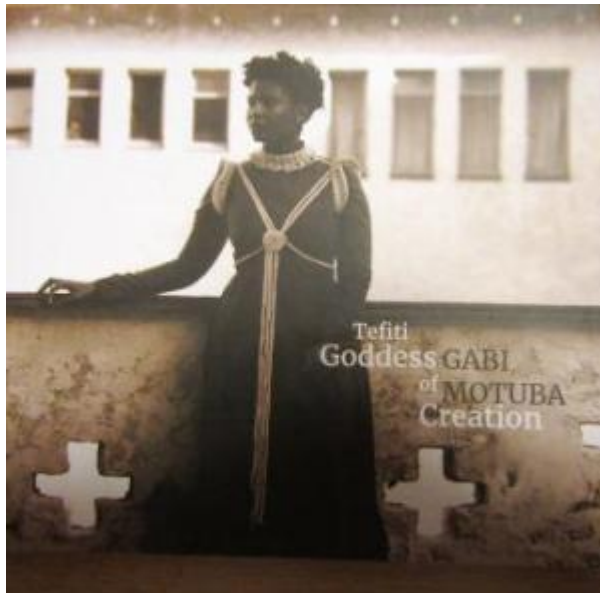
John Coltrane's songs include: 'Central Park West' with the scating vocals of Jazzmeia Horn; the swinging bebop 'Seedy's Song Flute' featuring Ron Carter on bass and Keyon Harrold on trumpet; 'Spiral' with its samba upbeat chats between Benjamin's and Steve Wilson saxes; 'Alabama' which follows Alice's 'Om Shanti' in similar soul pursuits. Here, Benjamin's concept of 'Pursuance' with the fast-paced bass of Jonathan Michel comes to fruition as both composers become one and end the album with acknowledging that to find God is to find Him, and subsequent healing in Oneness, in sound. Watch the band's concert at Jazz at Lincoln Center in March 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZ3lxe3b82U>

The listener should have reached the edges of Nirvana blessings if he/she made it to the end of this album. It's a fulfilling journey in sound, resounding, uplifting in spirit, and deeply

respectful of two sonic-breakers of earlier years. Benjamin's interpretations and delivery with fellow resonators excels.

**Vocal chants and silent noise: jazz vocalist Gabisile Motuba evokes profoundly deep sonic themes and bends rules** (21 March 2019)

Artists who invoke the philosophies of Franz Fanon or saxophonist Zim Ngqawana, and search for spiritual content in artistry in our otherwise violent contemporary world, resonate with an admirable depth for exploration. Young vocalist, Gabisile Motuba, supported by her drummer husband, Tumi Mogorosi, is a sound enthusiast who has delighted our Capetown stages with hauntingly alternative music which defies definition. She reflects: *I think about the silence that occurs in violence, and how to survive staying silent while the scream that occurs on the other side is heard under this veil of silence.*



Launching her new album, ***Tefiti – Goddess of Creation***, this being her and her husband's second album after ***Sanctum Santorium*** which was a product of her Swiss residency with supporter ProHelvetia, Motuba presents a rare "classical" feel to her musical idiom which is more choral ancestral chant than rhythm and blues. She has creatively wedded the string instruments of violin, viola, and cello in slow melodies with a voice that breathes out its message in unconventional ways. One listens and absorbs spirit-like sonic tones and pitches influenced by chanting, with softer and more mellow lower register strings harnessing this vocal repetition. Several songs on ***Tefiti*** have Tswana and English lyrics.



Completing her jazz music degree in 2013 at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) in Pretoria, Mamolodi-born Motuba embarked on an experimental journey to find her own voice. She doesn't consider herself a singer, per se, but sees a range of soundscapes possible with breath, voicing, and strings. For instance, she explores 'silent noise', referring to how slaves sang their songs in quiet tones so as not to appear rambunctious or defiant to their owners. But their messages were stark.

Motuba draws inspiration from such vocalists as Gretchen Parlato, Esperanza Spalding and Concha Buika, and South Africans such as pianist Nduduzo Makhathini, trombonist Malcolm Jiyane, and saxophonist Mthunzi Mvubu. Her and her husband's European residency with Swiss musicians spiralled this young couple into unknown and continuing sonic journeys in experimentation within the "jazz" idiom, begun during their studies at TUT.

*She admits: Knowledge I gained wasn't always through a conscious pursuit of what jazz is; rather, it was music I ran into or was introduced to by friends. A lot of us gravitated collectively towards the spiritual, into African spirituality. Not in a literal sense, but evoking a need to go deeper, an excavation of what this music is about, and not just performing for the sake of performing. This is why I gravitated towards the chanting style.*

Thirsty for more insights, I caught up with Gabi between her various Capetown gigs.

+++++

CM: Why strings? And why the cello in your compositions?

GM: I love the timber of the cello and viola with their alto sound. I had been listening a lot to the strings compositions by John Shaw at the time, and also the British cellist, Jacqueline Mary du Pré, in her classical performances, and I was thinking of how to use these stringed instruments.... You know, how to navigate this 'other world' of the classics. I was focusing on sound, and realized why the viola is paired so well with the cello and violins. The cello has this warm and rich sound along with the viola's lower register warmth, compared to the higher nervous pitch of the violin. The cello is a bit more sound-friendly for my vocal range.

CM: You trained in "jazz", but your style and approach to music is not improvisational. It's more like traditional chants, like a connection with the spiritual pursuits you hear in church, and also amongst First Peoples' music, like the American Indian's music with their ancestral male chants. You did mention that you're not into voice techniques so I'd like to understand your thinking here.

GM: I don't think initially it was intentional. The jazz department at the Tshwane University of Technology really allowed artist to experiment so I never felt I was trapped in the traditional aspects of jazz and their formations. My peers and I were able to explore music

together beyond the jazz idiom, even when intensively studying jazz music. You can really plant little seeds and let the collective discussions happen. This is what I'm interested in.

CM: There's a term we can use when trying to describe or go deeper into that spiritual realm, and that is exploring consciousness. That seems to be what you are doing, exploring deeper levels of consciousness and awareness of being, of existence. And sound allows us humans to go deeper, doesn't it?

GM: Yes, tapping into awareness – the jazz idiom allows us to understand that this jazz music doesn't only exist within the jazz idiom, but can bring friends with different expressions together to produce music. This has enabled many to look outside of jazz to connect and search deeper into narratives. For instance, going into academia, or fine art, or literary art, it allows us to find jazz outside of the standard stage.

CM: I'm intrigued because it's all about sound, and what sound evokes in our being. You're not coming with a message that I need to listen to. Rather, I'm led to find out what that message is, through your sound.

GM: Yes, exactly. It's not pointing to a particular thing, but giving us an idea in a very subtle way, and in a way that the listener can really engage within their own parameters and understanding, with a sense of freedom.

CM: So who has offered you inspiration?

GM: Well, my husband..... Haha..... he's, of course, my inspiration! I grew up with and watched Siya Makuzeni, and her approach to vocals and scat music, sound technique, and her sound. She helped me a lot with my own artistic mapping. I listen to a lot of people – particularly the generation ahead of me – those jazz practitioners like Nduduzo Makhathini, Zim Ngqawana, and that age group. They had better access to their older peers, like Zim Ngqawana, Andile Yenana, Herbie, and Mholo. I found landmarks to use for navigating and thinking through my kind of sound, along with my peers.

CM: Tell me more about '**The Wretched**' project – what tonality and instruments are you using because you're focusing on violence in the world?

GM: I'm excited to be with this collective which includes my husband improvising on drums, and Andre van Vyck on electronics soundscaping, and then me on voice. We are concerned with the chapter on violence that Franz Fanon talks about in his book, **The Wretched of the Earth**. We are reinterpreting his text through the sonic, looking at violence and how it manifests itself in our dark spaces. I think about the silence that occurs in violence, and how to survive staying silent while the scream that occurs on the other side is heard under this veil of silence. My voice in this collective is bizarre. The music will not be 'enjoyed'; it's loud and poses uncomfortable sounds because the topic of violence is not pleasant. This narrative is brought home ..... referring to violence in South African society. We've already recorded the project. Now, we're deciding how to present it.

CM: It sounds like you and Tumi are musical activists in that you want to pursue the deeper themes, having compassion about our world, but want to bring forth the message that violence must be confronted.

GM: Yes, it's this idea of violence against the 'other', the violence of 'othering' bodies, that we've allowed this 'otherness' to take up space occupied by people of Black decent. So it's a very intensive and crazy subject and demanding....

CM: Well, it's not crazy when you see how this 'otherness' is growing globally and coming under fire – with all this white supremacy raising its ugly head.

GM: By 'crazy' I mean that this condition [of violence] is unfathomable, and allowed to become possible. So we are addressing this, thinking through in ***The Wretched*** this idea of the 'possible impossibilities' of Blackness, and these impossibilities being violence in its different forms.

So the music becomes an artistic piece and engages with one's imagination and opinions about what's going on. It allows you to also expand your own thoughts, and be open to receiving this other uncomfortable message.

Motuba's quest to deploy meaning in her music appears noble, gutsy, and perhaps unnerving, but ultimately transformative for our own soul-scapes.

They are supported for concerts by Jazz in the Native Yards at various venues in Cape Town. She and husband plan to tour their ***Tefiti*** album in Africa soon, then in Frankfurt and Berlin in May.

**“My Miriam Makeba Story” Resonates a Language of Truth for Simangele Mashazi’s own life story** (6 May 2019)

This is a story, a collage of charming impressions about Miriam Makeba’s own life in song and politics-in-exile which have resonated with the young singer and song writer Simangele Mashazi’s own life journey, particularly after 1994 when Makeba could return to South Africa.



Simangele Mashazi

‘Sima’, raised in Hammarsdale, KZN, learned her vocals and groomed her talents firstly during her church choir years with strong gospel roots. She followed up with private classical vocal training sessions, but only studied music in a Ministry school when she moved to Stellenbosch. After experience on stage providing backing vocals to South African and European artists during European tours, her breakthrough came when she was cast to play the then late Miriam Makeba in the popular musical **Mama Africa**, a collaboration between the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and the University of Missouri (USA). A stage career was developing.

The bug had bitten her: Sima became inspired, if not spellbound, by the wealth of talents and history Makeba passed down, and in particular, how Makeba spoke truth through her lyrics. However, in 2016, Sima chose to leave the cast to pursue her B.A. degree in Language and Culture at Stellenbosch University, where she resides today, finishing her Master’s degree in Linguistics and teaching. But this hasn’t stopped her musicality. She delved into replicating that truth-through-lyrics by starting to compose **My Story** which introduces her as

a songwriter and storyteller. It also enabled her to write her own songs which are performed in the show: 'Bashadile' (Zulu for "They are married") and 'Still Miss You', along with other known gems like 'Phatha Phatha', to lesser known popular songs, like 'Suliram', an Indonesian lullaby. For 'Bashadile', Sima says she was inspired by a childhood game where children would all stand in a circle, and then children in the centre would pick a partner to "marry". *"The ones left in the circle would then sing 'Kusele mina ngedwa nje', which means 'I am the only one left, "Bonke bashadile" – they are all married."* The song wants to take you on a journey and let you fall in love with life.

Her backing band excels as one of the Cape's most popular jazz bands, made up of Ramon Alexander on piano, Annemie Nel on drums, Bradley Prince on guitars, Chadleigh Gower on bass, and Muneeb Hermans on trumpet. Some might query why she chose a Cape jazz band, even though highly successful on the local scene, but which is ethnically removed from the type of music Makeba wrote.

Sima had known the band-leader and pianist, composer, and producer Ramon Alexander, also living in Stellenbosch, for over twenty years, and experienced not only mentorship from him, but the band's versatility with genres of music. Together with Ramon, Sima could comfortably mastermind her next passion: to produce her own show, ***My Miriam Makeba Story***, about Makeba but from her own perspective. It worked. Both she and Alexander received the award for Best Music Production at the recent 2019 Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK).

Preparing the show became essentially a learning journey for this stage-seasoned singer about an icon's struggle with politics and life, in general. As a student of Linguistics, Sima had learned in ***Mama Africa*** how language is a symbol of power, and how Makeba in exile spoke truth to power. In this regard, Sima's humour and engagement with the audience started early in her performance, when she asked what was the name of the song she had just sung (the 'click song'). Soft clucking sounds buzzed around the Artscape's sound-perfect auditorium, imitating click sounds found particularly in isiXhosa. It seemed so natural; this was an African audience who understood these linguistic dynamics, at least functionally, and why Makeba sung the 'click song' to European audiences while she was in exile. Sima's background in Linguistics enabled her to point out the differences between her isiZulu clicks and isiXhosa ones, making this aspect of her presentation quite entertaining. The music became a background to her story, however.

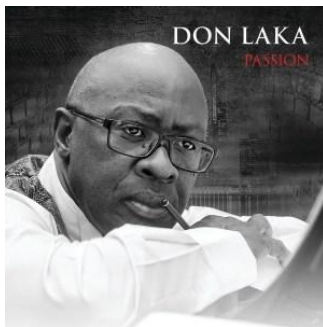
*"We must re-imagine a multi language society and view multi-lingualism as a norm in South Africa,"* Sima emphatically stated in our interview. *"Ideologies are attached to language which is why I'm eager to study Linguistics and understand the power of language for social change. This is why I liked the way Makeba spoke her truth. I can do also. She used her voice to instigate social change."*

For example, during her performance, Sima did not shy away from the pain of loss which Makeba had experienced, the latter unable to visit her dying mother because apartheid barriers would not allow Makeba to return to South Africa from exile. Sima had also suffered loss, of her two sisters, and was inspired to sing her own tribute song to that, honestly and reflectively. Also, in keeping with the themes of carrying the South African 'sound' to world corners, she honoured the renowned Capetownian musician, Tony Cedras, (who had sculptured and arranged Paul Simon's songs before and during their Gracelands album tour) and his efforts to spread the Cape musical histories far and wide.

Sima says she's not a social activist per se, or a jazz artist, but she believes in the power of the message and entertaining through musical stories. Audiences won't find intricate musicality and technique in **My Story**, but a melodic voice well controlled, at times spicy, and one that can emote and engage feeling about her sonic journey. Be prepared to have an intimate evening of relaxing moods tainted with a storytelling charm.

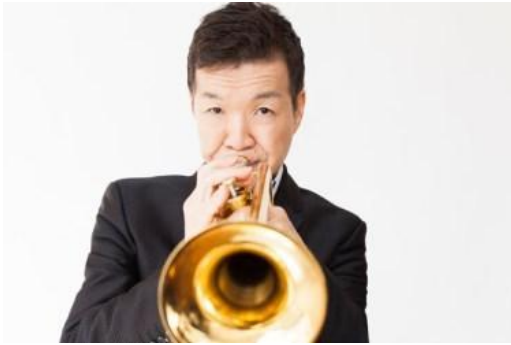
### Latest jazz albums for your Lockdown walks (20 May 2020)

Listen to some hearty jazzy funk and blues, if you're down with the COVID lock, and find joy in spotifying or youtubing a few of these artists, local and worldwide. All Jazz Radio receives loads of albums sent for broadcasting, so here are a few briefly reviewed for your tastes – some Japanese, Croatian sentiments, choral harmonies, South Africans crossing African boundaries.... Don't get locked down!!



#### Don Laka **PASSION** (2020)

Away from making music for some 8 years, jazz pianist Don Laka is back with his album, **Passion**, which is filled with rhythm and melody. At age 60, it's like a new turn for Laka's creative bent, reflecting on nostalgias of old, soft and thoughtful, like in "Passion", along with a contemporary smooth style in newer materials, like in "Take My Hand, I Will Walk With You". Laka has let his South African rhythms spill out in the ghoema-styled "Domans Dance" and jivey sounds in "Thula Mabota". You might find yourself dancing by the seaside on this one, during your Lockdown walks!!



Shunzo Ohno **RUNNER** (2020)

Renowned Japanese trumpeter and composer, Shunzo Ohno's 18th album as leader promises orchestral-like delights within a short 30 minutes. His four piece "Epic" uses trumpet, clarinet, and cello which paints dramatic moods and soft colourful visions of universality. This is followed by a stunning title track with electronic guitar, two bassists, drums, and clavinet as an ode to the perseverance of marathon runners. The final piece sounds out a duo of trumpet and bassoon – all unusual configurations for a jazz album.

Ohno is no stranger to collaborations with key American jazz musicians from the 1970s, and brings to this album colourful musical landscapes. Because of his own bout with physical damage to lips and a throat cancer that left him having to improvise ways to play trumpet, a documentary was made about his journey, *Never Defeated: The Shunzo Ohno Story*, available on YouTube. When the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake devastated Northern Japan, Ohno focused on helping to revive music programs for children affected. His story and music reeks of perseverance we all need to get us through this present pandemic.



Thana Alexa **ONA** (2020)

This self-produced album expresses what it means to be a woman. Croatian-American Thana Alexa discovers the wild woman spirit in her and tells us how she sets it free. "Ona" means "she" in Alexa's native Croatian tongue and that title track begins the album with choral chanting, drumming and foot stomping that feel primordial and real. Her lyrics are carefully logical and assertive; some spoken, some sung, all belted with convincing honesty. Her contralto voice is persuasive, aggressive, determined, with powerful political messages in 'The Resistance', suggesting we revolutionize our minds, and then rise up in the dramatic 'Pachamama' featuring violinist Regina Carter. Thirteen vocalists feature on the various songs, along with guitar, piano, bass and drums, the latter played by her multi-Grammy husband, Antonio Sanchez. Her musical moods rarely settle down because the subject matter is serious. Her interesting vocalizing in 'Teardrop' explodes with a spirit of twangy electric guitar blues that repeats that assertiveness. The album ends with a satirical resolve in having fought the worthy battle to gain that freedom so elusive in 'Everybody Wants to Rule the World'. The control and tightness of musical output is impressive and nothing short of bold as Alexa uncovers the truth of life. Watch her YouTube videos looping her vocals with

multiple Grammy-awardee drummer husband, Antonio Sanchez.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ot\\_QihxE2w4&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ot_QihxE2w4&feature=emb_logo)



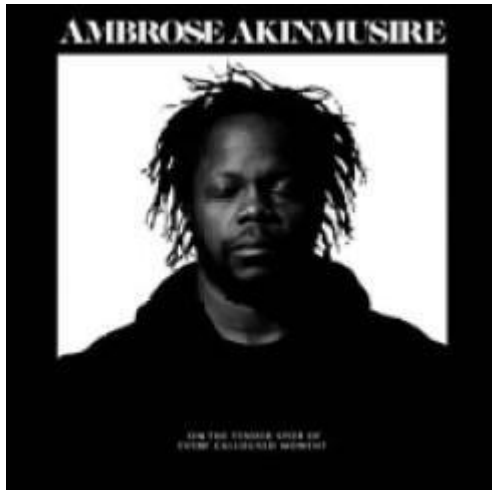
### Simphiwe Dana **BAMAKO**

Here is a gem for some jazzy swing, pop, choral chanting, and joyful lyrics. Like with Thana Alexa's female chorus, South African Simphiwe Dana has crafted songs that carry conversations, often witty as in 'Bye Bye Naughty Baby'. Soft beats from West Africa with cora runs soothe the soul with Bamako vocal inflections in 'Masibambaneni' between a male and several women vocalists. Here, Dana has crossed African sonic borders. Her album starts with 'Usikhonzile' which sets a stage of gentle, chatty messaging which thematically runs throughout. Rhythmic lulls with lullabies hum about Dana's own convictions as she stereophonically massages the listener's ears and heart.

Dana's intended exit from the music industry bodes sadness for fans who will find solace in this, Dana's last recorded album. She says her popular single, 'Uzokhala', is exactly what the doctor ordered in these depressing Covid-19 times. As a single mother, Dana will look for other outlets that treat talents better than musicians are treated, she is reported as lamenting. Catch this album fast for its delightfully melodic, if not melodramatically lyrical, resonance with Xhosa and West African musical styles. **Bamako** is sure to give ear and mind health during these strange Corona virus lockdown protocols.

Jazz from Denmark, China, Ivory Coast, Korea and U.S. Speak diversity: CD Reviews (15 June 2020)

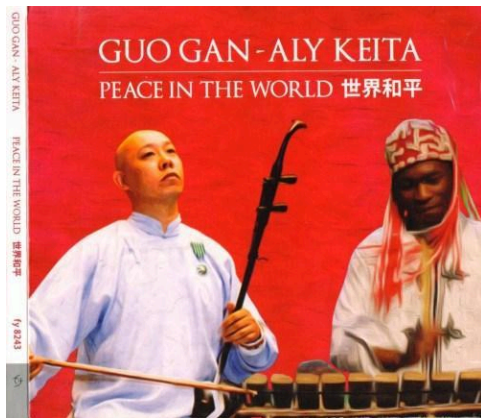
*on the tender spot of every calloused moment* by Ambrose Akinmusire (2020)



A timely release by Blue Note Records, considering the racial unrest that has exploded visibly world-wide, American jazz trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire voices complexities of black life in America, unpacking it and breathing through his trumpet some beautiful, shape-shifting art to the ear. This album is a stunner, boasting 11 new original compositions on this, his fifth Blue Note album. It unpacks the feelings of 'otherness' in a racially distraught America, but, unlike the seething emotions that underlie his previous albums, this one simmers as he examines the past *"with pondering eyes and not a furrowed brow"*. This is a study of blues in a contemporary context, with songs that celebrate while admitting defeats, as in 'Reset', and the chilling 'Blues' and 'Hooded procession' which ends the album with a depiction of names of those who have suffered from racial injustices. Released as a CD in May 2020, the album

will be available on digital platforms and on vinyl in August 2020. Hear some tracks on Spotify.

***Peace in the World*** (2020) with Guo Gan (China) & Aly Keita (Ivory Coast)



This album is a gem. Well-known Guo Gan, thought to be the ‘grand Master’ of the Chinese Erhu (a two stringed instrument), had studied in France in the early 2000s obtaining his Master’s degree from the National Music School of Fresnes in Paris. Recognized world over, he has performed with key orchestras, and casts his “sonic perfume” on classical music, jazz, ballet, opera, and contemporary soundtracks. Teamed up with Aly Keita from Ivory Coast, a seasoned player of the West African balafon, a musical ancestor of the xylophone and marimba, the melodic and dreamy sounds, soft and contemplative, will enthrall and spin the listener into peaceful depths which the world needs now. Keita uses different sized calabash resonators to produce special sounds. Both Guo Gan and Aly Keita learned their instruments from their fathers. The Keita family practiced the griot profession (an art of storytelling) through their balafons and singing.

***Peace in the World***, first issued in 2016 is re-issued now for obvious reasons. It’s sure to help pacify the otherwise stressful social and political upheavals emerging in this infamous year of 2020. The album is released by Felway Records, Italy.

***Racing A Butterfly*** (2020) by Anne Mette Iversen Quartet +1

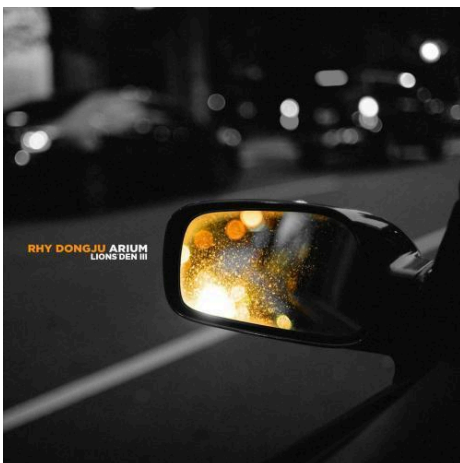


Danish bassist/composer/bandleader Anne Mette Iversen had a touching encounter with a butterfly while jogging in southern France. *“It was the fun, the enjoyment, the playfulness and lightness that was so beautiful and which nature displayed so naturally, that made me feel that I really ought to celebrate those sides of life more than I have previously done in my music.”* A New Yorker since 1998, her well-established band of John Ellis (tenor saxophone), Peter Dahlgren (trombone), Danny Grissett (piano), and Otis Brown III (drums & cymbals) playfully maneuver themes always tilting toward that flitting butterfly, gently and melodically. The horns mesmerize with their chats, faithful to the composer’s wishes, sometimes exchanging opposite runs, sometimes joining in “parallel flying” along with this silent insect. This album will mellow, soothe, and even amuse. Just listen to the butterfly’s silence!



Iversen has eleven recordings available as a bandleader, including one as composer and artistic director for the Norrbotten Big Band with whom she served as Composer in Residence in 2016. She tours regularly in Europe and the U.S., and is active with the musician’s organization, Brooklyn Jazz Underground, in New York, also the name of her recording label which has released this album. Check Spotify and muse with Iversen’s butterfly!

***Lion’s Den III: Arium*** by South Korean Rhy Dongju (2020)



Growing up in South Korea with a classical pianist mother, Dongju moved his ear and musical awareness from classical to traditional Korean to contemporary performance art to different genres of jazz, rock, blues, and World. His guitar training took hold, as did many opportunities to travel, compose, join orchestras, and hone his own styles which cross cultural, racial, and religious borders.



He started Lions Den Records to do just that, ***Arium*** being his third album on the label. His compositions depict personalities and art forms, such as 'Picasso', then rocking in 'Elvis', and a dramatic 'Rachmaninoff' with a bit of orchestral samba lift-off. As he says about his Label, *"We promote different styles of music (Progressive, Contemporary, Classical, Jazz, Rock/Metal and World Music) with over 30,000 radio stations and more than 2,000 music magazines, reviewers, DJs and internet radio station / potcasts through our contact network system."* Ambitious as young Dungju is, he's definitely someone to watch. Listen to track excerpts from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeqVR6woAMc>

**Nigerian Jazz Trumpeter, Etuk Ubong, remains consistent and focused: An Interview** (26 October 2016)

As I was clearing out old files and articles, one caption hit my eye hard. “Exodus of Cape Town’s Jazz Giants” by Ayesha Ismail started: *“Jazz greats are leaving Cape Town in droves because they can’t earn a living in the city once regarded as South Africa’s capital of jazz.”* That was published in September 1998 (Sunday Times Metro) !

Yet, jazz schools of music, like the U.C.T.’s College of Music Jazz Studies, have experienced a steady influx of overseas and African talents seeking degrees and interactions with South Africa’s music legends. One such determined soul is 24-year old trumpeter, Etuk Ubong, from southern Nigerian, who already has notable experience to his name as well as incredible discipline and commitment to his art. His quartet of young South Africans is one of five bands which will compete for the ESP Young Legends award to perform at the 2017 Capetown International Jazz Festival. His album, ‘Miracle’, can be heard on <https://soundcloud.com/search?q=Etuk%20Ubong>.



Etuk Ubong – media

I caught up with Etuk on 10 October 2016 before he left for Nigeria to resume his life and goals there. It seems consistency and focus is this young gun’s mantra. Oh, and ‘hard work’. He sounded mature and seasoned, having weathered the disruptions which his University (U.C.T./Capetown) politics were affecting. It’s hard to study and get ahead in a foreign academic environment when the indigenes upset academic progress which eager students from other disruptive African countries so badly seek. Etuk chose to leave those protests behind him, for now.

We chatted about his personality, and mentors like Victor Ademofe and Femi Kuti, son of famous late shrine leader Fela Ransom Kuti, and his own emerging form of music which he calls ‘Earth’ music. *“It’s got attitude, spirit, and voice.”* His other gurus like Clifford Brown and Wynton Marsalis have helped groom his sound as well.

**CM:** What makes you tick, and go for improvisation? And why jazz?

**EU:** *Just passion and love of the sound of music. It's about the message and how to integrate it and reflect it in my music. I studied music at an early age so I got my freedom early. I considered music is about love, bringing people together and making them smile. I love the Coltrane and jazz, but I see myself creating another sound.*

**CM:** What's so special about your music that comes from Etuk?

**EU:** *Attitude, spirit, and my personality: essential factors are about love, obedience, loyalty, and being humble. Making sure things go right.*

**CM:** It sounds like you had a good childhood.

**EU:** *Yeah, I got this discipline from my parents and my four sisters who were all around me growing up. Also, my parents were hard working – my father was a driver who would get up at 5am to go to work. Same with my mom, a trader. I was a teenager when I took up this trumpet, thanks to my Mom who said this would be my future! She got me to play in our Church band. I didn't take it seriously for a while, just played around. Then I started practicing from 5am before walking to school and would continue the practices after school until 10pm. My tutor, Victor Ademofe, was a God-send. He was like a Godfather and taught me a lot about life as well, so I got that food and solid orientation from him. He's also very talented and disciplined as well. He changed me.*



Etuk Ubong in Capetown

**CM:** Some musicians are activists who use their music for a cause or to get their message across. Are you an activist of sorts?

**EU:** *Yes, I grew up to love nature, and I never liked the way my country's economy was going or the corruption surrounding our leaders and the way they were acting. I used to say that I'm going to get to a level where I was going to fight for justice and to eradicate this corruption, and stand up for what's right. I grew up with like-minded people and wanted to address these corruption issues growing in my country.*

**CM:** How were you going to do that?

**EU:** *With my music, with my power, with my soul. I read this book about Fela Ransom Kuti who said a lot in his music and life. He referred to Malcolm X whom I then studied. Fela was*

*making sense by presenting his perspectives on politics at that time. As a teenager, I read about his legacy and structure, and what he was trying to fight for. He made sense to me.*

**CM:** So you were doing things that other teenagers in your home weren't doing, it sounds like?

**EU:** *Yeah, none of my friends liked what I was doing and thought I was just lazy. After high school, they got involved with jobs, making money, buying clothes, etc. But I just kept practicing trumpet.*

*I don't mind going back to those days as I prepare to return home to Nigeria. I'm so grateful that I had learned something about hard work, diligence, commitment, consistency, focus, and of course, my culture. This is what keeps me going. Back then, my parents tried to discourage me from going into music. My father actually grounded me, wouldn't give me money, and sometimes would lock up my trumpet! [Etuk laughs] He didn't want me to identify with some of those musicians or artists who smoke and take drugs, but he didn't see the other side to what I wanted from the music, and I knew where I wanted to go. I told my parents I was playing on TV and that I was going to travel on tours. They didn't like this, but gradually could see I was playing well, even as a teenager, started to show me respect. Now, they're my number one fans!! I wish my mom was still alive; she would have been crazy about my success now. For my second album, I've composed songs for her in a high life form which she loved. My Dad is supportive now, as are my sisters.*

**CM:** Are you interested in teaching?

**EU:** Yeah, I'm doing this in Nigeria. I try to reach out to the youth to impact them.



Etuk Ubong Album Cover 'Miracle' (2016)

**CM:** What influenced your album songs?

**EU:** *'Miracle', 'Prayer', 'Reading in the Dark', and 'Thinking'. They're all my compositions. I had studied classical music in Lagos, and played in Femi Kuti's band. But when I put my own band together, I wanted to play my own music. So my songs came out in different places, and at different times. I just wrote the music but never gave the songs a name, until I had to record them. The song names came to me while I was in the bath! I thought of what Nigeria has gone through, its struggle for Independence and all, and that's how I got those names....'miracle', 'thinking', 'prayer'. It was like we in Nigeria were reading in the dark, when things were obscure and uncertain, and then thinking how to develop ourselves as a nation.*

**CM:** Are you thinking of becoming politically involved?

**EU:** *I think I'm driving to that! I need to study history, learn more about where I'm coming from in general. So I'm trying to read as much as I can now.*

Here's a fiery artist to watch as Africa broadens its reach with interesting jazz initiatives having those special cultural flavours.

**Jazz provides prayers for peace in hard times: Dinga Sikwebu reflects** (13 September, 2021)

All Jazz Radio publishes excerpts

<http://www.alljazzradio.co.za/2021/09/13/jazz-provides-prayers-for-peace-in-hard-times-dinga-sikwebu-reflects/> ) presented by unionist, social activist, and jazz lover, Dinga Sikwebu\* on his Facebook page of 18 July 2021 which he entitled, 'Umthandazo weJazz' (Jazz Prayer for Peace) and from his article published in **Amandla Online Issue 77**, August 2021 <https://aidc.org.za/umthandazo-wejazz-jazz-prayer-for-peace/>.

On 18 July 2021, Dinga Sikwebu spoke to a gathering at eDikeni restaurant in Sandton, Johannesburg, in response to the recent violence in South Africa's two Provinces and COVID-related deaths. Jazzmen Yonela Mnana and Sisonki Xonti expressed concern about what musicians could do to bring more peace to the Nation. Sikwebu's talk was also meant to mobilise support for Abahlai base Mjondolo, including the community of their national spokesperson, Thapelo Mohapi.



Dinga Sikwebu – credit OIL.co.za

## **Introduction**

Let me first extend my gratitude to the organisers: The events of the last 8-days, and the death of 212 people have opened gaping wounds in our society. There is too much pain around us.



Ray Phiri

As Ray Phiri & Nana Coyote said in their popular 1986 **Stimela** song, 'Whispers in the Deep':

We are all tributaries of that great river of pain  
Flowing into one ocean  
There is only one ocean  
All our pain flowing into it

Music, and jazz in particular are historically allied to mourning and commemoration. If one takes, for instance, Stanley Cowell's 'Prayer for Peace' in his album, **Musa**, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfmhe9UMLJc&t=156s> (starts at minute 8.51) written in the middle of the Vietnam war, we can see that what you have organised today is part of the jazz tradition. As a response to the Sharpeville massacre, US drummer Max Roach recorded 'Tears for Johannesburg' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgNWyngdO5Q> in his album, **We Insist! Freedom Now Suite** in August 1960.

'Our Prayer' is a song recorded by Chris McGregor's trio with Barre Phillips on bass and Louis Moholo on drums in 1969. Zim Ngqawana has his 'Umthandazo' (Prayer) : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8Qv-tM9hBo> in his album, **Zimology**. Pianist Thandi Ntuli turns to 'umthandazo' (prayer) in her 2018 (2014 recording in album, **The Offering**.) recording, **Exile**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ad0Hg06Wdrk>

Jazz is a great contributor to a sub-genre called '*musical retrospection*' rooted in prayer, commemoration and mourning. One example is Sisonke Xonti's composition 'Minneapolis', in his album **uGaba the Migration**, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QWqcxfnDXM> – starts in minute 34:08) which was written in response to the killing in May 2020 of George Floyd by a white police officer from the Minneapolis Police Department.



Sisonke Xonti

Sikwebu goes on to thank the people gathered at eDikeni: Many of us are longing for fellowship, being with people we love or share common interests with. Connectedness between people is being dismembered daily. Not spared is even connectedness to ourselves. Relations between people are being severed all round. Zoom connections and MS Teams meetings are unable to replace traditional ways of connecting.



Thanks go to Yonela Mnana's Trio and its saxophonist guest, Sisonke Xonti, for closing the first set of 'Umthandazo we Jazz' with John Coltrane's 'Lonnie's Lament'. Known for his reluctance to vocalise his political views, Coltrane took to his horn to record 'Alabama' and to express his anger triggered by the death of four girls who were killed when white supremacists bombed the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham in September 1963, a church that served as a venue for civil rights mass meetings in that city.

### **Dismembering Connectedness:**

There are many causes to the butchering of human connections. Firstly, the pandemic and associated lockdowns are barring what humans have done throughout their existence; that is to connect and gather. Secondly, in a world where personal relations are highly monetized, the absence of income and loss of jobs are a further strain to relations between people. As we all know, watching and listening to live music as opposed to hearing a recording is very much part of the whole musical experience. Unfortunately, the pandemic has robbed us of this experience. Here, I am not referring to the so-called jazz festivals which are mainly not about music but pilgrimages bathed in corporate pomp and commercial showmanship driven by sponsor demands. What the pandemic has taken away from us are gatherings that normally occur when jazz appreciators meet on Sundays to share music. As the slogan of these jazz appreciation societies reminds us "ijazz ayinamona (jazz jettisons jealousy), ayinanzondo (grudge does not propel jazz) and ayifuni okunakwayo kodwa (jazz does not promote individualism). Jazz appreciators know: *"Don't listen alone. Jazz is to be shared"*. Unfortunately, the pandemic has made difficult, if not impossible, these gatherings where we can share music. In addition to being unable to gather, there is also too much death and loss around us. Just this morning, we woke up to the news of guitarist Lawrence Matshiza's passing.

But it is not only jazz lovers who are experiencing loss and are unable to gather. People cannot go to their stokvels and societies to connect. People cannot worship together. We cannot bury those who abruptly and without notice leave us forever. We are also unable to comfort each other in times of bereavement. The inability to connect is leading to anxieties. We are definitely living in an 'age of uncertainties'.



Raiding and looting shops during COVID in KZN

The events of the last few days have led to many people in the affected communities not being able to buy bread. Even those with money have been unable to withdraw cash because of the destruction of ATMs and closed banks. I hope through this 'Umthandazo we Jazz', we can figure out how to deal with the situation that is causing anxiety and uncertainty.



We have to find ways to get out of political and economic morass that led to the explosion that hit us last week. Serious thinking of how to get out of the socio-economic rut and the deep racialised furrows that we are in, is required. If we don't find a map out, we will see a repeat of the volcano that engulfed us in the last 8-days.

### **The need for 'an aesthetics of hope'**

I suggest that ONE of the things we desperately need is what Sophia A. McClennen calls '*an aesthetics of hope*'. Based on a study of the work of Chilean activist and literary giant, Ariel Dorfman, McClennen defines '*an aesthetics of hope*' as artistic expressions and literary practices "*dedicated to the conviction that art plays an essential role in how we remember the past and imagine the future*".



Dr. Sophia McClennen

McClennen identifies these core features:

- A belief that hope brings together desire and expectation, and that both these phenomena are products of past and present experiences. Because hope emerges out of individual and communal experiences, it is therefore not some airy-fairy notion. It is concrete and real.
- An approach that sees art as having the ability to reach back to the past, give a diagnosis of the present and project a future, and connect them.
- Hope is based on both reason/rationality and emotion, and sees no binaries between knowledge and feelings, and between mental and sensual.
- Hope enables us to *“imagine the impossible, to see beyond the given, and to propose concrete alternatives visions”*. This utopian nature of ‘an aesthetics of hope’ is necessary for resistance, struggle and political agency.
- Hope is not just a solitary or individual desire, but requires a collective agency. *“An aesthetics of hope speaks to an individual within a collective”*.
- Hope does not eliminate doubt, questioning and scepticism. There are therefore, differences between hope and ‘banal or blind optimism’.
- Art inspired by ‘an aesthetics of hope’ is not some form of individual and mental catharsis. Rather, that art seeks collective solutions to social dilemmas and *“depends on the intersection of the self, an external reality and imagination”*. Again, there is no separation between mind and body.
- Art must forge provocative connections with audiences, eschew the aesthetic of individualism, and support the association of the individual and the community.
- ‘An aesthetics of hope’ assumes an allied relationship between art and social rebellion. Art that is framed by ‘an aesthetic of hope’ orientates to protest and struggle.
- This art must all the time reflect on both *“brutal reality and a hopeful future”*.

Centering hope in the period that we are going through is vital. It is my strong belief that however justifiable and necessary anger is, rage is inherently unable to sustain an emancipatory project. Rage-centred politics may be powerful in its critique of the present but is weak on sketching an alternative future. We need HOPE that tomorrow will be better than today.

As it is always said from the pulpit: Indlala nentshutshiso yakaloku nje, azinakuthelekiswa nentlutha ezayo (Today’s misery, hunger and persecution must not take away our ability to dream of possibilities to reap bountifully in the future). We need to tell oppressors and exploiters as well as their hangers-on that we refuse to let them rob us of our ability to dream about freedom, emancipation and an alternative future, like what inspired slaves to resist enslavement, to revolt in plantations and seek refuge in maroon settlements. The ‘dreams of a better future’ gave colonised people an appreciation of their power to change

oppressive conditions.

### South African Jazz provides 'an aesthetics of hope'

As an activist, I can identify moments where jazz provided 'an aesthetics of hope'. The first example involves Abdullah Ibrahim's tune, 'Soweto is where it's at', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FF03w6Pajlg> on the pianist's 1975 *African Herbs* LP and features bassist Siphon Gumede, drummer Peter Morake, alto saxophonist Barney Rachabane, tenor saxophonist Basil Coetzee, saxophonist Duku Makasi and trumpeter Dennis Mpale. When the album came out, it was an era of 'bum dance' and I suspect that by releasing the recording, Rashid Vally's As-Shams/The Sun recording company was keen to capitalise on the commercial success of an earlier release, 'Mannenberg' in 1974. In an interview with one of that era's musicians, I was made aware that after that release, every jazz artist tried to come up with a long enough tune that could get a party going, sustain the get-together, and keep the 'bum dancers' on the floor throughout the night. 'Soweto is where it's at' was not different to the songs of the time, until June 16 Youth Day exploded in violence. That track title proved prophetic.



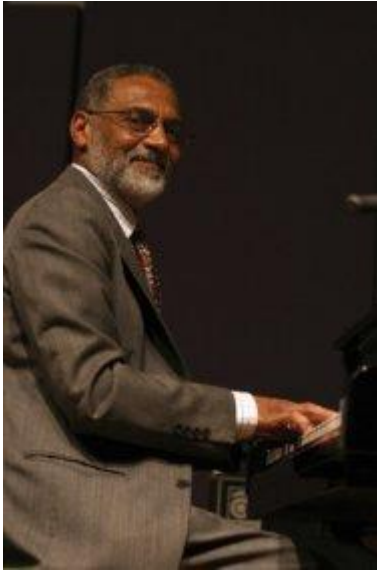
June 16, 1976 Youth uprising- Credit: Sam Nzima

But to us activists of the time, what is interesting is how the initial 'bum dance' tune became a song to not forget about the 1976 uprising. I recall 'Soweto is where it's at' being played in commemoration services in 1977 and thereafter. With the tune in the background, a young Fitzroy Ngcukana recited Oswald Mtshali's poem 'Sounds of a Cowhide Drum' and read Langston Hughes' verses from the poem, Dreams:

Dreams Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.  
Hold fast to dreams  
For when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow.

The second example on the value of 'an aesthetics of hope' is when Hugh Masekela's *Give it up/District Six* album landed in the country in 1980. This was a year of nationwide schools boycott and intensifying workers' struggles on the shopfloor. Like Abdullah Ibrahim's 'Mannenberg', Masekela's tunes, 'Where It's Happening' and 'African Herbs', could keep a party going. Other songs were 'Give it up' by Masekela and Leo Chesson's, and 'District Six'

composed by the late Cape Town-born pianist Hotep Galeta  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LyqQkWk4pT8> when he and Masekela were in exile in the USA .



Hotep Idris Galeta

Triggering Galeta to write the song were bulldozers which moved into District Six, flattened the multi-racial settlement in line with the segregationist Group Areas Act and moved more than 60 000 people to townships far away from the city centre. The chants 'Sibuyele District Six' in the song, in addition to reminding us of the callousness of demolishing of District Six, expressed the longing and hope to return one day to the site where the demolished settlement once stood. In August 1977, the government bulldozed a camp called Modderdam and other informal settlements in Cape Town as it tightened influx control measures. These threats of demolition, like in Crossroads throughout the late 1970s, and the resistance to them, gave the song 'District Six' currency and immediate relevance.

### **'Khawuphinde mzala' and the urgency of repeated takes**

I know that in jazz, recording a tune in 'one take' is a sign of originality and ingenuity. Dealing with inequality in our country is not going to be easy as the musical arrangements of the spiritual, 'When the Saints Go Marching In' suggests. To deal with the deep levels of poverty and economic marginalisation that drove the multitude of people to raid the malls last week which, in turn, made them vulnerable to manipulation by those with nefarious agendas, requires not 'one take' but 'repeated takes'. Take the cue from Stimela's tune, 'Whispers in the Deep', which the SABC immediately banned from the airwaves in 1986 just as the army occupied townships and detained some 26 000 people, the chorus, 'Khawuphinde Mzala' (keep repeating) became a call to activists to keep at it despite the odds.

To deal with the present situation, those who are interested in a different and better future must be prepared to make their contributions through different and 'repeated takes'. Unfortunately, there are no shortcuts! While supporting the call for 'an aesthetics of hope', we must avoid overburdening the arts and think that artistic expressions and practices can solve all our problems. The Palestinian activist and public intellectual Edward Said, himself a pianist in the Western classical tradition, recognised that we must appreciate the deeper paradox of music which he described as "*an art of expression without the capacity to say denotatively and concretely what is being expressed*". Efforts to engender 'a politics of hope'

and build 'a praxis of hope' must accompany and complement calls for 'an aesthetics of hope'. Without a broader movement driven by hope, 'an aesthetics of hope' will fail to deal with the challenges that we face.

I don't think that there is a better way to conclude these reflections than to play the chorus in Stimela's 'Whispers in the deep' (3.00-3.47)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qy9QPjUkvvM> and share with you the lyrics of the song:

Sleep right in your eye  
This is tasty food for rat and flies  
Call me angry, call me mad  
Soul whispers in the deep  
The echo!  
All throughout the land  
Reaches out to find, a head  
But finds an amputated stomp  
That tells the strong of the lonely  
And beats the rhythm of the flame  
I'm inspired  
I cannot understand hate  
(Khawuphinde, Khawuphinde mzala)  
Whose songs are as truthful?  
As dream flows as steady as a stream  
A stream of knowledge and of pain  
Of one whose stance begin to wane  
Allow the sleep to retire  
Because their love blows out the fire  
I can see you pointed finger  
Your eyes binoculars  
Whispers in the deep  
Bayahleba

We are all tributaries of that great of river of pain  
Flowing into one ocean  
There is only one ocean  
All our pain flowing into it  
But it did spill over  
Spill over the wonders of love  
Into one nation of love  
Before we recognise that all the oceans  
All the oceans are one  
Khawuphinde mzala hmmm  
Khawuphinde mzala hee!!  
Khawuphinde mzala hmmm  
Khawuphinde mzala whololo  
Ungahlebi  
Speak your mind  
Don't be afraid  
Don't whisper in the deep  
Speak out your mind

Stand up! Wake up!  
There's still sleep right in your eye  
Call me angry, call me mad  
A soul that Whispers in the deep  
I'm inspired  
But I can't understand hate  
I'm inspired if I can't understand it

\*Dinga Sikwebu is a trade unionist based at the head office of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa). Dinga considers himself as a follower and appreciator of jazz music. Previously, he has written on jazz in publications such as Uhuru, Creative Feel, City Press, Business Day and Sunday Independent.

(Published in

<https://musicallymine.wordpress.com/2025/05/26/sibusiso-mashiloane-presents-isigqi-pulse-of-home-album-review/>)

### **Sibusiso Mashiloane presents ISIGQI Pulse of 'Home': Album Review** (26 May 2025)

If there was any music that could express the pulse of the African soul, and define the essence of South African 'jazz', or display sounds and rhythms that emanate from the humanity of South Africa's diverse groups, it's pianist, composer, and jazz don, Sibusiso Mashiloane's production of **ISIGQI**.



Mashiloane, affectionately referred to as 'Mash', has been pursuing musical concepts and expressions of 'home' according to his own personal experience. He has found some excellent examples in these twelve songs which are actually memories – of *'place, people, and location'*. For the listener, it's a journey into South Africa's homelands to uncover the pulse, beats, chants, and emotional sounds of its peoples through their music, which has become his own, also.

Thus, ISIGQI, *'the incessant beat of the people'*, pays tribute to the people who have influenced his continual quest to better understand his sense of being and identity. His rendition of what his African home sounds like is deeply spiritual, ascribing a divine connection and personal memory to each song. Although songs were crafted in his South African homeland, his residency with Swiss musicians in Basel, Switzerland allowed them to participate in this unique sound quest of the African 'home'. Hence, this album was recorded live at the Bird's Eye jazz club in Basel in December 2024 with four Swiss musicians. Overdubs of the South African vocal choir were added at the University of KwaZulu Natal in February 2025. The album is due for release end May 2025.

Mashiloane's previous albums have excavated rhythms and sonic emotions from his continual interactions with people. His last album, **Izibongo** (2023), pays musical homage to the power of gratitude for receiving the guidance, love, and skills-building from so many. The undercurrents of a Divine Power are always acknowledged as well.

Mash has completed his PH.D. at UKZN, has launched an album each year since 2016, and continues to teach and tour at home and abroad. He is also driving the South African Association for Jazz Education (SAJE) as Chair as well as receiving accolades, nominations, and awards from various cultural bodies. Mash seeks innovative collaborations, such as in *ISIGQI*, and will continue to represent an important compositional voice in the African and South African jazz industry.

From the beginning, the listener relaxes to various moods and melodies as the composer presents his utmost appreciation to fellow colleagues. 'Wethu', a love ballad inspired by jazz collector Mamsie Ntshangase, offers gentle, soothing Zimu (Godly) blessings from an eloquent alto saxophone solo. One hears her gospel of love explode.

Guitarist Madala Kunene, long revered, according to Mash, for his '*ways of musicking*', or making music from Zulu traditions and roots, is applauded in 'KwaZulu' from whence Kunene comes. The rhythms in 'Africa' could not come from any other continent or region other than Africa. One hears home sounds – from the soil of the indigenous Nguni speakers of southern Africa to the foot-stomping khoisan in ritual dance and chant to contemporary blues chords, signaling possible mismatches in our world. Africa is not just a place, but a people-focused 'home' with human experiences displaying ubuntu qualities of living. In 'KwaNdebele', Mash's characteristic left hand chord chant holds this song with haunting repetitive phrases that seek to remember his Ndebele traditions that he grew up with (in Bethal, Mpumalanga). Another Ndebele reference is in 'Zimu', meaning supreme God, with a heavy bass and percussion which suggests deference to a powerful divine force, all-knowing, operating in a continuum of beginning and end. 'Townships in the 90s' bristles like jive songs coming from people's houses or taxis. Familiar. Local.

'Jeez' '= you could have done better!! has a touch of humour with a funky beat, the message coming from a determined mentor. Dominic Egli's drum solo presents a myriad of beats that would satisfy anyone's toe-tapping needs! This is the longest piece on the album which displays the wealth of skills held in this band.

'Internal Vibrations' is a song for percussionist Tlale Makhene who spent decades articulating a sound of home. Drummer Egli has reproduced a deeply moving pulse with rhythms, but at times with a cacophonous interchange between the alto and tenor saxophones. Composer Mash seems to explore how sounds pile up on one another and communicate messages from one generation to another.

The other songs honour mentors who have touched Mash's sense of purpose. His Durban-based teachers, Susan Barry and Neil Gonsalves, played a large role in enabling the young Mash to meet and learn from legends and dons. 'She is Mother' (S Barry), a bluesy song with a touch of funk, represents how Mash was encouraged to meet and learn from legendary singer, Busi Mhlongo, while Gonsalves lauds the Mbaqanga style of South African jazz with his students in 'Real-Neil'. The song carries horn improvisations played over a fundamental Mbaqanga beat by the piano and drums.

'The Chief' presents a melodic and danceable swing meant to highlight the importance of body movement with a subtle samba beat allowing rhythmic outlets to emerge. Even minimal dance moves can still form part of how local communities express themselves. As the album begins, it ends with another tribute to a fellow musician who has displayed a specific brilliance in his playing, like in 'A Tribute to Philani Ngidi'. This song has a classical

liturgical feel with a bluesy twist. Subtle upright bass solo by Xaver Ruegg accompanied by a vocal choir enhances the tribute chant.

The album bustles with home sounds, unmistakably South African, and exudes the composer's appreciation with glee. The listener will dance feet-first!

**Band Members:**

Tapiwa Svosve on Alto Saxophone

Christoph Irrniger on Tenor Saxophone

Xaver Rüeegg on Upright bass

Dominic Egli on Drums

**Vocal choir** overdubs were done at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in February 2025.

Mbuso Nxumalo – Bass, Tenor and Vocal Coach

Ntokozo Kunene – Soprano

Tamia Rex – Soprano and Alto

Amanda Mbatha – Alto

Sibusiso Mashiloane is only in 'Africa'