

CHAPTER 3

AN OVERVIEW OF MILESTONES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN STYLES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to provide a broad perspective of the development of the early urban popular music styles of South Africa, as well as the socio-historical contexts in which they evolved.

While several specialist research documents have been produced, there is a dearth of literature providing a chronological history of the urban popular styles of this country. The existing body of published literature which does attempt to provide an overview of both definitions and a broad chronology of the development of black South African urban popular styles is small and its usage limited. A thorough study of this literature reveals a rather confusing, sometimes contradictory, and often superficial treatment of South African urban styles. Those that attempt such a perspective include:

- Coplan's *In Township Tonight* (1985), derived from his PhD thesis, can feasibly be described as the only serious academic attempt at providing a broad overview of South African urban popular music history from approximately the nineteenth century to the 1980s. This book is divided into sections focussing on styles which, broadly speaking, represented the musical pre-occupations of the different classes. These sections, of necessity, contain elements of overlapping or convergence.

While this work is undeniably valuable and provides a good framework for future research, the structure and style prove to be problematic, with a lack of cross-references and inadequate, or even contradictory, definitions. As a result, it is difficult to glean succinct descriptions of the major styles as they emerged, in more or less chronological order. Furthermore, the classification of style in terms of class-based analysis is not without some controversy.

- Andersson (1981) has attempted a chronology and compilation of musicians from the 1920s to the early 1980s. These include white South African musicians who, while classifiable as political ‘activists’, are often representative of popular western, rather than African styles.

As a result of the breadth of the spectrum covered, discussion of each style becomes too limited, if not simplistic, to offer comprehensive descriptions of the music or the contexts in which it evolved.

- Kivnick’s book (1990) contributes a somewhat emotional and haphazard account of South African styles. This work was possibly never intended as an academic handbook, but because of the lack of available literature on the subject, is used as such. Her research findings, which are presented as a warm-hearted tribute to the spirit of black South Africans, make easy reading but provide minimal insight into the development of the music.

A contribution toward the remedying of this situation is therefore the prime motivation for this chapter.

3.2 A SUMMARY OF EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

Born out of and influenced by the painful political history of South Africa, nascent urban South African music has developed in spite of (and at times because of) hostility, arrogance, indifference and attempts to frustrate its growth. The critics and spoilers have not emerged exclusively from amongst the ranks of whites, but sometimes, as conscious or unconscious convoluted counter-attacks or defences against the influences and suppressions of apartheid, from within the black community itself.

Characterised by ongoing, albeit often insidious, cultural exchange between different nationalities, the urban music of the new millenium is a jubilant, triumphant attestation to the yearning for expression and the proud survival of an irrepressibly exuberant culture.

In different areas and at different times, the process was punctuated by the evolution of integrated societies which developed as a result of industrialisation. Coinciding with the general development

trend in Africa, the most notable momentum was gained in those areas where migrant, integrated populations flourished.:

It was in these bars, on the street corners and in the back yards, rather than in the town halls, salons and official residences, that the scene was set for the emergence of lasting and typically African forms of popular music. ... street and folk musicians reworked local rhythms on imported guitars, banjos and accordions to create a broad musical tradition that persists to this day (*Stapleton & May 1987:13*).

The development of an eclectic modern African popular idiom was notably slower in South Africa than in other coastal and industrial areas of the African continent distinguished by the intermingling of foreign populations. This is largely attributable to the assumption that the permanent white population of this area were intent on cultural insularity in order to preserve their identity, effectively building “a solid wall between local and imported cultures” (*Stapleton & May 1987:8*).

... black popular music in South Africa during the pre-World War II period is urban music, new music assembled from a wide range of traditional sources. Its evolution is tightly interwoven with the growth of towns and the emergence and nexus of a wide spectrum of social classes within that society, and it is music of opposition to the hegemonic white society. It is all these, but it is also a bridge across class barriers and a way of making elements of the dominant society work for the black laboring classes (*Erlmann 1991:20*).

In certain geographical areas, viz. the Eastern and Western Cape, Kimberley, Johannesburg and Natal, significant musical development occurred en route to the emergence of modern genres of urban popular music.

Notably, the germs of this evolutionary process are to be found at the coast at the site of the first cultural intercourse to take place in South Africa. Beginning with the interaction between the Dutch and the Khoi-Khoi in the early 1700s and following the Dutch East India Company's importation of slaves from different countries, the Cape became a cosmopolitan society and hotch-potch of musical cultures. These included representatives from Holland, the slave communities of India, Java, Malaya, West Africa, Mocambique and Madagascar as well as immigrants from England, France and Germany.

According to Gibson et al, the essence of the “sound aesthetic” that was to become a distinctive characteristic of black South African popular music for over three hundred years was formed as a result of interactions and intermarriages between these cultures and the assimilation of instruments such as:

- the indigenous instruments of the Khoi (e.g. the drum or *khais*)
- the three- or four-stringed guitar from Malabar (which subsequently became known as the *ramkie*); and
- Western instruments introduced by colonists and sailors (*Gibson et al 1992:243*).

Perhaps notable in the light of references made earlier to the attempted preservation of white cultural identity, is the fact that after two hundred years of intercultural contact (1700 - 1900), it was the 'coloured' people of the Cape to whom the development of a distinctive and original syncretic style could be attributed (*Nixon: writer's interview 3/2/95*). It was the essence of this style, which included Eastern and Western influences amongst its indigenous resources, which the migrant Cape coloured musician contributed to the musical 'puree' of the Kimberley diamond fields (*Gibson et al 1992:244; Coplan 1985:11,14,15*).

eDiamani, Kimberley, City of Diamonds, was a major cultural landmark in South Africa's industrial revolution. While a minority of blacks had experienced some urban life in the Cape, the almost frenetic expansion of an urban population of diverse cultures which took place in Kimberley established this city, along with Johannesburg, as a founder of black urban society. Certain social patterns and cultural trends which developed as a result of intercultural and interethnic contact in the cramped, squalid and economically deprived living quarters are of special significance, for they were to set the pattern for similar developments in first Johannesburg and later other industrialised areas of South Africa:

- a proportion of the black population remained true to rural culture and this was reflected in their performance practices;
- affected by western 'civilised' norms and values promulgated in mission-school education, a minority so-called elite remained aloof from proletarian entertainment and confined themselves to cultural practices, mainly western choral singing, approved of by the Church;

- “a proletarian majority ... lived by their wits in the shadows and shanties of the mushrooming locations, creating hybrid styles of cultural survival that permanently shaped black music and drama” (*Coplan 1985:5*).

Black migrant workers were literally bombarded with new musical influences, which included:

- the ‘honky-tonk’ piano styles of the American prospectors;
- the guitar, concertina, banjo, violin and piano styles of the white South African diggers;
- the Khoisan servants' dance-tunes improvised on home-made violins;
- the traditional music of the Cape Coloureds which was to prove to be the most influential on black urban performance practices (*Coplan 1985:14*).

A sector of the mining population consisting mainly of Cape or Natal Nguni were influenced by the music of these Coloured musicians who worked local musical influences into new styles. (The term *Nguni* is used here to refer to the Mfengu, Xhosa, Zulu, and Bhaca-speaking tribes (*Coplan 1985:15*). Note that elsewhere Coplan refers to the term *Cape Nguni* as describing the Xhosa and Mfengu (*Coplan 1985:25*). Hamm and Kivnick, supported by Kirby, use the name as an umbrella term for Zulu, Xhosa and Swazi-speaking people (*Kivnick 1990:195; Hamm 1988:5; Kirby 1982:269*). Dargie describes the term *Nguni* as including the Xhosa-speaking chiefdom clusters of the Xhosa - the Thembu, Mpondo, Mpondomise, Bomvana, Mfengu, Bhaca, Xesibe, Zizi, Bhele, Hlubi, Ntangwini - as well as the Zulu, Swati and Ndebele (*Dargie 1988:4,22*).

These people occupied a unique position in African society in that they identified with neither the highly Westernised products of the mission schools nor the sectors of the population who remained loyal to rural, traditional modes of behaviour and cultural practices. They were referred to as either *abantu abayi esontweni* (‘dressed people’) or *abaphakathi* (or *amakumsha*) (‘those in the middle’ or ‘those in between’) (*Koch 1983:151*) implying

... a superficial adoption of European culture, a limited command of Afrikaans or English. lack of interest in Christianity, and an individualised, opportunistic social outlook ... They became acquainted with the value of the material trappings of European life but did not fully adopt the social and moral patterns and restraints of their adopted culture (*Coplan 1985:15,16*).

However, describing Xhosa society in the Lumko district, Dargie refers to a group of people who are outside missionary or other white sphere of influence, but who nevertheless practise “certain forms of Christianity”. Known as *amaGqobhoka* – “converts” or “pierced people” (the idea being that the preaching of Christian doctrine had perforated their hearts - see *Hodgson 1981:11*), otherwise known as *abantu basesikholweni* (“school people”), they are categorised “somewhere in between” the traditional lifestyle of the *amaQaba* (“red blanket” people, who “live in the old way”) and the sophisticated mainline Christians and well-educated professionals. While the *amaGqobhoka* identify “to some extent with the doctrines of Christianity”, their way of life is founded largely on the traditional. Musically, the importance of the *amaGqobhoka* lies in the fact that they, like the *abaphakathi* described above, “have developed their own songs ... the *Gqobhoka* songs have absorbed a variety of techniques and influences: Western (from mission and from popular music), but also extraneous African - not only from other Cape Nguni, but also from Zulu, from the mines, and perhaps from elsewhere as well” (*Dargie 1988:32*).

Portable trade-store instruments such as concertinas and guitars as well as violins and keyboard instruments were used to create a genre which was to prove to be one of the most important Coloured and Afrikaans contributions to the development of black urban popular music.

Even at these early stages, fashionably disdainful attitudes manifested amongst blacks who for different reasons disapproved of the incorporation of Afrikaans Cape melodies into their traditional music. “Africans who combined their indigenous melodies and rhythms with the Western Cape idiom were regarded with some resentment by other blacks, particularly by Christianized Africans who regarded the music as having been cheapened by the integration of the two styles” (*Gibson et al 1992:245*).

3.3 CHURCH-INFLUENCED BLACK URBAN MUSIC

Note: Unqualified references to 'church' in this section refer to the 'mainline' or 'established' churches of the various Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church, rather than the separatist Zionist and Ethiopian churches (see Mngoma 1981:61).

In 1960, Henry Weman, a scholar of Christian music overseas, lamented the rapid intrusion of missionary music into southern Africa: Western civilization has marched into Africa like a conqueror in triumph. The missions taught the African to think and speak like a Westerner, and to sing like a Westerner (*Stapleton & May 1987:10*).

Organisations involved in early mission work in South Africa included the Wesleyans, the American Congregationalists, the American Board (under whose auspices the "Native Home Missionary Society" was established), the Anglicans, the Free Church of Scotland, Lutheran Societies from Scandinavian countries and Germany, and the Roman Catholic Missions (*Sundkler 1961:25,26,27,29*). Mission schools and churches were powerful, if not brutal, catalysts for change and innovation amongst Africans. They were responsible for what can - from a certain perspective and with the wisdom of hindsight - be viewed as gross cultural displacement.

Observing that "Education has ... always been a way of controlling how people in South Africa think", Sole notes that the potential for control of the educated population by the church was great. In 1917 a mere three black schools out of several thousand in South Africa were not under the auspices of the church (*Sole 1983:69*).

One of the basic tenets of the mission church was to effect the Western acculturation or "civilisation" of the indigenous black population. (It would appear that this principle was applied to the extent where it would produce citizens suitably equipped for a "modernising agriculture", while discouraging subjects such as writing and arithmetic which could lead to a "disrelish for laborious occupations of life" (*Erlmann 1983:133*).

Traditional music - comprising traditional rhythms, lyrics, instruments and dancing - was pronounced heathen and to be eradicated at all costs (*Coplan 1982A:366*). Apart from the fact that the music was associated with what was perceived as pagan dancing and ritual, Coplan states that Christianity was less enthusiastically received in communities which displayed strong

traditional customs and practices (*Coplan 1985:25,28*). However, non-mission communities were indirectly but significantly affected by mission-inspired practices through “migratory labour and proletarianisation” (*Coplan 1982A:366*).

Generally speaking, the non-Christian migrant, proletarian class sought expression in ways which were generally frowned upon by their more educated Christian brethren for whom aspirations of “civilisation” by definition excluded the developing urban popular music. Among a large sector of urbanising proletarian blacks in the city, trade-store instruments quickly replaced traditional instruments which acquired a negative, “uncivilised” image. Soon these new instruments were identified with non-Christian music to such an extent that mission-educated Christian blacks shunned them as part of the “pagan” armoury (*Coplan 1982A:363*). This typically middle-class attitude is articulated by Ewens, who quotes an erstwhile member of that section of early urbanites’ society:

Musical instruments were always hard to come by, as musician, writer and filmmaker Molephe Pheto explained. “When it came to instruments like saxophone and trumpet (sic) and so on, that was a total mountain to climb ... the money was just not there. If you wanted those, it took ages. They were not available in the ghettos. But the guitar was so common, people didn’t think much about it, and they didn’t think much about the player. Religion, remember, was a very strong influence on us, and the guitar was the instrument of Satan. The religious attitude was that if you played guitar you were going to Hell, whereas if you played the trumpet you were going to Heaven. Well, it’s in the Bible somewhere that trumpets shall sound ... The Salvation Army had brass instruments all over the place, but no guitar. In fact, to this day I’ve never seen a guitar there” (*Ewens 1991:188*).

3.3.1 Western-Style Choral Singing

The triadic harmonies (of black sacred and popular music) have been very, very strongly influenced by the church. And somehow people who have not had the background and the history have come to accept that it is the way of the African ethos to sing in harmony, whereas originally, indigenously, we *didn’t* sing in harmony. It’s been adopted and adapted. It’s a process of socialisation (*Mngoma - writer’s interview: 14/2/95*).

Following the example of Charles Hamm (*Hamm 1991:162*), the genre which shall be referred to as ‘western-style choral singing’ is essentially the style which exhibits the features of the western choral idiom, and which, from the nineteenth century, was introduced to South African blacks by white (initially) European missionaries. The Wesleyan or “baroque Christian hymn”, the major

style of church music at the time of initial Christian religious infiltration into African societies, has become the most dominant western musical form used by black South Africans (*Mithethwa 1980:23; 1987:28*).

Reasons for the inclusion of an examination of the development of this genre include:

- While its roots lie in the harmonies and rhythms of European-style church hymnody, hymn-singing is included but not exclusively referred to by the term, which later incorporated the singing of traditional songs arranged in a western idiom for choir, English ‘light classical’ and popular choral songs, and American and African songs arranged in “ragtime style” (*Coplan 1985:38,39,72*).
- The triadic harmonies of this medium have influenced popular styles, not least through the effect of the genre on societal structures and the musical practices which were subsequently influenced by them.
- The importance of the various forms of reaction (or lack thereof) to this imposed westernisation in the subsequent development of popular styles. “In fact, modern African popular music is an offshoot of the baroque hymn” (*Mithwethwa 1987:28*).
- Since the style for many years was the medium for what were perceived (correctly or incorrectly) by the white regime to be protest songs, it can be argued that even certain sacred forms are popular to the masses. The famous *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, now part of South Africa's national anthem, but for many years the anthem of the African National Congress, is one such example.

3.3.1.1 *The Use of Other Terms*

A term commonly used by writers to refer to the genre described above, is *makwaya*. The premise stated by Nketia in which “the principal instruments used in a given musical type may also provide

the name of the music” (Nketia 1974:25) obviously lies at the root of the practice, since *makwaya* is the Nguni term for *choirs*.

The term is defined by Erlmann as “nineteenth-century choir music” (Erlmann 1991:123) and referred to elsewhere as an “idiom” (Erlmann 1983:136). Referring to the black church music of Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), Lenherr classifies “*makwaya* style” as the “re-creation of Western choir style with a short leader's part” (Lenherr 1968:34). Essentially dealing with church music, Hodgson defines “*makwaya* style” as “that style affected by African musicians in attempting to perform or compose in European choir style” (Hodgson 1980:72).

The name is initially used in Coplan’s text as: “*makwaya* (choir) music” (Coplan 1985:72), the umbrella term for the western choral styles as described above. The term is defined in the glossary as “African sacred or secular choral music developed by mission-educated Africans, combining European classical song and hymnody, American popular song and African traditional choral music” (Coplan 1985:267).

Manuel refers to *makwaya* as a “syncopated choral genre” (Manuel 1988:106). A feature of “acculturated”, middle-class African society, it is described as a syncretic, vocal style which originated in the late nineteenth century

variously integrating hymn-derived European harmonies or ragtime elements with traditional (predominantly Xhosa) rhythms and overlapping choral formats ... *Makwaya* also represented an early attempt to find a form of musical expression that could be pan-tribal, “civilized”, and yet African (Manuel 1988:107).

Kivnick uses the term *makwaya* to label the “genre of formal choral singing” (Kivnick 1990:197). Imitating Coplan’s use of the word, *makwaya* is used as the descriptive term with which to indicate a *style* of singing (e.g. “... ended their long *makwaya* song ...” - Kivnick 1990:201). It embraces western-sounding, Christian congregational singing; components of spirituals, minstrelsy, and ragtime integrated into Western classical compositions; the arrangement of traditional material for four-part Western choir; and the creation of new, syncretic forms incorporating elements of traditional singing (Kivnick 1990:197,198).

While white academics such as Muller (*writer's interview 2/2/95*) and Dargie (*personal communication: 4/3/95*) readily acknowledged the use of the term as referring to black western-style choral singing, black record industry personnel (*Mcineka: writer's interview 31/1/94; Salume: writer's interview 2/4/94; Radebe Petersen: writer's interview 17/10/94*), musicians of other genres (*Masondo: writer's interview 18/1/95; Piliso: writer's interview 1/11/94; Tshomela: writer's interview 17/10/94*) and choral music practitioners such as Rantho (*writer's interview 31/1/95*) and Khumalo (*writer's interview 15/2/95*) claimed that the term was being incorrectly used to refer to the style in question. Henry Kolatsoeu, black music librarian at the SABC for twenty-five years, and Yvonne Huskisson, first Organiser and then Head of Black Music at the SABC from 1962 to 1985 and author of "Bantu Composers of South Africa" were significantly ignorant of the term (*Kolatsoeu - writer's interview: 30/1/95; Huskisson - writer's interview: 2/2/95*).

Prof. Khabi Mngoma clarifies this mystifying situation by explaining that *makwaya* is the term which was adopted by, and subsequently limited to, missionised blacks in the Cape to describe their singing of western choral forms. Despite implications in the literature to the contrary, the usage of the term has remained localised to that specific geographic area.

Makwaya is used a lot in the Cape, but it's not countrywide. Among the Zulus, *makwaya* would be a mere interpretation of the **practice** ... *Makwaya* ... is (used to refer to music in which) ... there's a person conducting in front, and very likely the music learnt from notation. But you do get group singing ... that has no choreography, that has no body movement, also referred to as *makwaya*, but mainly in the Cape - both Eastern and Western Cape.

It's not a nationally accepted one (*i.e. term*). It actually emanates from the Cape, and it's used in ... (that) context, referring to group singing that imitates formal western choral singing (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Judging from the opinions of those interviewed, it would appear that in Gauteng and Natal no single term is commonly used by black choral music practitioners, popular musicians, or, for that matter, the population at large, to categorise the western-style choral singing which was the direct legacy of white missionary influence in South Africa.

While Coplan uses the word *amaculo* to refer to hymns (*Coplan 1985:72*), Dargie defines *amaculo* as "both (mission) church hymns and school songs" (*Dargie 1988:33*). Prof. Mngoma maintains that "*Amaculo* means all songs, not necessarily categorised to refer to (church hymns and

school songs) ... That's bandying the meaning a little too far. *Iculo* is from *cula*, meaning 'to sing'. *Amaculo* are songs, in any context, any style" (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Victor Masondo's suggestion for the term "hymn-singing" was *umculo wesonto* (*Masondo - writer's interview: 18/1/95*). However, Prof. Mngoma thinks that the term is too broad, since it would include *amachorus*, the improvisatory chorus-singing which has replaced hymn-singing in schools (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Prof. Khumalo observes that the term used colloquially to refer to *white* music (as opposed to *western*) music is *umculowesiLungu*: "It means white music ... The Western concept is not really easily available in Zulu. We never really speak of *isintosaseWest*, we speak of *isintosasiLungu* ... 'white' rather than 'western'" (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95*).

3.3.1.2 *Africans' Adoption of Four-Part Singing*

Hamm maintains that western-style choral singing was accepted more easily into black South African culture than elsewhere in colonial Africa. This was primarily because the traditional music of many South African ethnic groups was characterised by predominantly choral styles (*Hamm 1991:162; Blacking 1982B:297; Rycroft 1982B:315; Mamiel 1988:106; Andersson 1981:14,15; Kivnick 1990:195*).

Since tones in African speech determine meaning, parallelism of voice parts resulted from the necessity of voices rising and falling together (*Kirby 1954:922,925,926*). Rycroft states that such parallelism is often avoided in indigenous South African music by the use of antiphony, non-simultaneous voice entries and different voices singing different texts (*Rycroft 1982A:303*). Kirby asserts that, generally speaking, ceremonial songs (as opposed to "domestic", single-line melodies) were usually performed in a kind of polyphonic style which featured "two or more voices proceeding in a parallel progression in which certain intervals used in European harmony were prominent" (*Kirby 1982:271*). However, Mngoma states that "When you study indigenous music, (you find that) it is antiphonal, but it is usually in octaves. You do get responses ... at a fifth or a

fourth in the same tonality, but the textures are really not in the triadic, western sense” (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

For the most part, Kirby argues, Africans were at the same stage of musical development as were Europeans in the tenth century. (The parallelism of fourths and fifths, common in English church music of the tenth century, Kirby states, is part of the “natural harmony” of the Nguni peoples, “the natural and inevitable result of tone in language” (*Kirby 1982:272/273*.) Thus the missionaries were able to facilitate the “four-parts-at-any-price” ecclesiastical tradition in black church singing, effectively “short-circuiting” the centuries (*Kirby 1982:271*).

Mngoma was a product of missionary education: the Salvation Army school in Eastern Native Township; a Methodist school in Annievale in Dannhauser, Natal; St Peter's Secondary school in Rosettenville; Plimiton High School in Silverton and finally, Adams College. He states that:

It's really mainly with communities that had the exposure to western Christianity, that these harmonies became a part of their music-making experience. So, it's a process, I think, of socialisation. They became used to it, and liked it, and continued to use it. To the extent that, later when I was a child, it became 'natural' to sing in harmony. It was quite abnormal to find a community that sings in unison and does not adopt harmony. I grew up in a culture where these harmonies are used. But I'm quite sure that ... communities that have not had the exposure to Christianity ... especially hymn-singing ... didn't adapt to this (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Blacking's viewpoint is that urban blacks' ability to harmonise new melodies 'spontaneously' must not be confused with or always perceived as an imitation of western music, but rather as an example of the continuation, if modified, of indigenous musical practice. Traditional music appears to be derived from “a conceptual framework of chords rather than single tones” (*Blacking 1982B:295*) - where alterations in melody necessitated by speech tones, or the “filling out” of a melody by the addition of extra melodic lines - involved systematic selection of tones which occur in these “chords” and which “implicitly accompany each shift of tone in the basic melodic pattern” (*Blacking 1982B:295/296*).

Mngoma argues that the incorporation of western harmony into African choral singing was facilitated by the African's inherent vocal ability. He postulates that the natural resonance of African singing generates both the fundamental and overtones of the harmonic series, allowing for a predisposition to hear - and therefore to sing - these harmonies (*Mngoma 1981:62*). This factor,

combined with the attractive intrinsic qualities of the music, made their acceptance an easy, almost natural, process.

My own argument, usually, about Africans' acceptance of this four-part harmony is: ... We are by nature, I think, a very loud-voiced type of people, [which sometimes disturbs some of the western-oriented people, who feel we are very noisy and become uncomfortable about that]. Now, ... it was easy to adapt to this (western-style four-part harmony) because each voice in fact does create this harmonic series in its own resonance, so that as you speak, sub-consciously or consciously, ... you do 'feel' the third and fifth in your voice. So it was easier to adapt to that. And then the dissonances that occur in the music itself, causing the natural tensions and the resolutions back to consonance, made it pleasant to make music using these textures (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Interestingly, it would appear that Kirby also alludes to this theory by stating that it was "the power and resonance of the male voices of their African converts" which led missionaries "to endeavour to teach them to sing their hymns in four-part harmony" (*Kirby 1982:271*). Mngoma states that the African's inherent ability to harmonise results in "an abundance of harmony" in the folk songs, the sonorities of which are used by the black composers of western-style choral - or what Mngoma referred to as 'art' (and Huskisson, 'serious' (*Huskisson 1969:XII*)) music – "even when the chord progressions often tend to be 'learned' and Western folk elements are always present" (*Mngoma 1981:62/63*).

In addition to rhythmic inflection, the pitch contours of speech are semantic in all the indigenous African languages of South Africa (*Dargie 1988:68*). Apart from the tonal inflections of words, *sentence* intonation, or the speech contours of sentences, are also a consideration in indigenous music. Rycroft observes that while the relation between melodic sequence and speech contours in traditional music-making are not always exact, "'essential tone' patterns of words are abstracted from sentence intonation, and serve to intermodulate with overall contours that are musically determined, instead" (*Rycroft 1982A:310*).

Most writers concur that the most negative impact of the imposition of western hymnody on African musical practice, was the sacrifice of the rhythms and prosody of normal, essentially tonal African languages, in which the tones and inflections vitally determine the meaning of words, in order to conform with western musical forms (*Kirby 1982:272; Erlmann 1991:123/124; Erlmann 1983: 134,135; Rycroft 1982A:313; Hodgson 1980:75; Hodgson 1981:3; Hansen 1968:2; Huskisson 1969:XVII; Kivnick 1990:198; Mamel 1988:86*). However, referring to

indigenous choral singing, Rycroft does assert that “it may often prove misleading merely to make a direct comparison between a sung melody and the sequence of pitches used in a spoken rendering of the same text. From existing studies ... it seems that exact melodic imitation of the pitch contours of speech throughout an entire song is of very rare occurrence” (*Rycroft 1982A:306*).

In his study of Venda children’s songs, Blacking notes that while the melodies and rhythms tend to be influenced by the fluctuations of speech-tones, the melodies “are never slavish imitations of speech-tone” (*Blacking 1967:167*). He quotes examples in which “speech patterns are sacrificed almost entirely for musical considerations” (*Blacking 1967:168,201*). While Mngoma concedes that “you do get cases where the speech accents are deformed or abused”, he maintains that it was mainly in the missionaries’ *translations* of hymns into the vernacular that unacceptable distortions of speech tones and rhythms occurred. In most cases, the vernaculars tended to have more syllables than the original western texts. Linguistic distortions occurred when these were put to original hymn melodies without the rhythmic adaptations necessary to accommodate the syllables.

Mngoma contends that in the works of black composers of original western-style choral material in the vernacular, the so-called ‘incorrect’ usage of speech tones and rhythms was usually incurred by the composers’ specific design. Subject to the “same influences that obtained in the development of western vocal music”, melismas and rising or falling tones which do not conform exactly to those of speech are not only *tolerable* but commendable in the sense that they comply with and express the intention of the composer - namely, to enhance the meaning of the word:

... It depends on what the composer wants to highlight. It doesn’t necessarily affect the meaning. It may affect the meaning (when) taken in isolation, but in context, that shock effect might be what the composer wanted ... in order to highlight the significance ... This is an ongoing debate ...

Speech is speech, and music is music, and indeed they do influence each other, but it is not a factor that determines whether music is going to survive or not. Because they tried to emphasise the importance of that text, by having put it to that music.

... Baroque music is not condemned because there are so many distortions. When you listen to a Bach choral work, you hardly listen to the words themselves, but it has not restrained people from listening to Bach (*Mngoma - writer’s interview: 14/2/95*).

Polyphonic vocal styles found in South Africa (generally-speaking, the predominant indigenous medium - see *Rycroft 1982B:315*) traditionally feature at least two voice parts and typically consist of one or more solo voices in a call-and-response dialogue with the larger group. This style proved

to be particularly conducive (or susceptible) to transformation to four-part Christian congregational singing (*Mithethwa 1980:23*) in which indigenous polyrhythmic features present in traditional vocal performances (*Kirby 1982:298/299*) were suppressed. Free-moving parts in overlapping call-and-response patterns were “straightjacketed” into diatonic “four-square melodic structures” (*Erlmann 1983:135*) where

- four-part harmony and four bar phrases replaced the free, flowing African phraseology and polyphony;
- single melody lines with harmony replaced parallel melodies;
- Western major and minor tonalities replaced African tonalities;
- a harmonic range of three basic chords, i.e. tonic, dominant and subdominant, dictated by a prominent melody, was introduced;
- traditional dancing, gestures and work movements, intrinsically part of traditional singing, were strictly forbidden (*Stapleton & May 1987:10; Kivnick 1990:197,198; Coplan 1985:28,72*).

Thus what can plausibly be referred to as an example of an “invented tradition” (see *Erlmann 1991:71*), western-style choral singing was forged within Christian ideology as espoused by mission schools: aspirations of a ‘couth’ society and ‘civilisation’ went hand in hand with eschewing African musical influences (*Mithethwa 1980:23*). Symbolizing “both advancement and stagnation, both expression and repression” (*Kivnick 1990:97*), the practice of western-style choral singing demanded the exorcising of the ‘uncivilised’ and ‘primitive’ from their tribal past by suppressing Africans’ natural rhythmic and melodic inclinations. According to Erlmann, the rejection of their own musical heritage by black cultural leaders such as the Christian minister Tiyo Soga, was “not without its ambiguity and certainly not without painful psychological side-effects, a conflict which was to characterise the subsequent history of the African elite” (*Erlmann 1983:134*).

Lovedale College in the Cape was at the forefront of the promotion of the innovations which were intended to eradicate heathenism. The first college and teacher-training institute for blacks, it

represented the vanguard of what Erlmann refers to as “cultural disruption”. It was chiefly responsible for producing a small but influential black elite who would disseminate values and standards of an “emerging petty bourgeoisie” (which included the elimination of traditional music practices) in the newly industrialising cities (*Erlmann 1983:135,134*).

Gradually a shift in attitude relating to these practices began to manifest among the burgeoning black middle class. Cautious doubts were expressed about the wisdom of a blanket embracing of western ‘civilisation’ in the light of a growing cynicism as to what the ultimate results of such espousal would be, given the evident racialistic convictions of most white colonists.

Erlmann maintains that a situation in which “converts had accepted the supposed superiority of the symbols of Western civilization such as four-part choral hymnody over autochthonous forms of cultural expression such as Zulu prosody” (*Erlmann 1991:123*) persisted in vernacular compositions until 1911, when John Dube’s collection *Amagama Abantu* became the first published example of western choral style composed by an “elite” composer in which “the integrity of Zulu speech modes” was preserved (*Erlmann 1991:124*).

Coplan credits John Knox Bokwe as a writer, poet and musician who “tried to repair some of the damage done to the Xhosa language in mission hymnody, and inserted indigenous melodic and structural features into their songs” (*Coplan 1982A:370*). Referred to by Erlmann as “the first African composer of national stature” (*Erlmann 1983:136*), Bokwe’s most important works were the four hymns (which were published between 1876 and 1884) based on the work of a Xhosa prophet, Ntsikana, of whom his grandparents were followers (*Hodgson 1981:7*). Ntsikana’s renowned indigenous sacred works (the fourth or ‘Great Hymn’ being particularly well-known) employed traditional Xhosa musical style, but without traditional dress and dancing (*Erlmann 1983:136*) “as an authentic African expression of Christianity” (*Hodgson 1980:1*). Bokwe used tonic-solfa to arrange these hymns in a song cycle, and while incorporating Western elements such as the dominant seventh chord and what Erlmann refers to as the ‘toleration’ of “slight distortions of pitch-speech tone relationships and stolid rhythm”, adhered to general rules of traditional Xhosa music such as the “characteristic falling melodic line and frequent tonality shifts between the first and second degree” (*Erlmann 1983:136*).

Kirby notes, however, that whereas the *accentuation* of Xhosa speech was corrected by Bokwe, the problem of incorrect *intonation* (i.e. the rise and fall of speech tones while singing) in four-part European harmony remained inevitable. This occurred particularly in the bass part, which of necessity moves in contrary motion to the melody (*Kirby 1982:272*).

Dargie maintains that “non-Xhosa elements are numerous” in Bokwe’s arrangements of Ntsikana’s hymns. These include the presence of the perfect fourth, “atypical” use of the dominant and dominant-seventh chords and the incorrect use of speech-tones. The “total lack of rhythmic feeling”, the “dependence on the barline” and the “stolid $\frac{3}{4}$ metre” of the “Round Hymn” (according to Hodgson, incorrectly referred to as such – *Hodgson 1981:11*), as well as the writing and singing of different lines of text to the same melody without variations are all described by Dargie as “non-Xhosa”. Furthermore, in Bokwe’s arrangement of the ‘Great Hymn’ “many of the accents fall incorrectly, with the additional rhythmic distortion that arises when semiquavers are followed by heavy regular crotchets” (*Dargie 1982A:9*).

While Bokwe’s work became “repertoire standards” for middle class choirs throughout the country and the “daily bread for African schoolchildren” (*Erlmann 1983:136*), its significance lies in its being one of the first examples of the adaptation of the white man’s medium in order to create a musical vehicle for rousing black nationalistic feelings. This phenomenon was to develop into the use of black choral singing as a powerful agent for the passionate expression of feelings, including those of protest.

Mngoma acknowledges that the “virile” rhythm of the “eclectic” African composers’ work, bound as it is by the bar-line, lacks the polyrhythmic features and freedom of indigenous music. Despite this, and the limitations of the tonic solfa notation used by the majority of black western-style choral composers, he maintains that their “Africanness still comes through strongly” (*Mngoma 1981:63*).

Mngoma refutes the theory that the significance of either Bokwe or Dube lies in their correction of vernacular speech tone or rhythmic accentuation. Referring to the “rhythmic distortion” in Bokwe’s work alluded to by Dargie in the quotation above, he contends that this should be viewed from within the context of “contemporary compositional tendencies and creations” as well as “the

influences of psychology ... where issues of dissonance are taken as necessary shock to emphasise significance ... (This has existed) right from the time of the expressionists ... (It is a matter of) tonal inflections for whom, for what era?" (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Both Bokwe and Dube wrote in staff notation rather than tonic-solfa. According to Mngoma, the significance of Bokwe (whose repertoire, with the exception of Ntsikana's hymns, was in "western choral style") and Dube lies in the inspiration conveyed by their texts (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Hodgson maintains that the images used in "the 'Great Hymn' and in Ntsikana's prophecies have not only influenced Xhosa writing over the years but have become symbols of Xhosa nationalism too, which have far-reaching political implications even at the present time" (*Hodgson 1981:2*).

Erlmann states that "It is perhaps no coincidence that Bokwe's hymns roused nationalist feelings", since Ntsikana's original hymns had resulted in similar audience responses in 1874. In this year an anonymous writer in the *Kaffir Express* had declared:

We have heard only one Kaffir hymn, which deeply moved the congregation of worshippers. It was composed by a chief named Tsikana ... and the Kaffirs, from the circumstances of its composition, look on it with a kind of national feeling, especially now that they droop their heads from the loss of national freedom, and the dominance of the white man (*Erlmann 1983:136*).

3.3.1.3 'Folk' Music

Along with a nascent black pride, there arose a need amongst cultural leaders such as Dube, Caluza, and others, to create an authentic but modern African culture: one that would provide a framework for the promotion of a positive black self-image while disregarding the hitherto sacrosanctity of Christian musical practices.

Erlmann describes the situation in Natal where a cultural osmosis, as it were, began to occur between the two hitherto mutually exclusive classes of traditional peasants and *amakholwa* (see 3.6) landowners. As part of a general trend among beleaguered *amakholwa*, previously shunned traditional musical practices referred to as *isiZulu*, while still frowned on by missionaries, "provided

a common, genuine framework for the expression of Zulu ethnic identity in opposition to the virulent racism of Natal's white settlers" (*Erlmann 1991:71,74*).

However, black elite ideology, bent on approbation by and admission to white society, dictated that "traditional" be defined from **within the** context of black intellectual preconceptions of a refined and so-called purified cultural heritage. Thus the "invented tradition" of "folk music" emerged as "the appropriation of peasant traditions by urban elites". It is described as

the product of a culturally and politically conscious reworking of "traditional" performance styles by the black intelligentsia under the conditions of the urban ghetto. As such it is distinguished from popular music which, although equally grounded in traditional music, is the product of a much greater amalgamation of styles from a much wider range of cultural and class sources in which the laboring masses have a far greater stake than in folk music (*Erlmann 1991:72*).

Mngoma states that "With the upsurge of nationalism among Africans especially from 1950 onwards, there was a conscious effort among those who wrote music to include features in their music that were identifiably African" (*Mngoma 1981:61*). He quotes supreme examples of the incorporation of 'folk music' into the 'art music' of composers such as Mohapeloa, Caluza, Raseleso, Tyamzashe and Qwasha, renowned for their mastery of black western choral compositions. He describes the newer varieties of "Folk music of the contemporary African cultural scene" as showing "a healthy 'bastardisation' which is part of evolution and even conscious development ... These are now sung for entertainment as well as to reinforce a Black cultural identity" (*Mngoma 1981:61*).

3.3.1.4 The Social Effects of Missionisation

Both Erlmann (*Erlmann 1991:4*) and Ballantine (*Ballantine 1991A:121; 1993:11*) convincingly expound the blurring of lines of distinction - or the danger of regarding them as watertight - between various classes and music styles in industrialising South African cities.

However, citing Johannesburg, possibly the supreme example of industrialisation in South Africa, Coplan articulates the establishment of broad but complex "patterns of social organization" which were the results of urbanisation: missionised and educated Africans "attempted by word and deed

to direct the processes of urban acculturation affecting their more ‘backward’ brethren” (*Coplan 1979:136*).

Mindful of the perspective that “Although ideology can be loosely connected to class interests, there can be no such thing as pure ideologies belonging to any particular class” (*Sole 1983:68*), it can be stated that broad patterns of social stratification manifested as a result of “the social and cultural discontinuities between mission station and pagan African community life” (*Coplan 1982A:366*). These patterns influenced, at least to a degree, musical practices, particularly in the 1930s and early 1940s. “At the top of a social universe severely constricted and depressed by white segregationist policy was the culturally self-conscious elite: Africans who made a genuine and partly successful effort to solve ‘the problem of African music’” (*Coplan 1979:138*).

Mission-school graduates who had been pressurised into renouncing both traditional and urban cultural practices regarded these as not only heathen, but uncivilised and therefore inferior (*Gibson et al 1992:245; Coplan 1985:24; Erlmann 1983:134*):

Clearly the ideas and language of a hegemonic culture pressed in on the black middle class at many points - in the press, the civil service, the law courts, the church. Above all, the schools inculcated modes of behaviour, values, forms of speech, which had an immense effect. No adequate study of these schools exists - their curricula, the origins and nature of their staff, their changing patterns. From Lovedale to Adams college the schools reproduced elements of the English and Scottish educational system and sought to produce a new class ... Behind the walls of these schools young Africans lived a life of relative freedom and security where the promise was held out that progress and equality were realisable. Political, social and economic events in the outside world did not tally, however, and the relatively liberal movement (though conservative in many respects) as represented by the mission schools did not triumph in wider South African society (*Couzens 1985:353*).

For a considerable period, black western-style choral singing was to remain primarily the domain of the educated black elite and it generally formed part of the programme at ‘couth’ entertainment structures such as tea meetings, evening concerts, etc. Referring to the programme content and ‘strategy’ of Radio Bantu in the 1950s, Hamm unequivocally states: “Choir music, cultivated chiefly by educated blacks, proved useful in attracting persons of this class to Radio Bantu” (*Hamm 1991:163*).

Culturally speaking, however, “migratory labour and proletarianisation” brought about a considerable infiltration of “missionary influence” into the non-mission-aligned communities. Fur-

thermore, in reaction to missionary demands for the total abdication of both traditional and urban “pagan” cultural practices, mission Africans themselves “developed alternative institutions” in which Christian and heathen traditions were strategically combined in cultural practices which provided a unique “basis for community life” (*Coplan 1982A:366*). Mthethwa makes the point that it was necessary for the hymn to undergo a process of “secularization” in order to fulfil the desire for music to accompany all aspects of African life, rather than solely to satisfy religious requirements (*Mthethwa 1980:23*).

More importantly, one observes the birth and growth of a mindset which was to play a pivotal role in the later development of black urban popular music: Western Christian education espoused the values and norms of the white man, therefore the quest for acquisition and demonstration of those values and norms became part of the quest for social status, and ultimately, integration into white society (*Erlmann 1983:134*). (See 4.5)

That this quest would eventually prove to be futile, and indicative of the prejudiced white viewpoint which was to continue for decades, was summarised by a critic for a colonist paper in Cradock, *The Midland News and Karoo Farmer*. Reviewing the performance of a Zulu Choir's rendering of works by composers such as Handel, Rossini and Donizetti, he applauded the standard of excellence obtained, but nevertheless remarked:

Such shows ... will only tend to intensify and make more difficult the race question in Africa. We take leave to doubt if the Kaffir is to be raised by means of his musical faculties, promising as they undoubtedly are. He can no more escape the primal curse than the man whose skin is of lighter hue, and we thus feel constrained to look upon ... (such) ... efforts - praiseworthy as they are in some points - as being on the whole detrimental to the interests of the natives themselves (*Erlmann 1983:135*).

An example of an alternative institution to overtly pagan and Christian models and one which was developed as part of an apparent two-pronged strategy to meet the norms of Christian and white civilisation simultaneously, is that of the English church “tea meeting” (*Coplan 1985:76; 1982A:367*).

Tea meetings were recreational functions at which, at least initially, no liquor was served (automatically implying a certain level of decorum, ergo possible and generalised insinuations of class affiliations). The term originated within the church society of British settlers at the Eastern

Cape, but soon broadened to include other members of the community (*Coplan 1985:76/77*). Tea meetings and school concerts, the “universal training ground of middle-class performers” (*Coplan 1985:122*) traditionally under the auspices of mission churches, became profitable forms of entertainment at which ‘coon’ groups, ragtime, together with Western choral music (*makwaya*) were performed. These institutions were important vehicles for the establishment of the concept of variety entertainment as well as the popularising of performance traditions of black America. After completing their schooling, many school performing groups formed what Coplan and Ballantine refer to as “minstrel companies” and “vaudeville companies” or “troupes”, respectively (*Coplan 1985:123; Ballantine 1991A:133,131; 1993:23,25,21*). Thus “mission-school people”, i.e. the burgeoning black intellectual elite, “were among the primary transmitters of black American cultural influence to the wider African population” (*Coplan 1982A:371*).

Certain institutions, established within the arena of the educated elite, were assimilated into and transformed by proletarian communities (*e.g. Coplan 1979:137*). Coplan notes that in the mid- to late nineteenth century the practice of “tea meetings”, in original and variant form, had been adopted by Cape Nguni. In Johannesburg the mine compounds provided the context within which tea meetings, along with other mission-influenced cultural practices, were introduced to migrant workers, and where “*amatimitin*” became “occasions for music, individualised dancing and beer-drinking” (*Coplan 1982A:367*).

These “occasions” of music and dancing were to become both the common denominators and points of confluence for middle-class and working-class cultural expression:

One thing middle class voluntary associations and the shebeens had in common was music and dancing. From before the First World War until the mass removals to the new government-owned townships like Soweto in the 1950s, no social function of a middle class association was complete without a choir, a variety concert, or a western-style dance orchestra (*Coplan 1979:137*).

3.3.1.5 Western-style Choral Competitions, Both Secular and Sacred

With its roots bound in the educated black’s attempt to embrace the white man’s ‘civilisation’, western-style choral singing gradually became the flagship of black middle-class society’s endeavours to justify its equality of stature with whites and fashion a convincing identity for itself in

the cities. Tea-meetings and choir concerts (including the Eisteddfods of the 1930s and the Johannesburg Bantu Music Festival of the 1940s) established the style as the axis around which elite social entertainment revolved.

A phenomenon of both church and school, choir competitions, originally initiated by the missionaries, became a regular feature of middle-class life and spurred composition. Inter-school, inter-district and inter-provincial competitions began in 1935, and church choir competitions became annual events (*Huskisson 1969:XIX;XX*). Teacher associations organised National Choir Competitions from 1860.

Since the body of choral compositions initially available was in either English or Afrikaans, black composers felt the need for African music in the repertoire. Expressing “a type of black consciousness” and “in order to make up for the prohibition of indigenous music in the church”, composers such as Dube, Bokwe and Caluza composed western-style choral music, much of which was secular, in the vernacular (*Mngoma 1981:61*).

Mngoma asserts that, despite the fact that for the first half of this century African composers tried to be “as un-African as possible”, the use of vernacular texts influenced melody and rhythm, imposing “an African character” on their compositions (*Mngoma 1981:61*).

3.3.1.6 The Indigenisation of Sacred Choral Singing

Having been rejected by white society to whose cultural practices they had willingly submitted, blacks developed white-inspired choral singing into an idiom which adequately reflected their desire to embrace Westernisation while maintaining a proud African identity. However, inferences that the appropriation of this western idiom involved an intrinsic and simultaneous indigenisation of the music are incorrect. While Khumalo asserts that “the truth about hymn music is that most of it is not really in black style; most of the hymns are in western style, even today”, he observes that “The only thing that’s indigenised are these choruses, because these choruses ... are in typical African style” (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95*).

Michael Rantho, veteran choirmaster and adjudicator of choir competitions, maintains that the indigenisation of church music from within the confines of the Anglican church (with the instigation of which he was formally involved) is still in its infancy. The performance practice of indigenous styles in orthodox churches, as observed by Helen Kivnick (*Kivnick 1990:16*) is relatively new, and, although there are definite and important exceptions, the greater proportion of hymn-singing in these churches, even in the 1990s, remains in the European, Wesleyan four-part hymn style.

Khumalo maintains that the only indigenisation that has taken place in black western-style choral singing is that in the *practice* of the genre, speech nuances in the vernacular songs, particularly those of the Nguni, have been incorporated:

... the one thing that has happened is ... that, particularly with the people who come from the Nguni language grouping ... they have in their languages these consonants that have an effect on the tone of their language. We usually call these tones and these segments “depressors” ... (e.g.): b. d. g. Now. ... when the Zulu Nguni speak, when they get to these segments - there are about eleven of them in the Zulu language - if you go high toned on it, that high tone rises, and then sometimes another aspect of it is that if you’ve got a long syllable, then it falls.

Now, what happens is that these speech nuances, these rises and falls that you get in the language, get transferred into the singing, so that if I say something like “ibola” - can you hear? “I-bo” – it’s rising. It’s rising because of the effect of the consonant and the tone ... You’ve got to be very careful if you are teaching them an English song, to make sure that the intonation is just perfect for English singing, that they do not include what ... would have been the case if they were singing a black language.

It (i.e. western-style choral singing) hasn’t remained as it was ... It’s effects like ones I’ve been describing that have come into the singing in the vernacular. ... (Whereas) the English hymns have a way of being performed which is independent of the quality of the words (*Khumalo - writer’s interview: 15/2/95*).

Huskisson states that “the Bantu ear never did wholly accept the Western scale and in this, his music-making, even at the outset of his composition efforts, bore a slightly different musical hallmark” (*Huskisson 1969:XXII*). Mngoma, who has a fascination for the debate surrounding the use of tempered and acoustical pitch, trains his choirs to use tempered pitch when singing from notation and accompanied by a tempered instrument, and acoustical pitch when singing *a cappella* in the vernacular (*Mngoma - writer’s interview: 14/2/95*).

Hodgson observes that the need for the indigenisation of Xhosa worship was articulated as long ago as 1871 in a vain plea by a white correspondent to the Kaffir Express. Expressing concern that the dull Christian life would be rejected by converts, he bemoaned the fact that the western church had not provided Africans with a suitable sacred substitute for the traditional singing and dancing

of which they had been deprived (*Hodgson 1980:78*). Writing in 1981 Hodgson laments: “A century and a half later the Church still struggles to reach a vast mass of people because of its failure to use indigenous vehicles of communication in conveying its message” (*Hodgson 1981:2*).

The Roman Catholic Church (specifically, Fathers Oswald Hirmer and Fritz Lobinger of Lumko Missiological Institute in the Transkei) began the indigenisation of church music, commissioning the Xhosa composer Benjamin Tyamazshe to compose traditional liturgical music in traditional Xhosa style in 1964 (*Hodgson 1980:79*). Tyamazshe, then aged seventy-four, had until that time predominantly composed in the western choral style, and his inspiration was drawn directly from the only notated indigenous music available, Bokwe's transcription of Ntsikana's hymns. Techniques used by Ntsikana, such as polyrhythms and harmonic patterns using raised fourths (typical of Xhosa music - see *Dargie 1981:15; 1982:9A; 1988:8,19,87; Hansen 1981:37,38*) are found in “African style sections” in which participants are instructed to clap or dance (*Hodgson 1980:79*). While certain orthodox and independent church hymn repertoires have included Ntsikana's hymns (*Hodgson 1980:20*), Dargie laments as late as 1982 that “It is a pity that the singing of the hymns of Ntsikana in Roman Catholic worship has only recently begun” (*Dargie 1982A:7*).

Significantly, while Ntsikana's musical compositions provide a vital landmark in the history of the indigenisation of church music in this country, his followers and descendants returned to the use of European tunes and traditional western church verse form (*Hodgson 1981:3*).

3.3.1.7 Separatist Church Music

A situation existed within mainstream western churches whereby the Christianisation and ‘civilisation’ of blacks did not alter their inferior status in the eyes of white, albeit Christian, society. The irony of racialism in a Christian context did not escape black converts and was perhaps the most significant factor in the development of the separatist or independent church movement.

Mthethwa suggests that African responses to the imposition of western Christian religious expression manifested in different ways:

- One such response was ridicule: The Zulu folk music oral tradition repertory includes “vulgar” songs, the texts of which have been fitted to western Christian hymn tunes.
- A second response was the transformation or Africanisation of repertory and performance style. Mthethwa maintains that, while scholars have noted the lack of new composition by African Christians (*Sundkler 1961:193*),

the focus of African worship lies not so much in the original music, as it does in the way in which worship is performed. In this regard, it is believed that the holy spirit is imparted to western hymns specifically through the use of polyrhythms and polyphonic melodies. Thus, the technique of call-and-response is believed to enable the spiritually ‘weak’ western Christian hymn to come alive in African religious worship (*Mthethwa n.d.:5*).

Two main branches of the Separatist Church movement exist: the Ethiopianists and the Zionists. The impetus for the formation of the two movements can be broadly, if somewhat simplistically, expressed: that of Ethiopianism was essentially motivated by black consciousness and a desire for black political assertion; integral to the formation of Zionism was a desire for indigenous religious expression and ideology.

The rapid growth of Ethiopianism is attributed to the absorption of disaffected members of missionary churches in the towns. The philosophy of black spiritual and material self-reliance it championed, soon resulted in the Ethiopian preachers being viewed by white society as responsible for the promotion of subversive, anti-white sentiments (*Coplan 1985:42/43*).

Proletarian Christians who not only balked at the contradictory ideologies of western Christianity mentioned above, but also manifested a desire for uniquely African modes of worship, formed the Zionist church. Both rural and urban Christians found articulation for their religious beliefs in an environment in which traditional rituals and practices were enthusiastically embraced. This movement was to grow into the largest and most influential black church movement in South Africa and continues as such to the present day.

Coplan attests that the music of the black American church, in particular that of the black Baptist, Pentecostal and Methodist churches was a strong influence on the music which was created in a distinctly African ambience (*Coplan 1985:80*).

Isaiah Shembe, founder of the Nazarite sect, was a major contributor to the growing crusade to “re-Africanise” songs of worship. However, whereas Coplan infers the Nazarite “sect” (see *Coplan 1985:80*) to be classified as Zionist, Muller designates this influential religious movement as more Ethiopianist than Zionist, “constructing a regime of cultural truth in opposition to the hegemonic rule of the South African state” (*Muller 1994:394*). Mthethwa proclaims Shembe to be the “embodiment of the Africanisation of Christianity” (*Mthethwa n.d.:56,49/50*). In response to the prevalent notion among white clergymen and Christians that God’s arrival in Africa was marked by the first shipment of (white) ministers of religion, Shembe's religious ideology contained a message of racial equality and an inherent black pride (*Mthethwa n.d.:56*).

Based on western versions, the performance of his hymns became essentially black or more correctly, Zulu, in character by virtue of their inclusion of idiosyncratic African musical devices. Shembe’s church attracted the masses “by his message of cultural and spiritual autonomy”. Essentially a proletarian institution, the Nazarites were “ignored or despised by most mission Africans” (*Coplan 1982A:369*). Of special significance is the fact that Shembe’s music heralded the incorporation of dancing as well as drum accompaniment into separatist black church music (*Coplan 1985:81*).

Mthethwa suggests that God, *Mvelingqangi*, “understands rhythm, and is to be communicated to through the language of rhythm” (*Mthethwa n.d.:34*). In traditional African belief, the rhythmic appeal of a particular hymn is used to evaluate its depth of spirituality. The deprivation suffered by African converts denied the rhythmic bodily movement which was integral to their indigenous music was perceived as an intense spiritual impoverishment of the music.

3.3.1.8 Amachorus

While the style of *amachorus* is known nation-wide, it is not documented in any of the available secondary literature. Reference to this improvisational style of hymn-singing is pertinent: elements of the style and technique of composition employed in the genre were later to be found in the popular urban music arena - most significantly, in the protest songs which emerged and typified the liberation movement from the 1970s onwards.

Mngoma asserts that the essence of this style - community singing - “has been around as long as I know. It was happening when I was born, 1922, and that’s a long time” (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Its roots lie in the use of the style as a gentle admonishment for practices of which the community disapproved. For example, a song would be composed to articulate the community’s objection to some form of deviant behaviour on the part of a leader, to whom it would be difficult to vocalise such disapproval in speech:

And everybody will sing it with impunity, because it is music. And if he is sensitive enough, the leader will get it, but usually because the community sings it, some of his lackeys will pick it up and he will get the message ... So it is a very, very important form of communication (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Missionary influence in schools, perceived by the Apartheid regime to be encouraging the challenging of the status quo, was summarily eradicated by ‘Bantu Education’ which was introduced in South Africa in 1952/53. Along with other changes to the curricula, religious assemblies - in the form of morning and afternoon prayers with singing of the hymns of the relevant Catholic or Protestant denominations - were removed from the school system (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*). Possibly manifesting the germs of the confluence or grey area between sacred and protest song, it would appear that the chief motivation for this draconian decision was the manifestation of what can be viewed as early ‘liberation theology’:

... religion - for instance, morning prayers and so on - was where many people were able to say a lot of political things, with the support of the Bible. So, religion was taken out of the school system as such, especially the morning and afternoon prayers. (At) morning prayers, as a rule, especially at day schools, there was a lot of hymn-singing. Once the missionary influence - because most of them were under missionary control - (was removed), they were taken over by the State. So the different denominations didn’t have ... a hold in ... getting the community to sing their hymns (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

The use of the *amachorus* at school assemblies emerged to fill this void. Encouraged by the headmaster of the school, scholars would be asked to sing in the style of the antiphonal call-and-response *amachorus*.

Non-denominational and forming the ‘popular’ link, as it were, between the various denominations of the mainline churches, the recent incorporation of *amachorus* into the sacred repertoire of black

churches represents a notable shift in stance from its predominant use of western-style choral singing (*Rancho - writer's interview: 31/1/95*). Since its introduction in schools in the early 1950s coincided with the simultaneous abolition of missionary influence and the emergent popularity of American gospel (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*), it can be hypothesised that the incorporation into the church repertoire of this traditional genre of community music-making which incorporates western elements, depicts a uniquely dichotomous idiom of indigenisation in the South African urban sacred milieu.

Mngoma stresses that while the popularisation of this *a cappella* form in schools coincided with the gospel singing influence, the two forms were distinctly different:

Gospel singing is quite different in that it has to have ... an instrumental component to it. In most cases it has to be very aggressive, comparatively. *Amachorus* (always sung *a cappella*) can be very appealing, very subdued; it expresses sorrow, it expresses one's spiritual longing ... The whole tone, the whole style ... has a very strong religious base (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Generally-speaking, the lyrics of the *amachorus* sung in churches are based on Bible texts which relate to current events in the church calendar:

... they might take a snippet from the Bible which relates to what happens: epiphany, resurrection, and things like that. Just a snippet from that, and hit upon a melody, which is picked up and sung - sung so long that by the end, everybody knows it. So the next time it starts, everybody will recognise it. It's sung in church, it's sung at funerals ...

So it is, I would say, it is an adaptation as far as the harmonic structures in the responses, ... greatly influenced by hymn singing, but inevitably, in all of them, virtually without exception, there is antiphony. The leader makes a statement and there is a response, either a repetition of the same statement or a response which is different texturally to what is being sung by the leader. The text becomes quite important: it can become a repetition of the text, or it can be something else that is responded (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

In the 1950s, inter-church activities resulted in a repertoire of *amachorus* being sung by different denominations and thus becoming familiar to "the community at large". While Khumalo and Mngoma concur that direct missionary influence is evident in the western four-part harmonisation used by the responding chorus (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95; Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95, 16/2/95*), body movement, anathema to western-style choral hymn singing, is integral to the style. The choreography, usually initiated by the leader and which "varies also according to the creativity of whoever leads", is usually simultaneous, thereby denoting group

identity. However, Mngoma observes that individuals “can embellish, can vary slightly, very subtly” to show independent musicianship (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

However, it was to be another two, and in some instances, three, decades before the genre became a vital part of mainline, as opposed to separatist, church worship. Mike Rantho maintains that while other African countries manifested elements of indigenisation in church worship much earlier, South Africa had “become too westernised” and “resisted this indigenisation” (*Rantho - writer's interview: 31/1/95*).

It would appear that, in terms of that period (i.e. the 1950s) and from within the context of the black intelligentsia with whom he identified, Mngoma espouses theories which Muller describes as “radical”: the notion that one could “be civilised without losing your cultural identity” (*Muller - writer's interview: 2/2/95*).

Rantho maintains that the Maseki (Anglican) movement, to which he belonged and for whom he was a choirmaster of note, was in the forefront of the crusade among Churchmen to encourage indigenisation and its integral component of body movement. However, even from within this milieu, Rantho asserts that “it is taking ages for them to accept any movement”. A large section of the congregation, generally the older generation (possibly belonging to the mindset which is a direct legacy of missionary education) still “resists movement and feels very uncomfortable with the idea” (*Rantho - writer's interview: 31/1/95*).

Khumalo laments what he regards as “one of the greatest tragedies with African music here”: “having been taught to look down so much upon it”, those schooled in missionary culture are unable to “react to” music of traditional flavour (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95*).

Relating the essential differences between the *amachorus* of mainline and separatist churches, Khumalo describes the melodies and harmonies of *amachorus* as “set”, the western harmonies of the responses “always coming in blocks”. While the song develops into a number of variations, they tend to be “not too long”. The Zionists, by comparison,

continue for a long, long time, because they're more inventive in their singing, and ... they keep just building up as they sing and it can go on and on and on ... You see, with the Zionists, that (*i.e. western harmony*) is not what they use. When the other voices come, they come at different times and they don't come together and they do not form a harmonic block. They are all different, interesting melodies of their own, that are sort of sweetening what is the main melody (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95*).

3.3.1.9 *Protest Songs*

Articulating the confluence of style in the spiritual vehicle of *amachorus* and protest songs, Khumalo maintains that

There isn't too great a difference. The difference is mostly in the lyrics. But the musical style is not too different. You see, the lyrics of the *amachorus* are all religious, whereas the lyrics of this music are not religious. But ... if you look at some of the earlier protest songs, they actually came from some of them (which) had been religious. So that you sometimes find that the same melody with the same harmonies and rhythms will be used in some instances as a chorus and in others, with different lyrics, used as a protest song (*Khumalo - writer's interview: 15/2/95*).

While protest songs are generally conceived from within a different ethos to that of *amachorus*, the same basic call-and-response, improvisatory framework is used. However, the lines of delineation between the two media do become blurred in certain situations:

The text quite often is taken from the Bible, just a snippet ... which is relevant to this particular situation: it may be an expression of sorrow, expression of anguish. If it's a political funeral: expression of anger ... revenge, and things like that (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Furthermore, the subjects of *amachorus* lyrics can be adapted to protest songs:

But the protest songs can adapt an *amachorus* item ... Or it can allude to a biblical situation - like crossing the Jordan, crossing the Red Sea, receiving ... of Manna - according to how pertinent it is to any given situation that is being lived through at any particular time (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Generally-speaking, though, protest songs differ in that while they may contain elements of "spiritualism", the ethos of their expression is more aggressive than that of *amachorus*. The lyrics of protest songs are more topical, expressing issues that cause anger and resentment to the black community (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

This form of protest, as a youthful articulation of Black Consciousness, was most pronounced in the period which Mngoma refers to as “the worst part of apartheid, before the actual 1976 explosion”. Texts vocalising the wrath and resentment of the young people vis-a-vis “a leader, or white oppressor, anything that ... rubs them the wrong way” would be invented.

Some could be quite base and very, very vulgar, with swearing. Others could be denigrating ... They pick up these words and then a tune would be evolved, would be developed, and it would be picked up, until it ‘sets’ (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

An initial chant by a leader, regarded as most sensitive to the issue involved, verbalises the anger and concern of the community and instigates a response from the chorus. Mngoma emphasises the need for this introductory chant to be “very, very telegraphic”, expressing the emotion of the body of people in only a few words. The leader invents a tune and choreography by which to express the communication, and this is developed, embellished and contributed to by the company until it ‘gels’ into a set form which is recognisable at a future date.

Muller (*writer's interview: 2/2/95*) concurs with Mngoma’s deduction that

in African music-making, the capacity to initiate music activity correlates very closely with the leadership potential of the individual ... The ones in the group that are stronger in character, will invent much more effective themes, either melodically or rhythmically, and this is likely to influence others, who’ll want to imitate it and identify with the supporters (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

3.3.2 Brass Bands

A phenomenon introduced to this country by German missionaries, the marching brass band first captured the imagination of Pedi and Tswana communities in the then Transvaal province, probably since it represented a relatively easy transition from their traditional reed-flute ensembles. Coplan maintains that the Tswana people, dispersed by war, had effectively been deprived of national power and were enticed to Christianity more by the prospect of missionary protection than by religious convictions (*Coplan 1985:83*). Tswana marching brass bands attached to missionary establishments became a regular feature in the Transvaal.

During the late nineteenth century, brass bands were established in every region of the country (*Ballantine 1991A 137; 1993:30; Coplan 1982A:368*). These held significant appeal and were soon imitated by separatist churches, where new ceremonial dances evolved from elements of western military drill and traditional dances.

Soon brass bands were absorbed into secular life, offering performance opportunities for musicians outside the church. Here a genre inspired by the current practices of the separatist churches was created in which traditional African polyphony and ornamentation blended with urban rhythms and predominantly European marches and songs.

Ballantine states that tribal-affiliated brass bands, wearing uniforms “sponsored by traditional chiefs”, appeared in the Transvaal in the 1880s. The growth of locations in the cities resulted in “proletarian” brass bands losing their tribal identity: Modikwe’s Band and the Mokgoros Band from Bloemfontein are two examples (*Ballantine 1991A:139; 1993:30*). Some of these ‘proletarian’ bands were seconded to the vaudeville stage.

This tendency to merge diverse musical influences into new, innovative forms of distinctly black music was one which was to set the course for the future development of black urban popular music.

3.4 POPULAR VOCAL MUSIC FROM MINSTRELSY UP TO ISICATHAMIYA

The history of urban black South African music is signposted by popular music influences from America. The first significant American musical contribution to this country’s popular music idiom can be pinpointed as the visits of the first American minstrel troupes to South Africa.

3.4.1 Minstrels

This idiom (*i.e. vaudeville*) was already so close to the Cape coloured syncretic style (coming as it did from similar roots), that the songs of Louisiana and Stephen Foster were a familiar sound ideal to the Western Cape, and the spirituals were a stone’s throw away from the Afro-Christian hymns of South Africa (*Gibson et al 1992:246*).

It would appear that ‘black-face’ white minstrel troupes performed in Cape Town as early as 1848, followed by more of the same in the 1860s. These were followed by black American groups, with whom local black audiences felt obvious rapport, and there is evidence of local imitation in the form of at least one African minstrel troupe performing in Durban in the 1880s (*Ballantine 1993:4; 1989:306*). Amongst other examples of American popular style, the spiritual in particular was a genre gleaned from the minstrels whose direct as well as indirect influence was profoundly felt in developing urban music for decades. Possibly because of aspirations to attain the “civilised” status as exemplified by black minstrel musicians themselves, or possibly because of a perceived relevance in the lyrics which articulated the suffering and longing for freedom of the blacks on this continent, the spiritual was eagerly embraced by South African blacks:

The spirituals provide the first example of black music as a music of survival: It has provided as a cultural form a means of survival, “a secret language of solidarity, a way of articulating oppression, a means of cultural resistance, a cry of hope” (*Pratt 1990:50*).

In the 1890s minstrel troupes singing spirituals became known as ‘jubilee’ singers. The troupe to achieve the most fame and exert the most influence on developing popular styles was Orpheus McAdoo's Virginia Jubilee Singers, who toured the country several times between 1890 and 1898. The development of one such style to be affected was to play a major role in urban popular music and later became known as *isicathamiya*:

McAdoo's visits became so deeply ingrained in popular consciousness as a turning point in black South African musical history that Theminkose Phewa, member of the legendary Evening Birds under Edwin Mkhize, declared: “Our oldest brothers, the first to sing *isicathamiya*, were the Jubilee Brothers. That was in 1891” (*Erlmann 1991:159*).

Another important popular genre influenced by the minstrels was vaudeville, where obviously the concept of a “show” consisting of various acts was of direct influence, while the all-important ‘coon’ songs, which were often indistinguishable from ragtime (*Ballantine 1991A:130; 1993:18*), had tremendous impact.

Erlmann highlights a most important legacy of the minstrel theatre in terms of laying the foundations for the spirit and ethos of later developments in black South African music, both in terms of black pride and of gaining white approval:

Minstrel humor closed the ranks of the black community and ultimately helped to restore racial confidence. Thus it is a perfect illustration of the effects of minstrel performances that as early as 1904 the Inanda Native Singers persuaded doubtful concertgoers who “did not think there is anything worth seeing which could be done by blacks,” of the viability of black values (*Erlmann 1991:64*).

3.4.2 The Contributions of Reuben Caluza

A leading innovator in the swell of cultural re-assertion - and pioneer of the mindset which Ballantine refers to as the “Liberal View” (*Ballantine 1991B:130; 1993:40*) - was Reuben Caluza. A graduate of and later teacher at Ohlange, he was influenced initially by the minstrel shows and later by American popular music in general, focussing and articulating black South Africans’ infatuation with that continent which was to last for decades.

Rolfes Dhlomo said that “not only will Caluza triumph, but (so will) every blackman”. Caluza’s songs inspired him to write:

The progressive Native,
See how he progresses;
Oppressed and shunned by others;
He rejoices in the fact - that this is the land
For which his sires died - so he
Aspires! Aspires! Aspires! (*Couzens 1985:56*).

Fanning the flames of emerging African nationalism in general and Zulu nationalism in particular, Caluza contributed to the development of western-style choral singing by his arrangements of traditional Zulu songs, hitherto taboo with educated composers. Perhaps of even greater significance in the long-term were Caluza's innovations in combining traditional African and popular American elements to produce a novel, syncretic style in which the image of the black man as a sophisticated urbanite with a unique and proud culture, engendered self-respect.

One style which germinated from Caluza's work and which illustrates this feature, was known as *isikhunzi* (coons). Regarded as one of two important forerunners of *isicathamiya*, a major genre which is popular to this day, Caluza characterised *isikhunzi* as a unique combination of Zulu song, usually in four parts, synchronised dance steps and actions and piano ragtime (*Erlmann 1991:159,32; Coplan 1985:72,73*).

Caluza was exposed to one of the first and most brutal manifestations of black oppression. The passing of the Land Act of 1913 resulted in the confiscation of land from countless black landowners as well as squatters for whom such expropriation represented the deprivation of “their rural base of subsistence”. Opposition to the proposed measures led to the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) in 1912, later to be called the African National Congress (ANC).

Caluza was “sensitive to any injustice”, but a-political to the extent that he did not join the ANC or view “the articulation of popular protest as a form of organized political response”. Erlmann describes the “spiritual source” of his essentially black nationalist songs which “solemnly underscored black demands for freedom and justice” (*Erlmann 1991:123*) as a “blend of moderate nationalism with a moral, Christian viewpoint”. Songs such as “Silusapho Lwase Afrika” (which became the anthem of the SANNC in 1913), “Vulindhlela Mtaka Dube” (“Pave the Way, Dube”), “Bashuka Ndabazini” (“What is Congress Saying?”) and “Yekan’Umona Nenzondo” (“Don’t be Jealous”) are technically indebted to choir composers like John K. Bokwe and Enoch Sontonga (composer of “Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika” which in 1919 replaced Caluza’s work as official anthem of the ANC) (*Erlmann 1991:119,120*).

As choirmaster of the Ohlange Choir at Ohlange Institute which he joined in 1915, the practice of annual tours of Natal and Johannesburg, “... an unusual, high-profile, and almost political enterprise that ran numerous risks”, begun a few years earlier in order to raise funds, was continued (*Erlmann 1991:121*). It was within the medium of these choir compositions that one of Caluza’s paramount contributions, significant both in terms of its musical and social function to the genre of urban popular music, emerged: namely, *iRagtime*. The syncopated melodies of this style, which together with *isiZulu* (traditional Zulu genres - *Erlmann 1991:71*) and *imusic* (Western, mainly European, music and hymns - *Erlmann 1991:59*), became recognised categories of black urban performance, proved more compatible to the transposition of Zulu speech patterns than had the “*makwaya* of the mission-educated elite” (*Erlmann 1991:121,123*).

Caluza developed the existing mission school-inspired Zulu practice of *ukutamba* (“action song”). This term essentially denoted singing accompanied by synchronised movements which had earned missionary approval and were both similar to and could be combined with British school action songs (*Coplan 1985:72/73*). Movements imitated from minstrel and ragtime shows and known as *ukureka*

(“to play ragtime music, engage in movement during music of African songs”) were added to this genre, transforming it “into a professional African musical variety tradition that smoothly integrated Zulu song, piano ragtime, and interpretive, synchronised step dancing” (*Coplan 1985:73*).

Erlmann maintains that Caluza “revolutionized the entire concert and stage practice of Natal’s black middle class” by

- the introduction of *urureka*;
- his insistence on the polished and accurate execution of movements;
- the use of stage costumes and “the ‘dramatization’ of his songs”; and
- the use of humour or comedy (existing in Zulu urban genres such as *ukukomika*) (*Erlmann 1991:139 140,141*).

However, the importance of Caluza as a landmark figure in the overall development of urban music is underlined by the fact that his work also appealed to and influenced those outside the confines of the educated middle-class (*Coplan 1985:78*). This reinforces the theory expressed earlier that distinctive musics did not develop to the absolute exclusion of certain classes. His innovative performances “made ragtime respectable and elite choral music popular”, influencing the composition of both genres within the South African urban context (*Coplan 1979:139*):

the tours ... provided cultural models able to satisfy the needs of the entire spectrum of black society by expressing an overarching black identity. Unlike mission-type concerts of *imusic*, Caluza’s shows attracted audiences made up of “all classes, from everywhere”. Over the years the concerts developed into one of the earliest-known forms of variety show for blacks that combined brass band performances, *imusic*, sketches, dress competitions, and more unusual attractions such as ballroom dancing, film shows, traditional drum-and-reed-flute ensembles, *isicathulo*, and back-to-back dances (*Erlmann 1991:122*).

To at least a degree providing the germs of Ballantine's theories regarding jazz and its links to oppositional politics (*Ballantine 1993:8,39-62; 1989:308/309; 1991B:129-152*), Erlmann states that

The reception of Caluza’s music ... demonstrates how “ragtime” songs blended with the cultural symbols fostered within the emerging black nationalist movements in South Africa. Rather than thought of as derogatory

and racially biased, syncopated music was seen by many South African blacks as an expression of racial pride (*Erlmann 1991:126*).

Hand in hand with the creation of the symbolism of “ragtime” as the expression of black nationalist and “antiwhite” sentiments, Caluza’s work articulated and reflected the dilemma of the black elite, who, in Durban as elsewhere in the country, were “caught between a self-conscious urbanism and rural nostalgia, and hemmed in between white hegemony and black popular opposition” (*Erlmann 1991:127*). Caluza’s work can be said to have emanated from, and to a degree reflected, the anomalous phenomenon evident amongst Natal Christian elite: the emerging African nationalism manifested by this stratum exposed “a strong admixture of Zulu ethnic pride”. Their Christianity was a source of alienation from traditional communities

... and they played an active role in the Natal Native Contingent in the British destruction of the Zulu state in 1879, and most of them were of Nguni clans not strictly part of the Zulu empire. Nevertheless, Natal Christians identified with the glory of the Zulu past. They referred to themselves as Zulu and attempted to create a national culture based on an adaptive blend of Zulu, Afro-American, and European elements (*Coplan 1985:70*).

Furthermore, Caluza’s lyrics revealed his own ambivalence “toward the value systems and cultural formations” evident in urbanising black society (*Erlmann 1991:127,135*). His ideology vis-à-vis traditional or rural customs and practices is described as “janus-faced”: one which “could be read and instrumentalized for quite diverse interests”. To whites, threatened by the cultural symbols of black urbanisation, those reflecting traditionalism or “rural harmony” represented an affirmation of white superiority and cultural hegemony. To black elite leaders, traditional symbols “were used to legitimize and mystify their class position” (*Erlmann 1991:135*). “Clearly, in Caluza’s mind there was no contradiction between loyalty to the hereditary leaders of the Zulu, the continuity and legitimacy of traditional customs in a modern industrial state, and the search for a secure position *as middle class* in that society” (*Erlmann 1991:136*).

3.5 ISICATHAMIYA

Isicathamiya, described by Ballantine as “arguably the most important purely vocal style to have emerged in South Africa this century” (*Ballantine 1993:5; 1989:307*) (in the 1989 publication the term *mbube* is used) exists today as an extremely popular and characteristic component of the body of South

African urban popular music. The genre was given unprecedented international exposure by Paul Simon's *Graceland* album, on which South Africa's unquestionably most famous modern *isicathamiya* group, **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**, was featured.

Kivnick alludes to the fact that the style has been called various names over the course of its development: "... *mbube* (lion), *ingomabusuku* (sic) (night song) *cothozamfana* (walk steadily, boys) or *isicathamiya* (to walk stealthily or on one's toes)" (*Kivnick 1990:114*).

Stapleton & May refer to the style as "*ingoma ebusuku*" and appear to confuse the style with that of western-style choral singing (see reference to *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* - *Stapleton & May 1987:191*). Coplan, who states that "Since the Second World War ... *isicatamiya* (sic) is performed almost exclusively by people who may be considered urban, but not Western, in culture" (*Coplan 1985:67*), uses the terms *ingom'ebusuku* ("Zulu: 'night music'") and *isicatamiya* (sic) ("Zulu: 'a stalking approach'") (*Coplan 1985:65*) interchangeably. However, a somewhat confusing account of the development suggests that the change from *ingom'ebusuku* to "*isicatamiya*" (sic) could have marked the assimilation of *ukureka* (ragtime) (*Coplan 1985:66*). Musicians Donald Tshomela and Louis Radebe Peterson assert that the terms are perceived as synonymous today - (*Tshomela - writer's interview: 17/10/94; Radebe Petersen - writer's interview: 17/10/94*). With no allusion to earlier names, Erlmann simply refers to the genre as *isicathamiya*, while *mbube* (or *imbube*) is classified as "the first genuine *isicathamiya* style" (*Erlmann 1991:165*).

While Erlmann provides the perspective of the genre's roots as being "only one set of symbols among many heterogeneous cultural resources available to migrants" (*Erlmann 1990:201*), Ballantine describes the style, which was developed by Zulu migrants in the early 1930s and which has "hymnodial roots" (*Erlmann 1991:53,56*), as "an extraordinary performance style, vibrantly alive with echoes of American minstrelsy, spirituals, missionary hymnody, Tin Pan Alley and Hollywood tap dance ... as well as Zulu traditional idioms" (*Ballantine 1993:4/5; 1989:306*).

The unique, resonant and characteristic sound aesthetic of "overlapping antiphonal harmonies in distinct ranges ... sung in medium to slow tempi" (*Manuel 1988:109*) produced by the male a cappella men's voices has reverberated through the decades. It captures the distinctive, peculiar expression of the ethos, the feeling world - with all its pathos, joys, contradictions, insecurities, challenges and

passions - of the Zulu migrant worker. Suspended in a “strangely oscillating experience” (Erlmann 1990:203) between two worlds, these migrants appropriated a cultural space in which to communicate on the one hand and define on the other, their unique identity.

In the most detailed account of the evolution of the style available, Veit Erlmann’s article entitled “Migration and Performance: Zulu Migrant Workers’ *Isicathamiya* Performance in South Africa, 1890-1950” corrects the more simplistic perception of the process which is gained from Coplan (Coplan 1985:65,66) and more so, Kivnick (Kivnick 1990:119-121,225).

Ultimately, a picture of a tradition emerges that is characterized by a deep-reaching articulation of urban and rural cultural elements. This characterization entails the simultaneous existence of very different orders of meaning and of communicative channels that are not necessarily expressions of and do not transmit one view of the world alone. Zulu-speaking migrant performers do not perceive themselves as puppets entangled in the strings of a “dual” economy of some sort. Nor do they portray themselves as wanting to assimilate completely to the urban lifestyle. Rather than being a strategy of urban adaptation, the osmosis in migrant performance genres such as *isicathamiya* is a result of the increasing articulation of South African black migrants’ heterogeneous worlds (Erlmann 1990:202).

According to Coplan, traditional *ingoma* dances were transformed by secular urban innovators, most notably *amagxagxa* (“vagrants”) who, in an analagous predicament to the Xhosa *abaphakathi* discussed earlier, found themselves conforming to the social and moral norms of neither the Christian nor traditional groups. *Ukureka*, “Caluza’s skillful combination of dance, action, and Zulu topical lyrics”, is recognized as cardinal to the development of *isicathamiya* (Erlmann 1991:159; Coplan 1985:65).

Erlmann highlights the “osmosis” of rural and urban elements in the development of *isicathamiya*. Rural material was influenced by the urban environment and transported back to a rural setting where this new influence was reabsorbed and reworked with a rural flavour, before the process began again (Erlmann 1991:158,157).

... rural and urban performance practices were modalities of the same culture that had begun to permeate the whole society. Rural cultural practices not only depended for their survival, evolution, and functionality on the feedback from the cities, in certain areas and during specific historical periods they were even inseparably enmeshed with urban culture (Erlmann 1990:200).

The participation of migrant workers in *isicathamiya* performance rather than soccer, disco dancing, and other such solidly urban cultural activities and the choices different groups of migrant performers make about dress, dance, and vocal style in *isicathamiya* do not allow us to determine criteria of successful urban adaptation, to

“tell the migrant worker who is urbanizing from the one who is not” (*Erlmann 1991:157*; see *Coplan 1982B:114*).

Erlmann attributes the first “urban” source and prehistory of *isicathamiya* to the second half of the 19th century when the impact of the American minstrel shows was felt by the black South African community. In particular in the 1890s the effect of the visits of Orpheus McAdoo’s Minstrel, Vaudeville and Concert Company were to become “deeply ingrained in popular consciousness as a turning point in black South African musical history” (*Erlmann 1990:203*; *1991:159*).

Erlmann observes that the South African minstrel troupes formed in imitation of McAdoo and other white South African blackface troupes were not exclusively from an educated urban middle - or “intermediate” - class, but sources included rural mission stations as well as mining compounds. However, the style which came to be known as *isikhunzi* is credited as the earliest prototype of *isicathamiya*. The image of the sophisticated “coon” and “its corresponding musical style” merged in the minds of the migrant audience (*Erlmann 1991:159*). It is described as a

... distinctly urban, middle class style, whose proponents were regarded by working-class audiences and performers such as T. Pheva ‘as a better group, as a different breed, a class of their own’ (*Erlmann 1990:204*).

Inspired by positive images of the slick and sophisticated city dweller - the “coon”, as portrayed in the shows of Caluza’s Ohlange Choir - the characteristics of *isikhunzi* included:

- “low-intensity and low-range idiom in four-part harmony” (*Erlmann 1990:201*);
- westernised balancing of parts;
- westernised open voice quality.

Isikhunzi infiltrated rural performance practice as a result of the influence of returning migrants. *Ingoma* dance and song, by inference affected by the new urban style, emerged as the second source of *isicathamiya*. *Isishameni*, an *ingoma* dance, was adapted from the *umqonqo* dance by Johannesburg timber worker, **Jubele Dubazana**, who combined the “upright body posture” of this dance “with raised hands and kicking, stamping leg movements” (*Erlmann 1991:160*). The elements of *isishameni*

dancing retained in *isicathamiya* are negligible. However, the significance of the style as a developmental landmark is evident in the extent to which it was remodelled in terms of “terminological shifts of performance roles and internal group organization” so as to reflect “the realities of industrial labor and urban living”:

- *isicathamiya* choirs are often referred to as “teams”, by contrast *ingoma* dance groups are known as *isipani* (“oxen plough spans”);
- early *isicathamiya* teams often appropriated names that were popular with soccer teams or criminal gangs;
- *isicathamiya* choirs refer to the lead part as the “*khontrola*” (“controller”) (as opposed to the *ingoma* “*ifolosi*” or “lead oxen”); and the voice parts are labelled by “anglicized names such as *bes* (bass), *thena* (tenor), *altha* (alto), and *soprano* or *fas pathi* (first part)” (Erlmann 1991:160/161).

Adding to the rural-urban *melée* from which early *isicathamiya* emerged, modern *ingoma* performers such as Jubele created a new style of song by fusing traditional vocal styles with *izingoma zomtshado* wedding songs. These were themselves products of fusion with Western hymns and urban musical practices and, by the 1920s, the choreography was highly influenced by Caluza’s “ragtime” movements (Coplan 1985:65). (This same influence is strongly evident in the slow “*ukureka*” (ragtime) steps that are performed to this day at *isicathamiya* competitions as choirs file into the hall in rows from the door.)

The characteristic feature which distinguished early *isicathamiya* from the similar styles of *ingoma* dance and wedding songs was the western concept of strict allocation and control of voice parts in four-part harmony (Erlmann 1991:161,162). Coplan infers that *ukukomika*, a “form of self-parody and dance humour”, was a precursor to and component of *isicathamiya* (Coplan 1985:65). While this is quite feasible, since *ukukomika* is classified by Erlmann as an *ingoma* dance (Erlmann 1991:100/101,141), and “comic” and “laughing” songs were “staple items” in both black school and mission concerts (Erlmann 1991:141), this element is not specifically referred to by Erlmann in his detailed account of *isicathamiya*’s development (Erlmann 1991:156-174).

The pioneers of *isicathamiya* groups were the **Crocodiles** - led by Lutheran preacher and farmer **Mzobe**, the **Durban Evening Birds** under the leadership of Edwin “**Siqokomo**” **Mkhize** (not to be confused with his namesake to be discussed later in this section), and a group called **Amanzimtoti**, the details of which remain elusive because of conflicting reports. Their repertoire varied “indiscriminately” from material which could be classified as *isikhunzi* to traditional or modern *izingoma zomtshado* wedding songs, folk tunes and hymns (*Erlmann 1990:209*).

The history of *isicathamiya* was significantly influenced by the contribution of **Solomon Linda’s Evening Birds** (not to be confused with the earlier group of the same name which had been led by his uncles Solomon and Amon Madondo and in which Linda had participated). Of particular significance is their innovatory and landmark hit, “*Mbube*” (Lion). *Imbube* (or *mbube*), subsequently became the name synonymous with the modern *isicathamiya* style whose emergence this song heralded. This viewpoint is supported by Coplan: “Urbanized styles of choral music sung by non-westernized Zulu migrants was recorded, both in the more traditional (but not rural) *bombing* mode, and in the more westernized *mbube* form made famous by Solomon Linda” (*Coplan 1979:144*).

Innovations introduced by Linda in “Mbube” were to become distinctive features of the new *isicathamiya*:

- In a return to traditional ceremonial performance practice, Solomon abandoned the *isikhunzi* practice of one singer per voice part and strengthened the bass part by two additional singers. While early *isicathamiya* groups usually consisted of between six and eight singers, this principle of predominant bass voices continued even after much larger groups became the norm in the 1950s.
- The I IV I6/4 V7 ostinato harmonic pattern (already being used by western genres of urban popular music) became the standard characteristic of all *mbube* music and the link between *isicathamiya* and these other genres “because it formed one of the lowest common denominators of all early urban African music regardless of class origin and specific ideological functions” (*Erlmann 1990:212*).
- An extra-musical innovation introduced in 1938 was that Linda’s Evening Birds became the first group to wear uniforms in the form of striped suits:

To interpret Linda's innovations, however, as indications of a clear shift toward an adaptation to urban values and life style, is to misunderstand the "space" in which migrants such as Linda's Evening Birds developed and pursued strategies of survival that made use of the best of both worlds, the urban and the rural (*Erlmann 1990:213*).

Erlmann expounds on "the difficulty of determining a class basis of African cultural studies" and reiterates and endorses Middleton's assertion that "musical forms and practices stand in a problematical relation to class forces" (*Middleton 1985:30; Erlmann 1991:4*).

Concurring with Coplan, who states that "*Ingom'ebusuku* participants at first included people of varying degrees of urbanisation and Westernisation, and the style itself could be varied accordingly" (*Coplan 1985:67*), Erlmann stresses that in the late 1920s and early 1930s specific *isicathamiya* styles were not the exclusive domain of specific classes: Groups whose members came from a certain stratum in black society did not exclusively appropriate specific styles: a choir such as Amanzimtoti who were regarded as a working-class group also performed (albeit "occasionally") Western-inspired *imusic*, *isikhunzi* or *iRagtime*, while mission-educated musicians included *isiZulu* in their performances (*Erlmann 1991:164*). Erlmann strenuously eschews the blatantly unequivocal stance of Coplan who maintains that *isicathamiya* is "a form of working-class choral music" (*Coplan 1985:134*). "Since the Second World War social sectors and categories have hardened, and *isicathamiya* is performed almost exclusively by people who may be considered urban, but not Western, in culture" (*Coplan 1985:67*).

However, the emergence of "*imbube*" in the mid-1930s as "the first genuine *isicathamiya* style" is presented "against this background":

... it was not until the consolidation and expansion of the country's manufacturing industry in the mid-1930s that working-class formation reached a stage where it produced the cultural forms, the dance clubs, trade unions, sports organizations, and musical performance practices that form the bedrock of present-day working-class culture in South Africa (*Erlmann 1991:165*).

Isicathamiya competitions again represent a fusion of two sources of inspiration: the already-established urban middle-class practice of school concerts, and the rural practice of *ingoma* dance competitions (*Erlmann 1990:214*). Whereas *ingoma* was characterised by strong, virile fighting movements, *isicathamiya* footwork was by contrast 'subtle' or 'stealthy' and almost silent. Groups such as the **Evening Birds** preferred the slow step-by-step movements; **Isaac Mzobe's Crocodiles**

introduced a version of fast, synchronised, “fidgeting” tap dancing known as *istep*, possibly inspired by tap dance troupes or American movie stars (Erlmann 1990: 216).

Models other than the above which served as inspiration of the ideal African were initiated by rural missions and it is to these that Erlmann credits the rise of the other predominant style of *isicathamiya*, namely, *isikwela jo*. This was pioneered in Natal and transported to Johannesburg where it first became known as *isikambula* (gambling). The title “*isikwela jo*” (“attack, Jo!”) alludes to the cues given by the lead singer to provoke the high-pitched, yelling sounds that are distinctive of the style. During the war the style was renamed *mbombing* (bombing) because of obvious comparisons to the sound of exploding bombs. Inspired by the immobility of church choirs, all dancing was banished from *isikwela jo* competitions.

An important development in *isicathamiya* practice to emerge in the 1930s was the association between *isicathamiya* groups and the African labour movement. The affiliation of the **Alexandrians** under the leadership of **Mkatshwa** with the Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union (ICU), signalled a significant and what was to become distinctive aspect of *isicathamiya*, namely its linkages with and perception as a musical medium for protest in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Erlmann states that after 1930, the Natal branch of this organisation, the ICU Yase Natal “had ceased to exist as a political force of any importance in Durban’s black popular resistance”. Thereafter, “for more than a decade the union club played an important role in the construction of a politically conscious, popular cultural alliance in Durban” (Erlmann 1991:87).

Erlmann isolates another important function of groups such as the Alexandrians and the Evening Birds. The ICU had come to be perceived as a middle-class organisation propagating black nationalist rhetoric. *Isicathamiya* groups played the role of social brokers, helping to bridge the ideological gap between proletarian migrants and ICU middle-class members by playing both the rural songs of the former and nationalist hymns of the latter. An example of “this peculiar aesthetic marriage” is the Evening Birds’ “Mayibuye Afrika” (“Come back Africa”) (Erlmann 1990: 215):

The use of new songs in *ingom'ebusuku* style represents a significant manipulation of ‘traditional’ African culture for purposes of positive self-identification and unity in a modern political context. Gramophone recordings of these songs helped to widen their distribution among Africans (Coplan 1985:135).

3.6 MASKANDA

The most famous modern-day protagonists of *maskanda* style, or at least derivatives of the style, are **Johnny Clegg** (together with his band, **Savuka**), and **Phuzhushukela**.

An essentially indigenous street music style developing alongside first *marabi* and then jazz, elements of *maskanda* (particularly guitar) style appear to have crept surreptitiously into the commercial *mbaqanga* of the 1960s without, it would appear, even the knowledge of certain of its chief proponents. West Nkosi, erstwhile saxophonist for Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens, claims that *maskanda* has “nothing to do with *mbaqanga*” (*Nkosi - writer's interview: 14/11/94*). Neither Nowotny nor Hamm, in their specialist papers on *mbaqanga* (Nowotny's being the only attempt at a stylistic analysis of Mahlathini's *mbaqanga*), make any reference to the contribution of *maskanda* guitar style (*Nowotny 1993 (unpublished)*; *Hamm 1985*). Andersson confines her obvious but unnamed reference to the style to her description of the development of **Juluka**, Johnny Clegg's first band (*Andersson 1981:161/162*). Stapleton & May (1987), Bender (1991) and Roberts (1972) make no mention of *maskanda* or its contribution to the development of syncretic styles.

Marks Mankwane, lead guitarist and composer of note in the foremost and definitive model of 1960s commercial *mbaqanga*, **Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens**, acknowledges the influence of the style as a distinctive component of his playing (*Mankwane - writer's interview: 17/10/94*).

Derived from the Afrikaans word ‘musikant’, *maskanda* (Mthethwa spells the word *maskanda*, Clegg and Coplan use the z - see *Clegg 1980:2*; *Coplan 1985:186*) is the umbrella term used to describe the playing of essentially Zulu indigenous musical forms, in what was initially predominantly “self-accompanied solo style”, using Western instrumentation (*Rycroft 1977:221,216*; *Mthethwa 1980:24*; *Coplan 1985:186*;). The most commonly adopted Western instruments were those that were readily and cheaply available at trade stores (or mine shops, “so-called Jew shops” - *Clegg 1980:2*) and included the guitar, violin, harmonica, auto-harp, jew's harp and concertina. Rycroft speculates that “it would seem likely” that missionaries neither played nor encouraged the playing of these instruments (*Rycroft 1977:219*). However, Clegg notes that the concertina, initially referred to as “*izibambo zika Satan*” (“Satan's handles”), was finally incorporated into traditional culture and associated with *umnumzana* (a homeowner, a person of substance), who would “sit down at the end of a week's

labour, call his children together and play the concertina for them”. The guitar, by comparison, associated as it was with “*isidolopho*, township values and traditions”, was “incontrovertibly bad” and shunned by both traditionalists and Christians (Clegg 1980:6).

In addition, home-made replicas of the western guitar (one example of which, encountered by Rycroft in southern Natal, was referred to as *igqongwe*) and variants or derivatives of the violin (e.g. the Mpondo *isigankuri* and the Swazi *sikhelekehle*) (Rycroft 1977:234,243) can be regarded as media of the style since the instruments are Western-inspired rather than indigenous. Sipho Mchunu, who together with Johnny Clegg formed the band **Juluka**, reputedly learnt to play Zulu guitar style on a home-made “petrol-container” tin guitar prototype (Andersson 1981:160).

Clegg maintains that “even some of the more developed styles of *mbaqanga* playing have their roots in an indigenous acoustic musical guitar tradition” (Clegg 1980:7). Since the guitar and concertina are the two instruments of the commercially-available variety which have the most exposure in and can therefore be said to have contributed to present-day urban popular forms, their role in the development of the *maskanda* tradition will be briefly examined.

Davies maintains that *maskanda* “... is strongly rooted in indigenous Zulu music. The fact that Western instruments are used to perform the music is of little consequence to the musicians in that they seem to regard these as ‘indigenous’ instruments” (Davies 1992: 35).

Rycroft notes that Western instruments were virtually never adopted by women, whether rural or urban. Their use by “sophisticated townsmen” in urban idioms which obviously incorporated Western musical elements is a “relatively recent phenomenon” (Rycroft 1977:218). It would appear that the practice of making indigenous music on Western instruments goes back further in history, with suggestions that the guitar was introduced to the Zulus by the Portuguese explorers in approximately 1880 (Clegg 1980:3). However, certain characteristic features of the *amagxagxa* (see below) proletarian musicians developed in the period of - and as a result of - the urbanisation and acculturation experiences of Zulu migrant workers in the (then) Natal (as opposed to Kwazulu) area from about the 1920s onwards (Clegg 1980:3; Coplan 1985:186).

These proletarian styles constituted what became known as the *gxagxa* tradition. *Amagxagxa* (according to Vilakazi, a synonym used in the 1920s was *abaqhafi* - Rycroft 1977:221) is the derogatory classification for the Zulu in an analagous predicament to the *abaphakathi* discussed earlier, whose status falls between the *Amabhinca* (“fervent” traditionalists) and the *Amakholwa* (Christians; the term is used by Erlmann to refer to mission-educated elite - see Erlmann 1991:60) (Clegg 1980:2). Described by Rycroft as those who are “outside the sphere of mission influence” but remain “attached to indigenous Zulu culture” (Rycroft 1977:219), the adoption of the instrumentation of the West and the musical forms of the traditionalists is one of the indications of their intermediate or transitional societal position, “problematically situated” between the *Amabhinca* and the *Amakholwa* (Clegg 1980:2):

They are young men whose roots are in the country, who came to town as temporary manual workers. They seek to emulate Western customs to a certain extent in order to dissociate themselves from the “backwoods traditionalists” they have left behind in the country. Yet, lacking education, they do not fit into sophisticated African town life, and consequently occupy the lowest social and economic strata in town society (Rycroft 1977:221/222).

The primary musical resource for these proletarian migrants was the song repertoire of the young rural girls which was played on the *umakhweyana* bow (this instrument was the inspiration of Zulu guitarists, in particular) the *umhhube* mouth bow, the *isitolotolo* jew’s harp and the *imfilitshi* mouth organ (which was of specific importance in the development of concertina styles). Associated with *ukuhlaza* (“greenness, rawness, uncouthness”), the period of a girl’s virginity when she is known as a *tshitshi*, the lyrics reflected the rural, idyllic wishes of the young women as well as proverbs and proverbial sayings and traditional war songs (Clegg 1980:2,5,7).

Clegg refers to the tradition of young men playing these instruments as one which was developed slowly by *ubusoka* (handsome young “fops” known for their “courtship craft”) in the Msinga area of Weenen, Colenso, Estcourt and Ladysmith. According to Clegg, the Zulu in this area have historically occupied an “interstitial” position in Zulu culture, seeing themselves as both “apart from the Zulus and apart from the English”. While this reference is somewhat confusing and unexplained in the context of his paper, their importance to the development of the *maskanda* tradition would appear to lie in their credo of “*Sa 'bantu basesilungwini*” (“We are the people from the white man’s farms”) which engendered a type of ‘anti-establishment’ mindset which Clegg epitomizes by the words: “We have developed our own tradition, we have confronted problems which *abantu bomdabu*, the original

people in Kwazulu have not confronted - we have our own world view” (Clegg 1980:3,2). According to Clegg, the people (farm labourers and presumably also migrant workers in Durban) from this area are responsible for the development of a unique concertina form called *Isichumu*, two original forms of dance and a style of singing linked to *Isishameni* dancing (Clegg 1980:3). (However, the development of the Zulu guitar style is described later as directly related to the “woman’s musical tradition, from the *umakhweyana* bow” (own emphasis), developing, in the hands of migrants and using the Western guitar, into a “very masculine musical tradition” (Clegg 1980:5).)

Besides the mine compounds, the “initial breeding ground” of guitar and concertina music was the municipal compounds of eastern Durban. The first concertinas were imported from Germany, followed by Italian products which were marketed under the label “Bastari”, a name which was assimilated into the Zulu vocabulary as *Ibastari*. There is evidence that the Xhosa shaking dance was accompanied by the concertina in approximately the 1920s, while the development of original Zulu concertina styles was mainly concentrated in Ndwedwe (Clegg 1980:3).

The traditional resource pool of concertina styles is the music of the *imfilitshi* mouth organ tradition as developed by young girls. One such style, in which the influence of the ‘boere orkes’ is also evident, is *Isichumu*, developed by the Chunus in the Msinga area. In Zulu concertina playing, the left hand button-playing forms the bass part, the right hand, the melody. Whereas in *isichumu* style the bass took the form of “some vague shaping of chords”, in *umzansi* style, from Ndwedwe, Durban and southern parts of Natal, the guitar influence becomes evident. Like the thumb-playing bass part on the guitar, individual notes are now played by the left hand as traditional songs are interpreted on the concertina in what must obviously be a more polyphonic style. Earlier, Clegg mentions that the people of Ndwedwe developed a unique style of playing which involved innovations such as the introduction of the pentatonic scale, and necessitating the dismantling of the instrument and changing the buttons in order to accommodate the special techniques of playing. Whereas the style related to these adaptations is not named, it would appear that these innovations would be more related to the *umzansi* rather than the *isichumu* style. The “creative progressions” - from one melody structure or scale to another, perhaps even involving a change of rhythm - of the accomplished concertina player, like that of the guitarist, should occur smoothly and “insiduously” (sic). In many instances the songs are played while walking, and these progressions should occur without the player altering pace. In concertina street

competitions, the same categories or criteria for judgement as those used in guitar competitions are applied (see below) (Clegg 1980:6,7).

Rycroft states that the Western guitar “has adopted almost exactly the functional role previously fulfilled by the *umakhweyana* gourd-bow” (Rycroft 1977:228). Zulu guitar material is classifiable by three “levels of projection” or “development”, in which the role of the guitar in terms of assuming the function(s) of other participants in traditional Zulu music-making situations is analysed. At the first level, the guitar, like the gourd-bow (either the unbraced *ugubhu* or *umakhweyana* referred to above) simulates the part of the chorus only, as related to that of the solo part of the singer, whose leading phrases enter at varying starting points. At the second level, the role of the guitar is polyphonic: while a lower ostinato phrase functions as the chorus part, an upper melody line is played in unison with, or sometimes replaces, the voice of the singer. At the third level the bass ostinato is again found below an upper melody line. However, in this instance the melody line both reinforces the solo voice part and to some degree provides independent, antiphonal phrases, which often begin where the singer’s leading phrases end (Rycroft 1977: 230,233/234,225).

Clegg, on the other hand, describes the earliest technique of *maskanda* guitar style as *ukuvamba*, which basically refers to strumming (Clegg 1980:3). Coplan maintains that in the 1940s *ukuvamba* was disseminated to Southern Rhodesia by two Ndebele singers from Bulawayo, George Sibanda and Josaya Hadebe (Coplan 1985:186). Davies asserts that *ukuvamba* was the most common technique used in guitar playing until the 1950s and even extending into the 1960s.

Influenced by Hadebe, a young Zulu guitarist by the name of **John Bhengu** appeared in Durban in the late 1940s. Under the stage name of **Phuzhushukela**, he (aided by producers Cuthbert Matumba and particularly H. V. Nzimande) was to be responsible for the popularisation and wide dissemination of the *maskanda* guitar style in an urban, commercial idiom (Coplan 1985:187). According to Davies, Phuzhushukela is regarded by many as the best exponent of Zulu guitar music (Davies 1992:40). Phuzhushukela claims to be the first musician to introduce the *ukupika* ‘picking’ style of guitar playing which involved the retuning of the guitar (the top string of the guitar was brought down a tone from E to D, in unison with the second D string). Clegg observes that there are “older practitioners” who maintain that they were playing in the style before the advent of Phuzhushukela’s influence. However,

Clegg credits Phuzhushukela with the development and modernisation of the *ukupika* style, which he says was probably influenced by Western folk styles:

... he is by far the person who influenced the technique the most, explored with it, worked out its limitations, took it to its furthest dimensions and, even today, he is the first person who actually thought about using electric guitars, with this particular technique, working out different parts for the bass guitar and the drums, - working out a whole rhythmic section behind it (Clegg 1980:4).

Davies maintains that *ukupika* (also called *ukuncinza*) is currently the only technique considered acceptable by *maskanda* practitioners (Davies 1992:38).

Characteristics of the early form of Zulu guitar style include:

- The music is often performed while the player is walking (Rycroft 1977:221,229).
- Diverse tuning systems and a range of individual plucking styles are used (Rycroft 1977:230).
- Different scales are used for different songs.
- Only very rarely are more than five frets used; for the greatest part of the playing, the use of only two frets is the norm.
- The first three strings of the guitar are used for the treble, the last three for the bass.
- The bass line is played by the thumb. Every beat of the basic rhythm is played in this line, which also functions as a counterpoint melody line.
- The treble is played by the fourth finger, which intersperses the melody line against the “constant thumb” of the bass.
- A lot of the song repertoire (presumably, particularly initially, before the advent of *ubugaku* [see below]) was drawn from the women’s *umakhweyana* bow tradition. The introduction of the

metaphor of stick fighting into the street music competitions helped to transform the genre into an autonomous and masculine one.

- Nostalgic lyrics were soon replaced by pertinent and political topics which affected migrant life (Clegg 1980:5).

A guitar style which developed in the 1940s is, according to Clegg, the precursor to *mbaqanga* music. A variant of *inkindlane*, named after its best exponent, **Inkindlane**, it is known as *isimondolini* since its sound is similar to that of a mandolin. In a reverse of the tuning necessary for *ukupika*, in this style the D string is replaced by a second E.

The Zulu guitar genre flourished in the period between 1960 and 1974 when street musicians abounded and participated in street guitar competitions. The format of street music competitions was based on, and metaphorically similar to, that of stick fighting. These competitions took place on an informal and ad hoc basis when two musicians met in the street or at a hostel or shebeen, etc. The ‘challenge’ was normally made on the behalf of one musician to another by the supporters of one of the musicians. Each guitarist’s performance was divided into three categories: *Izihlabo*, the introduction, the purpose of which was to announce the scale and the type of song which was to be played, as well as to flaunt the player’s technique (in a manner akin to brandishing their stick movements in *ukugiya* prior to the actual fight). The performance of the song followed: whereas before 1960 this merely involved the transposition of a traditional song to the medium of guitar, *ubugaku* now became the category in which the inventiveness and originality of the playing and lyrics were judged. *Ukubonga*, the third and final section follows in which the player praises his people, his chief, the environment and area from which he comes:

You will do this rapidly, very quickly and so, in fact, you’ve got a tension being built up between appreciation of the actual music that’s going on and what is being said at the level of praise poetry. These two are, in fact, juxtaposed in a jarring way but in a way which is very pleasant and you’ve got to open your ears, again, and listen to the words, what he’s saying, appreciate the cadence, the fall, the way he structured the words as he’s saying them and at the same time, listen to the way he’s controlling the melody line. He hasn’t lost one beat as he’s doing it (Clegg 1980:4).

Clegg states that the songs are generally antiphonal, with the singer taking the lead part. Audience participation indicates that those listening have been “sufficiently moved” by the musician’s playing to

be motivated to contribute to the performance, and is a signal that the musician in question has won the competition (*Clegg 1980:5*).

While Coplan claims that “these competitions still take place wherever migrant Zulu musicians gather” (*Coplan 1985:187*), Clegg stated five years earlier that “The present situation is one where there has been a decline in guitar music especially - you don’t see street musicians any more” (*Clegg 1980:4*).

Until the 1960s, *maskanda* music was used mainly for self-entertainment. The enthusiastic public response with which Mahlathini’s *mbaqanga* was received in the 1960s led to Phuzushukela and his contemporaries switching from acoustic to electric guitar. In addition, instrumental backing, initially in the form of bass guitar and drums were added. Davies maintains that this transformation led to the emphasis of previously latent elements of the music – namely the inherent dance beat and the bass melody. Also influenced by dance forms, the tempo of the music gradually increased (*Davies 1992:42/43*). In this way the trend of *maskanda* bands, so popular in KwaZulu Natal, was catalysed.

3.7 MARABI

Marabi: that was the environment! It was either organ but mostly piano. You get there, you pay your ten cents. You get your scale of whatever concoction there is, then you dance. It used to start from Friday night right through Sunday evening. You get tired, you go home, go and sleep, come back again: bob a time, each time you get in. The piano and with the audience making a lot of noise. Trying to make some theme out of what is playing (*Ballantine 1993:28/29; 1991A:136 - quoting Wilson Silgee, interviewed by Eddie Koch*).

One of the most significant landmarks in the development of urban music (*Ballantine 1993:5; 1989:307*), and certainly providing the catalyst for its future direction and much of its essential flavour, an exuberant dance music known as *marabi* emerged in the 1920s as the musical vernacular of the slumyard. Symbiotically associated with *shebeens*, home of the illicit liquor trading which “became central to African working-class social and cultural as well as economic reorganization” (*Coplan 1982A:363*), and providing opportunities for the cultural expression of a new, pan-ethnic urban African identity, this propulsive, hypnotically repetitive, single-themed genre (*Ballantine 1993:26; 1991A:135*) represented

... more than just a musical style. As music it had a distinctive rhythm and a blend of African polyphonic principles, restructured within the framework of the Western ‘three-chord’ harmonic system. As a dance it

placed few limits on variation and interpretation by individuals or couples, though the emphasis was definitely on sexuality. As a social occasion it was a convivial, neighbourhood gathering for drinking, dancing, coupling, friendship and other forms of interaction. Finally, *marabi* also meant a category of people with low social status and a reputation for immorality, identified by their regular attendance at *marabi* parties (Coplan 1985:96).

Luring the dancers to wild abandon at all-night *shebeen* parties, *marabi* music was fundamentally a keyboard style, but not uncommonly played on guitar or banjo (Ballantine 1993:26; 1991A:135) while the percussive element sometimes consisted of no more than the rattling of a tin can filled with stones (Ballantine 1993:27; 1991A:135). Coplan observes that the first “professional musicians” employed to perform in the *shebeens* were predominantly Xhosa men from the Eastern Cape who had incorporated both English sacred and secular styles as well as American ragtime into traditional Xhosa music (Coplan & Rycroft 1981:47). *Marabi* music was intoxicating and exciting to its participants, and vociferously denigrated by non-ghetto dwellers.

An indictment on the lack of foresight of the SABC as well as the music industry of the time is the fact that archival collections of early *marabi* music do not exist (Ballantine 1989:305; 1993:3). In defence of “commercially-oriented recording companies” of the time, Coplan suggests that

... an answer may lie in the fact that they had as yet no real knowledge of the African market, and took advice from elite artists like Radebe (whose *nom de plume* was ‘Musicus’) and Griffiths Motsieloa who considered that *marabi* did not merit preservation on wax.

Alternatively, the cause of this omission may have been the professional urban musicians themselves, who were beginning to have to compete for their established audience with the gramophones which some *shebeen* owners were using in place of live musicians. In these circumstances it seemed unwise to put one’s music at the disposal of the competition for the price of a few shillings recording fee (Coplan 1979:144).

As “seminal to South African popular music as the blues was to American” (Ballantine 1993:5; 1989:307), this “musical expression of an outcast people” (Callinicos 1987:215) and the fundamental roots of much of South African urban popular music is thus lost to students and musicians of the present day.

Possibly as a means of expressing frustration, certainly in an ambience of sexual innuendo, *marabi* music encouraged physical movement. Listing the different styles of traditional dancing among the various ethnic groups of this country, Bender infers that *marabi* music provided the urban proletariat with an essential component, viz. the opportunity to dance in what was perceived as a suitable context and medium for their new way of life (Bender 1991: 175). One such dance, “performed to attract the

attentions of male spectators” and known to the Sotho proletariat as *famo*, was “a rather wild type of choreographic striptease” which was the specialty of prostitutes, “abandoned women” and shebeen owners or “queens” (Coplan 1982A:363). It must be noted that, unlike traditional rural dances or those rural dances transformed by migrant workers, *marabi* dancing had no formal steps. Rather, it was a personalised interpretation of and response to the music in which “the only apparent theme ... was expressive sensuality” (Coplan & Rycroft 1981:53).

What may be referred to as the idiosyncratically ‘urban African’ spirit of exuberance conveyed by the music has reverberated through the decades in later forms of instrumental township music. Apart from this, the most important legacy of *marabi* which has become fundamental to other forms of urban music and particularly important to the development of South African jazz, was the repetitive and cyclical harmonic pattern. Using one chord in each bar, the basic I-IV-I6/4-V cycle stretched over four bars. Typical of traditional African music, the use of this ostinato harmonic progression leads Ballantine to conclude that “from a structural and harmonic point of view, *marabi* is properly to be understood as a form of neo-traditional music” (Ballantine 1993:26; 1991A:135).

Influences detected in *marabi* melodies and rhythms included traditional Nguni music, Cape Malay *ghommaliédjies* and “types of coloured-Afrikaans and white-Afrikaans dance music known as *tikkie-draai* (sic) and *vastrap*” (Ballantine 1993:27; 1991A:136).

Coplan & Rycroft maintain that knowledge of certain traditional music practices as well as historical musical influences of the performers is necessary to an understanding of the principles involved in *marabi* music (Coplan & Rycroft 1981:50). A few essential characteristics from examples of musical forms that were present in *marabi*’s “historical musical environment” and the influence of which can be detected to a lesser or greater degree in the style, are provided:

- Xhosa choral music such as *uXuamugezile uSindindlu Ngodaka* (“The Iguana is Very Silly”). Here traditional Xhosa melody is combined with tonic sol-fa harmonies typical of those promoted by mission-schools and the distinctive rhythm of American ragtime. Traditional features include the prominent deep bass and the alternation of voice parts.

- The influence of the rhythms of Afrikaans folk music on Xhosa recreational (as opposed to ceremonial) forms is evident in the harmonica-accompanied *Molweni Nonke* (“We Greet You All”). This is a *mbayizelo* (“roaring”) dance song performed by Nqgika Xhosa rural men from the Peddie District in the Eastern Cape.
- Xhosa *tickey-draai* is performed by Herman Magwaza’s Guitar Band in *Hamba Carolina*, demonstrating the combination of African melody with the working class Coloured’s “guitar dance music”. A distinctive feature is the use of western harmonic sequence root progressions.
- Typical of the wedding song melodies which were incorporated into *marabi*, *Yakhal Ingana Encinane* (“The Baby (i.e. bride) Cries”), traditional to the Baca and Nguni tribes from the northeastern Cape is in “characteristically Nguni multimetric organization”, so as to orchestrate the movements of group step dancing. When *marabi* musicians transformed these songs into 4/4 metre, the multimetric accents became syncopations.
- Recreational *ndhlamu* dance song melodies such as *Ngibanjwe isigebengu 'sentombazana Swazini* (“I Made Love to a Swazi Girl of Bad character [a criminal]”) were used extensively in *marabi*.
- Coplan & Rycroft maintain that the off-beat rhythm usually furnished by a shaker in *marabi* was derived from the characteristic rhythm and vibration of the Nqgika Xhosa one-string bow. *oNongayi Ndobogana* (“The Bothersome crows [policemen]”) in which traditional phrase structure and relationship of parts is evident, is an example of the music played on this instrument.
- The progression from what is viewed by Coplan & Rycroft as “neo-traditional guitar song of the kind analysed by Rycroft (1977)” to the neo-traditional type of “Zulu guitar *marabi*” of the migrants and newly-urbanised street musicians is evident in the examples provided:
 - ⇒ *Inkani* (“Discord”), by Joseph Nzuzi, is an example of Rycroft’s “neo-traditional guitar song” model.
 - ⇒ *Temba Lami* (“My Hope”), on the other hand, while it maintains the features of bass ostinato and solo voice, illustrates the typical I-IV-V root progression of *marabi* and other South African urban popular styles (Coplan & Rycroft 1981:50/51).

In one of the only such analyses available, Coplan & Rycroft provide a summary of the transformation of traditional music principles in the compositional elements of “Highbreaks”, “a classic keyboard marabi” performed in 1976 by a professional musician of the 1930s *marabi* parties, **Aaron Lebona**. (It should be noted that *marabi* compositions, which generally had titles, often contained no recognised lyrics (*Coplan & Rycroft 1981:51,53*)). Briefly, the main findings are:

- A four-bar ostinato I-IV-I6/4-V7 root progression sequence occurs. While the use of two, four, or six-bar ostinato sequences is characteristic of traditional South African music, the use of the specific I-IV-I6/4-V7 sequence is only found in syncretic urban styles. Coplan & Rycroft state that this four-bar chord progression ending on the dominant may reflect “a segmentation” of harmonic sequences commonly used in the blues.
- “Staggered” melodic phrases, alluding to additional parts with individual entry points, are played against this bass progression, reminiscent of the vocal polyphony created by the non-simultaneous and overlapping voice parts of traditional singing as well as Nguni bow and guitar songs (see *maskanda* guitar style). As in traditional bow music, the specific notes of the bass ostinato limit the selection of melodic notes. Variation is provided by the distinctive “prolonged dominant descant”, which provides a resting point in the perpetual motion created by the root progression and staggered phrases. This feature is common to traditional South African music as well as jazz and other Afro-American forms. While variation is provided by phrase shifting, some “melodic digressions” may represent snatches of other songs in the player’s repertoire.
- In the right hand part, short melodic sequences consist of single-note passages interspersed with chord sequences which for the most part move in parallel motion (see score, *Coplan & Rycroft 1981:59*). Parallel motion is to some extent idiosyncratic of traditional South African music, but Coplan & Rycroft deduce that the phenomenon is probably the result of retaining the fingers in a more or less consistent position. “Irregular” chords which do not conform to western harmonic principles are sometimes used. The phrase scheme for the first twenty measures is analysed as: AA' (repeat) BA" (repeat) CC'C"C".
- The “cadence to tonic” progression in melodic phrases which recurs frequently in “Highbreaks” is common to traditional bow and guitar songs. Interestingly, in “Highbreaks”, these cadences (V7-1)

usually do not occur at the end of the root progression (i.e. on measure 4), but generally at the onset of measure 3.

- An off-beat rhythmic pattern, played by two pebble-filled tin shakers, accompanies “complex and interesting features” derived from early jazz, including syncopation and hemiola (*Coplan & Rycroft 1981:52/53*).

Referring to variants of “mainstream *marabi*” associated with “certain groups of Xhosa- and Zulu-speakers”, Ballantine writes of the Zulu version of the genre, *ndunduma*, as “really a kind of ‘concert and *marabi* dance’ developed by Zulu migrant workers in Johannesburg” and named after “the minedumps that seemed to symbolise that city”. He identifies the Xhosa version as *thula n'divile*, “after the words of a song first made popular by migrant workers in Durban in the late 1920s” (*Ballantine 1993:27; 1991A:136*).

Erlmann (whom Ballantine quotes as his source for the above information) provides a description of *thula n'divile* which would render the definition of the style as a Xhosa version of *marabi* as oversimplistic. Erlmann attributes the original tune of “*Thula ndivile*” (sic) to the Durban composer **Willie Mdhholzini** (*Erlmann 1991:82,81*). While conceding (by inference) the lack of sophistication manifested by the style (*Erlmann 1991:82*), he observes that

Together with other examples, Mdhholzini's songs appear to demonstrate that as a genre *thula ndivile* concerned itself primarily with the collapse of traditional value systems under the constraints of urban living. Mdhholzini's song “Ikhiwane Elihle”, for example, blames the alcoholism among urban slum dwellers on the breaking up of family ties ... Another *thula ndivile* tune, “Ulixoki Lomfozi”... criticizes the decline of traditional gender roles in the urban environment (*Erlmann 1991:81/82*).

However, Radebe Petersen's understanding of the term *thula n'divile* as an early urbanisation of “Xhosa lullabies” appears to lend support to Ballantine's explanation, at least insofar as the meaning of the term within the context of Johannesburg's slumyards was concerned (*Radebe Petersen - writer's interview: 17/10/94*). Coplan & Rycroft refer to the style as “a variable form of African ragtime”. Their verbatim and apparently ‘eyewitness’ account of *thula n'divile* practice from “musician and cultural organizer” Dan Twala, would appear to be another apparent rebuttal of the generalisation of Erlmann's description of *thula n'divile* as a kind of moralizing, philosophizing medium:

You saw that from house to house, where there was drinks or parties, you could hear the piano playing *tula n'divile*. It was not as polished as *marabi*, it was an advertisement to say, come this way! From the Xhosas came *tula n'divile*, meaning 'You keep quiet, you haven't heard what I've heard, I'll tell you!' Everybody was trying to come with his own little style, because they want you to buy drinks at their *timitin* ("tea-meeting") there (Coplan & Rycroft 1981:48).

Erlmann's description of *indunduma* concurs substantially with that of Ballantine:

Far more sophisticated and ethnically less unambiguous than *thula ndivile*, and more directly perceived as an imitation of ballroom dances unknown in traditional Zulu dance styles, was *indunduma* (mine dumps), the first truly urban dance form in Durban after the war. Usually performed on keyboard instruments and tin shakers, *induduma* was connected with *marabi*, a style that originated in Johannesburg, and it is through returning Natal migrants that *indunduma* possibly filtered back to Durban (Erlmann 1991:82).

Developing concurrently with the Concert and Dance phenomenon (to be discussed from page x), and in another implication of the class-linked orientation of the music, Coplan maintains that *marabi* cultivated its own version of the genre in the form of "working-class concert and dances" (Coplan 1985:105).

With the exception of the apparently inaccurate, or at least ill-defined, inference made by Graham that *marabi* was created by professional jazzmen (Graham 1989:258), it would appear that there are those (e.g. Coplan 1979:136,138; Coplan 1985:94,97,108,121; Koch 1983:158/159,163/164; Manuel 1988:108) who share with Sole the conviction that *marabi*, as an original keyboard genre played at *shebeens* and *stokfels* (Sole 1983:83; Coplan 1985:104), was born out of, expressed by and was largely functional to the lives of the working class:

Disapproved of by whites and middle class blacks of the time, *marabi* has since been extolled as the first authentic example of black working-class cultural expression. While this is an exaggeration, *marabi* nevertheless remains noteworthy. It was a discernible form of culture which flourished in a specific environment and faded with the destruction of that environment in the late 1930s (Sole 1983:83).

It also remains true that *marabi's* popularity insidiously infiltrated the dance halls and other essentially middle-class domains, and became an important element in the development of the music which was concurrently evolving there. However, it can be broadly stated that in the 1920s and 1930s - that is, as long as *marabi* continued to survive in its original form as an integral part of *shebeen* society - it remained polarised from the cultural activities of the black elite:

in South Africa nothing could be firmer proof of the class component in culture among black people than a comparison of, say, the *marabi* parties in the Johannesburg slumyards of the 1930s with the soirees and concerts of the BMSC and Inchcape Hall during the same period (*Sole 1983:76*).

Because of what Coplan describes as “contradictions in middle-class culture during the inter-war period”, “Middle-class Africans regarded command of Western culture and disassociation from both the ‘primitive’ traditions of the past and the proletarian *marabi* of the present as essential to their progress” (*Coplan 1985:138*).

3.8 SOUTH AFRICAN JAZZ AND VAUDEVILLE

Perceiving the commonalities of oppression, exclusion from the dominant white society and economic hardship in their respective conditions, and aspiring to the economic and social gains made by black Americans as they appeared to gradually surmount their evidently analagous situation, blacks in South Africa identified with their brethren in the United States (*Hamm 1988:36*). (See also *Couzens 1985:83-87,107-114; Manuel 1988:106*.) This identification, which manifested in the appropriation of black American cultural practices as common and appropriate modes of expression, began as far back as the nineteenth century (*Hamm 1988:2*).

The steady tide of American cultural influence, which began with the earliest missionaries and first minstrel troupes to visit these shores, resulted in the use of American popular musical styles gradually becoming endemic in South Africa. In the 1920s, this tide grew into an overwhelming wave which engulfed black urban society. The onslaught was channelled through films where ‘stars’ portrayed modes of behaviour, dress and presentation to be emulated, while the gramophone became the hallmark if not standard possession of the urbanite, through which could be gained easy access to American performance culture.

The music of the jazz bands, playing ragtime, followed by dixieland and then most significantly, swing, had a profound and resounding effect on black musicians. The 1920s saw the mushrooming of black jazz bands modelled on American prototypes, initially particularly so in the predominantly black urban areas in and around Johannesburg.

It was in the espousal of jazz that certain strata of black South African society, like their counterparts in America (*Hamm 1988:36*), demonstrated an adherence to a social strategy aimed at the approval of and acceptance by white society, which Ballantine names the “Liberal View” (*Ballantine 1993:40; 1991B:130*) and which will be referred to in this work as the ‘liberal approach of moral persuasion’, or merely the ‘liberal approach’ (see 4.4).

3.8.1 Brass Bands as a Training Ground for Jazz Musicians

The musical panorama into which the phenomenon of black swing bands emerged was rich and varied, and included *marabi*, *isicathamiya*, *makwaya*, sacred and secular brass bands.

Brass bands were idiosyncratic to most mission institutions, including Lutheran missions, the Salvation Army and the separatist churches (*Coplan 1985:82,83*).

As secular performance opportunities grew, brass instrumentalists began to infiltrate entertainment structures outside the sphere of the church. (Early examples include **Modikwe’s Band** from Rustenburg and **Jeremiah Nlatseng’s Mokgoro Band** from Bloemfontein (*Ballantine 1993:30; 1991A:139*.) These bands played a diversity of styles and it is in the use of this *variety* that the long-term significance of the introduction of this medium to popular urban music lies: history proved it to be the first step in the tradition of assimilating different and varied genres within a Western idiom. This trend was subsequently developed in the maturation of South Africa jazz .

... the brass-band institution tended to be appropriated for differing ideological ends. The ‘repressed elite’ adopted it for the symbolism of its Christian, Eurocentric affiliations, and its usefulness as a means of social discipline; in these hands it was fostered by organisations such as the Transvaal African Eisteddfod in the early 1930s. Whites, after the missionaries, also continued to establish black brass bands, and for not dissimilar reasons ...

Towards the lower end of the class spectrum, brass bands proliferated as well - but served quite different goals, usually related broadly to community needs such as economic support and solidarity. Most common were the marching bands that drummed up support for the *stokvels* (*Ballantine 1993:31; 1991A:139*).

Stokfels are informal credit societies or ‘clubs’ in which every member contributes a specific amount of money each week or month, and each member in turn receives the total sum contributed (*Sole 1983:82; Coplan 1985:102*). Generally, a party for paying guests would be given by the recipient of the

lump sum, the purpose of which was to generate a profit for the host or hostess. While Bantu World reports these events as occurring on a Sunday in Western Native Township (*Bantu World 17 September, 1932:9*), Mngoma asserts that in Eastern Native Township where he lived as a young boy, *Stokfels* took place on a Thursday afternoon. *Stokfel* members, dressed in uniform, would march to the party accompanied by brass band ensembles hired for the occasion. Included in their repertoire were

... already established Tswana songs that we heard played, for instance, by the *Babilegi* Women's Clubs who used to strut around - usually, I don't know why, it coincided with Thursdays which was normally, according to the church, set aside for services in the different denominations. Now these *stokfels*, especially among the Tswana women, used to have their meetings on Thursdays. Each of them - we used to have two or three - would have a marching band that accompanied as they strutted from one venue to another, all dressed up in their different uniforms ... Apparently those had developed from ... around Rustenburg, where there was a strong Lutheran tradition, with huge brass bands ... Now these had got to places like Western Native Township and Eastern Native Township (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 16/2/95*).

The band's chief function was this heralding parade. They would make only a brief appearance at the party itself, whereafter *marabi* was the standard fare. The use of alcohol served as a common denominator - and also blurred the lines of distinction - between *marabi* parties and the marching *stokfel* brassband. (The *stokfel* concept, including a *shebeen*-type party at which recorded music is used for dancing, still exists today in proletarian township society, but the marching bands are a thing of the past.)

3.8.2 The Concert and Dance Tradition

An entertainment structure which was the principal medium by which black urban jazz was to become a significant, if not dominant, force in black popular urban music of the 1930s and 1940s, was the institution known as the 'Concert and Dance' (*Ballantine 1993:12; 1991A:122; Coplan 1985: 149/150; 1979:139*).

In imaginative reaction to repressive pass laws and night curfews, a typical Concert and Dance was a nocturnal indoor entertainment form: the concert component was provided by a vaudeville show which would last from 8pm to 12am; the dance followed immediately after and jazz music would be played from midnight to 4am, "when curfew laws again allowed Africans to walk the streets of the city"

(*Coplan 1979:139*). Ballantine emphasises the “symbiotic relationship” between the jazz and vaudeville artists: “It was a crucible in which the two styles were seldom totally distinct; instead, despite some obvious differences, they fed off each other” (*Ballantine 1993:13; 1991A:122*).

Vaudeville shows, begun in imitation of the minstrel troupes who visited the country from the 1800s, were an established tradition in South Africa since the First World War. The ragtime or ‘coon’ songs and the spirituals were part of the legacy and were to become established components of the vaudeville tradition. The momentum of this tradition, established by the minstrel troupes and the inspired local groups which began in their wake, had been carried in school concerts (*Coplan 1985:123*). An innovator of note whose contribution to the genre is of significance was Reuben Caluza.

Variety was the keyword to the vaudeville troupes’ shows. The evening’s programme line-up could include routines varying from impersonations, juggling, acrobatics, tap dancing, mime and comedy sketches, to solo or ensemble vocal or instrumental items. The most popular vaudeville troupes included: the **African Darkies**, **Versatile Seven**, **Darktown Strutters**, **Harmony Kings**, **Pitch Black Follies**, **Mad Boys**, **African Own Entertainers**, **Midnight Follies** and **Synco Fans** (*Ballantine 1993:6; Coplan 1985:123*).

Louis Radebe Petersen, “meticulous observer of the local jazz and vaudeville scene since the 1920s” (*Ballantine 1993:42; 1991A:133*) was pianist for first the Manhattan Stars and then the Manhattan Brothers, which he left in approximately 1949. “Vaudeville companies” or “troupes” and “jazz-based vocal groups” (*Ballantine 1993:7,13,35*), Radebe Petersen maintains, belong “all in one category” (*Radebe Petersen - writer's interview: 17/10/94*). Support for this viewpoint is inferred by Coplan’s categorisation of the **Manhattan Brothers**, **Gay Gaieties**, **Synco Fans** and **Pitch Black Follies** as “stage companies” (*Coplan 1985:149/150*).

In practice, certain jazz bands and vaudeville troupes regularly appeared together in the same programmes. The bands were often required to provide music for the troupes’ singing items; sometimes band members supplemented the troupes’ cast.

Landmark jazz bands of the 1930s and 1940s included the **Jazz Maniacs**, the **Harlem Swingsters**, the **Rhythm Kings** and the **Jazz Revellers**. The leading dance band of the time was considered to be the

Merry Blackbirds, who regularly appeared with the **Pitch Black Follies**, generally regarded as the country's leading vaudeville troupe. The Merry Blackbirds' greatest rivals were the Jazz Maniacs. This band was less skilled at music reading than the Merry Blackbirds, but nevertheless, like them, constantly attained levels of performance which left audiences confounded by the similarity, if not almost exact imitation, of the original American recordings.

The Jazz Maniacs, led by Solomon “**Zulu Boy**” Cele until his death in 1944 and thereafter by **Wilson “King Force” Silgee**, featured some of the jazz musicians whose names are now legendary, including **Zakes Nkosi**, **Mackay Davashe** and **Jacob Moeketsi**. Important pioneers for the development of orchestrated “African jazz-marabi”, Andersson claims that “they carried the spirit of marabi through to the dance halls, and they provided inspiration for a new breed of jazzmongers - Dollar Brand, Hugh Masekela, Kiepie Moeketsi, Jonas Gwanga, Gwigwi Mwrebe, Bra Sello and the like” (*Andersson 1981:25*).

The imitation of American, specifically *black* American, music can be seen as the continuation of the trend of adulation and emulation of American cultural models. Originating as far back as minstrelsy, it was to have long-term significance and repercussions in the forging of not only jazz but other urban popular styles. Perhaps this fascination with black American culture was engendered by the fact that the black American and black South African “worlds”

... were part of the same socio-economic system, and the similarities of experience have been reinforced by the mass distribution in South Africa of black American performance culture. This culture attracted Africans trying to adapt positively to their own urban environment, and the international recognition given black American performers made the temptation to copy them, rather than develop problematic African models, almost irresistible (*Coplan 1985:148*).

A slightly different perspective is provided by Hamm: consciously or unconsciously, black South Africans held a “long-cherished dream that the American model of evolutionary, non-violent social and political change could serve for South Africa” (*Hamm 1988:37*).

American jazz of the 1920s became the primary resource pool of inspiration: repertoire to be imitated; American musicians to be emulated. In general, attempts were made to establish the musical subculture of the ‘Africans in America’. Interestingly, and possibly pre-empted by Caluza’s work in popularising

jazz, this obsession caught the imagination of the proletariat and middle-class alike. Disapproval emanated from the isolated and elite quarters of lone critics and educators (*Coplan 1985:121,122*).

Local music resources formed a much smaller and less frequently used basis for material and inspiration. Nevertheless, this basis is important to note, since it ultimately proved to be the vital component for the germination of South African jazz. A seminal feature of South African urban music for decades to come, the tendency to look both outward to America and inward to black roots occurred to varying degrees in the different decades. Ultimately both sources were fused into one syncretic form, the essence of which was to become the distinctive sound aesthetic of South African township music.

It would appear, however, that from the onset of the ‘jazz craze’ in the 1920s until the end of the era of ‘swing fever’, the local component was, generally speaking, of secondary importance to American jazz. A typical repertoire of predominantly American jazz music at a Concert and Dance function would invariably include one or two familiar *marabi* tunes, possibly to incorporate a ‘local’ flavour, possibly to please certain sections of the audience.

Ballantine, who stresses that jazz musicians were not exclusively represented or supported by the elite stratum of black urban society, nevertheless concedes that the tastes and predilections of jazz followers in the 1920s and 1930s were such that the inclusion of occasional *marabi*-based pieces in this period may be viewed almost as a form of “tokenism”, rather than as a concession to the music containing any real worth (*Ballantine - writer's interview: 1/11/1993*).

Within the Concert and Dance structure, it was the vaudeville component that was to initiate the incorporation of traditional elements in the form of songs, dances and traditional sketches (*Ballantine 1991A:133; 1993:23*). Four reasons which could have motivated the inclusion of local influences are suggested, namely that:

- the need to preserve a cultural heritage became apparent;
- musicians and critics became aware of creative possibilities flowing from these traditional sources;

- the importance of preserving a cultural heritage for future generations became obvious;
- included in the Concert and Dance audiences were people of differing educational and socio-economic backgrounds. This is possibly the most persuasive reason. The inclusion of local elements and flavours can be viewed as an attempt to accommodate them; to transcend some of the contradictions that existed within and between classes (*Ballantine 1991A:133/134; 1993:23-25*).

The jazz bands' local concession was restricted to the inclusion of single *marabi* numbers:

The association of *marabi* with illegality, police raids, sex, and a desperately impoverished working class ... stigmatised it as evil and degrading in the eyes of those blacks whose notions of social advancement rested on an espousal of Christian middle-class values. Yet, though both the bands and their audiences included members of this latter group in significant numbers, the heterogeneous nature of black ghetto society meant that there were also strong pressures towards the *inclusion* of *marabi* in the bands' repertoires ... Even band members who grew up in homes that deeply disapproved of *marabi*, knew the style and its tunes well. Many would be able to say with Silgee - who grew up in such a home but used to watch and listen to *marabi* 'at the window' - 'It got itself infiltrated in me' (Silgee 1986). Not even the prestigious Merry Blackbirds steered clear of *marabi* (*Ballantine 1993:29; 1991A:136/137*).

The ethos of *marabi* was essentially hedonistic and not "overtly political", a factor which Koch attributes "in no small way ... due to the hard-drinking milieu it embodied" (*Koch 1983:165*). Proponents of "marabi culture", typified by the "itinerant marabi pianist" of the shebeens, also included "small combinations of jazz musicians" epitomised by the **Japanese Express**, a band that began to play orchestrated marabi towards the end of the 1920s (*Koch 1983:160*).

In the 1940s, the arrangement of *marabi* for dance-band instrumentation led to the emergence of *tsaba-tsaba*, a relatively short-lived but significant phenomenon. As in other African urban forms, *tsaba-tsaba* is the name given to both a specific dance and the musical style to which it is performed. Allen cites two differing descriptions of the *tsaba-tsaba* dance: Kubik's offering involves "jazz dances seen in films" (presumably 'the jive') and features dancers holding up a hand and wagging the forefinger (*Allen 1993:18*). The second version concurs with Donald Tshomela and Khabi Mngoma's account of the *tsaba-tsaba*, and is a variant of the dance described by Mphahlele (who remembers the same action and dance steps, but describes it as being performed as a formation dance). It would appear that the dance was performed by a couple, who danced towards each other in what is described by Mensah as "rubber-legged" style. As the couple were about to make contact, "*Tsaba!*" or "*Tsaba-*

Tsaba!” was shouted and they jumped (not merely ‘danced’, as Mensah describes) backwards. Tshomela, Mngoma and Mphahlele emphasise that the jump backwards was accompanied by an exaggerated shaking of the shoulders and chest area (*Tshomela – writer’s interview: 24/4/94; Mphahlele – writer’s interview: 27/5/98; Mngoma – writer’s interview: 16/2/95*).

The Jazz Maniacs recorded a number called “Tsaba Tsaba”, and this is used as representative of the early 1940s style. In the 1950s, August Musarugwa recorded an example of “Rhodesian *tsaba-tsaba*” entitled “Skokiaan”. The common denominator between the two was the fast, “straight” beat (MM=232) which “dynamically propels the music forwards” (*Allen 1993:19*).

While Allen states that *tsaba-tsaba* was “influenced by, if it was not actually, *marabi*”, she maintains that Piliso could distinguish between *tsaba-tsaba* and *marabi* on two recordings by the Jazz Maniacs (the one is actually named “Tsaba Tsaba”; the flipside, “Izikhalo Zika Zulu Boy”, is defined as a *marabi* number). Interviewed by this author, however, Piliso maintained that he could not detect any stylistic difference between *marabi* and *tsaba-tsaba*, and could not remember the latter as a distinct style at all (*Piliso – writer’s interview: 18/8/95*).

Nevertheless, following the two compositions by the Jazz Maniacs referred to above, a unique style of African jazz which was the first to bear the name *mbaqanga*, was born. Ballantine states that the main elements of this style are identifiable as:

- The cyclical harmonic progression of *marabi*;
- An African ‘stomp’ style, the rhythm of which “is immediately recognisable as the typical *indlamu* rhythm” (*Ballantine 1993:61*)
- The forms and instrumentation of American swing;
- A “languorous and syncretic melodic style owing less to the contours of American jazz than to those of neo-traditional South African music” (*Ballantine 1993:60/61; 1991B:150*).

Allen feels that African jazz is “more satisfactorily described as Americanised African music” (*Allen 1993:26*). Piliso describes African jazz as the absorption of *marabi* into American swing (*Piliso – writer’s interview: 1/11/94*). Allen states that the feature which distinguishes African jazz from both *marabi* and *tsaba-tsaba* is that African jazz “must be rhythmically influenced by American swing”. The Jazz Maniacs’ two recordings referred to above show no such influence (*Allen 1993:21*).

Allen describes “Tomatie Sous”, as played by the Harlem Swingsters (although it was first popularised by the Nu Symphonators from Bloemfontein – see 5.4.1) as a seminal African jazz composition. In essence, the bands had taken the Cape *vastrap* song,

... slowed down the tempo by half and superimposed a swing beat. This way their audience could dance the Jitterbug to their own songs. The response was electric, “Tomatie Sous” became an overnight rage (*Allen 1993:22*).

African jazz is based on the cyclical repetition of short two- or four-bar chord progressions, which controls the structure of the composition. The primary chords are always used and no more than three pitches are sounded together (so that the tonic is customarily left out of the dominant seventh). Unlike American swing, there is no ‘bridge’ or intersection with a different chord progression from that of the ‘head’. Eight bars are played ‘straight’, followed by improvisation based on the same chord progression (*Allen 1993:24*).

It must be stressed that *mbaqanga* or African jazz as it was played by the big bands of the concert hall era, was referred to as *marabi* throughout the 1940s. The first regular references to the style of “African jazz” occur in the 1950s, and then only by certain publications. The regular columnist for Zonk, Gideon Jay, wrote a column, “Pick of the Discs: Off the Record” throughout the 1950s. He makes two references to its ‘birth’:

Round about the year 1948, the indigenous Jazz idiom was born, and we looked around for a tag ... a name which would describe this form of music adequately and yet avoid the confusion of overseas influence. We called it African Jazz, and since then, much music has flowed under the bridge of the Big Bass Fiddle ... (*Zonk February 1955:45*).

A year earlier, though, he had written:

1952 saw the birth and growth in popularity of a new type of music amongst our urban Africans, and the file continues to grow for recordings on all labels of what I originally described as “AFRICAN JAZZ” (*Zonk March 1954:440*) (uppercase as in original).

What is hinted at in these excerpts, is that there were two varieties of African jazz: the dance-hall variety played by big bands of the swing era, and the commercial version promoted by the smaller combos which could be accommodated in the studios of the recording companies. Ntemi Piliso maintains that the essence of both were the same (*Piliso – writer’s interview: 1/11/94*). However, musicological analysis beyond the scope of this work is required to prove or disprove this assertion. (See Recommendations - 6.2)

As deduced from the vast majority of informants to this research and from a broad perspective of all press articles, it can safely be stated that for the most part, the term ‘African jazz’ was used throughout the 1950s to refer to the style which was captured on vinyl recordings, and of which the **African Swingsters**, the **Nu Symphonators** and above all, the various bands led by **Zacks Nkosi** can be said to be archetypal.

The recording industry which was midwife to and lifeblood of African urban styles, including African jazz of the 1950s, was the subject of fierce controversy. (See 5.4.1) Related styles such as *kwela* and jive (often confusingly used to refer to African jazz, but apparently more accurately used to refer to ‘sax jive’, ‘vocal jive’, etc.) were spawned as its by-products.

A caption to a photograph in *Zonk* in 1956 describes the “music mobile” which was the feature of an effective marketing strategy of recording establishments in the 1950s, catalysing the record and radio-buying and –listening frenzy in black South African society so denigrated by certain intellectuals and ‘progressive’ jazz enthusiasts:

Here is a van with built-in record playing and amplifying equipment, which a well-known South African record distributing company is using to bring music to locations and townships. Filling a long-felt need, this “music mobile” is serving the double purpose of bringing to the African music written, played and sung by Africans, and of brightening up location life. The “music mobile” carries a staff of two, Michael Smandla and Ezekil August, and here you see them on the job. Michael is giving a description of the record he is about to play while Ezekil is handing a leaflet to an interested spectator. It is hoped that the “music mobile” will eventually cover every location in the Union – so watch out for it, it will be coming your way soon! (*Zonk June 1956:43*).

It must be noted that definitions and descriptions of the commercial styles of the 1950s are not attempted here. Reasons for this include:

- There was in the 1950s no tacitly accepted glossary of terminology. Terms used in the press for the recorded African styles were ambiguous and confused, making the deciphering of styles a painstaking and difficult task. The introduction of the term ‘jive’ as an umbrella term for fast-tempoed *African* music was applied to anything from *kwela*, as well *majuba* (itself a generic, if not ambiguous, term), *mbaqanga* (of the big-band, as well as smaller, studio-combo variety), vocal groups of various styles, including ‘vocal jive’, as well as sax-jive, *patha-patha*, etc. Similarly, the term *msakazo* was used as a generic name implying commercial music of African flavour and indeterminate style.
- Single bands, or combos, used to record under different names at the recording studios. Ntemi Piliso’s Alexandra All-Stars, for example, used various names which included the name “Kitty Joe”, followed by various epithets, amongst others.
- Categorisation alone would require many months spent at Gallo archives in Johannesburg and would require musicological analysis which is beyond the scope of this work. (See Recommendations – 6.2)

3.8.3 Sophiatown and the ‘Modern Jazz’ Enthusiasts

To the black arts communities in general and jazz enthusiasts in particular, Sophiatown - this now legendary, racially-mixed freehold area to the west of Johannesburg - represented simultaneously the last gasp as well as pinnacle of authentic, vibrant urban community performance practices; a final *encore* before they were effectively extinguished in the cross-fire of the implementation of Apartheid laws.

Characterised by colourful, diverse types of music, a distinguishing feature of Sophiatown society was the enthusiasm displayed for jazz. Sophiatown’s jazz society i.e. those who appreciated or at any rate appeared to appreciate the music, replaced the shebeen with the nightclub. In places like the “Thirty-nine Steps”, “Aunt Babe’s” and the “Back of the Moon”, jazz sessions and dance crazes like the jitterbug held feverish sway while the very destruction of the community was being premeditated by the architects of Apartheid.

Significant to the discourse of not only the history of the music's development, but also the reasons for the eventual demise of jazz, is the jazz played at the Sophiatown Modern Jazz Club. This club was founded in 1955 by gifted local jazz musicians interested in experimenting with less popular modern jazz styles emanating from the United States.

Hamm's summary of features common to virtually all 'new' or 'modern' jazz in America in the period of approximately two-and-a-half decades following 1945 is as follows:

- There was a shift from large bands to small ensembles.
- A greater emphasis was now placed on solo improvisation than had been the case during the swing era.
- The music was characterised by concern with more complex harmonic, rhythmic and formal patterns.
- The above two factors led to the deliberate detachment of jazz from dance music.
- A new equilibrium between black and white musicians occurred, with both races contributing almost equally to the new style of jazz (an assertion disputed by other writers – see 5.5.1.1).
- In general, there was now a more intellectual approach to jazz on the part of both performers and audience. A new aesthetic in jazz had emerged (*Hamm 1983:538*).

Interracial 'jam' sessions, popularly known as "Jazz at the Odin", were sponsored at the Odin cinema on Sundays. Individual performers, rather than formal bands, played at the Odin. Nevertheless, the **Jazz Epistles**, consisting of some of South Africa's most eminent and now famous jazz musicians, including bop stylist Dollar Brand (piano), Kippie Moeketsi (alto), Jonas Gwangwa (trombone), Hugh Masekela (trumpet), Johnny Gertse (guitars) and Early Mabuza (drums) (*Coplan 1985:172*) was formed as a result of these sessions.

Coplan maintains that “the bebop styles of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie were a powerful influence on local musicians” and specifies innovative groups who were playing the new jazz, including **Mackay Davashes’ “Shantytown Sextet”** and **Elijah Nkonyane’s “Elijah Rhythm Kings”** (*Coplan 1985:171/172*). However, Ntemi Piliso, erstwhile member of the Harlem Swingsters and Alexander’s All-Star Band as well as founding member of the Sophiatown Modern Jazz Club, maintains that the bebop style, attempted in earnest by the musicians, was never greatly successful because of its technical difficulty (*Piliso - writer’s interview: 1/11/94*). Notably, Coplan comments that “The music was not well understood by the population as a whole. Yet the prestige of jazz and of black American performance culture drew in the most urbanised people of Sophiatown” (*Coplan 1985:172*).

Apparently, the jazz following was sustained, at least initially, by the fact that membership of jazz society signified a coveted mark of status, “even among *tsotsis* and gangsters” (*Coplan 1985:172; Dan September, a member of the notorious Sophiatown gangsters, the “Americans” - writer’s interview: 15/1/95; see Lodge 1983:349*). By the time the new styles had gained “a genuine appreciation” amongst the population in the late 1950s, the destruction of Sophiatown had already begun (*Coplan 1985:172; Lodge 1983:337*).

3.9 KWELA

Kwela was the first authentic urban South African music to achieve major acclaim in the black South African market as well as a modicum of international recognition (*Bender 1991:177/178*), to penetrate the white South African market and, in the words of Ntemi Piliso, to cause a vital “change of trend” (*Piliso - writer’s interview: 1/11/94*) which was to have important ramifications in the history of black South African urban music.

The fact of the matter is that *kwela* was propelled to popularity by white economic muscle and a major music-industry marketing exercise: for the first time in the evolution of black South African music, the full impact of the commercialism of the music industry was felt. In South Africa, talent scouts Walter Nhlapo of Gallo and Cuthbert Matumba of Troubadour recruited and made famous young pennywhistlers such as Spokes Mashiyane, brothers Elias and Aaron Lerole and Lemmy ‘Special’

Mabaso. The result was the birth of a ‘*kwela* craze’, whereafter new dances such as *kwela*, *patha-patha* (literally, “touch-touch”) (Coplan 1985:79; Bender 1991:180) and others were spawned. These fast-tempo dances gave a new lease of life to ‘jive’, one result of which was the blurring of lines of distinction between certain styles, all of which could be ‘jived’ to and which subsequently became inaccurately, synonymously and somewhat confusingly known as ‘jive’.

The idiom, whose beginnings Andersson assigns to Alexandra in the mid-1940s (Andersson 1981:28) and to which the pennywhistle is both integral and idiosyncratic, is described by Stapleton & May as “remodelled swing and boogie-woogie on pennywhistles” (Stapleton & May 1987:28). Gibson and her co-authors call it “the South African version of the London skiffle sound ideals of Lonnie Donegan” (Gibson et al 1992:250). Ewens refers to *kwela* as “a poor boys’ interpretation of American big-band swing” (Ewens 1991:195); Andersson finds that *kwela* developed amongst youth who admired both the *marabi* jazz musicians like Zacks Nkosi and the American style jazzmen, implying that *kwela* was a unique fusion of these styles (Andersson 1981:28). Allen suggests that whereas American jazz numbers like “In the mood” by Glen Miller were influential, most informants to her work claimed a greater affinity for and inspiration from *mbaqanga* numbers like “Tomatie Sous” (Allen 1993:29/30). (See 5.4.1)

The pennywhistle’s entree into the urban music panorama stemmed from humble beginnings: at first used predominantly by urban youngsters who could not afford the instruments of their counterparts in adult dance orchestras, the inexpensive “small metal cylinder with six finger holes and a whistle mouthpiece” (Hamm 1991:165) elevated street music to a vibrant and important component of township musical life.

The tradition of reed ensembles was a long established one among the Zulu (*lithlaka*) and Tswana (*umtshingo*) (Coplan 1985:156), and according to Roberts, similarities of phrasing occur between the traditional mode and that of the *kwela* era (Roberts 1972:259). Possibly influenced by this legacy, the pennywhistle was absorbed into the musical vernacular of young urban street musicians. The first medium in which it flourished was that of the ‘marching bands’, formed by township youths in imitation of Scottish military bands and Coloured ‘coon’ street bands (Coplan 1985:155). With names like “Phalanzani Scots Band” and “Scotchies” (the one to which Prof. Khabi Mngoma belonged as a youngster in Eastern Native Township), members of these smartly-dressed “Scottishes” - the colloquial

generic term for the marching bands - roamed the townships and surrounding areas, their music and well-drilled antics eliciting money from appreciative audiences:

We used to have what we called marching bands, all toggled up in the Scottish attire that we would get some of our seamstresses in the townships to make ... We would have ... leggings, without shoes, marching into town, playing these pennywhistles. We used to make our own drums from goatskins, which we got from Eastern Native Township at the time. And that sort of activity took me away from home over weekends ... playing in places like Belgravia, Yeoville, Doornfontein ... (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

The band members bought their instruments at concession stores found outside mine compounds, such as the one near City Deep, south of Eastern Native Township where Mngoma lived. The relatively inexpensive merchandise carried at these stores was determined by the target market of mineworkers and included concertinas, guitars, mouth organs, jew's harps (or *tholotholo*) and pennywhistles.

Heralding the birth of kwela's idiosyncratic tone, the youngsters experimented with the pennywhistles and exploited the inherent variations of timbre to create what they believed was a satisfactory substitute for the tone produced by Scottish bands which rehearsed at the Union Grounds at weekends: "We were enchanted by the husky tone that we heard from those marches. So we used to play the pennywhistle *skewed* in at an angle, so that it didn't have a shrill sound, it had a sort of muffled, husky sound" (*Mngoma: writer's interview 14/2/95*).

Years later, Coplan was to maintain that the appeal of the music lay in the "tonal flexibility and vocal quality" which could not be easily reproduced on standard Western instruments (*Coplan 1985:160*).

Kubik describes the idiosyncratic sound as produced by unique playing methods:

... kwela flautists push the flute relatively far into the mouth ... rotating it towards the inner side of the right cheek. The oblique embouchure guarantees that the edge and window remain open between the lips of the player and a full and round tone is obtained, much louder than if it is played in a Western manner. The flute also sounds almost exactly a semitone lower than the factory-tuned pitch. By means of their own special fingering techniques they play glides, 'blue' notes and chromatic passing notes (*Sadie 1980:330*).

Mngoma attributes the harmonic structures used in the music to the triadic, western textures of the church:

They (*i.e. the marching bands*) were influenced by the church, because we were all school-going, and hymn-singing in school was a regular thing. The harmonies, as far as I remember, were monophonic. They were

usually three-part harmonisations, because we didn't have a bass part. Two or three parts. We always had an accompaniment, and of course, we had to have a beat (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Each piece evolved from a process of “group composition” to which all the members contributed. Immediate sources of melodic inspiration included existing melodies played by the brass bands which accompanied Tswana women from the *Babilegi* Women’s Clubs, as they “strutted” to their venues, mainly on Thursday afternoons. Mngoma ascribes the influence of this music, in turn, to the brass bands emanating from the Lutheran tradition in the Rustenburg area, which had filtered to the likes of Western Native Township and Eastern Native Township (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 16/2/95*).

Other melodies, which “just came in as little snippets” were derived from township ditties, as it were, and concerned the lives of urban people, “but you have to be in the culture to know what they refer to”. Being in the (old) Transvaal, many of them were of Tswana origin. An example of such a song is “*Emotswala*”, a song which alludes to prospective weddings. At the time, marriages were authorised in Pretoria. It was expected of “a man of status” - a symbol of which was a bicycle - to transport his bride to Pretoria in order to have the marriage officially ratified. Since the likelihood of a breakdown was ever present, his wisdom was demonstrated by carrying a spanner (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 16/2/95*).

Yet other of these little township tunes stemmed from the Free State. Strongly influenced by neighbouring Lesotho, “*Serantabule*” concerns the norms of the blanketed people of “Lesotho proper”. The song alludes to the necessity for or status of a very attractive, bright-coloured blanket which would reflect the sun, “really more for the visual impression it would make” (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 16/2/95*).

Blocks of apartments in white suburbs like Jeppe, Troyeville, Belgravia, Yeoville and Doornfontein, and occasionally train terminals (there were no bus stops at the time) were the marching bands’ main areas of operation. The inevitable concentration of people at these locations invariably represented more financial reward to the youngsters:

We would swing and swagger as we marched along. We did ... formation marches. We’d get to a flat, and one of us - I was one of these - would play and actually do antics to drum beating. Somebody would be holding the drum, and I’d be beating it, doing all sorts of tricks, ... and of course money would come pouring down from the flat-dwellers ...

We had a regular drum player, but for this sort of exhibition ... where we'd have an audience who'd be responsive, I would do the demonstration on the drum. Then I'd get back into formation and somebody else would play the drum, but this drum I would then perhaps hold on his back and play it from the opposite side, swinging out my legs ... doing all sorts of antics, crossing hands to the music (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/94*).

The marching street bands are yet another illustration of the osmosis between classes as they related to distinct styles, as well as the extent to which mission-school influence permeated popular styles. Bearing in mind that his parents did not entirely approve of the occupation, Mngoma recalls that the *kwela* band to which he belonged was made up of (church) school-going members, certain of whom, including himself, attended George Koch Primary School, at which the principal (who was also his piano teacher) was none other than the respected and elite musician, Mark Radebe. Mngoma remembers the many nights he would spend curled up in the outside lavatory, having returned home from the occupations of the 'Scotchies' at too late an hour to enter the house, and the wrath of his parents that these events would incur. Fearing that he was on the verge of juvenile delinquency rife in the townships at that time, the young Khabi's marching band activities were summarily curtailed and he was sent to Mission School at Annievale in Natal.

Early pennywhistle music of the marching bands exhibited the variety of rhythms inherent in the myriad influences which formed part of its evolution:

It is influenced by a whole range of styles: the *mbholoho* types - the music that is sung at community concerts. ... *isicathamiya*, the various children's styles ... the *indlamu* songs, the play songs - all these have a different character. And then of course you have the school influence.

As I say, we adapted any tune, any type of rhythm. It did not necessarily conform to any particular rhythm. If, for instance, it lent itself to marching, or we bent it to make it (suitable for a) march ... The timing varied, depending on what use we wanted to make of it ... some became set for use in marching, some to accompany the drum-beating demonstrations, some to use for formation marching. If, for instance, we stopped, some of the things we did was this drum demonstration and others were formation marching within a confined space, moving in and out, and so on (*Mngoma - writer's interview: 14/2/95*).

Aside from uniformed marching bands, youngsters also formed smaller bands consisting of pennywhistles and homemade instruments. According to Kubik, the "standard" *kwela* ensemble consisted of one or more pennywhistles, one or two (acoustic) guitars and a "one-string bass", presumably often of the tea-chest variety. In these bands, players developed techniques of fingering and blowing which facilitated the production of idiosyncratic American jazz notes such as 'blue' notes, chromatic passing notes, and 'glides' (*Coplan 1985:157*). Accompanied by home-made guitars

(*isiginci*) made from paraffin tins, tea-chest one-string basses and milk-tin rattles, *marabi* elements were incorporated into their basically jazz idiom to produce an improvisational genre of street music based on principles of African music (*Ballantine 1989:308; Coplan 1985:157; Andersson 1981:28*).

The origins of the name “*kwela*” are unclear and at times, confusing. One translation for “*khwela*” (note spelling) is provided as “(to) climb; ascend; mount” (*Doke & Vilakazi 1948:423*). Kubik, who mentions that “*kwela-kwela*” is one of the colloquial names given to the South African police van, asserts that the South African musicologist Elkin Sithole relates the first musical use of the word to the “bombing style” of *isicathamiya*. (See 3.5) In order to elicit response from the chorus, the leader would shout “*kwela*”, while “*kwela-kwela*” denoted their ongoing responses (*Sadie 1980:329*).

The use of the term is ascribed by some writers to the fact that dancers at parties would shout the word to encourage non-participants to join in (*Coplan 1985:158; Bender 1991:180*). Bender maintains that a more likely origin is from the name “*kwela-kwela*” given to police vans, since police used to use the words “*kwela, kwela*” to demand their arrestees’ entry into them (*Bender 1991:180*). Kivnick’s version provides for the term originating from “the sound made by police vans against whom the boys played their whistles as a warning and a kind of general camouflage” (*Kivnick 1990: 229*). Andersson agrees that the term “*kwela-kwela*” was used to refer to police vans - whose chief objective was to apprehend illegal gamblers. At the impending approach of a van, evidence of the illicit game would disappear and the playing of the pennywhistle would seem to be the attraction for the apparently innocent gathering (*Andersson 1981:28*). A similar version was furnished on BBC radio by the South African soprano, Elizabeth Connell (*The Star Tonight, Monday April 11, 1994: 11*).

Stapleton & May accredit the popularisation of the style to its inclusion in the film “The Magic Garden”, in which a young boy, **Willard Cele**, played “boogie on a pennywhistle” (*Stapleton & May 1987:188*). Catapulted into the limelight in 1951 by the release of the film, Cele was the first pennywhistler to achieve fame and is widely held to be responsible for the birth of the pennywhistle craze of the 1950s. Coplan states that the clear association of the name with the music only began after the release of the international hit recording “Tom Hark” by Aaron Lerole in 1954. (*See also Stapleton & May 1987:188*). Street-corner gamblers are interrupted by an approaching police van. One shouts “Daar kom die *khwela-khwela!*” (sic) while they hastily pack away their dice and commence playing their pennywhistles (*Coplan 1985:158; Andersson 1981:28*).

In a confusing and apparently inaccurate reference which implies that *kwela* and *mbaqanga* (or “*simanje-manje*”, itself a misappropriated term for *mbaqanga*) are synonymous, Kubik draws attention to the fact that the umbrella term “jive”, as applied to *kwela*, was also used for other styles (Sadie 1980:329). However, Hamm, who maintains that *kwela* represents one stage in the development of the larger genre of ‘jive’, a term which came to be applied to dance music of the overlapping jazz and *kwela* eras (Hamm 1985:172) provides the observation that

Some pennywhistle pieces included the word ‘kwela’ in their titles, and Western ethnomusicologists began using this word, inaccurately, for the entire pennywhistle repertory as well as similar pieces using other instrumentation ... In fact, ‘kwela’ was the correct designation only for pieces using rhythmic patterns appropriate for the *kwela*, a popular social dance of the time (Hamm 1991:165).

Acknowledging both the marching bands and ‘skiffle-type’ street corner bands as important evolutionary stages in its development, Allen, in her outstanding analysis of the music which came to bear the name “*kwela*”, concludes that the most widely-accepted broad definition of the style is “*marabi*-based pennywhistle and solo saxophone music composed between 1954 and 1964” (Allen 1993:59).

The reader is referred to Allen’s detailed analysis of the structure of *kwela* composition. A summary of some of the most idiosyncratic characteristics, as provided in her work, follows:

- *Kwela* music is structured on the call-and-response principle of African and African-American musical traditions: the most common form consists of motifs alternating with solo passages.
- The music consists of repeated, short harmonic cycles which are usually 2 to 4 bars long. Most compositions have four crotchets to a bar. The primary chords are always used. Chord changes take place every bar or half bar.
- Above the repetitive harmonic cycle, a series of short melodies, usually the length of a cycle, are repeated, varied and interspersed with improvisatory episodes. Melodic repetitiveness is an idiosyncratic characteristic. The most common of all *kwela* forms is one in which two motifs alternate with solo section (of which “Copper Avenue”, played by **Lemmy Special Mabaso** and **Spokes Mashiyane** is a prime example.) However, three motifs interspersed with solo work are also regularly found.

- The second type of *kwela* form is the ‘Solo-over-Ostinato’ Form. Here a chorus of pennywhistles repeats one or more ostinato riffs, above which a soloist improvises throughout. The famous “Tom Hark” played by **Elias (Lerole) and his Zig Zag Jive Flutes** is an example of this type.
- A small number of *kwela* numbers combine the above two forms.
- “Harmonic progression constitutes one of the fundamental areas of continuity between *marabi*, *kwela* and *mbaqanga*” (Allen 1993:77/78). The most frequent progressions are I I IV V and I IV V I.
- Rhythm is a distinguishing characteristic which differentiates *kwela* from other styles. The guitar, rather than the drums, which were not present in original street bands, provides the basic rhythm in *kwela*. Whereas *marabi* and *mbaqanga* are based on a “driving straight beat”, *kwela* is ‘swung’ to a “lilting shuffle”, the most common of which is approximated as follows.
- The strumming technique of the guitar, in which the short, soft upstroke precedes the downward stroke as a spontaneous result of the wrist movement, produces the “definitive *kwela* shuffle-type rhythm”.
- Derived from “Count Basie-type swing”, equal emphasis is given to all four beats in the bar.
- The transformation of *kwela* into the *mbaqanga* of the 1960s was characterised by the change from a “swung” to a “straight” beat.
- Instrumentation is a vital characteristic of *kwela*. Although a composition may contain typical features of *kwela*, it is not classifiable as such without the sound of the pennywhistle or solo saxophone. The most stereotypical *kwela* line-up is that of solo pennywhistle backed by pennywhistle chorus (such as in “Tom Hark”). However, from 1958 *kwela* recording included saxophonists as both soloists and members of backing choruses.

- The move from the street bands to recording studios was characterised by the advent of drums and bass. Allen maintains that this resulted in street-corner bands imitating the sound aesthetic of recordings, and introducing the tea-box bass into their line-up.
- As *kwela* developed, guitar parts became more sophisticated. Gradually, both a rhythm and lead guitar became the norm. Allen states that electrification was concurrent with the introduction of the lead guitar. In the late 1950s, this phenomenon heralded the birth of the second style to bear the name *mbaqanga* (Allen 1993:58-102).

This version of *mbaqanga* was catalysed to fame by one Simon Nkabinde, alias *Mahlathini*, whose characteristic growl was enthusiastically backed by a group of singing and dancing women; thus forming *Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens*. A seminal milestone on the map of South African music, this style has been both denigrated (Ballantine 1993:8) and praised (*Mngoma – writer’s interview: 22/4/95; Piliso – writer’s interview: 1/11/94*). While in-depth examination of this issue is beyond the scope of this work, some of the ideological issues which surround the debate will be examined in chapter 5.