

CHAPTER 1

STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

There is convincing evidence that commonalities and consistencies which existed in the ‘thought world’ of literate black South Africans substantially influenced the specific jazz-related music materials which they chose as media of entertainment and expression. The focus of analysis in this work is for the most part this ‘thought world’: the concepts and beliefs dominant in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s and which appear to have influenced both the choices and perceptions of styles.

There is sufficient evidence to endorse the claims by Ballantine (1993:11), Bozzoli (1983:40), Sole (1983:75), Lodge (1983:339) and Marks & Rathbone (1982:2) that there is no definitive relationship between the existence of class strata and cultural choices. (“While there may be economic classes in the making in South Africa, there have been few ‘class cultures’” (Bozzoli 1983:40/41)). In the *jazz* milieu, specifically, the same entertainment-style could be supported by educated, sophisticated teachers, nurses, clerks and social workers and at the same time by illiterate manual labourers, mine-workers or domestic helpers. Nevertheless, there is at least some evidence to support the hypothesis that there are in cultural activities and music styles other than American jazz (although some were closely related to jazz), limited periods in which there are distinguishable glimpses of class-based tendencies to support certain activities. These will be referred to for contextual purposes where appropriate.

Consciously or unconsciously, the black South African entertainment stage - with jazz and vaudeville as the increasingly major components amongst other styles like choral singing and ‘serious’ art music - reflected the divergent and often conflicting ideologies of the varying degrees of education, westernisation and urbanisation of black society. For some, jazz represented an “international musical vernacular of the oppressed”; black music proclaiming solidarity with black Americans (Ballantine 1993:8). For others, it was a vehicle appropriated for the expression of a unique, burgeoning African pride (and unlike Ballantine, this author argues that these two groups

were at certain times quite disparate); for some black liberal pedants, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, the fact that jazz was acceptable to South African whites was of even more importance than its relationship with American jazz.

The focal point of this thesis is an attempt to analyse the ideological *input*, the characteristic manner of thinking, of at least one sector of society into the ‘coalescing culture’ of jazz, as well as (and sometimes distinct from) that of jazz-related styles. The difficulty of such analysis has faced Coplan, Ballantine and Hamm: the ‘untangling’ and interpretation of what were for the most part *subliminal* motivations for, and traits exhibited in, the choice of jazz-related music entertainment styles. Furthermore, the sole available ‘hard evidence’ of such a ‘thought world’ or motivating ideology, is what was *written* in that period, mainly in the press, and therefore, by definition, by representatives of the black intelligentsia. This work will thus for the most part of necessity emphasise the ‘input’ or ideological motivations for cultural choices of the *educated*, or elite, members of black South African society. An attempt will be made to deduce the ideological aspirations or motivations for cultural choices of the masses of semi-urbanised, illiterate black South Africans. However, this will be done from the perspective that such deductions are, for the reasons expressed above, speculative: while made on the basis of such evidence as can be *inferred* from the advantage of historical hindsight, they are nevertheless presented as subjective opinion rather than objective academic truth. In every instance an attempt will be made to provide as much substantiation as available in arriving at such opinion.

The constraints of both the newspaper research referred to above, and the limited number of remaining musicians available for interviews who are both representative of the proletarian masses and who can make a meaningful contribution to this work in terms of articulating thoughts from which significant deductions can be made, are the same constraints which have faced other researchers in this field. Where claims of purported motivating ideologies or ‘views’ which influenced the cultural choices of the lumpenproletariat are made by other writers, while they may in fact be accurate, they are essentially speculative.

In the case of interviews with musicians representative of the various styles under discussion, the opinions expressed are as varied and subjective as there were interviewees, or more specifically, as there were socio-political interests represented. All these opinions are valid and authentic and of

infinite value in providing different perspectives - substantiating, contradicting or demonstrating utter oblivion of the thoughts expressed in the press. However, their greatest value lies in the illustration of the point which approaches, but is not identical to, that made by Bozzoli: that different classes could support the same entertainment structures; however, their *input* into these forms was motivated - consciously or unconsciously - from different socio-political, or even a-socio-political, perceptual stances (*Bozzoli 1983:42*).

The choice of music, and specifically jazz-related styles, for entertainment was not always a consciously political, or at least socio-political one; it would appear that for many, music was consciously *perceived* to be purely hedonistic. Therefore, issue will be taken with Ballantine's inference that the "liberal view" was a philosophical outlook and motivation for music practice which was subscribed to by the working class as well as the elite (*Ballantine 1993:40*). What was being presented in the press to be the dominant ideology, was generally-speaking that of the elite, rather than the masses.

This is not to infer that the masses' choice of musical expression was, while unarticulated in the press, devoid of all conscious or unconscious relationship to their repressed socio-political circumstances. The oppressive political climate in South Africa was so pervasive, insidious and vicious, that any attempt to exclude this dominating, suffocating spectre from the conscious or unconscious choices of expression of a people from whom virtually all freedom to choose in other areas of their lives was wrested, would be grossly flawed. If music was used only as an escape from their ugly reality, a form of hedonistic celebration of urbanness, this in itself was an unconscious demonstration of ~~protest~~ at, or ~~victory~~ over, the towering apparition of Apartheid which attempted daily to deny this urbanness and concerned itself with black South Africans' recreation and use of leisure time or lack thereof only in so far as it affected the life of white South Africans.

Couzens appropriately states that

... in this context of 'defusing Native Passions', culture and entertainment can be used as an auxiliary force in social control. A proper understanding of the literature, the drama, the music, the art and other related cultural forms must take this process into account (*Couzens 1985:92*).

To this should be added the fact that both the influences and the role of music, particularly from the mid-1940s onwards, were inherently more complex, more subtle, more the result of a complex interplay of inclinations of different dimensions, and generally more multifarious in their effect, than that of merely ‘defusing native passions’.

Thus this thesis focuses on an ephemeral subject: one which centres on perceptions, or more specifically, an analysis of perceptions as presented in the press, and tempered by opinions of these perceptions and those of other participants in the relevant decades. The researcher often works with what amounts to no more than *clues* - found in the press, secondary reading, and from personal interviews - of the perceptions of mainly journalists and intellectual leaders.

Ballantine’s area of excellent research focuses on aspects of the development of jazz and vaudeville in the years before and up to the (mainly) early 1940s. In many respects, this thesis can be regarded as an extension of much of his work, tracing the evolution of ideological trends which he had identified as emanating from the 1930s, through the following two decades and beyond. Developments in earlier or later years (i.e. the 1920s and 1960s) are used for contextual reference, to clarify or make deductions which lead to conclusions drawn about events in the decades under discussion, or where necessary for substantiation when this research has led to different viewpoints and conclusions from those of Ballantine. Those areas of his research on the developments in jazz and vaudeville with which this author concurs have not been reproduced to the same extent. His work on the manifestation of the details of American influence on early musicians and audiences in the jazz-milieu in South Africa, as supplied in press quotations, is one such example, and the reader is referred to his thorough research on that specific issue in both “‘Africans in America’. ‘Harlem in Johannesburg: The ideology of Afro-America in the formation of black jazz and vaudeville in South Africa before the mid-1940s’” (*Ballantine 1988:5-10*) and his book “Marabi Nights” (*Ballantine 1993:13-23*).

It is to be noted that in Chapter 2 fleeting references to some of the major urban styles of the continent of Africa are provided as a contextual framework for the presentation of the South African music; inaccessibility of musicians and experts with whom to conduct first-hand research may inevitably have resulted in certain inaccuracies made in the secondary literature being reproduced.

Chapter 3 contains a clarification of definitions and an overview of urban South African styles not readily available elsewhere. This is in order to provide some accurate contextual background for the issues dealt with in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Students of black South African urban music development have access to a small body of literature which contains voids, generalisations, flaws and inaccuracies, particularly with regard to the socio-political and ideological motivations surrounding the birth or use of certain styles.

In some instances the problems are being perpetuated by consecutive authors. The following areas are specifically problematic:

- 1.2.1 Disparate ideological stances or ‘conceptions of the world’ which developed in relation to white South African government policies and which led to the popularity of different American and African music entertainment styles are specifically not accurately reflected in the literature. Unsubstantiated conclusions or views that are representative of a minority are presented as those of the majority of black South Africans.
- 1.2.2 The role of the Africanisation of urban music vis-a-vis the Apartheid government is not comprehensively presented. The ‘philosophy’ of ‘New Africanism’ and its role in the development of oppositional or ‘radical’ music styles is incompletely portrayed.
- 1.2.3 Names and lengths of periods of development which provided ideological and philosophical motivations for different styles are ambiguously presented. There is strong evidence to suggest that these were fluid, complex and most importantly, contained disparate groups from within which different socio-political perspectives, and the role of music styles as expressions of these, emanated.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this work is to add to the debate in the available literature discussing the social and political forces at play in the formation, influence and articulation of black urban music in South Africa. Specifically, it attempts to provide what substantiation is available as evidence of the beliefs, attitudes and mores of the most deeply urbanised black South Africans and how these appeared to affect their choice or rejection of mainly jazz-related entertainment styles.

Influenced and affected by the politics of white South Africa, consciously or unconsciously and to a greater or lesser degree aimed at achieving freedom from its oppression, differing ideologies and socio-political concepts spawned adherents to different musical styles. Those reflected in the press were for the most part the views of the intellectual elite, and are to be presented as such. Those of the majority of black South African workers who were mostly illiterate, can merely be deduced from reports written by and interviews with intellectuals, as well as from the small and insubstantial group of musicians who often express biased subjective world views. These will be presented as such.

The motivations for the Africanisation of different styles in different decades, with an emphasis on the development of this phenomenon in relation to racist Government policies, will be examined. Specifically, an examination of the concepts of 'New Africanism' and 'Africanism' and their role in the development of the music, particularly in relation to the Africanisation of music as an overt manifestation of political opposition, will be undertaken.

Ideological frameworks within which the concepts of Westernism and Africanism, as well as tribalism and ethnicity, as reflected in the perceptions of different styles, will be examined.

Different strategies to achieving freedom from oppression were reflected in groundswells of popularity for different urban music styles in the various decades. These broad impulses will be presented while attempting to provide insight into and substantiation for the complex and sometimes conflicting concepts of disparate groups which provided the motivation for the support of the same or different styles.

A secondary aim of this work, as context for the above, is the clarification of definitions and an overview of the major developments in black South African urban music not available to date as a comprehensive whole in the published literature.

1.4 HYPOTHESES

Six hypotheses are formulated for this study:

- 1.4.1 Those who hoped to achieve liberation through the ‘moral persuasion’ of South African whites were both led and epitomised by mission-educated, Christian blacks. Represented by leaders of political and ideological thought, they formed an elite stratum which included those who wrote for the black press. This is the only sector of black South African society whose views on the subject can be substantiated. For the vast majority of the elite, the ‘liberal approach of moral persuasion’ which relied on the use of western cultural elements deemed admirable to and by whites, dominated cultural choices throughout the 1940s. In the 1950s, this mindset occurred alongside, or interspersed with, other ideological stances.
- 1.4.2 The birth of a feeling of pride in being African, or a sense of ‘Africanness’, can be regarded as a source of motivation (albeit mostly subliminal) for the Africanisation of jazz in South Africa. However, for the majority of black South Africans, the birth and use of African urban music styles in general and African jazz in particular, were neither the result of self-conscious, overt and articulated opposition to Apartheid, nor that of the conscious expression of ‘New Africanism’.
- 1.4.3 Commercialised black ‘pop’ (*msakazo*), denigrated by some intellectual music critics both then and now, was for many a celebration of a unique urban African identity, and forms a valuable part of South African heritage. *Msakazo* flourished in the 1950s, and some of South Africa’s most famous African jazz exponents contributed to its repertoire. The music appropriated by Radio Bantu in the 1960s was a continuation of the same commercial phenomenon which had propagated the African styles of the previous decade.

1.4.4 The 1950s were characterised by an ethos of urban protest. This appears to have been the impetus for the hedonistic and celebratory assertion of urbanness which permeated the entertainment scene and which manifested in the use of both African and American styles. Both were significant tools with which to brandish an assertion of urban identity and pride. For many, this presented no contradiction or confusion; for others, the choice of either a black *South African* or black *American* cultural identity emanated from specific ideological stances, which developed in reaction to Apartheid.

1.4.5 The level of identification of black South Africans with black Americans was comprehensive, inclusive and far-reaching. As such, the use of black American music was considered by many to be an expression of black pride. For some, this genre, rather than its African counterparts, was perceived as an important vehicle by which to demonstrate urban sophistication as a conscious or unconscious means of protest against Apartheid policies.

In America, 'modern, progressive' jazz or bebop of the late 1940s and 1950s was indeed self-consciously ideologically motivated as an expression of black consciousness. It is possible that this motivation was shared by the small group of young intellectual black South Africans who espoused the style. For this articulate minority, the adoption of a distinctly *un*-African persona and the wholehearted embrace of Americentric culture represented a strong oppositional stance to Government policies.

1.4.6 Despite its legendary indifference to blacks' wellbeing, in the years in which black South African urban music styles developed, the SABC, as representative of the white South African Apartheid government, was not opposed to specific styles of black urban music, nor did they view the Africanisation of any style as a form of black radical opposition to Apartheid.

The South African Apartheid government policies had no direct and conscious role in the death of either big-band American swing or its Africanised version, namely *mbaqanga* or African jazz, of the late 1940s. Apartheid policies were aimed at the interracial milieu in which bebop was nurtured in the 1950s, rather than the style itself. Bebop, and to less of an extent, 'cool' or West Coast jazz, was embraced by only a minority of black South Africans,

and was not regarded as an accessible entertainment genre by the majority of the population. For this reason, its failure to thrive as a popular black South African music style cannot be attributed to Apartheid alone.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This work is the result of the following methods of research:

1.5.1 A comprehensive literature study in two main areas:

1.5.1.1 The body of literature related to a description of the history and development of African and South African urban music styles. While the literature available in these areas was meagre at the outset of this project, significant and substantial contributions had been made by the end.

1.5.1.2 The most important area of research for the purposes of this thesis was the ideological and socio-political contexts for the developments of the styles. The body of literature on South African policies and related subjects is, as is to be expected, substantial. While little published literature is available on the ideological concepts of South African blacks and how these affected their choice of music, that which is available is significant in that it has been produced by eminent academics. It was controversial issues and insubstantiations found in this literature which necessitated the extensive newspaper research described under 1.5.2.

1.5.2 Thorough and extensive newspaper research which required over two years of exclusive study and which provided invaluable insight into and substantiation for the views presented in this thesis.

Almost every major black publication, broadly between 1930 and 1960, available in Unisa, the State Library in Pretoria and the South African Library in Cape Town, was thoroughly

perused. Relevant copies were made, categorised, collated and filed; many were re-copied and re-filed for cross-referencing.

1.5.3 Interviews: locating interviewees sometimes necessitated travelling to remote parts of the country and also to London, UK. On the whole interviewees fell into two main categories:

1.5.3.1 Musicians who had actively participated in the decades under discussion.

Initial informal conversations with black South African musicians were followed by subsequent taped, lengthy interviews on specific subjects. Included amongst those consulted are eminent music practitioners of the 1930s to 1960s, of whom, Peter Rezant, Ntemi Piliso and Louis Radebe Petersen, are extensively quoted and acknowledged in Ballantine's work (*Ballantine 1993:xi, 15, 16, 19, 21, 29, 35, 36, 42, 43, 47, 53, 66, 71, 72, 73, 80*).

1.5.3.2 Intellectuals: these were selected as keen observers and analysts of the South African condition, who, as most intellectuals of the time, had also participated actively in at least the jazz sub-culture, if not in other related music styles.

Interviewees from this category provided the perspective which this thesis adopts: namely, that what was presented in the press at times as the generally dominant ideology, and accepted by other writers as such, is rather that of the elite and cannot be construed as the ideology of the masses.

Personal interviews with two profound thinkers in particular influenced this perspective. While this may be a very small and unrepresentative number, they are the most insightful and influential people - both then and now - with whom this author has been fortunate enough to have developed truly meaningful and ongoing debate over several years. Without their thoughtful and considered insight, many views expressed would have presented only the currently accepted academic bias. The two gentlemen are:

- Professor Ezekiel Mphahlele (better known as Es'kia, or Zeke to his friends), political activist in the 1950s, eminent international academic and author of *Africa, My Africa*, *Down Second Avenue*, etc.
- The late Professor Khabi Mngoma, academic, musician, musicologist and political activist-peer of Ezekiel Mphahlele's, although his views sometimes differed significantly from Mphahlele's.

Another influential contributor to the views expressed in this work is the younger Aggrey Klaaste, erstwhile 1950s journalist for Drum and Golden City Post (two rich sources for this research), brother of Sal Klaaste (jazz pianist of note in the period under discussion) and nephew of Peter Rezant of Merry Blackbirds' fame. Most importantly, he was for a long time the highly respected editor, and is currently editor-in-chief of South Africa's largest newspaper with a predominantly black readership.

These people brought to this work their insightful ability to analyse the socio-political situation, which they had continued to do as political spokespeople, analysts and catalysts of thought, both then and - with the wisdom of hindsight - now. Their interest, enthusiasm and concerted efforts to clarify and define their thoughts and points of both agreement and disagreement have lent this work a dimension which has contributed immeasurably to its efforts to uncover the truth. This truth applies both to the ideological influences behind their own perceptions of entertainment styles, and what they perceived to be those of other, educated and uneducated, more and less urbanised, sectors of black society.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

It is necessary to define certain terms in the specific way in which they are used in this thesis.

- 1.6.1 The term '**culture**' is used in this work in the sense of the condensed definition supplied by Lodge:

... the concept 'culture' must be broadened to include not only the products of specialised intellectual work (books, philosophy, painting, etc.), but also the general social activity whereby all men and women give creative expression to the material conditions that surround them. In this sense culture is the way in which social groups 'handle' their experience of living in a set of objective conditions and thereby create a corresponding set of attitudes, symbols, values and mores. These patterns of meaning are created in all forms of practical activity and are the means whereby a 'social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored' (*Lodge 1983:154*).

- 1.6.2 The use and meaning of the term '**ideology**' does not refer here to "a deliberate and systematic manipulation and misrepresentation of objectivity" (as in "Communist ideology", etc.) (*Sole 1983:65*). The Oxford Dictionary's two definitions have been merged, so that the concept of 'ideology' is meant as "the system of ideas (or set of beliefs) at the basis of ... the manner of thinking characteristic of a class or individual". Hall's definition is perhaps the most comprehensive in terms of the use of the concept in this work:

Nowadays, the term ideology includes the whole range of concepts, ideas and images which provide the frameworks of interpretation and meaning of social and political thought in society, whether they exist at the high, systematic, philosophical level or at the level of casual, everyday, contradictory, common-sense explanation (*Hall 1986:36*).

- 1.6.3 The context for the use of the phrase '**conception of the world**' is that supplied by Gramsci:

There is no *human activity* from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded ... Each man finally outside his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a 'philosopher', an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct and therefore contributes to sustain a *conception of the world* or to modify it, that is to bring into being new modes of thought (*Gramsci 1971:9*).

- 1.6.4 The term '**liberal**', while used by Vigne to refer to "South Africans – both black and white – who sought freedom, justice and equality" (*Vigne 1997:3*), is normally used in the South African socio-historical political context to refer to whites, amongst whom Jan H. Hofmeyr, Leslie Rubin, Margaret Ballinger and Leo Marquard are outstanding early examples (*Vigne 1997:4*). In this work, the proper noun, '**liberalism**', which Hall states "is a diverse, not a unified, discourse" in which "radical, conservative and 'social democratic' strands" are identifiable (*Hall 1986:37*), does not refer to the political creed associated with the erstwhile Liberal political party. Rather 'liberalism' is used within the framework of the "common sense" understanding of the term as it appears to have formed part of the "unwritten presuppositions of the social thought of ... (the) epoch" (*Hall 1986:37*), in the form of a set of concepts and beliefs adopted by some black South Africans, including members of the

African National Congress, as a strategy for liberation. ‘**Liberal**’ is used to describe black South Africans who, influenced by their white counterparts and the teachings of white missionaries, sought by gestures of co-operation, goodwill, individual progress and achievement, to demonstrate a “moral and intellectual ascendancy” (*Hall 1986:5*).

- 1.6.5 The term ‘*tsotsi*’ was the slang term, commonly used in South Africa in approximately the 1950s to 1970s, which was used to refer to young African male ‘layabouts’ who were suspected of unconventional, if not criminal, behaviour.

1.7 POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA RELEVANT TO THIS THESIS

The following synopsis is intended to provide brief chronology for readers less familiar with the details of South African history:

1.7.1 Milestones in the history of black oppositional politics:

- 1912 The South African Native National Congress (SANNC) was founded with Dr John Dube as its first president. It was later to be renamed the African National Congress (ANC).
- 1930 Dr Pixley ka I. Seme became president of the ANC. During the 1930s, the ANC was inactive and generally perceived to be ineffective and elitist.
- 1935 The All-Africa Convention (AAC), a new movement to unite black opposition, was jointly formed by Dr Pixley ka I. Seme and Prof D.D.T. Jabavu. In oppositional alliance, it existed side-by-side with the ANC and many people were members of both organisations.
- 1940 Dr Albert Xuma became president of the ANC.

- 1943 Following brief bus boycotts in 1940 and 1942, the Alexandra Bus Boycott was instigated in August 1943 by the residents of Alexandra, on the outskirts of Johannesburg, in protest against the increased bus fare. Thousands of Africans refused to ride on the buses, and walked almost eighteen miles to Johannesburg for nine days. In November 1944, the protest resumed and this time resolutely lasted for a grim seven weeks.
- 1944 The ANC Youth League (ANCYL) was founded. Frustrated by the lack of progress achieved by the old guard's moderate and passive actions, the young activists (amongst whom were Anton Lembede, A.P. Mda, Walter Sisulu, Jorban Ngubane and Nelson Mandela) sought to overthrow the white government by mass action.
- 1948 The ANCYL finally formulated its policy.
- 1949 Dr James Moroka was elected President to replace Dr Albert Xuma. The ANC adopted a 'Programme of Action' which was to be frequently quoted by the 'Africanists' of the 1950s as foundation for their political stance.
- 1952 On 26 June, the Defiance Campaign, in which black South Africans mounted nationwide civil disobedience as a means of protest, began. Apartheid laws were openly flaunted: blacks used whites-only facilities and transport, stayed in the cities without permission, etc. Meetings all over the country to organise and publicise the campaign were punctuated by shouted phrases, many of which were to become common to the liberation struggle. In August twenty leaders, including Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, were arrested. By October, support for the campaign had begun to dwindle. In the aftermath, cooperation between the ANC and the Indian Congress continued to grow. Significantly, by the peak of the campaign, the ANC membership had swelled from 7 000 to over 100 000.

In December of this eventful year, Albert Luthuli was elected president of the ANC. Nelson Mandela became deputy-president.

1954 The Congress of the People, formed to formulate a Freedom Charter, significantly unified the ANC, the Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Organisation and the Congress of Democrats. The exclusive 'Africanists' resisted this move as they believed that the African problem should be solved exclusively by Africans, without the interference of 'foreigners'. The 'anti-white' perception with which they became tainted in the press stemmed from attitudes such as these.

1955 At a meeting in Kliptown attended by 3 000 people of all races, the different sections of the Freedom Charter, collated from individual contributions of ordinary people, were read out and voted on. The Charter demanded a non-racial, democratic government in South Africa. The opening sentence which affirmed that South Africa belonged to both black and white, became a bone of contention with the 'Africanists' who would in 1959 form the breakaway PAC.

October of this year saw an historic march of black and white women of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) led by famous white South African activist, Helen Joseph (a member of the Congress of Democrats) and Bertha Mashabe from the ANC. In protest against the extension of the hated Pass Laws to women, 2000 women marched on the Union Buildings in Pretoria, individually mounting the steps to deliver their petitions.

1956 FEDSAW launched a far bigger version of the protest. Twenty thousand women of all races and from different parts of the country again went to the Union Buildings. Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa and Sophie Williams, as representatives of the different organisations, were the leaders. After delivering petitions to the Prime Minister's office, the crowd stood in silence for thirty minutes. Then, led by Lillian Ngoyi, the women sang *Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika* and a song especially rehearsed for the occasion, *Wathini abafazi, wa uthini' imbolodo*

uzo kufa (“Now you have touched the women, you have struck a rock”).

- 1959 Robert Sobukwe, a Fort Hare graduate, led the breakaway Pan-African Congress (PAC) of disgruntled ANC ‘Africanists’. (He was later to be arrested and kept incarcerated for years on Robben Island by the infamous ‘Sobukwe Clause’, by which his term of imprisonment was renewed ad infinitum by a simple decree of Parliament. He died without gaining his freedom.)
- 1960 The notorious carnage at Sharpeville, where 69 blacks were killed and 180 injured when the police opened fire on an unarmed crowd, occurred on 21 March. The protest action was part of the Anti-Pass campaign, led by the PAC, in which thousands of blacks marched to police stations without their passes, thereby courting arrest. A massive clampdown on black oppositional activity followed: the ANC and PAC were declared illegal organisations and by the end of March over 18 000 people were detained in terms of new emergency regulations.
- 1961 The declaration of South Africa as a Republic sealed the fate of blacks in South Africa. They faced a future in which they were totally deprived of political and social rights and effectively decreed to be foreigners in the country of their birth. *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) (‘The Spear of the Nation’), the armed wing of the ANC, was formed, thereby officially abandoning the ANC’s erstwhile commitment to non-violent action. Led by Nelson Mandela, sabotage was directed at government buildings and installations.
- 1963 The ‘Rivonia Treason Trial’ commenced. The most famous treason trial in South Africa’s history, the accused included Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Dennis Goldberg, Ahmed Kathrada, Andrew Mlangeni and Rusty Bernstein. It lasted 11 months. All the accused, save Bernstein, were sentenced to life imprisonment.
- 1964 In June, the Rivonia trialists began their life sentences on Robben Island.

1.7.2 Developments in white South African politics:

- 1910 A new constitution, ratified by Britain, united South Africa under a single government. Those in favour of a union had successfully defeated the proponents of federalism and Louis Botha, leader of the South African Party, became Prime Minister..
- 1919 Botha died and Jan Smuts became Prime Minister of a South Africa in the grip of depression. General strikes occurred which were very damaging to Smuts. They served to cement the forces of the Labour and Nationalist Parties who contested the election on the same side.
- 1924 Smuts was defeated by J.B.M. Hertzog of the Nationalist Party. With Hertzog the 'colour issue' assumed an urgency in South African politics and he introduced laws to keep whites in supreme political control. Of particular significance was the policy of 'civilised' (white) labour and 'uncivilised' (black) labour which protected whites and marginalised blacks.
- 1925- Afrikaans became an official language and by celebrating the centenary of the
1929 Great Trek, Afrikaans history was formally established. The Bantu Repression Act was passed and blacks were removed from the common voters' role.
- 1930 Smuts and Hertzog formed a coalition government.
- 1934- During these years there was ever increasing urbanisation of blacks who moved to
1939 the cities in search of work. With a World War looming, a split developed in the coalition government as Smuts challenged Hertzog's policy of neutrality and won a narrow victory.
- 1948- Led by D.F. Malan, the National Party came to power. The two main objectives of
1966

the new government were to implement the policy of Apartheid ('Separateness', i.e. the separation of the races that effectively condemned blacks to political, social and economic discrimination) and to establish a Republic.

The ever-widening wage gap between whites and blacks led to labour unrest. Blacks also protested against the 'Pass Laws', which required them to carry certificates that allowed them entry to different 'white' areas. The Mixed Marriages Act (prohibiting inter-racial marriage), the Immorality Act (prohibiting inter-racial sexual intercourse), the Population Registration Act (which classified people into groups according to colour), amongst others, were passed.

- 1954 D.F. Malan retired and J.G. Strijdom became Prime Minister.
- 1958 Strijdom died and H.F. Verwoerd came to power. In order to make his even more sinister version of Apartheid palatable to the international arena, he renamed the policy 'Separate Development'. His vigorous propaganda attempted to promulgate the myth that blacks and whites would both benefit from the system. Blacks were regarded as temporary migratory labourers in 'white' areas and the 'homelands' or 'bantustans' (small and inadequate tracts of land assigned to different black ethnic groups), became 'independent states'.
- 1960 The notorious carnage at the police station at Sharpeville, later to gain the historical epithet 'Sharpeville', occurred in March of this year. The ensuing draconian actions against the ANC and PAC, in which the organisations were outlawed and their leaders detained, silenced black political expression. These measures triggered international sanctions and South Africa became the pariah of the world.
- 1961 South Africa was expelled from the Commonwealth and became a republic.

1.8 NOTES TO THE READER

The following notes are offered by way of clarification, and are in no particular order of priority.

- 1.8.1 For the most part this work focuses on what could arguably be called the ‘main’ stream of development of black South African urban music which occurred in the Transvaal (as the province was called prior to the new political dispensation). More specifically, it refers to that which occurred in Johannesburg and the surrounding areas. It should be noted that this is the same area of research of, amongst others, Coplan and Ballantine. The author went to some lengths to interview Cape musicians and other informants with a view to including this branch of the genre’s history. However, the substantial difference involved in certain aspects was deemed beyond the scope of this work. (See Recommendations - 6.2)
- 1.8.2 An exceptionally large number of quotations are used in this thesis, and especially in the sections based on newspaper research. This is in order to substantiate the context. Without such extensive quoting, incorrect conclusions can be drawn and/or perceptions created.
- 1.8.3 Where direct quotations are followed by several references in brackets, the first author listed is the one from whom the direct quotation is taken. Where a list of authors is given as substantiation for a point of view, those authors are listed in order of priority.
- 1.8.4 Curved brackets () are used to denote comments by this writer, and square brackets [] to reproduce brackets as they occur in the quoted passage itself.
- 1.8.5 The use of single inverted commas (‘ ’) is intended to convey the meaning ‘so-called’; the use of double inverted commas (“ ”) signifies direct quotations.
- 1.8.6 Italics are used for the African names of styles and for emphasis. In quoted passages, italics in brackets are used to denote the writer’s explanation, as opposed to bracketed ordinary type which corrects grammar or supplies missing words.

- 1.8.7 While “Biography tends to demand the past tense, literature ... favours a kind of literary-historical present tense” (*Couzens 1985:xv*). Therefore, as in Couzens’ book , this work vacillates between past and present tense: most commentary is in the past tense, but references to press articles or other literature have been made in the present tense.

Sadly, several informants to this research have died since the time of interview. They include Prof Khabi Mngoma, Peter Rezant, Michael Rantho and Henry Kolatsoeu. Many of the others are old and frail. Therefore, since the ‘live’ tapes have provided the source of their assertions and since newspaper personalities long-since dead are often referred to in the present tense (as mentioned above), the informants’ opinions and assertions are reported in the present tense.

- 1.8.8 As is the practice of several authors, this essay will refer to the musics of sub-Saharan Africa as ‘African music’. It appears to be generally accepted that the musics of this area can be broadly categorised as distinct from those of North Africa, which generally tend to manifest a more middle-eastern Arab orientation (*Manuel 1988:84; Graham 1989:1; Graham 1992:2; Johnson 1990:31; Merriam 1982:61,156; Bergman 1985:34*).
- 1.8.9 References to the various papers presented at the symposiums of Ethnomusicology have been categorised by the year in which the symposium was held, rather than the year in which the document was published, in order to facilitate reference access. (Note that in his Bibliography, Coplan lists Clegg’s article from the Symposium held in 1980 as a 1981 reference (see *Coplan 1985:201*), a factor which made the said article extremely difficult to find.)
- 1.8.10 Blacking states that “Black Music” is a term more appropriate to Afro-American music which has not yet been generally used to refer to the musics of Africa (*Blacking 1982A:265*). Mthethwa maintains that the term ‘black’, used as reference to “people of African descent”, is regarded by many Africans as an insulting one (*Mthethwa n.d.:24*). However, it is believed that the term ‘black’ is currently regarded as the acceptable and self-identifying designation for the South African majority population group of African heritage.

It will therefore be used in this work to refer to black South Africans and to the music made in South Africa by black South Africans.

- 1.8.11 The term “kaffir” (or “kafir”), as used in the nineteenth century to refer to unbelievers, did not have the racist connotation which it has today. When historically appropriate, the term has been quoted.
- 1.8.12 Readers wishing to have access to tape recordings of interviews quoted in this work should refer to the author.

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CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF URBAN POPULAR MUSIC IN AFRICA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Through the Africanization of musical ideas and technology from abroad, Africans have taken an important first step toward confronting the onslaught of influence from industrial nations. Disruptions caused by colonialism, international business, and misguided development programs may continue to cause rampant confusion and disaster, but the arts and entertainments may become a beach-head in the battle to transform imported Western ideas to make them usable in African culture ...

In music, appreciation of the new transformations has been long in coming, veiled by mourning and ranting over the destruction of traditional music styles due to Anglo-American cultural domination. As for musicologists, critic Bruno Nettl says, "They have only lately recognized that some of the most interesting and significant events in the recent history of world music result from the rapid growth, modernization, and Westernization of cities in the developing or recently developed nations outside Europe and North America" (*Bergman 1985:10/11*).

In the 1980s a new pop music style which incorporated elements of indigenous African music exploded onto the international charts. While exemplified and catapulted to worldwide fame by Paul Simon's not uncontroversial *Graceland* album, many black urban popular musicians had in fact been associated with the process for years before this globally-marketed and highly successful venture (*Graham 1992:13; Stapleton & May 1987:4; Sweeney 1991:44*).

In *Graceland's* wake came the 'world music' phenomenon - ambivalently regarded by different authorities as to its contribution to the African urban music cause (see *Sweeney 1991: Introduction; Ewens 1991:211; Graham 1992:13; Gibson et al 1992:229*) - and a general Western awakening to the sounds of urban African music. Not least, a long overdue nascence of interest amongst white South Africans in the music of their black compatriots at last began to manifest. Groups such as Ladysmith Black Mambaso who had collaborated directly with Simon, as well as other prominent and well-marketed groups who had not, such as Johnny Clegg and Savuka, Mango Groove, etc., benefited enormously, both in South Africa and abroad, from the enthusiasm which the album generated.

The sounds to which the western world now pays attention are dynamic reflections of the changes which have taken place and are continuing to take place on the continent of Africa. Inextricably linked to the social and economic aspects that were the by-products of the urbanization of the various regions of the continent, African urban music “is still penetrating its own cultural environment and, to an extent, presaging a culture that has not yet emerged” (*Bender 1991:xvi*). The modernisation of Africa, described by Chernoff as “one of the most exciting historical dramas of our time” (*Chernoff 1985:155*) denotes the industrialisation of music and the resultant cultural consequences inherent in this process (*Wallis & Malm 1984:2, 12-16, 64*).

Certain extra-musical conditions are crucial to the development of an urban music industry: undeniably linked to commercialism, a viable economic market is one of them. Popular music requires the social conditions of urban society as sustenance; generating capital to buy instruments, to produce and distribute the music, and a clientele financially able and predisposed to purchase the music (*Ewens 1991:9*). National radio stations and their policies vis-a-vis the dissemination of foreign and local musics play a pivotal role (*wa Mukuma 1992:72,78*). And in Africa, a cultural policy which manifests considerably more than a general indifference to popular urban culture is distinctly advantageous (*Graham 1992:9/10; Wallis & Malm 1984:11*).

Predicted to be an aesthetic of sound which would dominate Western popular dance music of the future (*Graham 1989:14*), an enthusiastically optimistic tone is generally used to refer to African urban popular music of the eighties in which “Black consciousness had liberated the music of the Third World” (*Gibson et al 1992:229*). However, this stance is tempered by the realistic account of the hardships and deteriorating economies of the continent and their effect on the music industry within Africa (*Graham 1992:14*).

Inadequate copyright laws and poor economies have combined to make tape piracy the prime, and in some instances, critical factor in the industry’s decline on the continent (*Bergman 1985:22; Seago 1985:177; Manuel 1988:89; Graham 1989:19; Graham 1992:10; Wallis & Malm 1984:77*). Interestingly, the market for Western pop has been substantially less affected. According to Seago, the MoR (i.e. ‘Middle-of-the-Road’ pop) and Disco fans generally tend to be more affluent. His warning that “unless something is done to reverse current trends, African pop will quickly suffocate under an

avalanche of disco” (*Seago 1985:177*), seen from the hindsight perspective of *Graceland* and its ripple effect, seems less dire. However, Graham’s observation several years later that First World multinational companies are still manifesting a priority to sell “western repertoire to Africa rather than sell African repertoire to the west” (*Graham 1992:9*) is sobering.

2.2 THE PHENOMENON OF “CROSSOVER”

This double transformation in the music, brought about by leaving and returning home has created a truly international music style in Africa, and yet one that is doubly African (*Collins 1985:73A*).

The commercially-coined terms such as “crossover” and “ethnic rock music” (as examples amongst others, see *Johnson et al 1990:14; Gibson et al 1992:229*), as used to describe the well-marketed western/African fusions of the 1980s, in effect represent yet another stage in the “centuries-old trans-Atlantic musical feedback cycle” (*Collins 1989:221*; see also *Graham 1989:16*). The best-known product of an earlier phenomenon of grafting “Black” onto “White” music is rock ‘n roll and its myriad off-shoots. All of these can be termed Afro-American music and have in turn played a singularly important role in the forging of African urban music. However, other foreign styles (such as rumba, calypso, reggae) which have reverberated throughout many countries of sub-Saharan Africa and which have contributed significantly, if not definitively, to certain of the emerging syncretic styles, are effectively “displaced musical relatives” which also manifest an African legacy at their respective roots (*Ewens 1991:9,24,26,28,35; Collins 1989:221; Merriam 1982:157,159,160; Manuel 1988:24,25,26,28; Kubik 1981:93; Bergman 1985:8*).

... Since the 1930s, the forms that have had the biggest impact in Africa have all come from there in the first place: calypso, reggae and, most significantly, rumba. Today’s funk and electro music, which are having a strong influence on some of the younger African artists, are the latest in a long line of musics that owe their basic thrust to Africa (*Stapleton & May 1987:5*).

To varying extents, all modern urban African music can be said to represent “crossover music”: traditional African elements have crossed over or been assimilated into modern syncretic styles which may contain Afro-American or Afro-Latin elements. Consequently, the genres manifest both a western and an African flavour to a greater or lesser degree. It is from this musical melange of assimilated and

hereditary ingredients that various popular idioms have emerged which have demonstrated an ability to communicate and engender appeal beyond the borders of the country in which they first evolved:

The most enduring pan-African styles have thrived not only because they started in the right place at the right time, but also because they were examples of outgoing music, deliberately tailored to help the widest inter-ethnic or non-tribal audience find a place in the modern world (*Ewens 1991:9*).

West African *highlife*, Congo-Zairean rumba and South African *mbaqanga* are arguably amongst the most prominent examples of African urban styles which have crossed over cultural boundaries to find an audience in other parts of Africa, or even further afield in Europe and America. It can be argued that the above styles reflect the facet of Western influence more specifically than, say, *mbalax* (see 2.8.10) or *fuji* (see 2.8.4) (*Sweeney 1991:18,40*). However, suggestions that international appeal is proportionate to the conspicuous presence of familiar Western elements are contradicted by Graham's observation that recent changes in Western tastes for African music reflect an interest in Sahelian music (in which elements of the *griot* tradition are prominent) (see 2.8.9) as well as South African music (*Graham 1992:1,3,60*). Furthermore, there is now evidence to suggest that "a closer approximation to western tastes and standards has inevitably involved a drop in domestic popularity" (*Graham 1992:9; Sweeney 1991:18*). (Note that this observation applies to those artists recognised as exponents of authentic African urban music as opposed to Western Disco or MoR - 'Middle-of-the-Road' - pop.)

2.3 COMMON SALIENT FEATURES OF URBAN AFRICAN MUSIC

While there are a number of distinctive styles which fall under the generalised umbrella term of "urban African popular music", the genre as a whole manifests a number of common distinguishing characteristics:

- The most outstanding and idiosyncratic feature is the predominant and highly active rhythmic component of the music; the counterpart in Western pop playing a mainly time-keeping, *beat*-accentuating role.

- The heritage of rhythmic complexity of rural indigenous music is found in urban African music to a greater or lesser degree. However, the most common exemplar found in modern commercial styles generally comprises syncopated lines added above a simple quadratic pulse.
- Unlike western pop music, where melodic and percussive instruments have distinctive and decidedly separate functions, the full rhythmic potential of melodic instruments and the melodic potential of rhythmic instruments are exploited. Similarly, the separation between the solo and rhythm parts is less well-defined than in Western pop. Melody and rhythm intertwine, balance and complement each other, while losing some of their complexity in the process of their incorporation into modern, syncretic forms.
- For the most part, electrified, western instruments are used.
- An insidious, essentially hypnotic but indefinable African element most aptly described by Ewens is invariably evident:

In trying to describe music in non-technical terms commentators necessarily turn to metaphor and analogy such as the familiar image of an “inter-woven fabric of rhythms and melodies which ‘mesh’ together into a complete whole”. This is fine as far as it goes but the carpet analogy is two-dimensional and frays at the edges. A better image for African music would be a three-dimensional shape with room for the spaces between the notes, so essential to any music and fundamental to an appreciation of African idioms. It is more like a net or a web, an image which also illustrates the sense of helpless entrapment that can overcome those ‘wrapped up’ in the music (Ewens 1991: 8).

2.4 MAJOR MUSICAL INFLUENCES AND GENERAL TRENDS

The incorporation of western instruments and the absorption of elements of foreign styles, both sacred and secular, into indigenous forms provided the fundamental media from which new, syncretic forms evolved in the urbanizing areas of Africa (Stapleton & May 1987:7). Cautionary perspective is provided by Chernoff (and substantiated by others - see Manuel 1988:22; wa Mukuna 1992:80/81) who warns that while documentary “evidence of such-and-such an instrument and such-and-such a musical presence” provides convenient landmarks of the continent’s musical development,

... we do not know enough about what was already there, the full range of traditional repertoires and the prototypical forms of evolving popular styles. I believe that creative developments are rooted in local affinities which take the names of imported styles they only resemble (*Bender 1989:xv*).

However, the following influences are generally credited as being the major catalytic sources of inspiration in the development of urban styles:

- Various styles of European music (most specifically in the form of Christian hymns and brass band music) and the adoption of Western instrumentation.

In practice, the promotion of western religion in Africa involved the imposition of western culture and civilisation on blacks. In churches and numerous schools established by the missionaries, traditional music and dance were denigrated as heathen, and therefore suppressed (*Graham 1989:15; Bender 1991:75; Stapleton & May 1987:9,10*).

The most important and lasting influences of church music on developing urban popular music in Africa were in the realm of melody and harmony and were reflected to a greater or lesser degree in the music of colonial times such as *highlife* (*Bender 1991:77; Coplan 1978:98/99*) and *juju* (*Stapleton & May 1987:11; Alaja-Browne 1989:231/232*).

The influence of the missionaries, and particularly the education they provided, spawned a societal phenomenon in the form of a black Christian elite. Regarding themselves as superior to those of their own race who persisted with “heathen” traditions and practices, they enthusiastically conformed to their newly-imposed culture and its conventions (*Bender 1991:75*). This stratum of black urban society was mainly responsible for reflecting whites' tastes in their endorsement of ragtime, vaudeville and Western choral music. They also espoused ballroom music and were mainly responsible for its initial flourishing in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya (*Stapleton & May 1987:11, 12; Coplan 1978:100*).

Brass band music introduced mainly by European colonists (*Stapleton & May 1987:8; Mamuel 1988:86*) played a significant role in the hybridisation of modern popular forms in Africa. Not least, its contribution is notable for providing the medium of brass instrumentation which was

idiosyncratic to later forms. By the time the influences of Afro-American jazz and Cuban music were felt on the continent, African musicians had mastered the techniques of playing brass instruments which were essential to the genres and which gave birth to styles such as East African *beni* (Martin 1991:75; Mamuel 1988: 86; Stapleton & May 1987:9), West African *dance-band highlife*, *adaha* and *konkomba* (Mamuel 1988: 86; Collins 1985B:2; 1989:222; 1976B:62).

- Music styles from the Caribbean, and Cuba in particular, in original or transmuted 'Latin-American' form. These styles are often credited as being the biggest single influence in the development of urban popular music on the continent in general (Mamuel 1988:87; Sweeney 1991:43; wa Mukuna 1992:72). Their impact on developing popular forms in South Africa such as jazz and *mbaqanga* would appear to be more subtle. (Certainly the influence is evident in the music of the miners who migrated to Zaire and were exposed to the "dry" Katanga guitar style (Bender 1991:43.)).

The French and Belgian Congo, Senegal, Mali and Guinea were among those who, as part of a general trend, adopted and then adapted the sounds of Latin-American, particularly Cuban music (wa Mukuna 1992:75; Sweeney 1991:10,17,26; Graham 1992:52; Stapleton & May 1987:21).

Cuban styles, of which the *rumba* can feasibly be isolated as the most significant, were primarily responsible for the creation of the syncretic urban Congolese genre which "has been more influential within Africa than any other regional style" (Mamuel 1988:97). Stapleton & May maintain that the attraction of Cuban music lay in the fact that the African flavour of this genre was manifested more strongly than that of "earlier imports such as waltzes and swing". Because the rhythms of Cuban music "were still essentially African" they were more familiar to the African ear than those of the other ballroom styles (Stapleton & May 1987:20).

The Second World War was the turning point in terms of the dissemination and popularity of Cuban music and its assimilation into African repertoire (Graham 1992:52). Africans adopted a new, self-assertive image which manifested politically as emerging nationalism, calling for independence, and culturally, as pride in the African heritage. "The Latin boom, with its tropical self-confidence, was symbolical of a new era" (Stapleton & May 1987:20).

- Afro-American music, including minstrelsy, ragtime (generally “accompanied by Black Minstrelsy with its tap-dancing and plantation humour” (*Collins 1985A:74*)), vaudeville and jazz. Collins comments on the irony of the situation in which the dance music of North American blacks was introduced primarily by whites (*Collins 1985A:73*). Later influences included rock, and more particularly, soul and reggae (*Manuel 1988:87*).

Manuel unambiguously states the significance of Afro-American musical influence in the development of African urban pop (*Manuel 1988:8*). Early South African urban music, in particular, responded with vigour and enthusiasm to Afro-American music, most significantly, to American vocal styles and the big-band swing era which included vocal swing (*Hamm 1988:7*). Of the other African styles, dance-band *highlife* (as opposed to brass band or guitar band-*highlife*) stands out as the one in which the direct influence of American *swing* appears most pronounced in the period of germination (*Manuel 1988:92; Collins 1989:225*). A general appraisal of the overall early development of the various styles of urban African music reveals that there is ample evidence of the initial adoption of the ballroom styles favoured by the colonialists. Sweeney, for example, emphasises the use of American-style jazz band *instrumentation* rather than musical elements in the evolution of *highlife*: “... in its original dance band form it was a blend of European jazz-band instrumentation with local Akan and Ga rhythms, given added spice by an assortment of influences from Latin to calypso” (*Sweeney 1991:34*).

However, the pivotal and catalytic role of Afro-American jazz in the early development of South African *mbaqanga* is unparalleled in the development of the modern syncretic forms of the other countries of the continent.

It seems plausible that the policy of Africanisation adopted by Mali, Ghana, Guinea and Zaire, the motives for which included the “abandonment of colonial values” (*Sweeney 1991:26*) as well as the impact of Cuban/Caribbean influences, tempered the prominence of elements of Afro-American jazz.

In later years the presence of Afro-American pop was decidedly felt, particularly by the youth in countries such as Sierra Leone and Ghana. The first African pop band was the **Heartbeats** of

Sierra Leone, followed by student bands like the **Echoes**, the **Golden Strings** and **Red Stars** (*Collins 1985A:80*). However, others proved more resistant to this Western genre. For example, Sweeney observes that during the 1950s and 1960s, which was the heyday of rock 'n roll, Senegal displayed overwhelming susceptibility to Latin-American, particularly Cuban, musical influences (*Sweeney 1991:17*). In yet other countries the level of interest in Afro-American pop fluctuated. An illustration of this phenomenon can be found in Mali, which in the 1960s distanced itself culturally from the West in an attempt to consolidate African culture. As a result, the “Euro-American pop-rock influence waned” only to be replaced by Cuban influences (*Sweeney 1991:20*).

The reason for the evident preference sometimes given to Caribbean/Cuban or Latin-American musics above those of Afro-American genres, lies in the extent to which the musics of the Caribbean were perceived as being essentially more African than those of America. Dealing with South Africa’s enthusiastic reception of “mediated”, commercially available Afro-American music and admiration for Black American achievements, Hamm maintains that these were “based to some degree on highly selective and often distorted information and images” (*Hamm 1988:15*). (See 5.5.1.1)

It seems fair to generalize that most “Afro-American” music imported into South Africa before the middle of the twentieth century was mediated by and acceptable to white Americans. It was imprinted with white taste and white styles; and in the process of being transformed into a commodity for white consumers, it had lost much of the African identity so unmistakable in many forms of Afro-American music performed and enjoyed by blacks themselves at this time (*Hamm 1988:15*).

For oppressed South African blacks, however, the bonds with African-Americans were deeply ideological and similarities in their respective social and political conditions outweighed the many differences (*Hamm 1988:16*). (See 4.7.1)

Rock 'n roll was nevertheless not afforded the expected enthusiastic reception in South Africa. Despite an initial response to and limited imitation of the music, its popularity amongst black South Africans faded dramatically within two years of its introduction. According to Hamm, and possibly because of the enthusiastic acceptance of the music by white South African youth, the reason for this rejection is primarily the black South Africans’ perception of the music as “having to do only with white interests and white power” (*Hamm 1988:19,20,21*).

It is interesting to note that those African countries which embraced the rock 'n roll and early pop music of predominantly white bands, abandoned the styles the moment that "Black Pop music" (such as the West Indian Ska music of 'Millie' - of "My Boy Lollipop" fame, and Chubby Checker's twist craze) hit the African continent in the mid-1960s (*Collins 1985A:82*). In South Africa "the twist" ("the first genre of Afro-American music to reach black South Africans in essentially the same form in which it was heard by a mass black American audience" (*Hamm 1988:25*)) was an overnight success. Elements of the style were almost immediately assimilated into *mbaqanga* artists' work (*Hamm 1988:22*).

The impact of soul music, which "hit Africa long before it hit Europe", was greater than that of any pop idiom previously introduced on the continent (*Collins 1985A:82*). The first African soul band is named as the **Heartbeats** (also the first pop band, see pp 2-8), who inspired the creation of many counterparts in the 1960s. **Joni Haastrup** "became Nigeria's James Brown" (*Collins 1985A:83*).

In South Africa the genre, first referred to as "soul jazz", was embraced with fervour. (See 5.5.1.2). The medium by which the electric guitar and organ were introduced into the country, the adoption by local bands and the assimilation into modern syncretic music was delayed because of the style's dependence on the expensive electric instruments. After so-called Cape Coloured groups such as the **Fantastics** showed the way, black groups in and around Johannesburg by the end of the 1960s included the **Black Hawkes** and the **Inne Laws** (*Hamm 1988:28,29*).

One of the biggest contributions of soul to the popular music of Africa in general is that by its essential nature, "taken to be an expression of black ethos and black pride" (*Hamm 1988:26*), it inspired the creation of original modern indigenous forms. "The period from 1969 to 1971 was one where musicians got away from the 'copyright' mentality of simply copying Western pop music. When Soul crossed over to Africa, young musicians made a quantum leap out of the copy-cat strait-jacket" (*Collins 1985A:84*).

Reggae has flourished in Africa. It is of interest to note that there is a "reggae-like Tukolor rhythm" known as "yella" which is indigenous to Senegal (*Sweeney 1991:19*). Reggae's most

famous exponents in Africa are **Alpha Blondy** from Cote D'Ivoire and **Lucky Dube** from South Africa (*Sweeney 1991:32,69; Ewens 1991:24*).

Modern eclectic styles emerging from Africa in recent decades clearly reflect the presence of Afro-American idioms. The avalanche of rock and its derivatives which have hit the continent have affected young African musicians the most. Manuel contends that rock has remained “the single most pervasive musical influence on African music, and most current styles can be regarded as fusions of traditional characteristics with heavy rock rhythms and instrumentation” (*Manuel 1988:88*).

Modern African musicians of international stature who manifest elements of Western pop or rock in their nevertheless authentic African styles include:

- **Cameroonian Manu Dibango** (who made famous “Soul Makossa” in 1972). He has played “every kind of music from free jazz to techno-funk”, and yet “All of his music has a definite African feel to it ...” (*Bergman 1985:127*). (See 2.8.6 for a description of *Makossa*).
- The Afro-American elements present in well-known Nigerian bandleader **Fela Anikolapu Kuti's** “Afro-beat” are jazz and soul, according to Collins (*Collins 1985A:13*). (See 2.8.5 for a description of *Afro-beat*).
- White South African **Johnny Clegg's** multiracial groups, **Juluka** followed by **Savuka**, which even at the height of the Apartheid era achieved “a new genre of crossover music that has gotten multiracial crowds together” (*Bergman 1985:118*), are described as playing an “easy-listening *mbaqanga*/rock mix” (*Sweeney 1991:68*).
- Cross-fertilisation within the continent itself led to the same fundamental styles appearing in different countries (*Graham 1992: 2*) as well as the development of yet more hybrid forms.
- Congo-Zairean music has established the “continental dominance which Zaire has enjoyed over the last four decades” (*Graham 1989:26; Bender 1991:43*). While the creators of its original

prototypes were not without West African *highlife* influence (see *wa Mukuna 1992:75*), Zairean music and its derivatives became widely inspirational to the music of other countries (see *Graham 1989:27; Chernoff 1985:154; Mamuel 1988:101; Kubik 1981:100; Stapleton & May 1987:41; Sweeney 1991:58,61;64*).

Although the popularity of the style spread as far south as Zimbabwe, whose *mbira* patterns played on electric guitars reflect Congo-Zairean music (*Mamuel 1988:105*), the developing urban styles of neighbouring South Africa again proved to be the notable exception in that the influences were not as overtly evident.

- *Highlife* influenced the development of other indigenous styles on the continent, including *makossa* of Cameroon (*Sweeney 1991:44*), *Afro-beat* and *rokafil jazz* of Nigeria (*Sweeney 1991:38*) and *milo jazz* of Sierra Leone. All these later *highlife*-derived styles are strongly aligned with rock and disco (*Mamuel 1988:93*).

The music of **Bembeya Jazz** of Guinea, described as “some of the most sublime ... on the African continent” (*Graham 1992:69*) included Ghanaian *highlife* along with other local rhythms in a blend of Manding and Cuban influences (*Sweeney 1991:27*). Famous **Fela Anikolapu Kuti's** *Afro-beat* is essentially a *highlife*-derived style (*Sweeney 1991:38*).

- There is evidence of South African forms being of some influence on the music of other African countries (see *Kebede 1982:115; Bender 1991:144,152,154,159; Mamuel 1988:101/102,105,109; Sweeney 1991:61;64*). For example, the distinctive national guitar style of Mocambique manifests South African elements amongst others, including Congolese music mentioned above (*Mamuel 1988:105*).

Kebede mentions that *kwela* (a “powerful dance form among youth”) (see 3.9) was disseminated prolifically throughout Central and Southern Africa (*Kebede 1982:115*).

Because of the geographic proximity, it is not surprising that the music of South Africa significantly influenced the development of urban music in Zambia and Zimbabwe. South African

miners in the Copperbelt in Zambia, or Zambian miners in Johannesburg, were the major sources of musical dissemination, at least initially. Among the styles imitated were western-style choral music (see 3.3.1); *kwela* (see 3.9) and its associated dance styles such as *patha-patha* (which Bender spells “pata-pata”), *mbaqanga* and the variants it spawned such as *tsaba-tsaba*, *simanje-manje* (the name given to some of the first studio-sponsored *mbaqanga* styles) and the twist (*Bender 1991:144*). (See 5.4.1; 5.4.3)

In what was then Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, the nightclubs which developed in the townships after the sale of alcohol there became legalised, encouraged visits by black South African musicians. Bender specifies South African jazz as well as “American jazz (in the style of the mid-1940s)” among the styles which were emulated by musicians in Southern Rhodesia (*Bender 1991:159*). Presumably, therefore, the visiting musicians included swing and *mbaqanga* (as in South African ‘African jazz’) - type bands. (See 3.8.2)

With the democratisation of several African countries there has been a general broadening of musical horizons as part of a common trend towards pan-Africanism.

2.5 THE EFFECTS OF URBANISATION

The more significant cultural penetration of African music is not outward but inward. Kwabena Nketia, our leading African ethnomusicologist, once advised me not to be so preoccupied with identifying African prototypes that I neglected the fact that music needs places where it can be played. What is involved in calling a type of music “popular”, he noted, is that the common people have to be ready to get with the music. For the music to become something that is part of the culture, the people need technical means and certain social contexts to be in place, as a matter of development, before music moves away from its elite forms. At that point, the society itself has become something else (*Bender 1991:xvi*).

Colonial expansion in Africa meant the establishment of new borders, often with scant regard for ethnicity, and the urbanisation of rural societies. Implicit in the urbanisation of those societies was their inevitable confrontation with a transformed and unfamiliar “social and economic fabric” (*Harrev 1989: 103; Bender 1989:45*). This process invariably involved enormous adaptation and realignment of cultural norms accompanied by physical and psychological deprivations of estrangement, insecurity,

and impoverishment; furthermore, most of the aspirant city dwellers left their country homes because they were compelled rather than chose to do so (*Mamuel 1988:85*).

Harrev recounts the emerging capitalism of the 1920s along with the growing middle class and the material trappings (such as gramophones, bicycles, watches, etc.) which became their symbols of prestige (*Harrev 1989:103*). The advent of the gramophone and radio, followed by the “‘Second Industrial Revolution’, based on the application of electricity to culture as well as to industrial manufacturing ...” afforded major, if not essential, impetus to the dissemination of forms which influenced the genres as well as the hybrid styles themselves (*Graham 1989:11; Harrev 1989:119*). The production of African popular music records commenced in earnest towards the end of the 1920s. Shellac 78rpm records were followed by vinyl, first 45rpm and then 33rpm. The next stage of development was marked by the introduction of the audio cassette tape and the battery operated cassette players which flooded the market and which “not only undermined the earnings of professional musicians but flooded the market with cheap copies of Western soul, disco, rock and reggae records” (*Graham 1989:2;1*). Record production ceased completely at the beginning of the 1990s, and despite the introduction of the compact disc, the audio cassette remains overwhelmingly favoured as the principal medium of music reproduction (*Graham 1992: 3*).

Life-supporting to urban popular music, the introduction of recorded music via radio, records and cassettes has had cataclysmic effects on traditional culture, threatened traditional music-making (*Kebede 1982:110*), completely annihilated several styles (*Graham 1989:11*) and irrevocably altered the tastes of the general populace: “traditional rural music will never sound the same. In a word, there is no turning back” (*Mamuel 1988:22*). The involvement of the major multinational music companies in the music of Africa resulted in traditional culture being “rationalised into a few standard forms under the control of multinational companies who then assumed the role of interpreters of a nation’s cultural heritage. As the companies grew, so too did their capacity to manipulate taste and exploit musicians” (*Graham 1989: 12*).

However, commercialism of urban popular music has disseminated popular styles within Africa and abroad, and “left us with a treasure-trove of over 50 years of recorded sound” (*Graham 1989:11*).

2.6 'TRADITIONAL' VERSUS 'POPULAR' AFRICAN MUSIC

Modern African music, with its strong foundation in tradition, has been a focus for the creative vitality of modern African societies ... They attain success by their ability to mediate, through their music, the disparate lifestyles of their pluralistic social environment (*Chernoff 1985:156*).

... Their music seems familiar to Westerners who are up-to-date with contemporary trends in American and European music, but it has developed in the nightclubs of African cities for African audiences who are sophisticated music-lovers and who dance many of the same steps both to electrified African pop and to village drumming and singing. Modern African musicians look inward and outward, backwards and forwards, and they have expanded their traditional music and adopted it to modern social contexts and modern musical technology. In typical African fashion, they have seen the new and the different as a means of adding to themselves, and they have turned adaptation into an agent of increase and not abandonment. The source of their musical vitality is their connection to their own African roots (*Chernoff 1985:152/153*).

The emergence of modern styles in the new urban environment induced a concomitant disparagement of essentially functional indigenous genres, where different occasions dictate specific music, rhythms and dances (*Stapleton & May 1987:5*). Those who viewed the apparently imminent extinction of the traditional forms with misgiving were provoked to painful introspection. Thus Katana, writing in 1950, is prompted to ask: "Why is it that within just half a century the African has come to look down upon his native methods of self expression?" (*Bender 1989:17; wa Mukama 1992:72*).

In the traditionally multi-ethnic countries of Africa, the tonal system of traditional music is a strong characteristic of ethnic identification and the juxtaposition of different tonal systems in one country or region is therefore not uncommon. As a feature of personal, social and historical identification, the traditional music of a particular tribe or group can be said to manifest an essential expression of ethnicity (*Harrev 1989:103*).

Manuel observes that ethnic exclusivity in popular music is not entirely eliminated. Distinctions such as specific languages and other associations with particular tribes occur. Effective "de-tribalization" requires specific conditions "such as when diverse ethnicities mix in a neutral context like a mining town" (*Manuel 1988:85*). In a contradictory generalisation Kebede states that "Urban society is not bound by the laws of ethnic culture. And *urban music* is an expression of this society" (*Kebede 1982:113*). This view is in fact the fundamental assumption implicit in the description of the genre by the great majority of writers (*e.g. Harrev 1989:103; Martin 1991:78; Ewens 1991:8,9,16,24*;

Chernoff 1985:159; Bender 1991:xiv; Kubik 1981:85; Kebede 1982:13; Bender 1991:62; Bergman 1985:8). Valerie Naranjo, who has done extensive research on the music of West Africa, including *in situ* research in Ghana for several consecutive years, maintains that urban popular music is by very definition pan-ethnic, emanating from the need to forge a more inclusive, specifically *pan*-ethnic, urban identity and expression in the developing cities (*Naranjo: writer's interview 23/8/94*). It is, however, interesting to note that the prerequisite conditions for pan-ethnicity as described by Manuel above, were those which presented in Zaire, parts of West Africa and South Africa. It is from these “major epicentres” (*Graham 1992:2*) - that predominant and decidedly pan-ethnic, modern syncretic forms germinated (*Manuel 1988:85/86*), despite insular political conditions and attempts at exclusivity as in Congo-Zairean rumba (*Ewens 1991:24*). And from these, or elements of these fused with other Western or Cuban styles, emanated more hybrid forms with ever-widening appeal, like ripples in a pond. The incorporation of foreign styles effectively lent a certain flavour of universality, functioning as a common denominator or bridge between nationalities, so that

While the traditional music of other cultures remains alien, popular music consumers have readily accepted calypsos played by Ghanaians, rumbas by a Congolese band or reggae from a South African. Yet all will proudly espouse their Africanness, and the need to keep in touch with their roots (*Ewens 1991:26*).

Bender maintains that it is “inept and misleading ... to apply our distinctions of popular and traditional music to African standards” (*Bender 1991:14*). “Popular” should not automatically be equated with the Western concept of “modern”, nor “traditional” with exclusively “ancient” elements. Zimbabwean Thomas Mapfumo’s *chimurenga* music is one example of a “popular” style which begs the classification of “modern”, mainly because of the incorporation of Western rock instruments. However, “Here we are at an end with our pigeonholes, what we would classify as modern music from a technical point of view, the Africans call traditional” (*Bender 1991:163/164*).

Traditional music, in the commonly understood sense of the term, can be said to infer indigenous melodies and rhythms played on indigenous instruments and generally associated with specific functions or occasions, which may or may not include pure recreation. Such music, which Ewens refers to as “‘folklore’ or ‘cultural’ music” (*Ewens 1991:11*) continues to play a major role in large

areas of Africa in the 1990s, particularly in the outlying villages (*Naranjo: writer's interview 23/8/94; Manuel 1988:89; Graham 1989:9; Graham 1992:195*).

The essential nature of the urban music which is prevalent in the metropolitan areas is described by Ewens:

Much contemporary African music has been called 'transitional', bridging the gap between the traditional and the modern; the village compound and the nightclub dancefloor; the bush and urban environments, which have an equal pull on the affections and allegiances of today's young Africans (*Ewens 1991:8*).

Collins asserts that the primary differentiating factor between the "acculturated popular dance-music styles" which have developed from a fusion of African and Western influences in Africa and those of the New World, is that the African versions "have a direct and continuous link with the traditional music of that continent" (*Collins 1989:221*). Since every music represents both tradition and innovation (*Graham 1989:15*), Collins has

rejected the traditional-modern dichotomy entirely in favour of the concept of the urban-bush continuum wherein styles of music are situated somewhere along the continuum depending on the degree to which they approximate stereotypes of 'traditional' or 'modern' music. This is a much more dynamic approach to the classification of music and can indeed be extended further to encompass a metropolitan-periphery continuum reflecting the truly international dimensions of popular African music (*Graham 1989:9*).

"Popular" styles in which traditional forms are conspicuously evident, such as those "less prominent" ones from Zaire (*Manuel 1988:100*), the Zimbabwean *chimurenga* music mentioned above (*Manuel 1988:88*), and the popular music from Mali in which the *jali-griot* tradition is unmistakable (*Sweeney 1991:21; Graham 1992:59/60*), abound in Africa. *Mbalax* from Senegal and *juju* from Nigeria are good examples of popular urban forms which have transcended ethnic and even national boundaries while retaining a fundamental core which, in character and appeal, is traditional (*Ewens 1991:23; Bender 1991:38; Sweeney 1991:39; Stapleton & May 1987:121*). Modern syncretic forms in essence strive to convey the mediation between the seemingly incompatible lifestyles of the pluralistic and complex social environment which urbanisation has created for many Africans; an ongoing exploration of the relationship between modern social contexts and traditional music (*Chernoff 1985:166; Coplan 1982B:125; Ewens 1991:14*).

The cross-fertilisation of cultures in the “global village” created by modern technology (*Kebede 1982:123*) has led to fears that the attempts to “reconcile the irreconcilable” (*Bender 1991:34*) by the assimilation of disparate Western elements will ultimately result in African music losing its identity (*Stapleton & May 1987:5*). Closely related to this argument is the question of whether the products of these fusions can be regarded as genuinely African: “Two generations ago, African popular music was viewed as an inauthentic type of syncretism, unworthy of discussion” (*Bender 1991:xiv*).

Kebede maintains that African music is transformed in a series of three, often interrelated, stages, viz.: musical “adoption”, “acculturation” and “innovation” (Hamm refers to the stages of “importation”, “imitation” and “assimilation”) (see pp xx) (*Kebede 1982:112; Hamm 1988:4; see also wa Mukuna 1992:79*). (See 4.7) Nigerian *highlife*, Congo-Zairean music and South African *mbaqanga* are all examples of the third and final period of the creative process.

To the Western ear, even the emergent styles of the intermediary period can sometimes sound like imitations of the foreign models and be interpreted as models of African cultural capitulation to the West. Instead, they reflect a single stage in a process of which the ultimate goal is the *Africanisation* of Western music, rather than the Westernisation of African music. They represent “the signs of a creative process in which a growing concern for characteristically African themes and sounds has given birth to a modern music that is as truly African as the styles of the oral tradition” (*Blacking 1980:196/197*).

African musicians took the instruments and technology offered them by the West, and after an initial period of “adoption” in which they familiarised themselves with the foreign “hardware” by imitating the foreign styles, local elements were incorporated until a new and unique indigenous genre had been created (*Stapleton & May 1987:7/8; wa Mukuna 1992:79,80/81*). (See also *Chernoff 1985:159*.)

Chernoff views the creation of modern syncretic forms as “the penetration of traditional elements into popular forms ... the use of Western instruments to play traditional musical motifs ... the way Africans infused Western social contexts with the motives of the traditional spirit” (*Bender 1991:xiv*).

2.7 THE RE-AFRICANISATION OF URBAN AFRICAN POPULAR STYLES

The modern urban music produced on the continent has been punctuated by periods of “re-Africanisation” which has manifested in various styles over the decades (*Ewens 1991:24; Bender 1991:60*):

- *fiiji* music, which developed in Nigeria in apparent reaction to the Westernisation and “international outlook” of *juju* (itself an indigenous genre which had overtaken the popularity of the *highlife* “imported” from Ghana) (*Stapleton & May 1987:25; Sweeney 1991:39,40*).
- Zimbabwean *chimurenga*, derived from ancient Shona *m'bira* music, manifested as part of a “national revolution” (*Stapleton & May 1987:213*).
- The music of **Franco** (known for years as the “Top star of Zaire and ... the whole of Africa”) who enthusiastically embraced the post-independence negritude of the campaign of authenticity launched by President Mobutu in Zaire in 1972 (*Stapleton & May 1987:26; Sweeney 1991:50,51*).
- *Mbalax* (see 2.8.10) reflects the Africanisation movement which developed in Senegal in the late 1970s and influenced the various styles of urban popular music which developed there.
- In the Cote D'Ivoire **Francoi Louga** returned from France and embarked on a trend of “Africanisation” in his music. **Ernest Dje-Dje** also “entered the Africanisation fray” and relinquished soul music to launch *ziglibithy* (*Sweeney 1991:32; Stapleton & May 1987:27*).
- The 1980s in Mali saw a rise in prominence of predominantly female singers such as **Tata Bambo Kouyate**, **Ami Koita** and **Nahini Diabate**, who included in their music indigenous elements of the Fula and Manding traditions. This style, broadly categorised as “Sahelian”, has grown in international stature in the 1990s (*Graham 1992:59,60*).

The post-Second World War phenomenon of African nationalism which manifested in countries such as Mali, Guinea, and Ghana was demonstrated culturally as a resurgence of pride in things African. The intention was “to fight off European influence and reassert African values” (*Sweeney 1991:20,27,50*).

Some countries launched cultural revolutions. Others took a more laissez-faire attitude ... Yet across Africa, from socialist Ghana to capitalist Kenya and Zaire, new sounds burst in alongside the old. Highlife spread from Ghana throughout West Africa (*Stapleton & May 1987:23*).

In South Africa the issue of Africanisation “... was clouded by the racism of apartheid...” (*Stapleton & May 1987:27*). For a certain educated sector of black South African society, ethnicity, inherent in the very term “traditional” and the music so described, was to be eschewed since to embrace a “back to roots” traditionalism would be embracing the cultural identity the Apartheid Government promoted. (See 4.7.4) Within this context, Stapleton & May’s inference that *mbaqanga* grew predominantly in response to an “Africanisation” movement (*Stapleton & May 1987:28*) is discussed later in this work. (See Chapter 5)

2.8 MAJOR HYBRID URBAN STYLES

The following section contains brief summaries of the most prominent hybrid urban styles of the continent of Africa.

2.8.1 Congo-Zairean Music

But of all the post-war styles, few proved as influential as the Congolese guitar music that exploded from Kinshasa with the formation of the city's first modern band, African Jazz, in 1953. ... African Jazz absorbed Afro-Cuban rhythms and arrangements and reinterpreted them in a purely African way. ... The Congolese sound, with its sweet harmonies and increasingly African rhythms, carried across the continent: on records and radio and live, through the work of travelling Congolese bands (*Stapleton & May 1987:25/26*).

A pronounced feature of Congolese dance-band music is its gentle, lyrical quality, reflecting the oft-noted prevailing “cool” aesthetic of much modern African music. In spite of the dominance of percussion and electric guitars, the clean instrumental and vocal timbres and the tuneful melodies lend the music a gentleness which, upon hearing, contrasts markedly with genres like rock, *apala*, or Cuban *rumba* (*Manuel 1988:100*).

The widespread appeal and accessibility of Cuban music which manifested in the international popularity it enjoyed from about the 1940s, was quite out of proportion to the relatively small size of the country from which it emanated. As a contributing factor in the explanation of this phenomenon, Manuel offers the theory that the music was eminently suited to interracial and inter-class acceptance, having transcended these barriers within Cuba itself. The crux of this accessibility involved the presence of relatively equal ratios of European and African elements in the music, resulting from the tolerance and acceptance of “neo-African musical practices” in Cuba by the colonial authorities and society in general. As early as the nineteenth century, the *rumba* emerged as a “secular Afro-Cuban music and dance genre”, performed by black musicians (*Manuel 1988:26; 28/29*).

From about the 1940s, imported modern Afro-Cuban dance forms, the *rumba* and *son* in particular, received widespread and enthusiastic acceptance in Africa (*Manuel 1988:87*). The music had powerful impact on Guinea, Mali, Senegal and the Congos (*Stapleton & May 1987:21*). There is also evidence that it was known in East Africa as early as the 1940s, where “the African roots of the Latin American rumba were so clear that a sensation of shock - on recognising something familiar in a new garment - was bound to occur, and this was finally to have creative results in Central and East Africa” (*Kubik 1981:93,92*).

However, it was in the region of Congo (People's Republic of the Congo) and Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo) that the Cuban forms inspired the creation of a syncretic style that “dominates Black Africa like that of no other nation, featuring in discotheques across the continent” (*Sweeney 1991:49; Bender 1991:42*). First known as *rumba* and generally referred to since about the 1970s as *soukous* (incorrectly, according to *wa Mukuna 1992:82*; see also *Bender 1991:42*), the music has been called a variety of names including African jazz, Congo jazz, Congo or Congolese music (*Bender 1991:42,52; Graham 1992:109; Manuel 1988:97; Bergman 1985:46; Collins 1985:61*) or “Zairean” music (*Sweeney 1991:49,54*). “Its principal ingredients are a skipping snare drum beat, tight, sweet harmony choruses behind a light, mellifluous lead voice and, above all, the famous multiple intermeshed guitar lines” (*Sweeney 1991:49*).

An important milestone in the development of the distinctive guitar style is the contribution of the guitarists from the Katanga region, today known as Shaba. A “mine workers’ culture” was prevalent

in this province and South African miners were among the foreign migrant workers who contributed to the society (*Bender 1991:43*). The idiosyncratic “dry” style which emanated from this area blended with traditional elements as well as Cuban horn and guitar lines to produce the Congolese/Zairean guitar style which was to become “one of the wonders of Africa” (*Stapleton & May 1987:137; Manuel 1988:98*). Important collaborators included **Antoine Kolosoy Wendo** and **Jean Bosco Mwenda** (*Sweeney 1991:50; Stapleton & May 1987:141*). According to wa Mukuna, 1930-1965 denotes the formative period of urban Zairean music and is stylistically referred to as “*tango ya ba-Wendo* (the era of the Wendos)”. Named after Wendo, a singer and guitarist who also composed prolifically, the era was characterised by the urban dance accompanied by an acoustic band, the *maringa*, and its response to the influence of the Cuban *rumba* (*wa Mukuna 1992:72; Stapleton & May 1987:135*). While Bosco is credited as being a “leading exponent” of guitar music, and “the precursor of the modern, plucked electric-guitar patterns” (*Stapleton & May 1987:16;144*), his specific role, noted by other authors (*Manuel 1988:98; Sweeney 1991:50; Stapleton & May 1987:141*) is given perspective by Bender:

In 1952, the songs of Mwenda Jean Bosco, Losta Abelo, Patrice Ilunga, and Edouard Masengo were released on 78 RPM shellac records by Gallotone. The selection of these guitarists was rather accidental. ... Tracey was able to record what and as much as he wanted. It was thus mere chance that Tracey found Bosco’s playing interesting and recorded him. Bosco’s fortuitous discovery does not at all detract from the quality of his music, but it indicates that there must have been many more guitarists playing similar music at the time (*Bender 1991:43*).

The introduction of the electric guitar, the newly-gained political independence in Zaire, and the post-war “second wave” of Cuban influence in the form of Latin-American records all contributed to the decline in popularity of the Katanga “dry guitarists”. The style exists today as “a rather rural phenomenon” (*Bender 1991:51; Stapleton & May 1987:136*).

Latin American orchestras and dance forms such as the *cha-cha*, *charanga*, *mambo*, *merengue*, *rumba* and *pachanga* (*wa Mukuna 1992:78*) inspired bands such as **African Jazz**, founded in 1953 by **le Grand Kalle** (born **Joseph Kabaselle**). Initially these new orchestras existed alongside the ‘*maringa*’ ensembles, but by the late 1950s their widespread appeal completely overshadowed that of the ensembles (*Graham 1992:109*). An initial imitation of Latin-American styles, sung in a combination of French and Lingala (the pan-ethnic language which developed as a communication medium for black colonial troops in the nineteenth century), lasted until the late 1950s (*Graham 1992:109*) or early

1960s, when “Congolese music began to break out of the Cuban mold (sic)” (*Manuel 1988:98; Stapleton & May 1987:136; Bender 1991:51*). The birth of the new music is partly attributable to Kalle’s African Jazz: his “Independence Cha Cha” in 1960 is regarded as a classic. The other notable influence was that of **O K Jazz**, led by **Franco** (born Luambo Francis Makiadi), and later known as **Tout Puissant O K Jazz** (*Stapleton & May 1987:136*).

The launch of modern Congolese/Zairean music was given immeasurable assistance by Radio Brazzaville. Previously Radio Free France, its powerful transmitters’ range was extensive. Four hours of Congolese music was broadcast each day from the late 1950s, giving the genre exposure across Africa which would otherwise not have been possible.

According to Stapleton & May and Sweeney, two schools or branches characterised the future development of Zairean music. A prominent exponent of the branch of urban music which sought to exemplify an indigenous ambience was **O K Jazz**, whose support for the *authenticite* campaign was manifested by the incorporation of traditional Zairean folk songs and rhythms into urban rumba (*Stapleton & May 1987:136; Sweeney 1991:50*). The other school, which included African Jazz and in particular, **Tabu Ley Rochereau**, who led **African Fiesta National** when African Jazz split, and later renamed his band **Afrisa International**, aspired to a more Western-influenced “urbanity and an international approach” (*Sweeney 1991:51,50; Stapleton & May 1987:136*). The distinctive approaches are acknowledged by Graham who asserts that orchestras such as O K Jazz and others such as **Negro Band** “replaced the maringa ensembles as the new champions of folklore legend” (*Graham 1992:109*). However, he provides the necessary perspective by remarking that African Jazz did not promote the contemporary to the exclusion of their indigenous roots. They represented

... modernism with their sharp Latin style and mastery of such rhythms as cha cha cha, samba, merengue, etc. However, they also paid some homage to their Congolese roots in songs like ‘Lemote’. The African Jazz rhythm section also utilised a variety of locally-made percussion instruments like tom toms, drums and cowbells. These instruments were played in a fashion **directly** inspired by traditional teaching (*Graham 1992:109*).

A band whose contribution is singled out by Graham as particularly important to the development of Congolese/Zairean music, is **Rock a Mambo**. Referred to only cursorily by Stapleton & May (*Stapleton & May 1987:145,179*) and not at all by Sweeney, Graham contends that their music

represented a fusion of the two strands of indigenous and modern, epitomised by O K Jazz and African Jazz respectively (*Graham 1992:109*).

An important musician, spawned from the bands of both Franco and Tabu Ley, is **Sam Mangwana**, whose **African All-Stars** is credited by Stapleton & May as introducing a new chapter in the development of the style and restoring its popularity in West Africa after a decline in the region. Described by Stapleton & May as “a ... mixture of soukous and biguine” (*Stapleton & May 1987:138*), Sweeney attests that Mangwana’s music is less representative of the distinctive music of the region: “His music, with its cocktail of influences from Angola, Zimbabwe, the Caribbean and elsewhere, is less purely Zairean in feel than that of many of his compatriots” (*Sweeney 1991:52*). Remarks made by Mangwana in the interview with Bender would suggest the pan-Africanism of his approach: “The older musicians did not have sufficient opportunity to meet each other ... to meet with musicians from different regions. With us, that is not the case anymore ... Only the exchange of ideas and cooperation among artists can help to create the African music of tomorrow” (*Bender 1991:63*).

During the early to mid-1960s Franco’s O K Jazz began to develop the “solid rumba rhythm”. The decade was to be distinguished as the heyday of rumba, replacing “the seemingly endless stream of boleros and cha cha chas of which Brazza and Kinshasa audiences were beginning to tire” (*Graham 1992:110*).

The rearguard of the era was **Orchestre Veve**, led by **Georges Kiamuangana (Verckys)**. Initially reproducing the sound of O K Jazz (which he had left), Verckys’s importance as a musician stems from his tendency to incorporate styles other than the rumba. As a businessman he is an important figure involved in management, promotion and sponsorship in the stage of Zairean music which Stapleton & May refer to as “a second form of revolution”; “a garage-band soukous whose wildness and echo define the new sound of Kinshasa” (*Stapleton & May 1987:151,157; Graham 1992:111*).

As leader of the vanguard of this “youth cult” movement which “took authenticity to new levels” with “enough new-wave energy to spark off a fresh musical boom”, Congo-Zairean music was revolutionised in the early 1970s by a group called **Zaiko Langa Langa** (*Stapleton & May 1987:153*). The word “Zaiko” is intended as an abbreviated combination of “Zaire-Congo” (*Graham*

.1992:118). Their innovations, which have since become standard practice, involved the exclusion of brass from the instrumental line-up, giving prominence to the three guitarists and snare drum (*Sweeney 1991:52*). Whereas the role of the guitar in the by now classic rumba had been “rhythm and embellishment”, it was transformed in Zaiko’s unprecedented and novel style to that of a “blustering lead instrument” (*Stapleton & May 1987:153*). What was soon recognisable as the “Zaiko sound” was achieved by a combination of this “raunchy guitar sound” and a “tight snare drum played to almost militaristic precision” (*Graham 1992:118*).

Sprouting a veritable generation of new bands, erstwhile members who have left to form bands, some of legendary proportions, have spawned a whole new tradition of Congo music. (See *Graham 1992:118*.)

2.8.2 Highlife

Described as “one of Africa’s most popular and potent forms of music” (*Graham 1989:76*), *highlife* has been widely inspirational and influential to the development of contemporary urban styles throughout West and Central Africa (*Graham 1992:32*).

As opposed to the situation in Francophone West African countries where French cultural domination was pronounced, British colonial policy displayed an openness to and even promotion of cultural interaction (*Mamuel 1988:89/90; Coplan 1978:98*). This factor undoubtedly stimulated the process of acculturation which led to the emergence of *highlife*, more particularly the ‘dance-band’ version of the genre.

The various sub- or proto-styles to which it referred were not collectively known as *highlife* until about the 1920s when the term was coined (*Graham 1989:76; Bender 1991:77; Collins 1989:222*). However, the origins of the style could plausibly be regarded as dating back to the nineteenth century (*Bergman 1985:34; Collins 1985B:1; Collins 1989:223*) when various syncretic genres developed in West Coast port towns from the exposure of traditional African dance music to Western influences.

Collins claims that the germs of the style were conceived on the Fanti coast of southwest Ghana (which has the distinction of the longest historical contact with Europeans) (*Collins 1976B:62*). Collins credits various early “Westernized” forms as “proto-Highlife” styles which were the products of the interaction of foreign elements and various Fanti recreational dance musics (*Collins 1976B:62*):

- the *Osibisaba* of the Fantis;
- Liberian sailors’ *Dagomba* guitar songs;
- the Creole melodies from Sierra Leone;
- the *Gome* or *Gombey* brought to Accra from Nigeria and the Cameroons by returning Ga migrant workers. Collins asserts that “*gome*” or “*gombey*” music from Sierra Leone is “Africa’s very first popular fusion-music” and that both *gombey* and the two styles to which it gave birth, *maringa* and *ashiko*, were later contributors to *highlife* (*Collins 1989:221*).

The above are defined as “proto-Highlife” styles which all comprised two basic rhythms. The majority were in duple or quadruple time, while those known as “the Blues” were in six-eight time (*Collins 1985B:2*).

Chernoff asserts that the roots of *highlife* are many and complex. While “no single traditional style can claim to be its progenitor”, he observes that “every Ghanaian culture has some form of music that can be considered prototypical highlife ... Ko Nimo, one of the most famous highlife guitarists, counts at least twenty-five forms of Ashanti music alone that he considers to be roots of highlife” (*Chernoff 1985:156,157*).

The importance of the “vaguely defined intermixture of musical subtypes” which were ultimately labelled *highlife* was that they represented “the first terminologically discrete category of syncretic music to attain both national and international significance and distribution on the Guinea coast” (*Coplan 1978:97*).

Three major sources of Western influence are isolated, each one designated as responsible for the emergence of one of three streams of *highlife* which were flourishing in southern Ghana by the 1920s (*Collins 1976B:62; 1989:222*).

- **Colonial military brass bands** inspired the formation of brass and fife bands which played at public events such as parades, etc. and which specialised in a form of *highlife* known as *adaha* (*Collins 1989:222; 1976B:62*). The “poor man’s equivalent” of this type of *highlife*, *konkomba*, emerged in the 1930s and consisted mainly of choral *highlife* groups which used the same percussion as the brass variety - namely, tambourines, clips, bass drum and the local side drum called *pati* (*Collins 1976B:62*). Bergman maintains that further inland, *konkomba* developed as a dance form which featured contests between dance groups. Dancers dressed in shorts and peak caps, and sporting colourful handkerchiefs, performed in lines, “army-style” (*Bergman 1985:35*).
- The “**christianized black elite**” were responsible for the formation of ballroom orchestras and the coining of the term ‘*highlife*’. The effects of western Christian education were manifested in the tastes and social practices of the upper stratum of black society which frequented prestigious dances (*Bergman 1985:35*). An entertainment phenomenon which developed in the 1920s was that of the ‘vaudeville’ concert.

Exponents of the concert tradition included the headmaster **Teacher Yalley** (whose Empire Day concerts in Sekondi in 1918 marked the beginning of the tradition in Ghana), comedians **Williams and Marbel**, and Afro-Americans **Glass and Grant** (*Collins 1976B:64; Stapleton & May 1987:35*). Preceding the concert by the showing of a silent film and following with dance-band music became a frequent institution.

Large “symphonic-type” dance orchestras played European, American, Afro-American and Latin-American dance music such as polkas, waltzes, ragtime, tangos, rumbas, etc. alongside orchestrations of “proto-Highlife” styles (such as those mentioned above). Dance bands of the thirties included the **Cape Coast Sugar Babies**, the **Winneba Orchestra** and **Teacher Lamptey’s Accra Orchestra**, whose members were drawn from his school fife band. It was hearing the orchestrated versions of “neo-folk” styles which had become familiar to ‘palm-wine’

and street music audiences which prompted the lower classes to label the sophisticated variety *highlife* (Collins 1989 224/225; 1976B:62/3,64; Bergman 1985:35).

Chernoff cautions that

... one should not overemphasise the Western influence on highlife. In the same way that Afro-American musicians found “blue notes” that bent the tonality of the Western harmonic system, African musicians played Western instruments in ways they had not been played before. Even the Latin American and Caribbean percussion instruments that found their way into highlife ensembles after the Second World War did not turn highlife into a variety of rumba. When Ghanaian musicians became familiar with other types of music, they worked from their own roots to find the inspiration that could solidify their aesthetic command of different musical forms (Chernoff 1985:159).

The musical effects of the Second World War included the introduction of swing by British and American troops stationed in West Africa. As a result, large dance orchestras were replaced by small dance bands. The vanguard of this movement was Scottish sergeant **Jack Leopard**’s multiracial **Black and White Spots**. Another swing band formed in Accra at about the same time, and which, like the Black and White Spots, played mainly for foreign troops, was the **Tempos** (Collins 1989:225). Coplan observes that the “highlifes” played by dance-bands up until World War II would be included in the repertory of Western dance music. Consisting primarily of Akan melodies in \approx time, which were “given a Western feel through ‘correct’ four-part harmonization”, a “steady Westernization and modernization of instrumentation occurred” despite the increasing popularity and influence of calypso and other West Indian styles (Coplan 1978:107).

The end of the war brought the innovations of returning musicians: a combination of the schooling in street, church and school bands of their youth and those influences absorbed from the West Indies and North America (Coplan 1978:107). From 1947 the **Tempos**, denuded of foreign members who left after the war and under the leadership of **E.T. Mensah**, “created a highlife style that had a swing touch to it” (Collins 1989:226). Known as the “King of Highlife”, Mensah is credited as the first musician to orchestrate indigenous rhythms as well as themes for dance band in a form which is described by Coplan as reflecting “the influence of contemporary swing, cha-cha, and calypso more than that of the fox-trot or quickstep” (Coplan 1978:107/108); and by Collins as a “combination of highlife, swing, calypso and Afro-

Cuban music” (*Collins 1989:226*). Mensah’s innovations and the Cuban influences brought to the band by drummer Guy Warren, subsequently known as **Kofi Ghanaba**, transformed the group into the most important West African exponent of dance-band *highlife* of the decade. (*Collins 1989:225; Collins 1976B:64*). Bands inspired by and modelled on the **Tempos** included:

... dance-band leaders Bobby Benson, Rex Dawson and Victor Olaiya from Nigeria; ... the Ticklers dance-band of Sierra Leone and from Ghana a whole host of bands such as the Red Spots, the Rhythmites, the Rakers, the Hotshots, the Stargazers, the Shambros and, of course, King Bruce’s Black Beats (*Collins 1989:226*).

- **Foreign sailors**, including black Americans, West Indians and Kru (from Liberia) introduced sea shanties and folk songs which were assimilated by local musicians. These forms together with the introduction of instruments such as the harmonica, concertina, and particularly, the guitar, led to the development of the “palm-wine highlife” style (*Collins 1989:222; Bergman 1985:35; Collins 1976B:62*).

“Low-class guitar bands” consisted of acoustic guitars, indigenous hand drums, rattles and hand pianos and their style is characterised as a “less-Westernised Highlife” than that played by “the posh urban bands” (*Collins 1985:2*). Maintaining a close musical connection with indigenous forms, guitar-band *highlife* played a mediating role in the urban-rural continuum. Not confined to urban centres as their dance-band counterparts were, guitar bands travelled to rural areas, at one and the same time symbolising, criticising and explaining modernisation. The lyrics of the guitar-band genre reflected the traditional and functional aspect of music as a medium of “social commentary, communication, and control” (*Coplan 1978:109,108,110*). The most famous of all early guitarists and the first to record the style, was **Kwame Asare** (*Collins 1976B:64*).

Rather than identifying with the ideals of the Westernized elite by trying to bring African elements into “civilized” Western musical tradition, guitar highlife developed from the needs of the ethnically heterogeneous Ghanaian urban working class to express emotional response to the conflicts inherent in the new social environment. The very name *highlife* in this connection connoted the performers’ disapproval as much as their envy of the elite’s high-living ways; and the lyrics of guitar-band songs included much adverse comment on the social, political, and economic wrongdoings of people in high places (*Coplan 1978:108*).

A boost in popularity for guitar-band *highlife* in the 1950s resulted in their supplanting brass band *highlife* groups (Sweeney 1991:34/35). The electric guitar dominated the medium from the late 1950s, signalling either the demise of older-style dance bands or the addition of the instrument (Manuel 1988:92). Prolific recordings of the style were made by bands led by **Kwaa Mensah**, **Yebuah**, **Otoo Lartey**, **Appia Adjekum** and **E.K. Nyame** (Collins 1976:65). Leading exponents of the “new guitar highlife” in the 1960s were the **African Brothers** led by **Nana Ampadu**, who helped to change public perceptions of the guitar band as being inferior (Sweeney 1991:35; Stapleton & May 1987:46).

From about the early 1950s the popularity of the concert had spread, both geographically and across social barriers. The elitist vaudeville version which had emanated from coastal towns had diffused to the more provincial concert parties, such as the **Axim Trio**. **E.K. Nyame** formed his own **Akan Trio** and revolutionised the institution by replacing the traditional ragtime music with guitar-band *highlife*, thereby effectively combining the concert and guitar band traditions (Stapleton & May 1987:35/36; Collins 1976:65). Existing bands such as those of **Kwaa Mensah**, **Onyina** and **Kakaiku** followed this example (Collins 1976B:65). This form of folk theatre, with music provided by guitar-band *highlife*, has continued in Ghana to the present day.

Manuel maintains that *highlife* has never quite recovered from the mid-1960s onslaught of other popular forms such as disco, soul, reggae and Congolese music. According to Coplan, “This is due as much to its loss of social relevance and symbolic significance since independence for the elite as it is to the hegemony of the electric guitar in other styles” (Coplan 1978:111).

Nevertheless, the style continues to have “a somewhat attenuated existence” (Manuel 1988:93,92). *Highlife* stars of the 1970s include **A.B. Crentsil** and his band, the **Sweet Talks**; **C.K. Mann**, **Pat Thomas** and **Jewel Ackah**.

While the popularity of *highlife* in Nigeria was replaced by that of the indigenous *juju* and *Afro-beat* which it inspired, Sweeney notes the existence of three major trends in Ghanaian *highlife* at the end of the 1980s:

- Traditional guitar *highlife* exemplified by **Alex Konadu** and his **International Band**;
- “A more polished modern form of highlife” of **Ben Brako** and other partially Europe-based musicians, inspired by the “Eurodisco-modified” *burgher highlife* of **George Darko**;
- “A number of rough-voiced traditional street entertainers” such as kalimba-player **Onipa Nua**, who are achieving unprecedented popularity (*Sweeney 1991:35,36*).

2.8.3 Juju

Juju music, which became popular at about the same time that American soul music and American black pride were helping Fela to find his roots, has several traditional functions within modern Yoruba society. Therefore, the music is strongly supported in Lagos, which despite its apparent disorder, has a very strong Yoruba substructure; it is dominated by this one ethnic group (*Bergman 1985:77*).

Juju is “a progressive music, always moving forward in terms of performance and instrumentation” (*Graham 1989:36*). In essence continuing the Yoruba tradition of praise singing (*Bergman 1985:82*), idiosyncratic characteristics include “call-and-response vocals, rhythm patterns, the use of religious folklore in the lyrics” (*Stapleton & May 1987:78*). Bergman describes the characteristic guitar style as incorporating “the bell-like legato of Zairian guitar into short phrases and rolling patterns” (*Bergman 1985:81*).

It is generally agreed that the precise origins of this Nigerian style are obscure (*Graham 1989:34; Johnson et al 1990:32; Bergman 1985:78*). Graham mentions several hypotheses, including the tracing of the term itself to a “small hexagonal tambourine ... with possible roots in the Lagos Brazilian community”, and noting that on the sleeve notes of the compilation entitled “Juju roots 1930s-1950s”, “Chris Waterman traced the emergence of juju to 1932 as a specifically Lagosian variant of the palm-wine style of music” (*Graham 1992:35*).

In similar vein, Alaja-Browne credits its establishment to **Tunde King** in the 1930s in the Olowogbowo area of Lagos (*Alaja-Brown 1989:231*). (Note that Graham refers to a Tunde

Nightingale as having introduced a “recognisable juju sound” by 1944 (*Graham 1989:34*). A man of this name is also referred to by both Bergman and Sweeney in relation to *juju* in the 1940s (*Bergman 1985:78; Sweeney 1991:39*). However, Alaja-Browne credits **Tunde (Nightingale) Thomas** with important innovations to the style in the 1960s (*Alaja-Browne 1989:236*). Alaja-Browne contends that the music was born from a fusion of church-hymn melodic and harmonic elements, “allusions and oblique references” to *asiko* dance music (a genre that had emerged from indigenous music) and three other important foreign elements. The first and most important of these was the adoption of the tambourine drum, chosen for its “potential as a ‘talking’ drum”; second, the use of the *samba* as a stylistic resource; thirdly, the “melodic structural influence” derived from the folksong, sea shanties and instruments of the Liberian Kru sailors. Of particular importance was the two-finger guitar style, referred to as *krusbass*. The tambourine drum (which was known as “eight corners”) was believed to be empowered to heighten spiritual consciousness. As a result, the name ‘*juju*’, a “magical term” used by colonialists to refer to African indigenous beliefs and practices, was given to the music (*Alaja-Browne 1989:233/234*).

Isaiah Kehinde Dairo, commonly known as **I.K. Dairo**, is referred to as the “Father of Juju” (*Sweeney 1991:39*) and synonymous with the term ‘*juju*’ (*Johnson et al 1990:32*). He introduced the accordion and mouth organ to the guitar-band style and by adding “regional modes of singing, rhythms and melodies” (*Alaja-Browne 1989:235*), he succeeded in deepening the constituency for the music locally while simultaneously widening its appeal (*Alaja-Browne 1989:235; Johnson et al 1990:32*). “He even tried to dodge the cultural barriers within Nigeria by incorporating rhythms from different parts of the country into juju music” (*Bender 1991:94*).

The process of “modernising” and yet concurrently “Africanising” *juju* (*Graham 1992:35*) is an early manifestation of the phenomenon which was to be oft repeated in the development of other African popular genres.

Graham mentions that “Juju took a gigantic step forward after the Second World War with the introduction of amplification and the talking drum” (*Graham 1992:35*). While Bergman acknowledges Dairo as the innovator who included the talking drum and guitar (*Bergman 1985:80*), no other author (including, notably, Alaja-Browne) specifically credits one single musician with these modernisations.

Sweeney refers to ‘**Chief Ebenezer Obey**, the instrumental line-up for whose band **The International Brothers** included talking drums, as the creator of the “modern juju style” (*Sweeney 1991:39*).

According to Collins, the change in the status of *juju* was brought about by the Nigerian Civil War, which began in 1967 and resulted in the exodus of many *highlife* musicians from Lagos (see also *Graham 1989:36; Alaja-Browne 1989:236; Sweeney 1991:38*). Up until that time, the style had remained “a poor relation to Highlife, as it was street music played in palm-wine bars, at weddings and traditional functions” (*Collins 1985:19*). Bender maintains that the social acceptance of *juju* after independence was brought about as a result of the general re-evaluation of traditional music (*Bender 1991:94*). The popularity of *highlife* is now confined to the east of Nigeria (*Graham 1989:36; Collins 1985:19*) and *juju* “has been the single most popular form of contemporary music played in the country since the 1960s” (*Stapleton & May 1987:78*).

Manuel states that the *juju* of **Ebenezer Obey** and **King Sunny Ade** “has drawn closer to rock and lost some of its distinctive Yoruba flavor” (*Manuel 1988:94*). Apart from these two musicians, important modern exponents include **Segun Adewale** and **Dele Abiodun** (*Sweeney 1991:40; Bergman 1985:90*) as well as **Sir Shina Peters** (*Graham 1992:18,21*).

2.8.4 Fuji

Today, fuji has become one of the truly great African styles, described as a percussion orchestra of enormous power and stamina. Western listeners may occasionally be put off by the Islamic vocal inflexions but on no account should the style be ignored (*Graham 1992:22*).

As yet another example of the cyclical re-Africanisation of urban African music (*Bergman 1985:92*), *fuji*, “the latest Islamic dance music in Nigeria” (*Bender 1991:98*) which first emerged in the 1970s from traditional Yoruba forms such as *Apala*, *Sakara* and *Waka* (*Graham 1989:46*) is defined as “juju with nothing new added: on the contrary, all the instruments are dropped except for percussion. On top of this, a singer declaims incessantly in a Mediterranean singing style. *Fuji* is the new hot music of the Lagos underclasses” (*Bergman 1985:92*).

An acoustic style employing only percussion instruments such as talking drums, bata drums, bells and shekere, *fuji* “is more African in feel than the more Westernised Juju” (*Johnson 1990:33; Stapleton & May 1987:91*). The abandonment of western instrumentation implies a re-acknowledgement of traditional roots, but “vital contemporary” texts assure its relevance and popularity, which culminated in the “fuji boom” of the 1980s (*Manuel 1988:94; Graham 1992:22; Johnson et al 1990:33*). Towards the end of the 1980s **Kollington** introduced the Hawaiian guitar into the *fuji* style “thereby adding a slightly lighter touch without sacrificing percussive power” (*Graham 1992:23*).

The most prominent exponents of the style are **Sikiru Ayinde Barrister** (who claims to have invented the name of the style); **Wasiu Barrister** and **Ayinla Kollington** (*Graham 1992:22/23*).

2.8.5 Afro-Beat

A long introduction builds the rhythm section with polyrhythms and funk syncopations by the rhythm guitar, usually in minor chords with a good amount of sevenths and ninths. The horn section enters with startling unison, then keyboard riffs are added. Then Fela begins singing in his reedy voice backed by the unison call-and-response chanting of women. During the songs, there are solos by Fela and the other horn players that have a hint of jazz, but are simpler scales against one or two chords. The riffs repeat without let up for a good ten or fifteen minutes (*Bergman 1985:64*).

The stylistic features of this distinctive music are briefly described by a few authors and include the following characteristics: dominant percussion and a distinctive beat and tempo; “jazzy” keyboard and brass improvisation; a call-and-response structure which includes chanted choruses and “Fela’s own lazy baritone singing”; and unusually politicised and outspoken lyrics sung in pidgin English (*Sweeney 1991:38; Stapleton & May 1987:63; Johnson et al 1990:34/35*).

Fela Anikulapo Kuti, “For many years ... one of the few African musicians known all over the world” (*Bender 1991:106*) who established and named the style and whose “central position to the genre is so all-powerful that his own output can be said to define it” (*Stapleton & May 1987:63*) initially played “highlife-jazz” (*Graham 1989:63*). Impressed by the soul singing of visiting Sierra Leonian Geraldo Pino and a period of “political awakening” in the United States, he formed the band **Africa 70** and began producing the “dynamic and original” music which Manuel contends is derived primarily from

Afro-American soul (*Manuel 1988:94*). Stapleton & May comment that the elements of the genre which theoretically display much similarity with Afro-American music are played in such a way as to make them “as assuredly African as the call-and-response vocals which are to be heard alongside them” (*Stapleton & May 1987:65*). This “Africanised soul” genre has been widely disseminated in West Africa and added to the repertoires of dance and guitar bands (*Collins 1976B:65*).

2.8.6 Makossa

The name comes from the verb ‘kosa’, to remove suddenly and roughly, the dancers’ movements simulating a form of striptease (*Stapleton & May 1987:98*).

Makossa developed in the 1950s in the port town of Douala (*Sweeney 1991:44*). Referred to by Collins as “the Cameroonian form of Highlife” (*Collins 1985A:49*), Stapleton & May assert that the style, originally a folk dance which became a guitar and percussion medium, has incorporated influences from *highlife*, rumba and merengue alike (*Stapleton & May 1987:98*). The acoustic group of guitarist **Ebanda Manfred** is acknowledged as providing “the foundations for modern makossa”, which then infiltrated the dance-band orchestras of the 1960s such as the **Black and White Jazz Orchestra**, **Los Negros** and **Black Styles**. Attempts by the government of Cameroon to restrict the playing of imported music on radio promoted the popularity of indigenous forms such as *makossa* (*Stapleton & May 1987:99*). However, it was international star **Manu Dibango**’s “Soul Makossa”, recorded in Paris in 1972, which boosted the popularity and status of the style to that of “national dance rhythm” and that of Dibango to international proportions (*Sweeney 1991:45; Bergman 1985:126*). The next step in the evolution of the style included “the arrival of a strong bass sound that puts *makossa* alongside mbaqanga as one of Africa’s heaviest musics” and the incorporation of Antillean rhythms so that “makossa and zouk became more and more alike” (*Stapleton & May 1987:99; Sweeney 1991:46*). Whereas Sweeney and Bergman attest to the popularity of *makossa* in the 1980s (*Sweeney 1991:46; Bergman 1985:123*), Graham contends that “by the late 1980s the *makossa* movement was steadily losing steam with neither Sam Fan Thomas, nor Moni Bile able to replicate the dance-floor success of earlier years” (*Graham 1992: 98*). However, Sweeney cites **Guy Lobe**, **Charlotte M’Bango** and **Epee and Koum M’Bengue** as musicians who, in the late 1980s or

early 1990s, form part of “an inexhaustible stream of makossa singers whose hits succeed each other in filling nightclub floors at home and in Paris” (*Sweeney 1991:47*).

2.8.7 Chimurenga

As chimurenga, pioneered and typified by **Thomas Maphumo** ... the new Zimbabwean roots rock music was closely connected with the anticolonial struggle and with the armed opposition to the white minority breakaway regime of Ian Smith in the 1960s and 1970s; for this reason a good deal of revolutionary spirit still attaches to it (*Sweeney 1991:61*).

During the 1940s and 1950s black Zimbabwean music was dominated by popular South African township styles. *Kwela*, in particular, proved to be very popular. This trend continued into the 1960s, and included Mahlathini’s *mbaqanga*, sometimes colloquially referred to as *simanje-manje* (*Stapleton & May 1987:215; Sweeney 1991:61*).

In imitation of modern Zairean practice with its counterpart in that country, the *likembe*, the melodies of the Shona *m'bira* began to be transposed to electric guitar (*Sweeney 1991:61*). *Chimurenga* music, with its idiosyncratic *m'bira* sound (*Sweeney 1991:62*) emerged during the armed liberation struggle of the same name which took place during the 1970s. “The authentic sound of modern Zimbabwe” (*Stapleton & May 1987:213*), its popularity was boosted by an anti-regime propaganda programme broadcast daily by Radio Mocambique known as “Chimurenga Requests”. Despite being banned by the then Southern Rhodesia broadcasting authorities, **Thomas Maphumo**, the chief exponent of the style, achieved enormous popularity (*Bender 1991:160,161*). After independence, Maphumo and his newly-formed **Blacks Unlimited** “became a musical figurehead for the government of Robert Mugabe” (*Sweeney 1991:62*).

While the music has not penetrated the South African market (*Johnson et al 1990:44*), Maphumo’s *chimurenga* achieved a measure of international success in the early 1980s (*Graham 1992:195*).

2.8.8 Jit-Jive

Capitalising on “the major eighties vogue for African music”, the **Bhundu Boys** from Harare, Zimbabwe, developed a fast dance music which transmits a “raw energy”, which they named *jit-jive* (Sweeney 1991:63; Stapleton & May 1987:221). Named “Bhundu” (“bush”) in obvious association with the ‘bush war’ of liberation, they combine certain ingredients which are inclined to gain international attraction, such as “political militancy, which appealed to white liberal sentiment everywhere” and “dance-floor acceptability” (Graham 1992:195).

Sweeney and Stapleton & May agree that, generally-speaking, *jit-jive* is unrelated to the *m'bira* sound and the “spiritual, political intensity” of Mapfumo’s music (Sweeney 1991:63; Stapleton & May 221). Essentially, it is “a fast guitar-and-snare-drum dance beat, quite like rock and roll in some ways, of great appeal to a younger generation” (Sweeney 1991:63).

However, Stapleton & May insist that cursory homage is paid to tradition: the influence of Mapfumo’s “mbira guitar style” is evident, and traditional songs are used as resource material (Stapleton & May 1987:221).

2.8.9 The Griot style

Graham states that the increased sales in African music which have been evident since the mid-1980s have revealed a simultaneous increase in fragmentation of consumer preference. While, generally speaking, Africans were attracted to dance music, whites in the twenty-year-old to forty-year-old age group showed a preference for “the more sedentary styles of the Sahel Region” (Graham 1992:3) in which a dominant musical influence is that of the Mandingo people, who inhabit most of the former French West Africa (Bender 1991:5).

The most influential style of this region is the essentially traditional genre of praise-singing and musical recounting of legendary events with which the *griots*, as hereditary, oral transmitters of historical culture and customs, are synonymous (Bender 1991:18). A supreme example of the blurring which

exists between the common (Western) perceptions of ‘traditional’ or ‘rural’ and ‘modern’ or ‘urban’ (*Graham 1992:59; Bender 1991:14*) styles which emanate from, in particular, Mali and Guinea, show imaginative assimilation of traditional idioms into more contemporaneous media (*Graham 1992:59; Sweeney 1991:26,28; Stapleton & May 1987:105*).

The word ‘*griot*’ (denoting a male, the female form is ‘*griotte*’) does not belong to any African language. It was adopted into French as “*guiriot*” in the eighteenth century, and its present spelling was employed from the nineteenth century and disseminated in Francophone Africa. *Griots*, essentially court or wandering musicians, are known by different names in different countries (see *Bender 1991:17*). Of the terms used for these musicians in Mali, *jalis* is the most common employed by writers (see *Stapleton & May 1987:105,337; Graham 1992:59; Sweeney 1991:20; Bender 1991:20*).

Instruments traditionally used by *griots* include the *kora* (a “harp-lute”, according to Bender), a lute known as *khalam*, (a lute known as “*konting*”, according to Stapleton & May) a *balafon*, or type of xylophone, and various drums (*Bender 1991:20/21; Stapleton & May 1987:105*).

Stapleton & May assert that, prior to Malian and Guinean independence, traditional *griot* culture and the developing (predominantly Western) urban popular forms were obviously alienated (*Stapleton & May 1987: 105*). A predilection for *griot*-related music was spurred and nurtured by the post-independence ‘re-Africanisation’ policy pursued by Sekou Toure. The resultant and influential popularity for things traditional was engendered by the National Ballet of the Republic of Guinea (founded by the son of a *griot*, Keita Fodeba) (*Stapleton & May 1987:22,107; Bender 1991:2/3*) and similar dance troupes in neighbouring countries which were inspired by its example. However, Bender maintains that the “bureaucratization of culture” which took place in Guinea and resulted in its secularisation and infusion with “heightened political consciousness”, deprived the music of its “essential content”: “The revolutionary cultural policy was able to accomplish with much greater efficiency what the colonial attack on traditional culture was not able to achieve” (*Bender 1991:9*).

Guinean government sponsorship produced a plethora of new bands and, more importantly, a manifestation in not only Guinea, but also in neighbouring Mali, Senegal and Gambia, of pride in their authentic (and to a significant extent, common) musical roots (see *Stapleton & May 1987:105*).

Current African musicians, among them the famous **Salif Keita** from Mali and **Mory Kante** from Guinea and bands such as the Guinean **Bembeya Jazz** and Malian **Rail Band** (later **Ambassadeurs Internationaux**) provide examples of elements of traditional *griot* styles fused with, or influenced by, Ghanaian *highlife*, Cuban music and Western rock idioms. However, it would appear that the “modern hi-tech” (by inference and deduction, eminently danceable), electric sound aesthetic produced, while undeniably African and often including traditional *griot* instrumentation, does not entirely conform to the ‘sedentary’ classification stipulated by Graham as currently enjoying unique popularity among Europeans (*Stapleton & May 1987:27,107,108,110,112,114,116,120; Sweeney 1991:20,21,24/25; Bender 1991:14/15,21,24/25,26; Graham 1992:3*).

Sweeney refers to **Bazoumba Sissako**, also known as the “Old Lion”, as “the greatest *griot* of post-independence Mali”. Although he died in 1988, his influence continues to be felt in a multitude of successors. The Kouyate clan (who claim to be direct descendants of Bala Fasigi Kouyate, *griot* and court musician of the emperor Sunjata Keita of the great Manding empire which existed around the thirteenth century) and the Diabate clan are prominent examples of families of hereditary *griots*. **Sidiki Diabate** and his son **Toumani** are referred to as “the best-known traditional kora players in Mali today” (*Sweeney 1991:21,20*).

However, it is the female singers (predominantly from Mali) who of late appear to have dominated the limelight of the more traditional *griot* styles (*Sweeney 1991:21; Graham 1992:59*). While Sweeney unambiguously refers to “female *griottes*” (the Malian term appears to be “*jalimusa*”) (*Sweeney 1991:21*), Graham and Bender appear to concur that male *griots* are accompanied by female *singers* (see *Graham 1992:59; Bender 1991:27*). This distinction, made especially confusing by the fact that some women performers are descendants of traditional jali clans, is not clearly explained in the available literature. However, it is deduced that the differentiation is based on the fact that females are traditionally forbidden to play instruments, with the single exception of the bell percussion (see *Sweeney 1991:27*). (It would appear that current female instrumentalists, including the Guinean all-female band, **Les Amazones** and **Sona Diabate** - from the famous family of *griots* - have espoused a ‘dance-band’ style [see *Graham 1992:69*].) Epitomised by **Fanta Damba** and **Mokontafe Sako**, one genre associated with these *vedettes* (“stars with very broad appeal” - *Bender 1991:27*) is “the gentle Manding style”, as opposed to the more masculine Bambara hunter’s style. (The latter influence on the

Malian band, **Super Biton**, results in “faster, funkier rhythms” (*Sweeney 1991:23*). **Tata Bambo Kouyate**, Damba’s main rival, is a member of the *jali* clan of the Kouyate who, with the arranger **Boncana Maiga** (who has similarly directed Guinean **Djanka Diabate** as well as **Ami Koita** and **Nahawa Doumbia**) in the Abidjan studios, achieved “an outstandingly successful updating of pure Manding music, in which a spare, heavy bass guitar and minimal touches of synthesizer added a contemporary feel to the raw simple melodies and traditional ngoni and balafon accompaniment” (*Sweeney 1991:21*; see also *Graham 1992:61*).

Other female singers who simultaneously continue and transform *griot* tradition include **Fanta Sacko**, **Ami Koita** (whose 1989 cassette “Tata Sira” was extremely popular) and **Nahini Diabate**, “non-hereditary musicians” such as **Nahawa Doumbia** and **Oumou Sangare** (whose primary influence is the Bambara tradition, her success an example of Malian female singers appropriating traditionally male musical styles) (*Sweeney 1991:21,22*; *Bender 1991:29/30*; *Graham 1992:61*).

2.8.10 Mbalax

To the tough, rural music, N’Dour added a range of modern instruments: a base of rolling, almost flamenco-like guitars, from which the talking drum explodes, along with fuzz-box guitar solos, inspired perhaps by the excesses of Western rock but offering, more significantly, a distinctively blurred or ‘dirty’ tone (*Stapleton & May 1987:120*).

Classified by Bender as part of “the Griot Style” (see *Bender 1991:35*), **Youssou N’Dour** was himself a descendent of *gaulo* or “courtly singers”. N’Dour’s *mbalax* was also part of the Senegalese response to the impetus for Africanisation provided by Guinea (*Bender 1991:36*). According to Stapleton & May, “Modern Senegambian music, the sound of Youssou N’Dour, Super Diamono, Ifang Bondi and Orchestre Baobab, owes its existence partly to the ancient music of the kora, balafon and talking drum and partly to the Afro-Cuban sounds that rocked west Africa in the 1940s and 1950s” (*Stapleton & May 1987:116*).

The name *mbalax*, originally denoting a particular Wolof rhythm, was first given to the “modernised indigenous sound” of **Youssou N’Dour**, described in 1990 as “currently Africa’s most favourite son”,

and his band **Etoile de Dakar**, renamed **Super Etoile de Dakar** (*Sweeney 1991:18; Johnson et al 1990:40*). The ensuing “new generation of electric Wolof pop” which has followed in the wake of N’Dour’s innovations fall under the same umbrella term. An integral element in Youssou’s music is the interpretation of traditional rhythms by a blend of electrified modern and traditional instruments. By transposing traditional Senegalese ceremonial music, specifically the *Mbalax* percussion rhythm, to a mélange of electric keyboard and guitar as well as traditional drums, the *sabar* and *tama*, the idiosyncratic sound which has gained international recognition was achieved (*Sweeney 1991:18; Johnson et al 1990:40; Stapleton & May 1987:120*).

The observation that “the current interchange between musicians from different countries but playing within the same basic style makes a nonsense of current political borders” (*Graham 1992:2*) is true of many of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. (See 1.7.6) However, available research to date indicates the virtual exclusivity of the evolution of South African black urban popular forms, which, along with the musics of Zaire and Nigeria, are cited as a major source and influence of the continent’s pop (*Graham 1992:2*).

2.9 THE COMPARATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN POPULAR MUSIC IN SOUTH AFRICA

The unique socio-political circumstances in which black South African music evolved is the major distinguishing factor in its history and may be the principal reason for its relative insularity in so far as its development on the continent of Africa is concerned. The major source of influence and inspiration to which it has turned with greater or lesser attraction at various points in its development is Afro-American music. The less obvious ingredient in the developing South African genres has been the Cuban music which has influenced the rest of Africa. Whether in Latin-American or Afro-Cuban guise, and while included at least to an extent in the big-band era, these forms are less conspicuous in the syncretised, African versions that followed. Three reasons for this phenomenon are suggested by Manuel:

- Unlike Afro-American music, Cuban styles are incompatible with indigenous South African forms, in which overlapping vocal responsorial patterns are characteristic and the instrumental tradition is relatively undeveloped when compared to other African countries. Consequently, the more simple rhythmical structures of Afro-American music appealed to South Africans rather than the “intricate, percussive, often polyrhythmic” Cuban styles. Moreover, the periodic use of overlapping responsorial patterns in swing numbers lent greater familiarity and therefore attraction (*Manuel 1988:106*).
- Secondly, since the white community in South Africa was larger than in other parts of Africa, the white society’s preference for Afro-American styles was substantially more influential on the black population of South Africa than that of whites on the black communities elsewhere.
- Thirdly, a psychological and ideological kinship exists between South African and American blacks. In their common struggle for liberation from white oppression, the aspirations and victories of black Americans became symbols of hope and motivation for their South African brethren, and an ideological identification with Afro-American music occurred (*Manuel 1988:106*). (See 4.7.1)
- Other points of comparison in the development of South African and other African urban musics include:
- The social conditions under which the urban popular music of South Africa and that of other African countries developed are very similar. In developing, industrialising centres across Africa, missionisation and urbanisation resulted in the emergence of a black, mainly Christian, elite who embraced European values and musical practices, usually to the detriment of their own traditions (*Stapleton & May 1987:10*). Generally speaking, the catalysts in the emergence of modern, syncretic styles were the inter-ethnic lumpenproletariat. The cosmopolitan communities of the major industrializing areas in Ghana, Zaire, and South Africa were ideally suited to nurture the creation of hybrid forms which transcended ethnic boundaries. From these centres emerged *highlife*, Congo-Zairean music and *mbaqanga*, respectively.
- Blacking observes that with the exception of Shangaan-Tsonga music and some examples of Venda and Pedi music, “the tempo of most South African music is slow, especially in comparison

with the music of central Africa, where the same metric patterns may be found at twice the South African speed” (*Blacking 1980:209*).

- The development of West African *highlife* and South African jazz shows certain parallels:

Lamprey’s “school orchestra” in the form of the “Drum and fife Band” (*Bender 1991:78*) and its effect on dance orchestras is reminiscent of the inspirational practices of Caluza’s Ohlange school musicians. Their influence on developing South African urban musical forms (at a more-or-less similar point in their development), as well as institutions such as tea meetings and school concerts, was substantial.

The similarities between the Ghanaian concert parties and the South African institution known as “Concert-and-Dance” (see 3.8.2), where vaudeville troupes would perform various sketches accompanied by musicians who would then play for the dance which followed, are obvious. Both inspired by the Afro-American genres of minstrelsy and vaudeville, the notable difference is that the Ghanaian variety was accompanied by guitar bands, while the South African bands were predominantly jazz bands with a classic Western-style jazz instrumentation line-up. Unlike South Africa, the Ghanaian institution continued to thrive into the 1980s (*Chernoff 1985:167*). The early Afro-American influences were basically the same for the two genres. In Ghana, the swing and other ballroom styles played by Leopard and His Black and White Spots for wartime audiences were the same as the early “copyright” music played by South African jazz bands. Indigenous elements were then incorporated in the course of the development of *mbaqanga* and *highlife*, respectively.

The urbanisation of the various countries of sub-Saharan Africa and the process by which the musics developed concurrently, share certain commonalities. However, it would appear that the black South African product is as unique as the tortuous socio-political history with which it is inextricably linked.