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# FOLK SONGS SUNG IN GAZANKULU

(in Tonic Solfa, Staff Notation and Video Tapes)

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STUDY LEADER: PROF E HOGO

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#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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- 2. I am also indebted to Mrs Marelie Schöning for book, "The Role of Singing in Music Education", which gave me some ideas as to what and what not to include in my document.
- 3. To the University of Pretoria Audio-Visual Centre officials, where always more than willing to professionally provide for my needs, I say thank you.
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#### CHAPTER ONE

# RESEARCH PROGRAMME

This research paper consists of three video-cassettes on which 43 songs from Gazankulu are recorded.

The author is a music adviser who visits the schools in this area regularly. Therefore he was able to make a responsible choice of songs which are regularly sung, including those in the indigenous languages of the Northern Transvaal.

The first video cassette consists of the singing of the individual voice parts of each song. Then it was discovered that it was desirable to sing the songs in solfa. This was added to the other two video cassettes.

The solfa is useful for pupils who wish to learn the songs, but who do not know the languages. The video cassettes also depict the following:

- \* facial expression
- body language
- \* actions
- \* movement
- conducting

In the final instance 21 songs were selected and were provided with:

- \* the lyrics
- translation of the words into English
- background information of each song
- \* tonic solfa and staff notation.

The most important contribution of the research paper is the fact that the problems relating to -

- \* the selection of songs;
- \* notation in solfa and staff; and
- \* video-recordings

were experienced in practice and the workable solutions were found.

There is a need to use songs from other ethnic groups of South Africa in our Class Music Syllabuses. At present there are very few such document songs. This research paper is the first attempt to provide a South African song book, with the necessary solfa and staff notations, on video cassettes.

#### **CHAPTER TWO**

#### 2. SOUTH AFRICAN SONGS

#### 2.1 Problem Statement

There has always been a dire need for a specifically South African song book for use in schools and by other interested music groups. Being a land of great cultural diversity, South Africa is very rich in songs, a very high percentage of which has not been documented and can, therefore, not be effectively used by scholars, choirs, music classes and other interested groups. It is hoped that this collection of 21 songs in Tsonga, Venda, Northern Soth and Zulu will form a foundation on which more can be added. It is further hoped that songs in all the languages spoken in South Africa will be included in the final collection.

# 2.2 Use of the songs

Most of the songs in this collection are four-part arrangements suitable for use by choral groups, and are accompanied by dance. An attempt has been made to include tuned with simple rhythmic flow, as well as those with more complex rhythmic patterns. The songs can thus be used in class music lessons for sight reading and for teaching movement, in both the lower and the more advanced classes. These songs can lend themselves to instrumental accompaniment; especially percussion accompaniment calls for some measure of improvisation, and also offer ample opportunity for creativity. Since most tradition African songs are accompanied by some kind of movement, the visual element (watching the chorographical skills) is included.

The polyphonic, simple and repetitive nature of these songs makes them more readily enjoyable to pupils than other indigenous or Wester/non-Western types of

music. Since they led themselves to a cappella singing, they are a favourite in vocal music-making circles, especially among African choral groups, where accompaniment is not common.

Each of the songs has not only been notated in both tonic solfa and staff notation, but also video-taped, with the compiler singing each part of every one of the songs in both tonic solfa and in words.

The collection includes songs for different occasions in order to cater for as many interests as possible. For that matter, life itself consists of a large variety of situations, feelings, aspirations and experiences, and folk songs are a unique musical means of expressing these various life moods.

# 2.3 Merits of the Songs

A summary of the merits of these songs with resect to class music teaching are as follows:

- they are short and yet complete;
- they are pleasant to the ear;
- they have varying degrees of difficulty;
- they are suitable for various grade/age groups
- they mostly comment on down-to-earth life situations;
- they are appropriate for use by schools and other singing groups;
- they are suitable for teaching both tonic solfa and staff notation;
- they are enjoyed by the majority of South Africans;
- they are suitable for voice exercises;
- they are also suitable for developing co-ordination between singing; and
- they engage, and give healthy exercise to, the individual's physical and emotional faculties.

There are in Gazankulu important music activities in which the author is actively involved. Therefore a chapter has been added in which these activities are described.

#### CHAPTER THREE

#### 3. MUSIC ACTIVITIES IN GAZANGULU

#### 3.1 Informal music education activities

# 3.1.1 "Rural Traditional Music"

This kind of music and dance falls into two categories, namely, Western musical instrument-accompanied music. The instruments here include electric guitars and organs, drums and other percussions. This kind of music has, since the early 1970s become very popular among Black listeners, especially the Shangaan/Tsonga people, among whom there are numerous composers. The most popular composers of this category of music are Thomas Chauke, January Ngobeni Elias Baloyi and GT Chauke. The second category is that of percussion (drum) accompanied song-and-dance music.

"Muchongolo", "mukhinyavezo", "xincayincayi", and "xibelana" are examples of this kind of traditional music and dance. An annual competition of this kind of music and dance is held in different districts of Gazankulu, followed by a "territorial" competition of the district champion groups. The competitions are organized under the auspices of the Tsonga Bureau for Culture which is financially supported by the Gazankulu Government. This national event takes place at the Giyani Show Grounds. Both young and old participate in the competition.

# 3.1.2 Township Folk Songs

These folk songs are characterised by brevity, repetition, strong and (usually) syncopated rhythmic patterns and dance accompaniment. They are very popular with both school and adult choirs. Traditionally township folk songs have been orally transmitted from generation to generation. It is rather unfortunate that in the

process of this oral transmission, beautiful folk songs may become spoiled by "transmitters" who half-learn the songs and thus allow these to be learned in their inaccurate form. The idea of having folk songs notated has of late become very welcome in order to preserve them in their reasonably original form.

# 3.1.3 Other Music Types

Other music types such as pop, gospel, reggae, jazz and mbaqanga are also popular in Gazankulu. Examples of performing groups in this category are Pure Gold, Mahotela Queens, Brenda Fassie, High Masekela and Meriam Makeba.

# 3.1.4 Choir Competitions and Festivals

Choir competitions and festivals are perhaps the best organized forms of music making in Gazankulu. Giyani, the Gazankulu homeland town where occasional and annual choir competitions and festivals are usually held has often been described as "the Mecca of Music". Many choirs from various parts of South Africa rally to the town to take part in the competition. The popularity of Giyani as a venue for choir competitions and eisteddfodau can be attributed to the availability of facilities such as a good shopping centre, an hotel, show grounds, a sophisticated stadium, a large, modern hall (the Chachulani Hall) coupled with a peaceful and hospitable atmosphere, Giyani has become one of the most ideal venues for concerts and eisteddfodau in the Transvaal.

#### 3.1.5 The Khindlimuka Choir Festival

Started in earnest in 1967, the Khindlimuka choir festival is one of the best organised and most popular music making festivals in South Africa. In the past 25 years this festival has drawn choirs from many parts of the Transvaal, and, at times, Natal. Hundreds of primary, post primary, college and adult choirs take part in the competitive festival. So do church, hospital and police choirs.

Like the traditional music and dance mentioned above, the Khindlimuka Festival is organised under the auspices of the **Tsonga Bureau** for Culture, and financially supported by the Gazankulu Education Department. Every year the Gazangulu Cabinet honour this and other choir festivals by their presence in the Chachulani concert hall.

The curation of the annual choir festival is three days, during the Friday, Saturday and Sunday of September. On the Friday, Primary Schools compete, are adjudicated, and the results of the competition announced. On the following day (Saturday), post primary (junior and senior secondary) schools have their turn of the performance. On the Sunday thereof the following groups of choirs compete: colleges, church choirs, hospital choirs, police and adult choirs also compete. At the end of each competition day all choirs which have won in particular sections are awarded trophies plus some prize money.

At the beginning of every year (usually in February), all the choirs which won are invited to a prestigious concert in Giyani, where they are congratulated and warded further prizes by well-wishing sponsors. For wxample, in 1992, Momentum Life, an insurance company sponsored the celebration, and undertook to do so in future years.

The Khindlimuka Festival encourages composers to produce new works by prescribing suitable song pieces for different sections of the competition each year. The result is that Gazankulu can today boast of not less than 10 noteworthy choral music composers, viz the late Rev DC Marivate, DD Malungana, SJ Hlekani, RS Mtsetwene, as well as SJ Khosa, LJ Nkuna, EP Maswanganyi, DG Baloyi, S Chauke, B Shilubane and GV Maluleke.

# 3.1.6 The Influence of Tsonga Composers

Choral works by composers such as DC Marivate, S Chauke, SJ Khosa, SJ Hlekane and LJ Nkuna are good examples of the influence Tsonga composers' choral works

have had on general education. For example:

- DC Marivate's song, "Vakhale va Varile", composed in 1934, is both a historical and political record of the colonisation and subsequent political and economic domination of Africa by Europeans.
- S Chauke's "Dyana Masonja ni Timanga" is an advice to everyone to include in their diet the mopani worms (masonja"), groundnuts and pumkins in other words, good food, for the sake of good health.
- SJ Khosa's vivid description of the Drakensberg Mountain Range ("Tintshava ta Drakensberg) has prompted a number of school excursions by choristers and other pupils who have got the message of the song: a description of places of interest to be found along the mountain range, eg the Strydom Tunnel, the Blyde River Canyon, the Echo Caves, God's Window etc.
- SJ Hlekane's "Xintshabyana" is in praise of Nature, and emphasised nature conservation.
- LJ Nkuna's "Ku Hlupheka ka Vantima" is a historical survey of the apartheid politics of South Africa. The lyrics of these and other Tsonga composers have much educational significance. Their religious songs and those based on folklore have a bearing on the cultivation by pupils and adults of good morals and well-balanced personality development. "Mbongolo" by Marivate emphasizes the value of careful judgement in everyday life situations. In short, the compositions advocate respect for nature, human dignity and fairness: educative topics are used by the composers to comment on almost every sphere of life experiences.

# 3.1.7 Community Involvement Through Music

In Gazankulu, as in other communities, choirs and other musicmaking groups take

part in different kinds of meetings - festivals, funerals, political rallies, agricultural shows, official openings of establishments, celebrations of all kinds and so on. These music activities serve not only to entertain the crowds, but also to bring in the spirit of unity and an atmosphere that is as beautiful as good music. While breathing is an involuntary, spontaneous way of keeping all living creatures alive, music making, especially singing, is a conscious, deliberate and artistic way of elevating the process of living. Every single mood in life is portrayable by music, which is, no doubt, the loftiest form of self-expression. Gazankulu is one of the shining examples of how people cannot, and should not, live without music.

# 3.1.8 Liaisoning with Music Makers outside Gazankulu

Gazankulu choirs and musicians make sure that they liaison with music makers beyond the confines of their territory.

Not only do Gazankulu choirs take part in national and international festivals and eisteddfodau; the territory's music organisers also invite choirs from other parts of South Africa to perform in their concert halls. The following are examples of Gazankulu's choirs and musicians' involvement in national and international involvement:

Adult choirs take part in the annual National Choir Festival sponsored by Caltex and Old Mutual. Participation in this festival depends on a choir emerging as the winners in the regional eliminations (competition). One of Gazankulu's adult or college choir represents the territory at the annual Sasol Choral Festival as well as the Oude Meester Festival. In 1987 the Hozani College choir took part in the Roodepoort International Esiteddfod. They also took part in the international mass choir. In the same year (1987) the music section of the Department of Education invited choirs from different parts of South Africa - Durban, Qwaqwa, Kwandebele, Kangwane, Venda, Pophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei and Lebowa, to take part in the Sasol Choral Festival, which was jointly sponsored by Gazankulu and Sasol.

Since its inception in 1986, the Sasol choral Festival mass choir has annually been conducted by SJ Khosa, Gazankulu's music inspector and composer of the "Sasol Song". This composer-conductor has also conducted the roodepoort Internaitonal mass choir singing his own commissioned work entitled "New Africa". Khosa also serves on the DNE committee for Arts Education.

#### 3.2 Formal Music Education

Formal music education embraces class music in all its forms as prescribed in the various syllabi. The syllabi of the Department of Education and Training is used in Gazankulu. Music is, unfortunately not effectively taught in schools and colleges. The reasons for this include lack of:

- suitably qualified music teachers
- \* the necessary equipment
- examinable status for the subject and
- interest in the subjects by school principals

A music centre with two qualified (music) teachers has been established. A piano, recorders, xylophones and metalophones are taught besides theory.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

# 4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Being a land of great cultural diversity, South Africa is very rich in songs, a high percentage of which has not been documented by means of solfa, staff notation or video-tapes. Therefore they are not vailable for use in music classes or for school singing. It is therefore important that those songs which have been video-taped should be notated in both solfa and staff notation. During the research and the documentation of the songs the following problems were encountered:

- having to embark on the research programme without any financial assistance
- appointments with potential data providers not always honoured
- the researcher being not so proficient in staff notation
- research assistants having no knowledge of tonic solfa, and
- typists without the slightest knowledge of the languages used in the typing matter.

The above and other problems often caused delays, and sometimes having to do the same work all over again. Fortunately, the work that had to be done again was better done the second time!

In view of the above it is also important that indigenous folk music should be written down. This should, however, require the necessary grants and bursaries. People who are capable of understanding this work must be identified and put to use. Experience has shown that team research produces the best results.

The various music activities of the different parts of our country have seldom been notated or video-taped. It is recommended that the Radio, Television, Press and educational institutions give more publicity to these activities, which also provide an important field of research for post-graduate studies. It is strongly recommended that a South African song book, which will include songs of tall the various language groups, should be published. The book must be made available to teachers, and should be on video, with the necessary solfa and staff notation. Financial support will make wuch a publication possible.

It can be used for the teaching of

- \* multi-cultural music;
- \* sight singing; and
- \* the teaching of music theory.

# APPENDIX A

# LIST OF FOLK SONGS IN THEIR ORDER IN THE BOOK

- 1. A re Tsamayeng
- 2. Xi Rila Ngop#u
- 3. Tshiivha Ts.
- 4. Va ta Giya Va ka Zulu
- 5. Mandad Swekile
- 6. Ndzi Rila Vanhu
- 7. Wen'u nge Gee
- 8. Hi ku Twanana
- 9. Tsho La Muri tsha Pomoka
- 10. Ke Mmone Maabane
- 11. Muxe, Muxe
- 12. Vamaseve
- 13. Goloi ya Makhuwa
- 14. Risenga wa Deya
- 15. S'yolala Ngaphi
- 16. Ba Bowa ka Wena
- 17. Tuva le Mur
- 18. Josefa N'wamilorho
- 19. Xewan', Xewan' Wamanana
- 20. Tshilidzi tshi Mangadzaho
- 21. Xisaka xa Tuva

# **ALPHABETICAL INDEX**

- 1. A re Tsamayeng
- 2. Ba Bowa ka Wena
- 3. Goloi ya Makhuwa
- 4. Hi ku twanana
- 5. Josefa N'wamilorho
- 6. Ke Mmone Maabane
- 7. Manana o Swekile
- 8. Moxe, Moxe
- 9. Ndzi Rila Vana va Vanhu
- 10. Risenga wa Deya
- 11. S'yolala Ngaphi
- 12. Tshiivha Tshanga
- 13. Tshilidzi tshi Mangadzaho
- 14. Tsho La Muri tsha Pomoka
- 15. Tuva le Murhini
- 16. Vamaseve
- 17. Va ta Giya Va ka Zulu
- 18. Wen' u nge Gee
- 19. Xewan', Xewan' Vamanana
- 20. Xi Rila Ngop∳u
- 21. Xisaka xa Tuva

#### **INDEX**

# I. TSONGA FOLK SONGS

- 1. Xi Rila Ngop≴u
- 2. Va ta Giya Va ka Zulu
- 3. Manana o Swekile
- 4. Ndzi Rila Vana va Vanhu
- 5. Wen' u nge Gee
- 6. Hi ku Twanana
- 7. Moxe, Moxe
- 8. Vamaseve
- 9. Risenga wa Deya
- 10. Tuva le Murhini
- 11. Josefa N'wamilorho
- 12. Xewan', Xewan' Vamanana
- 13. Xisaka xa Tuva

# **II. VENDA FOLK SONGS**

- 14. Tshiivha Tshanga tsho Dzhiyelwa
- 15. Tsho La Muri tsha Pomoka
- 16. Goloi ya Makhuwa
- 17. Tshilidzi Mangadzaho

# III. NORTHERN SOTHO FOLK SONGS

- 18. A re Tsamayeng
- 19. Ke Mmone Maabane
- 20. Ba Bowa ka Wena

# IV ZULU FOLK SONG

21. S'yolala Ngaphi

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE SONGS

# I. A re Tsamayeng

# I.I Meaning

Let us go to our homes to see our parents.

# 1.2 Background

This Northen Sotho tune is usually sung by school children when they are far away from their parents, i.e. when they are in a nostalgic mood.

# 1. A re Tsamayeng





# 2. Xi Rila Ngopfu

# 2.1 Meaning

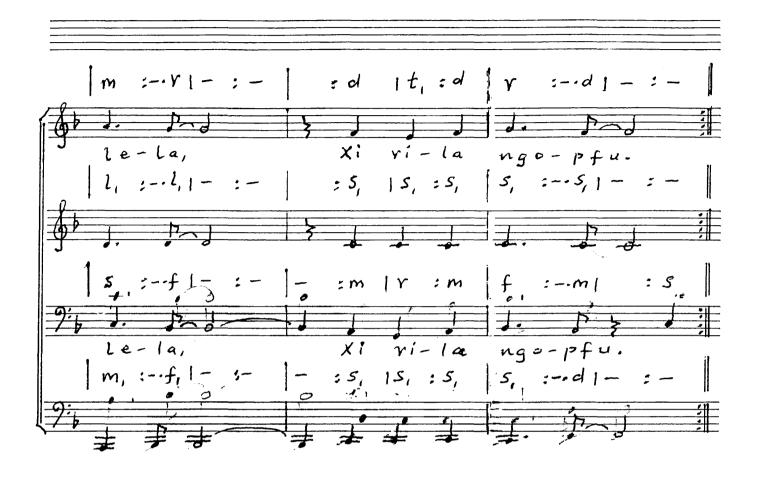
The bride's mother is crying bitterly, while the bridegroom is beaming with joy.

# 2.2 Background

It is customary for the bride's mother to crying during the wedding feast of her daughter because she (the former) is not sure whether or not her daughter'ns marriage will living happiness or miery. On the other hand, the bridegroom is very happy to get his new wife. The bride usually has mingled feelings about her marriage because, on the one hand she wants to get married, and on the other she is anxious about the unknown at her new home, with all the in-laws.

# 2 - Xi Rila Ngopfu



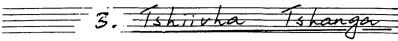




# 3. Tshiivha Tshanga

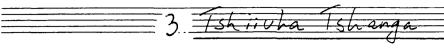
# 3.3 Background

This is a Venda herd-boys' song. The boy who discovers a bird's nest becomes the "owner" of both the bird (in this case a dove) and the nest. Now, the discover of a dove's nest is complaining that someone has stollen the eggs of his dove, which were two in number.

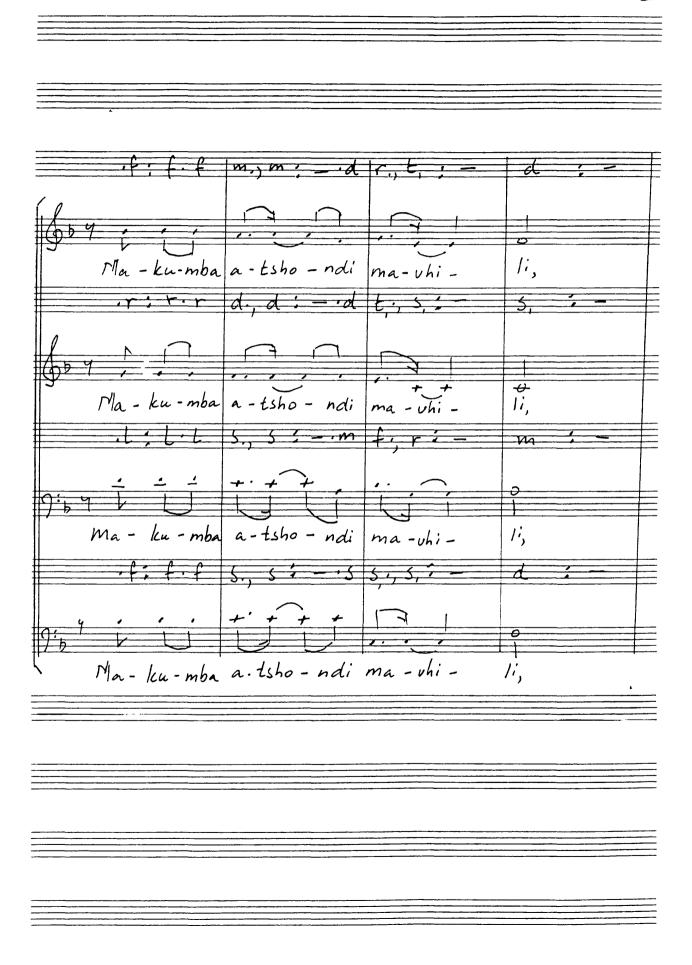


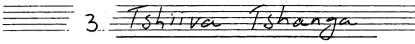














# 4. Va ta Giya Va ka Zulu

# 4.2 Meaning

The Zulu will dance. Yes, indeed, they will dance.

# 4.3 Background

This a Tsonga/Shangaan tune sung to a Zulu type of a dance. The Shangaan/Tsonga people have historic links with the Zulus, and they sometimes dance like the latter.





# 5. MANANA O SWEKILE

# 5.1 Meaning

Hurray! we are so happy!

Mother has cooked some porridge and some relish (meat or vegetables She will also cook some pumpkins and keep them in the pot.

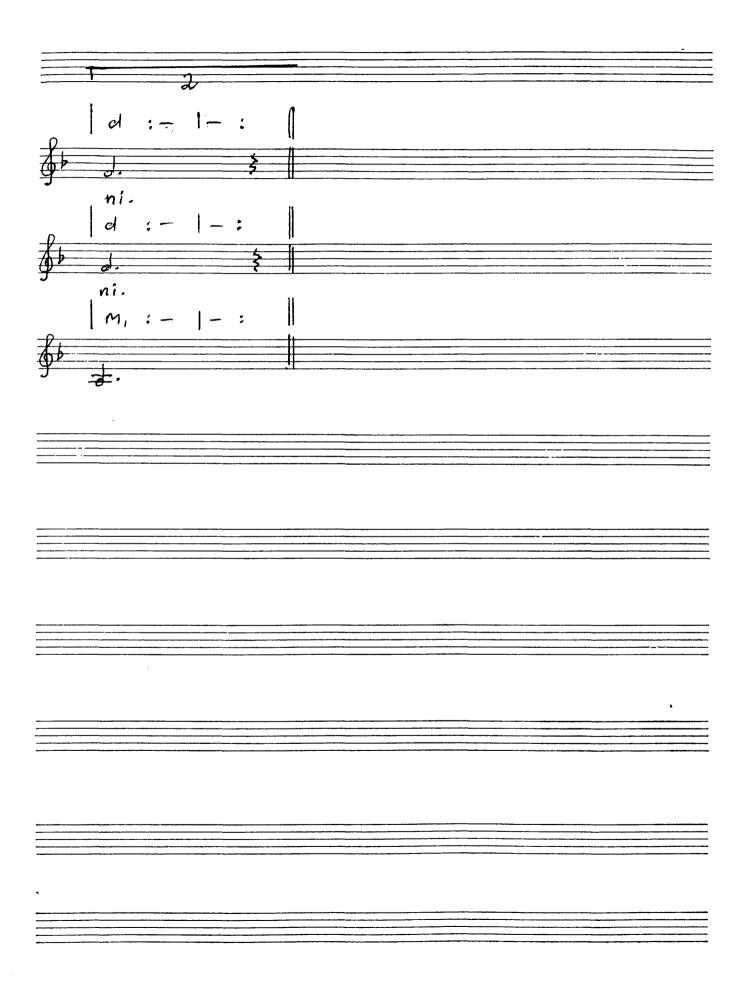
# 5.2 Background

This is a Tsonga children's song. It is important here to note that porridge is always enjoyed simultaniously with meat or vegetables (relish).

### 5. Manana O Swekile







### 6. Ndzi Rila Vana va Vanhu

### 6.1 Meaning

I am crying for the poor children, they might be eaten up by the lions and the hyenas.

### 6.2 Background

This is a Tsonga tune. It is used to accompany, and is part of a folktale.

## b. Ndzi Rila Vana va Vanhu - 4-



### 7. Wen' u nge Gee

### 7.1 Meaning

Wood-cutter, wood-cutter, please, go and tell my mother that is nomore; they killed her for her whitest teeth.

### 7.2 Background

This is a Tsonga tune - part of a folk-tale - about a girl with the whitest teeth around her area. Jealous of her pretty set of teeth, her peergroup girls conspired to, and actually did, push her into a dengerously deep part of a river. She was kept captive in the deep waters by a strange, amphibeous being. When one day she heard a wood-cutting sound she pleaded with the wood-cutter—that he should go and tell her mother that she had been thrown into the river.

## 7. Wen'unge Gee





### 8. Hi ku twanana

### 8.1 Meaning

It is a good thing to serve the Lord(worship) together. Even the ants know how to co-operate and dig their holes together. The teachers too are able to teach the children through co-operation.

### 8.2 Background

This Tsonga Religious tune is about the importance of co-operation.

## 8. Hi Ku Twanana







### 9. Tsho La Muri tsha Pomoka

### 9.1 Meaning

They have stole some fruit from some-body's orchard and accused the elephant for having done so. "Mutotoliyo" and "Sankambe" are nick-names given to the deceptive hare.

### 9.2 Background

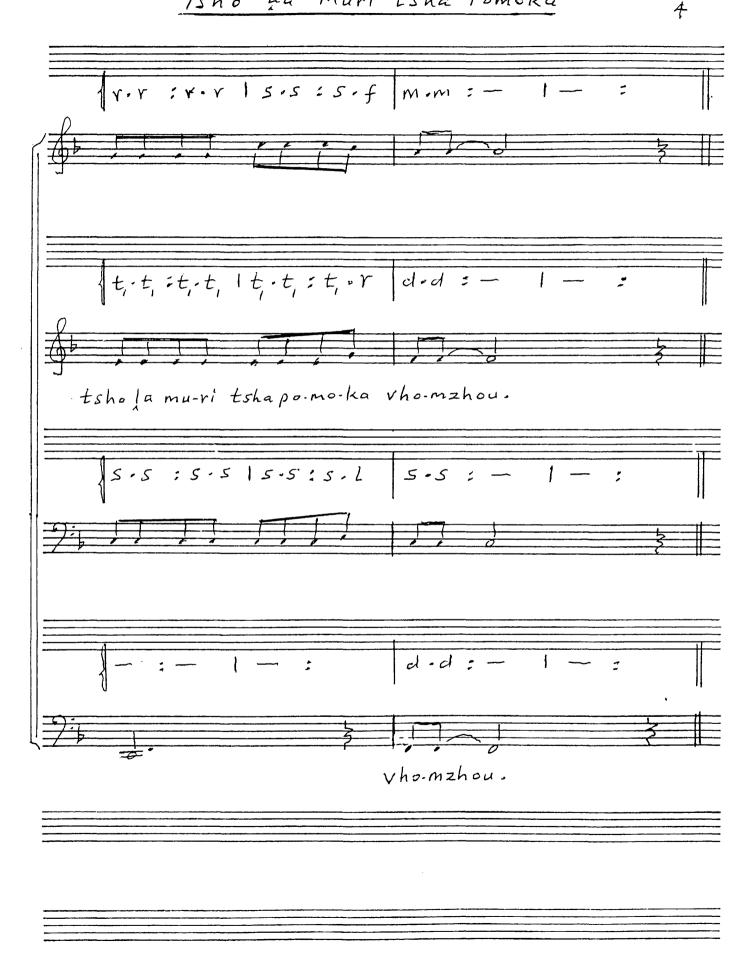
This is a Venda tune - part of a folk-tale.

# 9. Tsho La Muritsha Pomoka









### 10. Ke Mmone Maabane

### 10.1 Meaning

I sow him yesterday walking with her. Yes, Theledi himself.

### 10.2 Background

This is a Northen Sotho Love Song.









### 11. Muxe, Muxe

### 11.1 Meaning

"Moses, Moses, remove your shoes because you are standing on holy ground!" You young men, learn how to put your ties on; you young ladies learn how to put on your skirts properly, other-wise you will do it wrongly on a wedding day.

### 11.2 Background

This is a Tsonga wedding song. The lyrics come from the Bible story, where Moses hears a voice ordering him to remove his shoes etc. The words that follow irrelevant from the Bible story. The young men and the young women are being advised to learn to dress properly, in preparation for the wedding day.











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## 11. Muxe, Susa Tintangu











#### 12. Vamaseve

#### 12.1 Meaning

Well, well, dear in-laws, everything has an end!

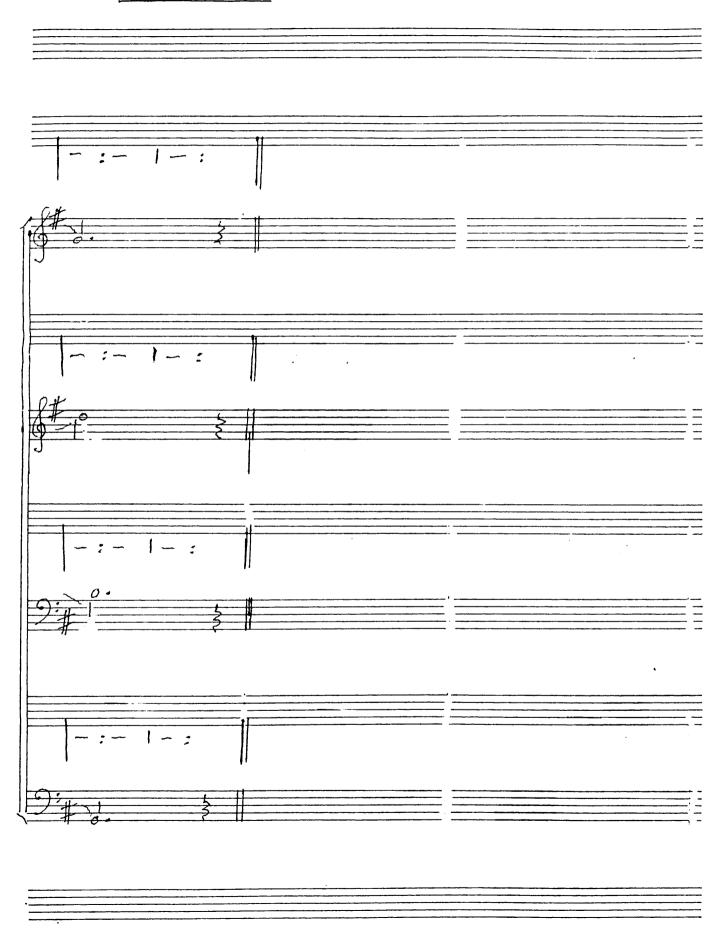
#### 12.2 Background

This Tsonga traditional song is usually accompanied with tingoma (small drums). It is usually sung during drinking sessions and is accompanied with dance.









#### 13. Goloi ya Makhuwa

## 13.1 Meaning

The steam locomotive is a wagon of the white people.

#### 13.3 Background

This Venda tune is about the steam locomotive. The compound word "Tshutshu-wee" is an ideophone derived from the sound of a steam locomotive. The word "makala" has seemingly been borrowed from Tsonga. It means coal (which is used in a steam lomotive).

# 13 Gotoi ya Malzhuwa









## 14. Risenga wa Deya

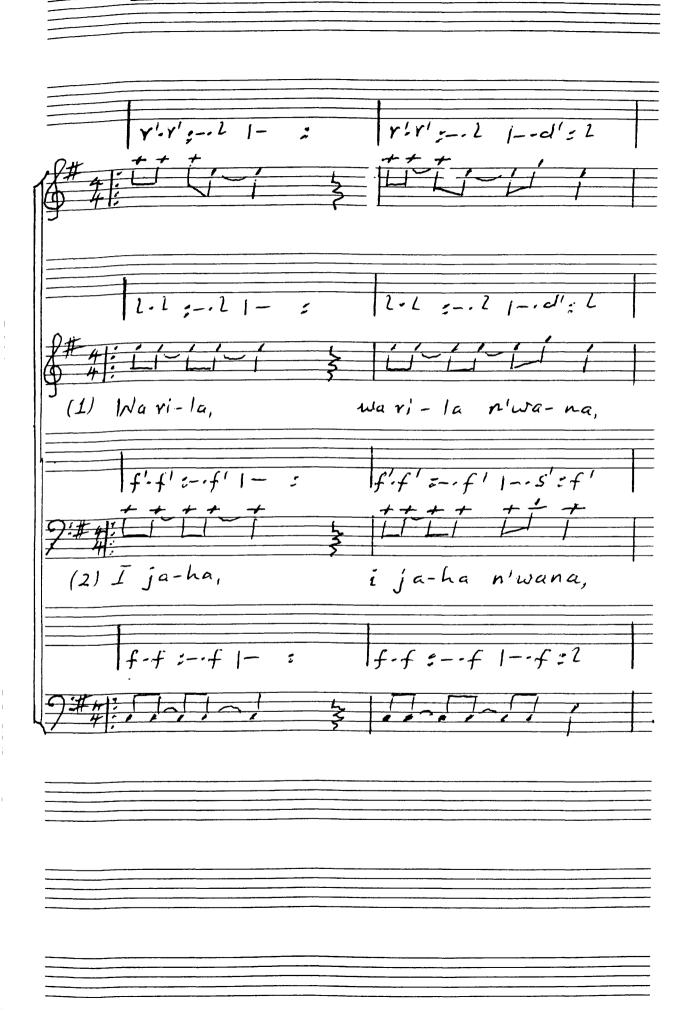
#### 14.1 Meaning

He is now a big boy
Risenga (who is a toddler)
is learning how to walk.
Nyanisi (who is a baby-girl toddler)
is struggling to walk.

The baby is crying and is walking!

## 14.2 Background

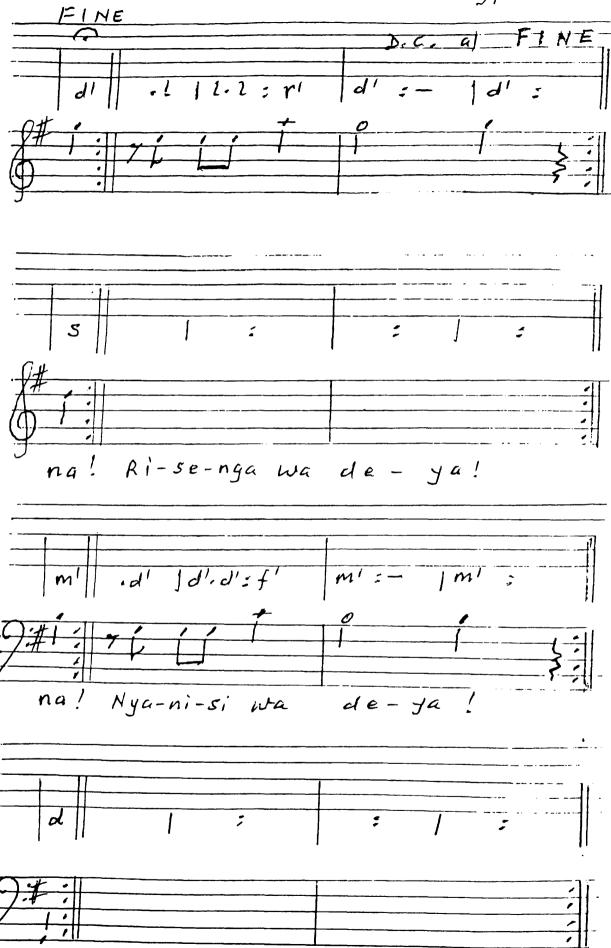
This is a Tsonga lullaby.











## 15. S'yolala Ngaphi

S'yolal/ngaphi?

## 15.1 Meaning

Where are we going to sleep?

## 15.2 Background

This Zulu tune is mostly used by boy-scouts when they go out camping.





#### 16. Ba Bowa ka Wena

## 16.1 Meaning

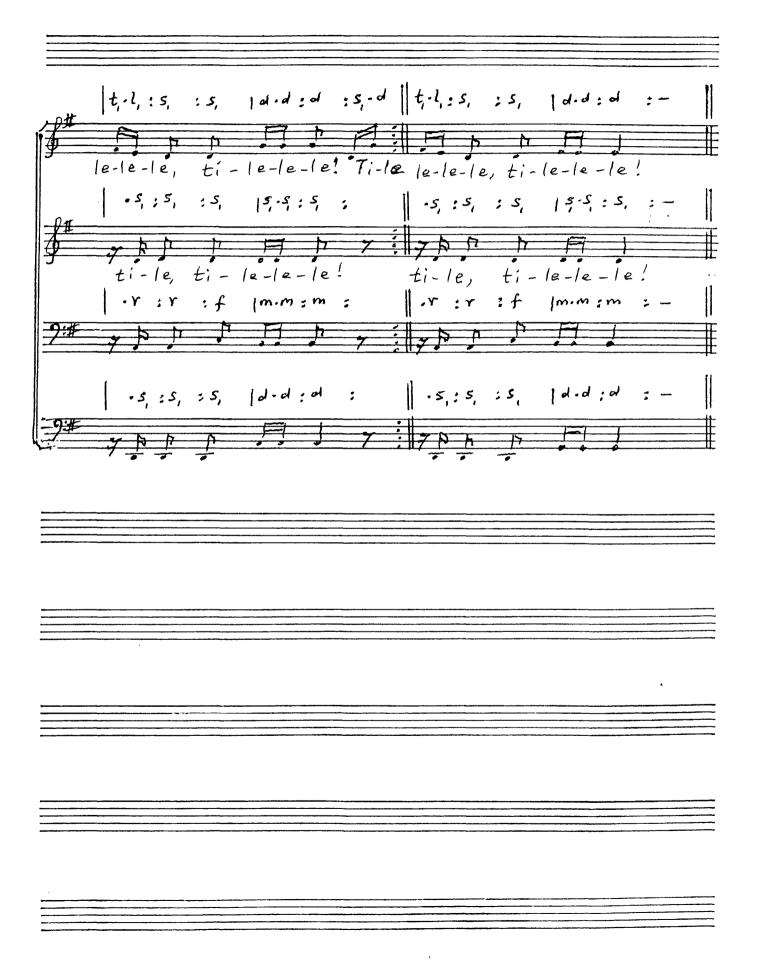
They are talking about you: they are saying "It is Moroboro". Hurray! hurray!

#### 16.2 Background

This Northern Sotho tune is simply sung for the sake of singing, rather than to express a specific message. Perhaps "Moroboro" might mean anybody people may be talking about.

## 16. Ba Bowa ka Wena Moroboro





#### 17. Tuva Le Murhini

#### 17.1 Meaning

See the dove in the tree!

O, a dove indeed:

## 17.2 Background

Some boys see a dove patching itself in the the tree. The stealthily move nearer and nearer the tree, careful not to scare the bird away. The song is perhaps an expression of their sense of wonderment and appreciation. Do the boys perhaps want to shoot it for a nice braai? The song then is about this dove.





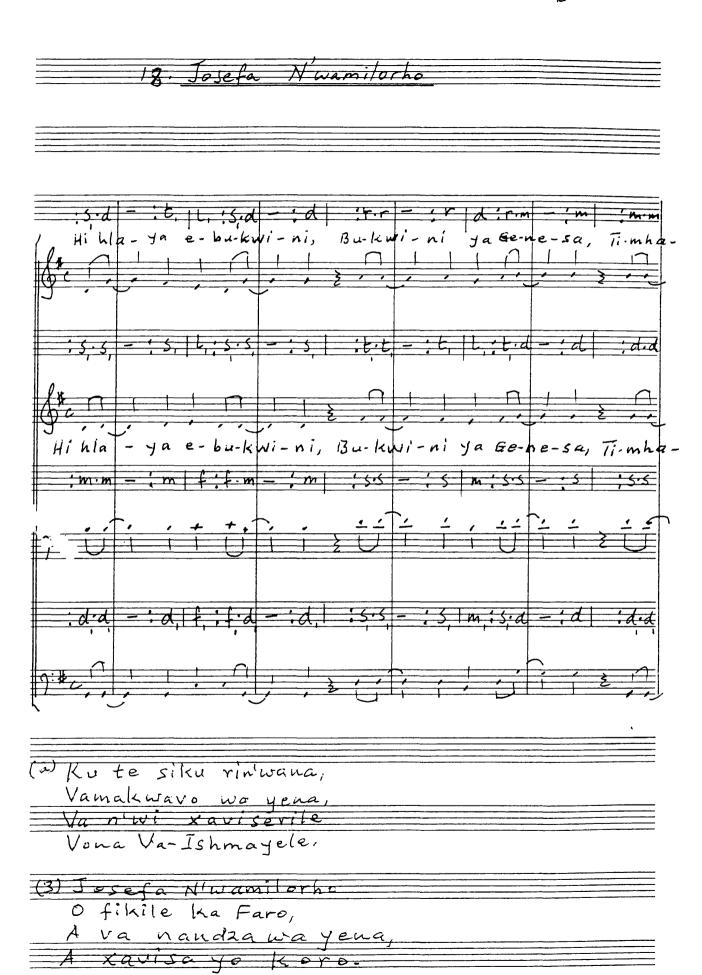
#### 18. Josefa N'wamilorho

#### 18.1 Meaning

a. We read from the Book of Genesis About Joseph the Dreamer. One day his brothers sold him to the Ishmaelites. Joseph eventually became Farao's servant, and his job was to sell corn.

## 18.2 Background

This tune with religious Tsonga words comes from a Zulu folk song.





#### 19. Xewani, Xewan' Vamanana

## 19.1 Meaning

- (a) We greet you our mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, we greet you our people.
- (b) We are happy to see you today. We greet you our people.

## 19.2 Background

This tune is sung in Tsonga by many Gazankulu school choirs, usually during special occations such as parent-days. Although it has for several decades been sung in Tsonga, it seems to be of Western origion.

## 19 : Xewan', Xewan' Vamanana



## Yewan', Xewan' Vamanana





## 20. Tshilidzi Tshi Mangadzaho

#### 20.1 Meaning

Wonderful grace He (Jesus) gave to me when He died that I might be saved.

## 20.2 Background

This religious chorus, sung in Venda, Tsonga and English, is actually of Western origion.





#### 21. Xisaka xa Tuva

## 21.1 Meaning

The nest of a dove is very common during this (autumn) season.

#### 21.2 Background

This old Tsonga tune is usually sung by boys and girls during the autumn season, while busy scaring away doves and other swarms of birds from corn-fields. During this season doves make their nests close to the corn-fields - hence the nests are "common" at this time of the year.







