



**BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN URBAN MUSIC STYLES:
THE IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS AND BELIEFS
SURROUNDING THEIR DEVELOPMENT
1930 – 1960**

by

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To my parents, George and Georgina, with love and gratitude.

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SUMMARY

The main focus of this work explores the ideological concepts surrounding the early development of South African urban music.

First, a brief description of the development of some of the major urban music styles of the continent of Africa is provided. This is followed by an overview of the early development of South African urban styles, and includes definitions of the styles as they occurred chronologically up to the development of African jazz in the 1940s. *Kwela* is discussed as the major commercial offshoot of African jazz in the 1950s.

The concepts and beliefs, or ‘thought worlds’, which were transmitted from white South African liberals to elite black intellectuals in the 1930s and 1940s, in so far as they were presented in the press of these decades, are examined. Specifically, the effects of these liberal ideological concepts on the preference for western civilisation in general and western music in particular is discussed. The role of Black America as the flagship of black progress, achievement, and above all, success in the realms of music, is assessed in relation to its impetus for the black elite ‘liberal’ strategy which essentially appealed to white moral conscience.

The concepts of Africanism and ‘New Africanism’ are investigated so as to determine their influence on the creation of unique, syncretic African forms, and in particular, on the birth of African jazz or *mbaqanga* of the 1940s. The viability of describing elite support for the Africanisation of jazz in this decade as expressing or emanating from political militancy as a manifestation of the ‘philosophy’ of ‘New Africanism’ is debated.

The 1950s are presented as a decade which can be described in generalised terms as one of ‘urban protest’, in which a *mélange* of hedonism and political assertion provides the context for the creation of highly commercialised African urban styles. The use of the colloquial epithet ‘*msakazo*’ as an umbrella term for these styles is discussed, focussing on the ideological perspectives of the proponents and opponents of the genre. Reasons for the vehement opposition to African styles by some in the



media who simultaneously sponsored American progressive jazz styles such as bebop, are analysed.

Emphasis throughout the work is given to the interplay between Government policies and the development of the different styles. In particular, the role of the Nationalist Party policy of Apartheid, and its direct and indirect effects on the demise of African jazz, is examined.