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Exploring Jazz Composition as an Agent for Addressing Social Issues - Perspectives from Young South African Jazz Composers

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Declaration of Originality

Full name: Bokani Dyer

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Degree: Master of Music

Title of Study: Exploring Jazz Composition as an Agent for Addressing Social Issues — Perspectives from Young South African Jazz Composers.

I declare that this study is my own original work. Where secondary material is used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with university requirements.

I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of university policy and implications in this regard.

30 August 2021

SIGNATURE **DATE**

Abstract

This study looks into the perspectives of young South African jazz composers with regard to their compositions and the nature of engagement with social issues. Five composers were interviewed, to gain an understanding of their ideas regarding their work as well as their impressions about how music functions in relation to its societal contexts. The study also looks at the history of South African jazz and the various modes of engagement with social issues reaching back to the arrival of the Dutch settlers in 1652.

This qualitative study took the form of a case study, looking into the individual constructions of the participant subjects. Participant selection was aimed at providing a diversity of views by selecting participants from different backgrounds.

The research has revealed a multi-layered and sometimes complex engagement with social contexts, from subtle to overt and activist in nature. Taking into account the socio-historical

relationships and present-day perspectives of the participants, the engagement of jazz composition with society is apparent throughout.

The study is an inquiry into how jazz composition in the South African context acts as a window into the social – the window can be clear, stained, broken, big or small.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

"An artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times," Nina Simone said in an interview (Nina Simone, 2013).

This statement by Nina Simone was my point of departure. Upon hearing it, I thought about my own work as a composer and what role I *should* adopt as an artist. Following this, the idea developed into thinking about the sentiments of other young jazz composers in South Africa and the ways in which they position their work within a societal framework – what sense of responsibility do they feel, if any, to respond to pertinent social issues? What is the nature of their response? By social, I am referring to a communal, shared interpersonal experience by groups of people, whose bounds are either imposed or self-determined. In a country with a

turbulent past and a present-day with no shortage of societal challenges, is the work of today's young jazz composers responding to the social issues of our time? Where the artist is afforded the freedom to express themselves in a manner of their choosing, how does the artist engage with society in, through and around their work?

In taking on this research, it was my impression that South African Jazz music was more engaged with social issues pre-democracy. This is because of signifying markers that have remained in collective memory and have become defining signposts of a characteristic style of engagement. Compositions like 'Inhlupheko' (Distress) by Duke Makasi, were written during the most repressive era of the apartheid regime. Or a song like 'Meadowlands' which speaks directly – through its lyrics – about forced removals brought about by the Group Areas Act of 1950. Such musical signifiers framed my thinking about pre-democratic South Africa and the closeness of socio-political engagement through jazz music. By extension, the victory over apartheid in 1994 possibly signalled that jazz composers could look elsewhere for their inspiration, with no social ills to address through their music, or did it? In the last decade in South Africa, we have seen much protest action and widespread social discontent in the form of the #FeesMustFall protests, gender-based violence and brazen racial conflict among other issues. With this social climate in mind, I was curious to know whether young jazz musicians were engaged in dialogues around these issues and their inclinations to respond or how these issues might indirectly resonate in their music.

Jazz as an art form by its nature is communal because it is predominantly performed as a group. Fundamental to the structure of the jazz tradition is the element of improvisation which promotes a kind of democratisation where each member of the band is given the mantle to express herself/ himself, during her/his solo, supported by the others in the group. The freedom to express oneself in their own way is a form of liberation in itself. “Here’s a musical style where the unity of the collective is preserved but, also, individual expression is allowed” (Ramanna, 2005, p. 195).

As poet and activist Mongane Wally Serote says, art “always exists in a symbiotic relationship with history, expressing the nature of history, portraying the essence of creation, and forever spilling its immeasurable content and context to humanity. The arts are the expression of culture” (Serote, 2020, p. 22).

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of the different ways music, more specifically jazz engages with its social environment. With an amplified focus on the ideas and perspectives of young jazz composers, informed by the distinctly South African context, I aspire to supplement the body of knowledge that illuminates the understanding of music’s relationship to its social environment and the bi-directional, symbiotic nature of this relationship.

Muller (2019) says that “South African jazz was arguably the music that most embodied the struggle for human and artistic freedom under apartheid” (Muller, 2019, p. 116). Historically, jazz music in South Africa indeed occupied a unique position in society. In the 1950s, jazz in

South Africa was loved equally by politicians and gangsters. A music primarily of the black communities, jazz attracted white audiences who enjoyed jazz as entertainment and, in bringing diverse peoples together, jazz brought about a space for otherwise restricted interracial dialogue. Jazz music sparked curiosity amongst white people about the harsh living conditions black people were subjected to and played a part in combatting the divisive and oppressive imperialist regimes of colonialism and apartheid.

Taking this into account, my study is looking into the current moment and looking at the nature and layers of engagement between jazz music and its social environment.

1.3 Research questions

Primary question

1. What are the views of prominent young South African jazz composers regarding their musical responses to social issues in a post-democratic South Africa?

Secondary questions

2. What is the nature of the relationship between South African social contexts and jazz composition in the minds of current South African jazz composers?

3. How has a democratic South Africa affected jazz composers' musical responses to issues of social importance?

1.4 Methodology

I have elected to conduct my research as a case study. In this case study, I focus on the thoughts and ideas of five young jazz composers and base my findings on the responses expressed by them in semi-structured interviews. A secondary component of the study looks into the past, comparing musicians' engagement with social issues in pre-democratic South Africa with that of today's artists through a study of existing literature. The study reads as a chronological timeline – an unfolding of history showing the developments of ideas and discontents – a timeline of jazz expression in the social matrix. The reason for democracy as a marker is because of its significance as a moment of perceived victory over colonial and apartheid histories.

The current moment in our history, for the past decade, shows growing discontent and a general sentiment of disappointment in the slow progress of the South African democracy project. In addition to this is the legacy of imperialism, with clear links to colonial and apartheid histories that are still pervasive today. An appreciation of this for me meant that the research project required an in-depth engagement with the legacy of social engagement in South African jazz history. What has emerged through my research is a present that is in many ways tied to its past and a youth (young jazz composers included) grappling with unresolved issues rooted in pre-democratic South Africa.

After speaking to the composers and engaging with existing literature, I discovered a complex web of engagement with the social, to the extent that I now believe that the composers are inextricably linked to their social contexts. The question is no longer *whether* an engagement exists, but what the nature of the engagement is. The characteristic nature of engagement exists within a spectrum between the explicitly activist to the subliminal and everything in between. Borrowing from the ideas of Theodor Adorno, Ballantine (2012) says, "we cannot seriously hope to explain the features of any music, or explicate its meaning in history, without precisely grounding it within a social context – including, importantly, its political economy" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 13).

In this study, I centre the musician/composer as a social commentator, looking to make sense of their literature – song titles, song lyrics and thoughts expressed by composers/musicians in writing and interviews. As far as possible, I am looking at presenting an insider's perspective – the world within and constructed by composers and musicians. I also look from the outside, looking at the jazz world as a social construct, existing and expressing in relation to the social and the political. For instance, in a highly oppressive time, musicians create music for enjoyment to counteract the harsh realities of everyday life. In this form of expression, the music itself does not appear to inherently reference a wider social issue but, looking from the outside, it is evidently informed by a social context. Wherever possible, I have favoured the use of direct quotes by artists over my interpreted analysis and paraphrasing to preserve the patois, which displays the style and humour, providing a deeper overall understanding of the time, place and character.

Using various supporting literature and historical texts – academic papers, books, newspaper articles, interviews and sound recordings, I look to suggest possibilities of understanding the artists' ideas based on the social contexts of their time. Said in another way, I am looking to explore the jazz composer's solidarities with their society.

1.5 Definition of key concepts

Jazz – a progressively contentious word and various, sometimes opposed interpretations of its meaning. For the purposes of my study, I am looking at music emanating from the black communities of South Africa, with roots in exposure to black American music and European musical instruments.

Social Issues – I am concerned primarily with macro-social and socio-political events and situations that affect a wide base of society.

1.6 Chapter outline

Chapter 1 provides a background to the study and includes aims, methodology and research questions.

Chapter 2 contextualises my study with a conceptual framework of literature that has informed the whole project.

Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology including data collection strategy and ethical considerations. It also provides details about data analysis as well as the key themes revealed by research participants.

Chapter 4 is a socio-historical study of jazz in South Africa from 1652-1994.

Chapter 5 is the discussion of the major themes of the study separated into overarching titles: 'Music reflects society', 'Identity' and 'Composers as social spectators'.

Chapter 6 is the final chapter of the research which includes answers to the research questions as well as a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I highlight the literature that has guided my writing and has provided a historical background to my study. This chapter is made up of three parts:

- The first part looks at an overall summary of the literature, used in the entire study, separated into overarching themes.
- The second part is a history of 'Jazz and the struggle – 1652 to 1994' which chronicles the development of South African Jazz and its association with social issues throughout.
- The third part is 'The 1994 moment' which discusses the significance of this moment and how social sentiment was articulated in the jazz community.

2.2 Conceptual framework

In this segment, I highlight the breadth of referenced literature used to inform and ground my study conceptually. The search for literature was informed by three overarching factors:

1. A required understanding of the socio-historical contexts of South African Jazz. Three landmark texts in South African Jazz historiography have informed my understanding of the pre-democratic era: *Soweto Blues* (Gwen Ansell), *Marabi Nights* (Christopher Ballantine) and *In Township Tonight!* (David Coplan). A primary focus of these works is to place jazz within its wider social context, which makes them a strong reference point because they are engaged in a similar inquiry to my study, albeit at a different time. A thorough engagement with these texts has provided a historical grounding and a basis on which to connect the current moment to a past that very much informs its present. In addition, the secondary component of my study is looking into comparisons between the current moment and the pre-democratic eras, concerning jazz and the nature of its social engagement.

2. A secondary marker in the pursuit of relevant literature was guided by the interview subjects through their expressed themes. Through a thematic ranking system based on the frequency of mentions, I was directed to literature that I had not necessarily anticipated before conducting the interviews. One of these unexpected themes I discovered was ‘Identity’. It was not imagined by me at the early stages of my study but through my

research, I found that ideas around identity have a long-standing legacy in the history of South African jazz.

3. Lastly, a broad base of literature was looking into the democratic moment. I engaged with politically-inclined texts as well as works that could highlight prevailing social sentiments on this significant moment in South Africa's history.

2.2.1 History of South African jazz engagement with social context pre-democracy

To adequately interrogate the legacy of awareness and engagement of South African Jazz with significant socio-political currents required a critical engagement with studies of this nature which place a greater emphasis on the pre-democratic era. The 'big three' texts, mentioned before, provided the basis on which to frame my understanding of South African Jazz and the socio-political climates throughout South Africa's history – reaching as far back as 1652. These substantive works are well-researched texts by credible researchers – one sees citations of these texts in almost all writing about South African Jazz since their first published editions. Outside of these works were readings of studies and papers which delve into greater detail about specific subjects in pre-democratic South Africa. For instance, studies based on South African exile musicians furthered my understanding of this phenomenon in South African jazz history. Studies such as Salim Washington's *Exiles/inxiles: differing axes of South African jazz during late apartheid* provide a comparison of musical output and conditions of musicians who chose to leave South Africa and those who remained. Two of Lindelwa Dalamba's studies about the exile period – one on the *King Kong* theatre production and the other on ambiguous solidarities of the

all-star band, the *Blue Notes.* A particular point of interest in the Dalamba (2013) study on the *King Kong* production was about how, after several denied applications to leave the country, were curiously granted passports by the apartheid government to travel to Britain in 1961. The Allen (1993) study on the history and legacy of *Kwela* music provided an understanding of a music that managed to break down apartheid barriers by attracting a white audience and young white musicians looking to learn and play this music in the 1950s. The Allen (1993) study also provides excerpts of in-person interviews with musicians who had first-hand lived experience of South Africa's first jazz style, *Marabi*. Studies such as Gilbert (2007) and The Medu Memorial Publication (2020) look into the politically-affiliated cultural groups *Amandla Cultural Ensemble, Mayibuye Cultural Ensemble and The Medu Art Ensemble* that operated as a 'cultural wing' of the African National Congress (ANC), by raising awareness about the oppressive apartheid regime – a time when it was realised that the arts could be used as a 'weapon of the struggle'. In being partial to direct quotes from interviews with musicians, the Douglas (2016) book on South African Jazz contains several interviews with jazz musicians who were active mostly during the pre-apartheid era. Other studies such as the Makhathini (2018) and Le Roux-Kemp (2014) are also referenced in my study.

2.2.2 Post-apartheid studies in South African jazz

Although the Ansell, Ballantine and Coplan works previously mentioned have updated editions that shed light on the post-apartheid era, I chose not to lean on these texts in engaging with the democratic era to avoid limiting my interrogation, by heavy-handed use of just three voices.

Using my own research instincts to tell the story, I looked to build my study into this period through a wide variety of sources, including books, academic studies, newspaper articles as well as my interpretation as guided by musical recordings recorded in this era.

Some notable academic papers which informed my understanding of this era are Carol Muller's (2019) study *Why Jazz?* – the closest theme and focus to my study which speaks about jazz in the democratic period with references to the past. I believe that my study supplements the Muller (2019) study in providing a more in-depth inquiry, which illustrates a greater complexity of South African jazz in the socio-political context. The study has nonetheless informed and enriched my study with valuable insight from a seasoned researcher with a commitment to South African Jazz history, and also includes accounts from musicians whom I have quoted in my study.

Nishlyn Ramanna's (2005) doctoral thesis on early democracy, entitled *Jazz as Discourse* was another study in which I found resonance – especially the chapter 'Jazz as political discourse'. A particularly memorable idea from this study is that the jazz construct can function as a 'fulfilment space' in which musicians can create an alternative reality as an expression of socio-political desires by symbolic demonstration. The Byerly (1998) paper on late apartheid / early democracy entitled *Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet: The Music Indaba of Late-Apartheid South Africa,* speaks about the transition into democracy through the lens of jazz expression, showing tangible parallels in various enunciations in jazz. Denis-Constant Martin's paper *Sounding the Cape, Music, Identity and Politics in South Africa* provides a comprehensive historical

engagement with the development of jazz in Cape Town specifically, with its unique social dynamics due to its early 'creolisation'. From this text, I used some ideas about identity expressions through music as well as some historical information previously not seen in other texts. Another Coplan text, his 2017 book *Last night at the Bassline*, paints a picture of a hopeful society "breathing the heavenly air of freedom" at the dawn of democracy (Coplan, 2017, p. 7), a story told through the microcosm of the Bassline jazz club, opened a few months after Nelson Mandela's inauguration in 1994.

2.2.3 Political studies, protest movements

I engaged with more politically-inclined studies, mostly for facts and figures centred in the 1994 moment as well as the legacy of apartheid in today's society. These studies provided information that supplemented the more music-focussed texts to provide a clearer picture of socio-political contexts. The Nattrass and Seekings (2001) article *Two Nations* speaks about the correlation between economic inequality and racial classification. Minty (1993), Henrard (2003) and Grundy (1995) provided information about the renouncement of apartheid policy in 1990, voting dates in 1994 and the new government that required consultation with the minority parties for major decisions. Shubin (2019) provided a figure for misappropriated 'state capture' funds. Habib (1997) speaks about the dawn of democracy and the origins of what has become a highly contentious idea, 'The Rainbow Nation'.

Protest movements in South Africa have been the major highlighters of social discontent that propel pertinent issues into public consciousness by attracting media attention. In South Africa in

the recent past, the #FeesMustFall student protest shed light on frustrations in the tertiary education system and called for free, fair, decolonised education. In addition to financial exclusion for previously-disadvantaged learners, the protests were concerned with the removal of colonial and apartheid signs and signifiers. These protests tie into feelings of subjugation because institutions of higher learning are functioning in a way that symbolically celebrates western hegemony, in a country nearly 30 years into democracy.

2.2.4 The Role and 'meaning' of music

Guided by the participants' accounts of the multiple roles of music in society, I looked for readings to deepen my understanding. The Gregory (1997) study called *The roles of music in Society* looks at the omnipresence of music in society, 'from the cradle to the grave' (Gregory, 1997, p. 124). Biko (2004) supports this idea, stating in his essay *Some African Cultural Concepts,* that music is an integral part of African culture. In looking to investigate the breadth of themes in a variety of areas, I searched for musical examples and supporting texts – interviews with artists about their rationale where the possible intention of the composer may be ambiguous.

Due to an inquiry on my part about the possible confusion of meaning in music which is largely instrumental, one of my interests was to read further about possible ambiguities in meaning and interpretation. In Weale's (2005) study *The Intention/Reception Project*, he makes a striking comparison of ambiguous meanings to the visual arts. He recounts a story in which visitors to an exhibition could only give insightful comments about the 'meaning' of art pieces once given an indication, found on the inscriptions attached to the artworks. In the Carr (2004) paper *Music,*

Meaning, and Emotion, he presents an interesting disjunct between intention and reception of a piece of music. He points to how a person may experience feelings of irritation while listening to 'hold music' while waiting to speak to someone on the phone – clearly intended to be happy music.

2.2.5 Postcolonial/Post-apartheid identity

This literature was an unexpected turn for me in my research, guided by answers from the interview participants. Most participants alluded to grappling with identity in their own work and observed the same in the work of contemporary composers; questions of how to assert their identities as well as the pressure of imposed identities, either as a lingering influence from the imperialist and apartheid regimes of pre-democratic South Africa or as western fetishised imposed identity constructions. An important paper, Afrin (2018), which distils Edward Said's theories about identity, has been a valuable resource in helping me understand and contextualise the complexities and development of postcolonial identity. A study about postcolonial literature by Dizayi (2017) also draws on ideas from Said as well as Fanon. An important insight from this paper is that: the search for identity is a defining characteristic of postcolonial states. An important work by writer and philosopher Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) examines the enduring legacies of imperialism which relate to my inquiries about post-apartheid legacy and its effects on identity. In my view, the marked prevalence of this sentiment among the interview participants is one of the signs of the pervasive legacy of our pre-democratic imperialist regimes. In addition to this, is the added complexity of identity in the specifically South African context. During apartheid, the strict divisions of people according to every

conceivable point of (especially racial and ethnic) difference, and separating these communities into separate designated living zones, has had the effect of limiting exposure to other race groups and has partly alienated people from one another. To get a better sense of the minority groups, I read studies on Indian and Coloured identity in post-apartheid South Africa. The Desai and Vahed (2012) on the Indian community and the Adhikari (2006) study on the Coloured community shed light on the marginalisation of these groups in South African collective identity.

2.2.6 Interviews

In most of my study, I am looking to foreground the composer/musician as a social commentator, and therefore I was partial to interview texts where I could get a sense of direct thoughts from the musicians themselves. I have used many long quotations as a way of preserving these thoughts without distortion from my interpretation and paraphrasing. These personal accounts, in my opinion, provide an inestimable value because they provide a manner of speaking which is untarnished by me as the researcher. An important archive was the *Ubuyile* series, – an eight-part audio series published in 2000 that chronicles South African Jazz and its development. Made up predominantly of interviews with musicians and people close to the jazz community, the series tells the story of South African Jazz – from *Marabi* to *Mbaqanga* to exile, to its socio-political engagements. Being a study about the perspectives of young composers, a like-for-like comparison of musicians now to their predecessors, enriched my study greatly. For the current-day composers, I looked for in-person YouTube interviews and other online print media to assist in understanding – from the musicians' perspective, their rationale and intentions and impetus

behind certain works. This gave me a stronger insight to interpret the meanings they ascribe to their works.

2.2.7 Current affairs and newspaper articles

With a closer look at the post-democratic moment, I made use of newspaper articles spanning a wide range of subject matter to gain an understanding of current affairs and dialogues. Some of the themes were: writings on jazz (events and interviews), decolonisation, identity politics, post-colonial issues in South Africa and the 'apartheid hangover'. Articles shedding light on specific issues like the 'Marikana massacre' also helped me with facts, figures and to contextualise ideas contained in the writing.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

I situate my study within the social-constructivist theoretical framework as this allows the participant subjects to define the outcomes of the study with subjective constructions of their realities – how *they* see and interpret their world (Gibbs, 2012). The nature of the study is interpretive as it is centred around gathering different viewpoints and constructions of the world through different processes of observation (Henning, 2004). Although a study of music, the research falls under the sociology of music stream of study in which there are "multiple,

constructed realities that are grounded in specific social contexts" instead of one objective reality (Bresler, 2008, p. 535). For these reasons, the research method used was qualitative and data was sourced from the personal accounts of the chosen participants. The primary data on which the study is based was drawn from individual social constructions that were communicated by the selected participants in semi-structured interviews. The data provided by participants is supplemented by supporting literature as a means of contextualising the viewpoints expressed, as well as providing a mode of interpreting the participant data.

3.2 Research design

The research took the form of a case study. According to Thomas and Myers (2017, p. 2), a "case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project". The case study method allows for the unique perspectives and context of each participant through extended narratives, and it emphasises the preservation of the individuality of every participant (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The act of extracting findings from individual perspectives and personal constructions of reality aligns the research to a constructivist research paradigm (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For further specificity, the study fits into the idea of social-constructivism because my research interrogates aspects of social phenomena, such as circumstances, situations and events that have been internalised, experienced and interpreted - and the possible effects of these phenomena on the

work of composers. Although phenomena may share a commonality among participants, interpretations may vary because an individual "develop[s] subjective meanings of their experiences" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). For instance, a white South African may have lived in pre-democratic South Africa and been aware of the system of apartheid but their personal lived experience of apartheid would be vastly different from that of a black South African living at the same time.

I base my conclusions from participant data on the understood context from which the outcomes emanate, taking into account the socio-political context of the participants (Creswell, 2014).

3.3 Selection of participants

The selection of participants in case studies is of great importance because case studies are used to represent and reflect the features of a broader population (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). My research is focused on five selected participants who were asked a series of predetermined, set questions. The responses were transcribed, analysed and compared. I made use of a purposive sampling method in the study by defining a list of criteria that the participants must fulfil to qualify to take part in the study (Tongco, 2007).

My criteria for the selection of participants were as follows:

- Young jazz composers under the age of 40 who have South African citizenship.

- The majority of their musical compositions must have been recorded/published after 1994.

- They must have a significant footprint in and recognition on the South African jazz landscape, by way of recognition through awards, festival appearances and international touring.

These criteria were aimed at selecting a sample made up of relevant voices in South African jazz – as confirmed by the industry. Although the study used purposive sampling, the identities of all participants are kept confidential and, hence, are not mentioned in the dissertation.

I also looked at ways of using elements of the diverse participant selection method to "achieve maximum variance along relevant dimensions" (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 300), ensuring that a diverse group of participants was selected. This consideration applies to my study because social issues affect people in different ways based on markers such as race and gender, and therefore when choosing a sample to speak about issues that are based on these differences, I was determined to ensure the sample included diversity in race and gender.

3.4 Data collection techniques

Qualitative interviews were used as the primary method of data collection for the study. The primary source of data for the study takes into account personal narratives, ideas and perspectives expressed by the subjects being interviewed (Warren, 2011).

The interviews were semi-structured and based on standard points of departure; however, most of the questions were open-ended to allow for elaborate explanations of opinions and perspectives. The interview process made allowance for the participants to speak without interruption and the questions were designed merely as signposts to guide the conversations between the researcher and participants.

Participants were each sent an email providing them with a short, outlined description of the study and what was required of them. On agreeing to take part and to be interviewed, the participants were asked to choose a convenient time for them to take part in the interview. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic person-to-person restrictions, the majority of the interviews were conducted through an online meeting platform. One of the interviews was conducted in person.

3.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Interpretations were based on the conveyed message of the conducted interviews (Warren, 2011). Full transcripts of the interviews were generated, analysed and interpreted, and conclusions were drawn from ideas expressed by the participants (Gibbs, 2012).

I looked for recurring themes by combining and cross-referencing themes from the various interviews. The study findings echo these themes raised by the participants by ranking the

importance of ideas based on the frequency of mentions. The process of interpreting data followed primarily the induction method, which is the "justification of a general explanation based on the accumulation of lots of particular, but similar, circumstances" (Gibbs, 2012, p. 6). Deduction was also used to explore the uncovered themes using external, additional information to support the findings (Creswell, 2014).

Careful attention was afforded to "learning the meaning that the participants hold about [a] problem or issue" (Creswell, 2014, p. 186) to best interpret the subjective realities of each participant. I applied the Tesch 8-step coding process (Creswell, 2014) to all transcripts from the interviews. The coding process follows the following eight steps:

1. Get a sense of the whole by reading through all transcripts.

2. Pick one study at random and consider the underlying meaning of what is being said.

3. Analyse the study and cluster common themes together.

4. Integrate themes to the data and abbreviate the themes as codes.

5. Combine similar themes into overarching categories.

6. Make abbreviated codes for the different categories.

7. Assemble the data based on the categories and analyse the data.

8. Recode the data if necessary.

This method of coding created a hierarchy of information based on the most frequently recurring themes in the different interviews. In the data findings discussion, I mostly align the order of mention to the frequency ranking, unless I felt it made more reading sense to switch the theme order around.

3.6 Data coding and analysis

In this segment, I highlight the themes picked up in the participant interviews. Using a data ranking system based on the frequency of mention, I have cross-referenced themes and combined similar themes. As the last step of data coding, I chose three overarching themes to conduct my discussion in the following chapters.

3.6.1 Major themes

- Music reflects society
- Direct social engagement
- Whether intentional or not, an artist/their work reflects society
- Titles chosen give an idea of the composers thinking at the time
- There are expectations of what a typical South African composer should be
- Personal experiences of injustice

- Music has multiple roles, not specific
- An artist has a responsibility to reflect on societal issues
- A major issue today is identity
- The individual vs society
- Meaning of music is subjective
- Pre-94 music was closely linked to politics
- South Africa is engaging more in political art today
- Anti-blackness
- Instrumental music is metaphoric/less direct in meaning and interpretation
- Music soon after 1994 was positive
- After 94, Apartheid became more covert
- The societal issues are always addressed, just the nature of the issues change

3.6.2 Structure of themes

From these cross-referenced themes, I have selected three overarching themes to conduct the discussion in the later chapters:

1. Music reflects society
2. Identity in post-apartheid South Africa
3. Composers as social spectators

3.7 Researcher bias

I am aware that as a researcher, also being a jazz composer living and working in South Africa, I approach the study with my own biases on the research subject matter. In light of this, I am conscious of a need to be reflexive, to mitigate against marred data interpretations due to my inherent bias. With this in mind, I have made efforts to widen my reflexivity. I consciously paid careful attention to my own ideas on the subjects discussed and where necessary, I declare these ideas and take ownership of the said ideas (Creswell, 2014). Wherever possible, I have opted for extended direct quotes from participants which constitute complete ideas, thereby reducing my influence on the interpretation of these ideas.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The participants of the study were sent a consent form that outlined the purpose and procedures of the study. It clearly stated the terms of engagement and fully disclosed how the collected information will be used. The study took into consideration ethical guidelines by detailing to the participants beforehand, what they would be agreeing to by taking part in the study and by ensuring that their information has been – and will be handled as agreed. The participants were involved in the study only after they provided the required consent and were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time during the process. Participants were provided with a copy of the interview transcript so that they could verify that the transcripts were a true representation of their views. They were also provided with details regarding the storage of their data. For this research, the data will be stored in the university library and may be used for further research (Gibbs, 2012).

Chapter 4: Jazz and the struggle – 1652 to 1994

In this segment, I will guide the reader through the history of South African Jazz, specifically looking at its legacy of engagement with social issues. This serves to provide a timeline that links South African Jazz to the social issues of different eras pre-democracy, and to contextualise our day and age in terms of its historical influences. By social, I am referring to shared conditions experienced by a group of people in a community, based on either external or self-determined principles. These can be chosen by an individual or they can be imposed, as is the case in South Africa's colonial history and later, the system of apartheid which separated people according to their racial classification. This chapter is also aimed at providing the insight to answer one of my secondary research questions:

"How has a democratic South Africa affected jazz composers' musical responses to issues of social importance?"

To adequately answer this question requires an engagement with existing literature that documents the social contexts in the jazz 'world' before democracy in 1994. In this chapter, I have drawn predominantly from three important texts: *Soweto Blues* (Gwen Ansell), *In Township Tonight!* (David Coplan) and *Marabi Nights* (Christopher Ballantine). These have provided invaluable insight into pre-democratic South African Jazz and the social and political backdrop

in which it existed and developed, reaching as far back as the arrival of the first European settlers in 1652.

As far back as the first settler communities arrived in South Africa, there has been a social response that is reflected in the music. In some instances, these responses were explicit and direct and in other instances indirect. Looking at a variety of factors, one can see the engagement nonetheless. I will be looking at the titles of songs, lyrical content and accounts from musicians as the basis for unpacking the story.

Until 1920

The arrival of the Dutch Settlers in what is now Cape Town in 1652, marked the beginning of slavery in South Africa. The Dutch brought with them slaves from various parts of Africa and South Asia (India and Indonesia). Musical talent in the slave was a valued commodity (Coplan, 2007).

"Slaves with musical talent commanded a high price, and the seventeenth-century governor of the Cape kept a slave orchestra" (Ansell, 2005, p. 12). The first black Africans to arrive in Cape Town were Xhosa-speaking people in 1830, brought in by the settlers to work on the docks (Coplan, 2007).

In another part of South Africa, the first missionary-led choir was formed in Lovedale in the Eastern Cape in the 1820s, giving Africans a western education in music (Ansell, 2005). The colonialist agenda was to 'civilise the natives', perceiving the indigenous culture and music as

primitive (Coplan, 2007). A social response in the music to this cultural marginalisation was that some of the African composers made a deliberate effort to compose traditional music, creating music that was 'Xhosa without distortion' (Ansell, 2005, p. 9). In light of political, social and economic subjugation, music was freedom – a means of asserting one's identity with pride (Coplan, 2007).

The influence of the thoroughfare of travellers using Cape Town as a pitstop had a profound impact on the lives of the inhabitant communities and their music. "Every new tune brought to Cape Town on the waves of European fashions and fads was soon learned and broadcast by these musicians" (Ansell, 2005, p. 13). A song that is still to this day a part of the annual Cape Town carnival repertoire, 'Daar kom die Alibama' can be traced back to a warship in the American civil war called 'The Alabama', which docked at the port of Cape Town to replenish supplies (Ansell, 2005).

It was common for the ships to travel with musical entertainers. The most influential of the visiting entertainment groups was Orpheus McAdoo and his American Jubilee Singers (Ballantine, 2012). The group travelled to South Africa four times in the late 1800s and toured around the country, traveling as far as Kimberly and Johannesburg (Ansell, 2005). The impact of this group on the black people of South Africa was long-lasting and is the beginning of an enduring love affair with black American culture. Initially impressed by their dress sense (Coplan, 2007), the admiration grew to become an appreciation of similar circumstances as oppressed people, as well "as a model of what 'Africans in America' could achieve" (Ballantine,

2012, p. 5). McAdoo himself in a letter wrote, “the native today is treated as badly as ever the slave was treated in Georgia” (Ansell, 2005, p. 15).

Due to an emergent mining industry and the increased use and need for cash, city life began and working-class communities coalesced around the mining sites – first in Kimberley and then in Johannesburg in the late 1800s (Coplan, 2007). The first of the pass laws were instituted in 1896 to regulate the movement of non-European workers. By 1904, there was a multicultural population of miners in the Transvaal of which only a quarter were South African (Coplan, 2007). Although still in the pre-apartheid era, separatist laws were in effect: In 1908, the early municipal laws prohibited whites from leasing accommodation to blacks, forcing them to live in the designated “Municipal Locations” (Coplan, 2007, p. 77). Choral music was a popular musical form and songs like ‘Umuntu Ontsundu Makabe Munye’ (‘Black People Unite’) became concert standards” (Coplan, 2007, p. 92).

In 1913, the Land Act was passed in South Africa, a law that reserved 87% of habitable land for white people (Coplan, 2007). The sentiment of black people is well captured in the first lines of Sol Plaatje’s book entitled *Native Life in South Africa:*

“Awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African Native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth” (The Journalist, 2016).

The law prompted an explicit response from composer R.T. Caluza, who composed a song that he called ‘iLand Act’. The words of the song:

We cry for our land

Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho

Unite!

We are mad over the Land Act

A terrible law that allows sojourners

To deny us our land

(Ansell, 2005, p. 21)

Ever socially aware in his compositions, Caluza even wrote a song entitled ‘Influenza’ in light of the Great flu of 1918 which killed thousands of Africans (Coplan, 2007).

With the world moving into recorded music in the early 1900s, “as soon as jazz went on record in America, in the early decades of the twentieth century, those wax impressions arrived in South Africa” (Ansell, 2005, p. 4). The arrival of ships was the first form of record shop where South Africans became familiar with the recent recordings from America.

1920-1930

In Johannesburg "by the early 1920s, there were more than 200,000 migrant mineworkers in the city" (Ansell, 2005, p. 18) – a multi-cultural mix of so-called "non-white" people from all around the country: Zulu, Shangane (coming from Portuguese East Africa), Sotho, Afrikaans-speaking Coloured and Chinese. Indians were also part of the community, running low-cost shops (Ansell, 2005).

Oppressive laws continued to weigh down on marginalised communities. In 1923, the Urban Areas Act was passed which mandated black workers to carry documents proving employment in the city without which they could not remain in the city (Ansell, 2005). Known otherwise as the Stallard Doctrine, it said "The Native should be allowed to enter the urban areas when he is willing to minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister" (Coplan, 2007, pp. 110-111).

In 1925, the African National Congress (ANC), having recently changed its name from the 'Native National Congress', adopted the anthem 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika' (God Bless Africa). Composed in 1897 by Enoch Sontonga, whilst a teacher at a Methodist mission school in Johannesburg, the song brought together European-influenced musical inflections and African-inspired spiritual themes in the lyrics (Coplan, 2007). For a political party to adopt a salvation prayer as their anthem shows the dire circumstances of the black population of the time.

Looking to create space to empower black lives, the Bantu Men's Social Centre was formed by, among others, Sol Plaatje – also a founding member of the ANC (Coplan, 2007). Their mission

in creating the space was to "mould native character and enlarge native outlook" (Ansell, 2005, p.23). This centre went on to become a rehearsal and performance space for the new music developing at the time.

The first 'jazz' of South Africa was brewing in the 1920s. Alto saxophonist Ntemi Piliso said, "we didn't call it jazz at the time. We called it marabi" (Ansell, 2005, p. 30). Marabi was a music of the ghettos and was associated with a hedonistic lifestyle of the impoverished communities (Ballantine, 2012). Marabi functioned as a form of escapism – to wilfully forget the harsh realities of black life, and as a form of identity expression (Allen, 1993).

Musician Wison Silgee remembers the Marabi era:
"Actually, Marabi was a relaxation, getting out of boredom and all that. You felt, 'I should be happy at some stage in my life.' There was dancing, rollicking. It was all happiness, even when you have troubles in the heart, you get out having forgotten about them. There was happiness and mixing of people" (Allen, 1993, p. 13).

Records show that ideas around using music to improve social conditions were already in the public consciousness. In 1929, at the first conference of the South African Bantu Board of Music, it was asked, "How could this heavenly gift…best be used for the glory of God and the amelioration of our social and cultural conditions?" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 54).

The Industrial Commercial Workers Union (ICU) developed into a black protest movement in the 1920s and often hired jazz bands as entertainment for their functions. In a particular rally in 1929, 4000 demonstrators took to the streets to sing 'The Red Flag' – the ICU anthem, accompanied by a jazz band (Ballantine, 2012).

1930-1940

Living conditions for black people, many of whom were living in slums, had worsened by 1930. In a report on the living conditions in the slums, it was discovered that each person was, on average, living in a total living space of 20 square meters (Coplan, 2007). "Through the 1930s, the authorities took steps to clear the racially mixed slums of the city" (Ansell, 2005, p. 36).

Conversations around black social progress continued. In an article for *Umteteli we Bantu (Mouthpiece of the People)* – a black newspaper, an opinion piece spoke about the possibilities of music as a means to improve the conditions of the black population. "[D]eveloping our music and singing to the white man will do much better than some of the methods adopted in solving the intricate Bantu problem in South Africa" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 56).

In addition, were conversations about cultural preservation in music. In 1931, The South African Bantu Board of Music declared that one of its aims was "to undertake research work into Bantu Music, and to collect for preservation, folksongs in their original form" (Ballantine, 2012, pp. 30-31).

With the introduction of gramophones to the South African market, there was greater access to the early swing music from America. This exposure led to a burst of musical bands modelling their music and band names on their American counterparts (Ballantine, 2012). “People of colour in the United States…were ‘Africans in America’; therefore their achievements were a source of very great encouragement to ‘Africans in Africa’” (Ballantine, 2012, p. 20).

Gallo record company set up a recording studio in Johannesburg in 1932, the creative centre of marabi – the early jazz of South Africa (Ansell, 2005). This music of the black communities was closely linked to shebeens, which were venues where black people could congregate, drink and enjoy musical entertainment. Thought to have originated in Cape Town, the word ‘shebeen’ came to describe the black-owned beer halls usually run by women – the ‘shebeen queens’ (Coplan, 2007). Marabi on the one hand provided entertainment and temporary relief from the mires of black life. On the other hand, it brought people together, creating a space in which people could engage in meaningful conversations about socio-politics (Ansell, 2005, p. 38).

Although the composition ‘Skokiaan’ (generic term for an unknown alcoholic concoction), composed by August Musarugwa, was released in 1947, it captured the sound and world of marabi. In the composer’s own words, “Marabi: that was the environment…you get there, you pay your ten cents, you get your share of whatever concoction is there and you dance” (Ansell, 2005, p. 38).

In reaction to this successful, relatively autonomous black enterprise, authorities found ways to intimidate and stamp their authority. Police raids into the shebeens were commonplace. The rationale behind the song ‘Sip and Fly’ by founder of the African Jazz Pioneers, Ntemi Piliso, paints the picture. In his own words:

“I composed a song called ‘Sip and Fly’. You see, the aunties used to get on top of the hill and brew skokiaan. And then you go up as a customer. And the cops are downstairs. Their cars can’t go up. So they had to foot it and negotiate that steep hill. Meanwhile, you are getting down the other side. So you sip – and you fly!” (Ansell, 2005, pp. 37-38).

Another song composed speaking directly about the incessant police raids was a song by the Merry Blackbirds:

Nank’ amaphoyisa
azosibopha
Asbophel’ugologo
(Here are the policemen
they are going to arrest us
They are going to arrest us for processing alcohol)

(Ballantine, 2012, p. 88)

In addition to the restrictive laws imposed by the government, white musicians who felt threatened by their black counterparts and looking to dominate access to performance engagements, motivated for the banning of black musicians in 'white' establishments. The Liquor Amendment Act of 1934 imposed stricter laws on black musicians, barring their presence at these establishments unless as help staff (Ansell, 2005; Ballantine, 2012). The government was totalitarian in its subjugation of black people's lives. In 1937, the Native Laws Amendment Act took away the rights of black people to sell alcohol in their own establishments (Ansell, 2005). "This grim new environment, not just the removals, killed marabi" (Ansell, p. 37). By the end of the 1930s, "Blacks could not be registered as professional musicians; the classification they fell under was either 'day labourer' or 'vagrant'" (Ansell, 2005, p. 52).

1940-1950

Despite the tightening of labour restrictions and movement in the city for black people, the 1940s were a time of cultural growth and development in the townships (Ansell, 2005). Developments were also apparent in jazz music, which was changing to suit the new attitudes and aspirations. Because marabi was seen as music of the shebeens, associated with an indulgent lifestyle, a new form developed in the 1940s which came to be known as *mbaqanga* (an isiZulu word meaning 'stiff-porridge') (Ansell, 2005). Popular pianist and composer Gideon Nxumalo hosted a radio show for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) called *This is African Jazz* and it is thought that he popularised the term 'Mbaqanga' (Ansell, 2005). With a marked sense of affirming identity, the use of a combination of indigenous influences incorporated into the jazz sound developed the new style (Ballantine, 2012).

The strive for excellence in black bands granted them access to performances in white-designated establishments. Walter Nhlapo wrote in 1941 that "these European night clubs are serving as a factor leading to a better South Africa" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 59). It was seen as a gesture of acceptance of black people, thereby promoting the cause of empowering the black population (Ballantine, 2012). For some black people, the favourable gaze of whites was celebrated. After a successful run for white audiences by a black band, the *Pitch Black Follies*, critic Herbert Dhlomo said, "You have done more for your people during these two weeks than many politicians have done for years… I maintain that art can, is and will continue to play a great part in solving our problems" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 60). This reasoning was borne out of an impression that the white man was racist because he was ignorant, and so black music could make a moral plea to their conscience (Ballantine, 2012).

The 1940s can also be characterised as a time of growing black nationalism in the arts. In music as well as the visual arts, artists were consciously looking to incorporate African elements into their art (Ansell, 2005) – following the philosophy of "New Africanism" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 73). A statement in the forging of an African identity was the formation of the Synco Music Schools by pianist and composer, Wilfred Sentso. The school had "branches in several townships and launched the first black music magazine 'African Sunrise' publishing the sheet music of local compositions" (Ansell, 2005, p. 47). This can be understood as a social response aimed at achieving a sense of pride in one's identity as well as a form of solidarity with *Africanness*. Championing a sense of pride amongst black South African musicians, Sentso exclaimed, "We

can do it here too" comparing South African musicians to the popular black American musicians of the time (Ballantine, 2012, p. 19). Other enunciations of assertive Africanness could be seen in performances by bands such as the *Bantu Revue Follies*. "Their programmes included sketches, drama, comedy and satire, also sentimental songs, jazz, madrigals and ditties – all of them in the native vernacular" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 77). The pianist in this show wore a loincloth while playing the piano. Although there was a noticeable shift in consciousness, some felt it was not enough. Walter Nhlapo wrote in 1941, "We have scores upon scores of daily acts that deserve dramatisation but are passed over" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 78).

In 1943, The ANC staged a vaudeville production, *The Progress of a Race*, written by Madie Hall-Xuma, wife of then-president of the ANC, Dr. A.B. Xuma. The musical component was performed by the popular jazz band, *The Merry Blackbirds.* Although the association could be viewed as political solidarity, the leader of the band, Peter Rezant said, "I had no political leanings in any way. Anyway, I think that was also the success of the band. I didn't discuss politics with them – the only thing I was interested in was to entertain them" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 70). Avoiding unwanted attention from the authorities, Rezant was cautious of political engagement for himself and his band members because he thought it could hamper the band's success (Ballantine, 2012). Other musicians had a contrary view and openly expressed their political solidarities. Leading up to an ANC protest event, *The Rhythm Kings* – a reputable jazz band who had offered their music services for free, issued a statement in solidarity with the movement: "If there ever was a time when every man and woman of our race should stand shoulder to shoulder this is the time." (Ballantine, 2012, p. 72).

On 24 February in 1944, twelve people met for a significant meeting. Among the attendees were Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu and the agenda for the meeting was the 'formation of the ANC Youth League' (Ballantine, 2012). Once formed, the Youth League adopted the slogan "a people's free society where racial oppression and persecution will be outlawed" (Ansell, 2005, p. 58). Their formation was a "consolidation of New Africanism" (Allen, 1993, p. 223) – an ideology that was mirrored in "social and political identity through music" (Allen, 1993, p. 223).

Perhaps not seen as separate from 'Africanness', the fascination with black American culture continued. The culture and fashion of the day were heavily influenced by Americans. Musician and writer Todd Matshikiza wrote, "Africa was drunk with American and English works" (Ansell, 2005, p. 47).

Trombonist and composer, Jonas Gwangwa said:

"Our people were listening to American records and seeing from the movies what people were doing out there – the Cab Calloways, the Duke Ellingtons… The Merry Blackbirds, the Jazz Maniacs were some of those disciplined bands, reading music, costumed and all that like any other big band in the US at the time" (Ansell, 2005, p. 47).

Some believed the attraction to American cultural works may have been due to the remarkable quality of the published works which was impossible to overlook.

Pianist Henry February said:

“Teddy Wilson in the late 40s. That's the first time I heard jazz - well, I didn't even know such a term as jazz. Didn't know what it was. But when I heard that kind of piano playing, I was completely unconscious. As if I’d been hit… I used to sit at home and think how the hell did these people do a thing like that? How can they be so clever as to be able to be improvising (sic) around?” (Ansell, 2005, p. 50).

The parallels of the black, marginalised social experience in both America and South Africa are easily identifiable. Along with the admiration of the music, black people in South Africa felt a sympathetic closeness to black America based on similar circumstances. Poet Don Mattera said:

“It's not just the jazz music, it's coupled with history, it's coupled with pain, it's coupled with all the hopes and aspirations of the native American people, of the African American people. We have songs like ‘The freedom train’… Now the freedom train when it came to South Africa, it meant to us (sic) something because we too had been suffering under subjugation, a colonial and imperial subjugation and it was our hope and our dreams to be liberated” (Mattera, 2000/2021).

Inspired by American cinema, an aspirational story about rural migration into the big city, *Jim comes to Joburg,* starring jazz singer Dolly Rathebe was released in 1949 (Ansell, 2005). "At the 1949 Durban première of the first commercial film about urban Africans, *Jim Comes to Joburg,* its star, Dolly Rathebe, was greeted by a crowd shouting the ANC Defiance Campaign slogan, 'Mayibuye iAfrika' ('Come Back, Africa!')" (Coplan, 2007, p. 204).

Conditions were becoming more difficult for black life. Whites, primarily invested in their self-interest, picked the blacks as an easy target and agitated for the removal of the remaining 'black spots' in the cities (Coplan, 2007). With an amendment of the Urban Areas Act in 1945, music performance in the cities without white supervision was not considered "gainful employment" (Coplan, 2007, p. 201).

In 1948, the Afrikaner National Party won the vote, took power and "South Africa passed from British colonialism to Afrikaner nationalism in the form of apartheid" (Gule 2020, p. 47). After the elections, the National Party enacted its system of racial segregation in line with its campaign promises (Byrd, 2020). Lucky Michaels, a jazz club owner in the 1970s, remembers the transition to apartheid in the 1940s-1950s:

"I don't even think that at that time there was a differentiation between Coloured, Indian, Black. Those people at that time used to live together. They were thrown into one pot. They were non-whites and they were thrown into the same pot…My father was running the restaurant and my

mother was running the shebeen. It was in 47. The Group Areas act only came in 51. So, obviously my father lost the restaurant in 51" (Michaels, 2000/2021).

The following years saw the enforcement of strict legislation which demonstrably declared South Africa as "a white man's country" (Ansell, 2005, p. 61).

1950-1960

A landmark apartheid legislation was The Group Areas Act of 1950. It had the biggest effect on urban black music with the removal of black people from mixed neighbourhoods (Ballantine, 2012). Imaginably a time of growing frustration in black communities, the 1950s also marked the first traces of a perception that the arts could be used as a political weapon (Ballantine, 2012). Written in 1949, H.I.E Dhlomo says:

"How can the African assert himself and influence others? [I]n a country where he has no direct representation in the councils of state and where there are discriminatory and muzzling laws against him, the political weapon has not been as effective as it might have been under a different setup…It seems to us that there is one weapon that the African has not organised and used effectively. And that is the weapon offered by the arts – painting, music and literature" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 128).

Due to the delayed enforcement of the Group Areas Act in Sophiatown – a western suburb of Johannesburg, a vibrant and liberal multicultural area had emerged where people of colour enjoyed a unique quality of life, at odds with the world outside its borders (Coplan, 2007). Jurgen Schadeberg, a German immigrant photographer who worked for the popular black culture magazine *Drum,* said:

"Sophiatown was like a Mediterranean city – full of life and excitement; colonial Johannesburg was boring and dull… very much behind the times. You couldn't even get a decent cup of coffee in Johannesburg. Whereas Sophiatown Africans were modern people" (Ansell, 2005, p. 64).

Poet, Don Mattera who lived in Sophiatown in these years recalls the music life:

"Sophiatown represented the antithesis of what the Boers wanted. Apartheid Calvinistic music, a Calvinistic history, Calvinistic norms, Calvinistic values, and here comes this jazz by these niggas. And here comes this sound from Sophiatown by these darkies and this was too much for these people. They had to do away with it. But they thought that when they would destroy, they would destroy the music as well, they would destroy the culture as well, they would destroy our memory, but memory is a weapon" (Mattera, 2000/2021).

Beginning in February 1955 (Coplan, 2007), forced removals brought an end to the idyllic life of Sophiatown, with the removal of non-white communities from the cities. The deceptively jovial-sounding song composed by Strike Vilakazi, 'Meadowlands', describes the removals out of the

city and into the township neighbourhood of Meadowlands (Ansell, 2005). A line from the song "'*Ons dak nie, ons phola hie'* (We're not leaving, we're staying right here') was a slogan painted on every wall before the lorries and bulldozers moved into Sophiatown" (Ansell, 2005, p. 80). Another song by the *Sun Valley Sisters* was called 'Bye Bye Sophiatown' (Coplan, 2007).

'Meadowlands' became a protest song for Sophiatown residents. In an interview with Bra Luke, a former Sophiatown resident said about resistance to the removals, "Toe sing ons daai song wat ou Strike ge-compose het (We sang the song that Strike had composed)" (Ansell, 2005, p. 80).

Among its many effects, forced removals broke up the black family unit because, increasingly, men were forced to become migrant labourers with no financially viable industries available in the townships and rural areas to which they were relegated. One of the most successful bands of the 1950s era, the *Manhattan Brothers,* directly engaged with the social issues of the time. Out of 105 titles they released, "almost half (51) engage directly or indirectly with the migrant-labour system" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 172). Songs on migrants as wanderers, their pain, the pain of their families and the traumas of separation (Ballantine, 2012). Along with mournful love songs there were also songs that highlighted "the calamitous effects of migrancy on the economic infrastructure and the socio-cultural fabric of the black population" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 177).

The influence of American (especially black-American) culture on all spheres of black life was ever-present in the 1950s. Conducting interviews at the Bantu Men's Social Centre on the interests of their potential audience, a patron was recorded saying, "Give us jazz and film stars,

man! We want Duke, Satchmos and hot dames. Yes, brother, anything American" (Ansell, 2005, p. 65).

"We used to emulate the Americans. We speak with the American accent. All the fashions were American. It used to be the Buicks, open coupès and you have to wear that fashionable hat and a double-breasted jacket and so forth." (Piliso, 2000/2021)

Oftentimes the measure of a band's proficiency was how closely they could replicate the American recordings (Ballantine, 2012). This fascination is captured by Hugh Masekela:

"So our lifestyle – if you're in a European situation and you're African, what lifestyle can you follow? What example is there? The only example of how to exist as an African in a European lifestyle is to, ah, emulate the people that already mastered it and those were the Americans." (Ballantine, 2012, p. 123)

This sentiment was not ubiquitous. A writer for the black publication *Bantu World* wrote, "the black man in South Africa can't think for himself. Instead he mimics" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 124). The culture of American emulation did not always yield positive outcomes. According to Peter Rezant, who was on tour with the *Manhattan Brothers* for the *King Kong* production in London, he said the Manhattans "went to an agency to try and get a contract. And the agency said, 'Well let me hear what you've got' and they started singing. He says 'Well, the Americans you can't beat: the Americans are here every, every year and they sing this type of stuff and they are well

presented. You can't go and compete with them; you haven't got accompaniment in the first place and things like that. But if you have got something original of your own, that um, nobody can compete with you, I've got a job for you" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 126).

The *King Kong* production, dubbed as an 'all-African jazz opera', was hugely successful in South Africa and led to the first major international tour by an all-black cast in 1961 (Dalamba, 2013). The show had a profound impact on white people within South Africa who were not necessarily supporters of the apartheid government. Although not overtly political, "it did show something of the hardships, violence, and frustration of African township life" (Coplan, 2007, p. 215). The show's conception and development at Dorkay house (a rehearsal, teaching and performance space in Johannesburg's city centre) in collaboration with a partly white production team was a challenge due to the segregation laws and was, as a complete product, a triumph against apartheid and also symbolised the possibility of a more integrated society. The white producer Leon Gluckman said of the production, "any white person who has seen the show will think twice now before he pushes an African out of the way on a street corner. It's not politics, but a question of human relations" (Coplan, 2007, p. 215).

"Progressive whites regarded it as a step towards our dynamic culture of the future. It was not only the show itself that came like a breath of mountain air in the stodgy South Africa of 1959, but also the stimulation of contact between young people of different colours that took place in a series of parties surrounding *King Kong*" (Ansell, 2005, p. 104). As an achievement of social justice, the strive for excellence by musicians with little else in terms of social privilege paid

dividends in developing a mixed liberal audience in the 1950s – in so doing creating more performance opportunities (Coplan, 2007). The admiration by white people of *kwela* music – an offshoot of marabi played mostly on pennywhistle, saw many young people looking for private pennywhistle lessons and it was reported that, on occasion, well-known songs in the kwela repertoire could be heard being played by young, white buskers (Allen, 1993).

"One of the things that infuriated Verwoerd and the architects of Apartheid was that there was a great mutual admiration for each other and that the white people were more and more by the 50s; our entertainment was a thing for them" (Masekela, 2000/2021).

Jazz for many has always been seen as a way of breaking down barriers. Even as a construct unto itself, aspects of jazz and its performance promote social cohesion. Cape Town pianist Tony Schilder says:

"There were few of us who decided there should be no apartheid in music. You can go anywhere in the world and play music. You don't have to speak the language, you can just say to the guy 'Green Dolphin Street', and you're talking" (Ansell, 2005, p. 72).

Regardless of progress in the liberation struggle, authorities showed no mercy and police brutality was an inescapable part of black life. Musicians were not spared. Here are some accounts from popular musicians living in this time:

Speaking about being accosted by the police, trumpeter Banzi Bangani said "we played until our lips were swollen up and cracked and bleeding… until we got off. And they said, *'Jah! Jele spiel mooi, jele kaffirs"* (Ansell, 2005, p. 74).

Jonas Gwangwa:

Sometimes you were invited to come and play in the suburbs and the people have to apply to the police station – they give you a piece of paper to say that you have been performing. But sometimes this *boere* boys they just get so mean – they take it from you and say, 'Now you don't have it! *Waar vanaf kom jy?* (So where do you come from?)' Otherwise they would make you perform in the middle of the night. In the middle of the street, you'd be tap-dancing at 3am!" (Ansell, 2005, p. 74).

Dolly Rathebe:

"One night I just walked across the street to go to sleep, there is a police van speeding round the corner. I was arrested, and when I tried to explain to them about the film and that I am Dolly Rathebe, they just said No! Fuck that! And took me to jail. The next morning the whole crew was looking for me, but I managed to alert them from jail. Later the newspaper had a headline: 'First Bantu Film Star Arrested for Night Pass'. By the way, I was a Bantu then" (Ansell, 2005, p. 75).

Pianist Chris McGregor, who illegally performed with black musicians, speaks about a cat and mouse with the authorities. The apartheid police would attend performances and although they were tempted to interrupt proceedings, they were also cautious about sparking riots by disgruntled fans. While the police discussed a possible course of action after the show, the band would rush out and catch the bus to their next performance. According to McGregor, "[w]e had to become specialists in dodging and camouflage" (Martin, 2013, p. 260).

"By the end of the 1950s, many creative black South Africans had despaired of peaceful change. They planned to leave or increased the pace of a reckless lifestyle that might offer other exits" (Ansell, 2005, p. 104).

1960-1970

"On Monday 21st March 1960, 69 people were killed and 186 wounded in the township of Sharpeville outside Johannesburg, when police opened fire on an unarmed crowd of Pan-African Congress demonstrators against pass laws" (Ansell, 2005, p. 108). After rejecting several applications for the *King Kong* cast to travel abroad, their eventual travel permission to Britain was, as suggested by Dalamba (2013), a way to gain favourable attention for the apartheid state to balance the damaging international press resulting from the Sharpeville massacre.

In 1962, Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment. In solidarity, musicians participated in benefit concerts around the country to oppose the Rivonia trial (Ansell, 2005). Liberation

movements were banned and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) formed its ethnically-based radio stations (Ballantine, 2012).

The next few decades were to be the darkest days of apartheid - the apartheid state, threatened by the 'winds of change' blowing in neighbouring post-colonial African states, appointed Hendrik Verwoerd as prime minister - previously the minister of native affairs (Coplan, 2007). Extending the ideals of the Group Areas Act, non-white communities were separated even further - black people were separated and classified according to their language groups (Coplan, 2007). Enforcing the strategy of 'divide-and-rule' and possibly, in part, to curb the appeal of black music to white audiences, black singers were not allowed to sing in English (Coplan, 2007). Pursuant to this was the incorporation of the Separate Amenities and Community Development Act which declared that "there were to be no further performances of any type before mixed audiences without special permission" (Ansell, 2005, p. 113). A composition by Kippie Moeketsi, entitled 'Scullery Department' was possibly describing a situation in which black musicians would perform for white patrons but would only be allowed to take their meals in the kitchen, out of sight (Ansell, 2005).

Some songs were explicit in their protest. The composer of several protest songs, Vuyisile Mini – who was eventually killed by the apartheid regime (Mtshali & Hlongwane, 2014; Le Roux-Kemp, 2014), wrote a song overtly critical of Hendrik Verwoerd, the former minister of native affairs infamously known as the 'architect of Apartheid'.

“Verwoerd pasopa

Naants’indod’emnyama

(Look out, Verwoerd, the Black people are coming)”

(Ansell, 2005, p. 116)

The following accounts from musicians illustrate the repression they experienced:

Johnny Mekoa (trumpeter, composer):

“I think that was end of 1966, or the beginning of 1967, black musicians were banned from performing in white-licensed places and you know how black musicians were smuggled into the clubs. They would change your name to play for whites, I remember mine was Johnny Keen” (Mekoa, 2000/2021).

Duke Ngcukana (trumpeter):

“By the end in Cape Town there was only one club that would accommodate us as audience as well as musicians. And I remember in one place Winston Mankunku had to change his name to Winston Mann because as a black man they wouldn't allow him. You had to change your name and be somebody else. It was very sad” (Ansell, 2005, p. 114).

Tony Schilder (pianist, composer):

“When I played for the SABC, and it was on radio so nobody could see me, I don’t think Schilder sounds like a ‘coloured’ name but they still changed my name. They changed my name – like to Peter Evans so I said listen, ‘What difference does it make what my name is? I'm an artist - You play my music or you don’t play it! Sunday morning 7 o'clock for an hour coloured artists could go on the radio” (Schilder, 2000/2021).

Censorship was in full-effect in the 1960s when the government withheld or destroyed any music or cultural expression which they deemed damaging to the image of South Africa they were protecting (Ansell, 2005). Radio Bantu, a group of black-language stations designed to cater to the black population but still regulated by the apartheid government, limited the broadcast of any perceived dissent in the content. In a composition by H.J.M Masiza, ‘Vukani Mawethu', “the composer scolds his people for being the ‘footstool’ (*isenabo*) of all nations” (Coplan, 2007, p. 144) The song was given more airplay after the Sharpeville massacre and, allegedly because it was airing too often, it was banned (Ansell, 2005). Even when the censorship officers did not understand a particular title, it could be outlawed. One such recording was the Abdullah Ibrahim recording of a Thelonious Monk composition, ‘Crepuscule for Nellie’. It is believed that one of the censorship officers believed the title had sexual connotations and was therefore banned (Ansell, 2005).

A seminal composition in the South African Jazz canon, ‘Yakhal’inkomo’ (The bellowing bull) by saxophonist Winston Mankunku Ngozi was released in 1968. Perhaps to deflect the attention

of the censorship authorities, the sleeve notes spoke of the piece as a tribute to the recently deceased American saxophonist extraordinaire, John Coltrane. However, in Mankunku's own words reflecting on the piece and the time:

"Things were tough then – but don't ask me about all of that, I don't want to discuss it. You had to have a pass; you got thrown out; the police would stop you, you know? I was about 22, I threw my pass away; wouldn't carry it. We had it tough. I was always being arrested and a lot of my friends and I thought it was so tough for black people and put that into the song. So it was *The Bellowing Bull:* for the black man's pain. And a lot of people would come up to me and say quietly: Don't worry bra. We understand what you are playing about" (Ansell, 2005, p. 132).

Another composition released around this time which speaks to the hardship of the time called 'Inhlupheko' (Distress), was written by another prominent saxophonist, Duke Makasi. Trumpeter Dennis Mpale shares his impressions about this song:

"Inhlupheko was Duke's tune, a great tune. It's hard to listen to it and not want to cry. It was a tune for all the beautiful things we wanted to do, the beautiful music we wanted to make, and the situation that didn't let you and what the situation was doing to us as human beings" (Ansell, 2005, p. 136).

In a quest for totalitarian control, the government enforced a multi-pronged strategy by restricting cultural expression of the non-white communities and any expression which they

deemed to be critical of the state. The closing down of performance venues and places that housed any government-opposed political discussions were replaced by government propaganda designed to portray the government in a positive light (Ansell, 2005). By the end of the 1960s these conditions, combined with a lack of venues for black musicians to perform, led musicians to seek homes elsewhere, in exile (Ballantine, 2012).

1970-1980

The 1970s saw a rise in militancy from the black population, contending with the sustained repression inflicted by the apartheid state. This militancy and overt confrontation was a shared sentiment in the arts, whether in solidarity or as a cultural wing of the liberation struggle (Ansell, 2005). A major contributing factor to this overtly political stance was the nationwide student protests in 1976 (Gule, 2020).

"Outside South Africa's borders, independence was being won by other African nations. The winds of change were blowing. The African National Congress now had an army, *Mkhonto we Sizwe,* and in 1967, it helped fight for independence in Zimbabwe" (Makurube, 2000/2021). Several African states had recently gained their independence from their colonisers and the perceived freedom fuelled a sense of urgency in black South Africans, which threatened the authorities. In addition, the African National Congress had set up offices, military training camps and refugee asylums in some African states. The ANC successfully set up *Radio Freedom* in Zambia from which they could transmit uncensored content (Ansell, 2005). In 1977, a historic pan-African arts festival, called Festac (Festival of Arts and Culture), was staged in Nigeria. Few

artists living in South Africa were allowed to attend but there was a South African contingent of performers living in exile who made it to perform. Realising the potential of art to be used as a weapon of the struggle, the ANC, shortly after Festac, formed the cultural group *Amandla,* led by trombonist Jonas Gwangwa (Ansell, 2005; Gilbert, 2007).

Playwright Maishe Maponya speaks about the Festac festival:

"It was seen to be the biggest festival. It still was the biggest festival on the continent but it brought all black people together and it had an objective of actually raising the consciousness of the African people and you will also remember that it was in 1977, we'd just come out of 76, the uprisings and also that the black consciousness in America was very, very strong and most of the countries, you know were fighting for their liberation and Festac became that convergence of all those minds that were saying we would want to do it for ourselves." (Maponya, 2000/2021)

The character of the arts was influenced by the climate of militant protest. Artist Sydney Selepe recalls, "When I was a kid, if it was not political, it was not art" (Ansell, 2005, p. 144). Reinforcing this idea, writer Dikobe wa Mogale said, "There is a point at which 'artistic neutrality' becomes a tool of the status quo by virtue of its silence in the face of injustice" (Ansell, 2005, p. 193). The political stance adopted by musicians was in some part influenced by the youth protest movements. Guitarist for the band Sakhile, Menyatso Mathole said, "[i]t became stronger because of the resistance of the youth in the 70s. We wanted to express ourselves musically as artists" (Mathole, 2000/2021). It was not, however, a blanket

sentiment shared by all musicians. The first incarnation of Malombo, led by Philip Tabane, broke up because of differing positions amongst band members about how politically-aligned their music *should* be (Coplan, 2007).

The apartheid regime continued viciously, imposing restrictions on cultural activities which had any semblance of political commentary. Amidst these stifling conditions, performance spaces still found a way to open arising from a desperate need for spaces of creative expression. Two important spaces were the Pelican Jazz Club in Orlando, Soweto opened in 1972, and the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, which opened in 1976 (Ansell, 2005).

The tradition of coded signifiers and deceptive titles continued. Any concerted scrutiny reveals that, for the most part, the culture was informed by the socio-political – a sign of a time when the arts and society at large were deeply engaged in politics. Rashid Vally set up a jazz record label and called it *Mandla*. It is believed that "the name Mandla was a slight variation (for security reasons) of the word Amandla" which is a slogan used to this day by the ANC (Ansell, 2005, p. 151).

In 1975, Dennis Mpale and Kippie Moeketsi made an album called *Our Boys Are Doing It,* a title influenced by Hugh Masekela's recently released album *The Boy's Doin' It* in America. Dennis Mpale said about the messaging of the album, "every person in the township knew who 'our boys' were – MK" (Ansell, 20005, p. 152). 'MK' is an abbreviation of the military arm of the ANC, *Mkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation).

New freedom songs grew in popularity: ‘Senzenina’ (What have we done?) – the song title and opening line, is followed by the words “Sonosethu, ubumnyama? (Is our sin the fact that we are black?)” (Le Roux-Kemp, 2014, p. 256) and “songs against apartheid-authority informers (‘You are a black dog / On your master’s leash’)” (Ansell, 2005, p. 163).

Johnny Clegg, a white musician who had been exposed to Zulu people and culture through the journalistic work of his father, formed the band *Juluka* alongside maskandi guitarist, Sipho Mchunu. At odds with the prohibitive conditions, their first album, *Universal Man* as well as their performances were, for the liberally-inclined youth of all races, risqué and attractive in that they presented an anti-apartheid idea of racial unity (Coplan, 2007).

Winston Mankunku on the 1970s:

“[I]t was still terrible. At times we’d just laugh at these people and get drunk – just to make ourselves strong… You just got through the day. If you had just got through the day and nothing too terrible had happened, that was the time to joke, to celebrate, and that was what the music was for… But we never stopped playing. Never! Never went away from the music.” (Ansell, 2005, p. 149)

On 16 June 1976 in Soweto, the police fired live rounds and teargas at a peaceful student protest initiated to fight the government's sub-standard system of Bantu Education – a curriculum designed by the government for the black population imposing Afrikaans as the primary

language of instruction. Government propaganda first published the death toll at 17; however, collected accounts from hospital records and family testimony, show that the death figure was around 600 (Ansell, 2005).

Saxophonist Khaya Mahlangu, who was close to the unrest, remembers the day in 1976:

"In 'Isililo', we tried to capture what happened on that fateful Wednesday. I remember, on that very day I was rehearsing at the Pelican night-club in Orlando, and somebody just came in and said, 'Hey, there's trouble outside there so will you stop playing music…' I went home – I was still living with my parents then, and it was not far from the school where Hector Peterson was shot. So the township was burning – I remember seeing bodies lying down, I had to take a cousin of mine to Naledi; we got shot at, and at Crossroads in White City. It was terrible. I almost died there – me and my father and my cousin… [It] was terrible, seeing burning cars, bodies lying in the streets. So that image never left my mind" (Ansell, 2005, p. 165). The song he composed in remembrance of the 1976 protest which Mahlangu refers to is 'Isililo', which means 'Weeping'.

After June 16, censorship was made even stricter than before. Sixty percent of all the material reviewed by the censorship board was banned. The penalties for infringing the censorship regulations were excessive and, in some cases, ridiculous. Two members of a reggae band, *Splash*, were sentenced to five years in prison for performing a song that mentioned 'Nelson Mandela'. The same sentence was handed down to Jacob Mashigo, a civilian who had a

compilation cassette tape featuring a song by Miriam Makeba. “All Stevie Wonder’s music was banned after he dedicated his Grammy Award to Nelson Mandela” (Ansell, 2005, p. 167).

The government propaganda machine was hard at work. Beyond censorship, a state-sanctioned 1978 theatre production called *Ipi Tombi,* looking to counter the anti-apartheid narrative portrayed by black formations outside the country, presented a false narrative of amicable co-existence within South Africa (Ansell, 2005).

Champion of black consciousness, Steve Biko was murdered in police detention in 1977. In the following year, Johnny Dyani released the album *Song for Biko.* In the opening song on the album, ‘Wish You Love’, “there is bluesy sadness, elation, and lyricism…which Dyani dedicated to “my people” (Ansell, 2005, p. 245).

“After 1976, the crushing of the Soweto uprisings scarred South African society but overseas it had a different effect. Now the world could not ignore Apartheid” (Peter Makurube, 2000,2021). In the late 1970s, there were visible signs of possible victory “in favour of the oppressed” (Serote, 2020, p. 21).

Struggles to suppress socially-conscious content at the SABC were proving to be difficult for the authorities. In 1979, the song ‘Paradise Road’ was released by the band *Joy,* a collaboration between Anneline Malebu, Faith Kekana and Thoko Ndlazi. An excerpt of the chorus lyrics is, “Better days before us, and a burning bridge behind us” which Ndlazi recalls had the intention of

"talking to people, giving them hope that one day they will be walking through *Paradise Road*" (Ansell, 2005, p. 168). The song won several prizes in the annual SABC awards (Ansell, 2005).

EXILE

The first significant departure of South Africans into exile was in 1961, when the successful *King Kong* production travelled to London for a performance run at Victoria Theatre (Ansell, 2005). Before their departure, at the airport, the crew sang 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika' (Coplan, 2007). Jazz musicians Jonas Gwangwa and Hugh Masekela were among the traveling party. Pianist Abdullah Ibrahim and singer Sathima 'Bea' Benjamin left a year later in 1962 (Martin, 2013). In 1964, Chris McGregor and the *Blue Notes* found a way to leave through a booking at a festival in France (Martin, 2013). Although these musicians had escaped apartheid South Africa, many of them retained a sense of thoughtful concern about their country's future and displayed their solidarity in various ways during their exile years.

After spending time in exile and building a sizeable international audience, Hugh Masekela said, "You know it was natural for me to say, HEY you might be enjoying the music I make but it's not mine it comes from these people and these people are catching hell" (Masekela, 2000/2021).

A major voice of the liberation struggle internationally was Miriam Makeba. In Miriam Makeba's own words, she said, "You can change a lot of peoples' thinking, just by your song" (Douglas, 2016, p. 96). Her unwavering support of the struggle is remarkable; even at

great personal cost, she was consistently aligned with the aims of the African National Congress in South Africa's struggle against apartheid. Her repertoire and artistic choices changed when she left the country, consciously focussing on South African songs and, in between songs, she would weave in stories about the plight of the people of South Africa, engaged in a war against apartheid. She played a significant role in conscientising the world outside South Africa's borders, thereby amassing support and solidarity in the international community (Ansell, 2005).

Hugh Masekela speaks about Miriam Makeba:

"I think that there is nobody who made the world more aware of what was happening in South Africa than Miriam Makeba. When she went overseas, she just went to sing. But because of what her songs were about, this was around 1959, the more she described the songs, the more she did interviews, the more people found out about South Africa. I think Belafonte picked up the torch with Miriam because he was at the forefront of her civil rights" (Masekela, 2000/2021).

Outside of music, one of Makeba's political engagements was a momentous address to the United Nations Commission in 1963 on the apartheid regime. Shortly after her address, the South African government invalidated her passport and the American government labelled her a communist (Coplan, 2007). Hugh Masekela said about Makeba's United Nations engagement, "this was at the height of Miriam's career. It cost her a lot" (Masekela, 2000/2021).

Multi-instrumentalist Ndikho Xaba, who collaborated with Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba in exile said:

"With the Makeba/Masekela ensemble, we were basically exposing the American listeners to our art forms and of course dealing with the Apartheid issue also because we have an agenda which is common to all of us. One: We are black. Two: We are being colonised Three: We were enslaved. Four: We were victims of imperialism, we were victims of racism, collectively so how can you divorce yourself" (Xaba, 2000/2021).

Another significant group in exile was the *Blue Notes*, made up of Chris McGregor, Johnny Dyani, Louis Moholo-Moholo, Mongezi Feza and Dudu Pukwana. Releasing one album before leaving South Africa in 1965, the band had clear American affinities in their sound (Washington, 2012). Their music made a profound impact on the European jazz scene at the time they arrived. Although their high-energy music — which was mostly free-form and improvised, and interpreted by many as protest expression, Dalamba (2019) speaks about the fallacy of interpreting the music of exiles only as protest/anti-apartheid music. Chris McGregor's idea on the band's solidarities seems to agree with this. Although McGregor was adamant that their music was centred around freedom, he distanced himself from specific political affiliations (Washington, 2012).

On the exile experience in New York, bassist Johnny Dyani said, "When I got to New York, it was as though I'd come to a twin town" (Ansell, 2005, p. 229). As well as the political landscape

of America unto itself, some politically aware musicians were engaging with South Africa's current affairs. In 1960, drummer Max Roach recorded the song 'Tears for Johannesburg' in response to the Sharpeville killings (Ansell, 2005).

Life in exile was not without its own problems. Bass player Ernest Motlhe on his first experiences in England said, "It was still those 'Keep Britain White' days…I could write a book about finding a place to stay, walking from place to place. One time I ended up sleeping in my car for a while…they were very careful not to say [you're black], but you could feel that this guy – oh yeah!" (Ansell, 2005, p. 239).

Singer Thandi Klaasen said,

"You know, very funny enough, because when we arrived in England, we also all thought we were free, you know. We were free from the South African apartheid but when we got there, I discovered that I wasn't free, I was very uncomfortable because I could not think in Xhosa or Zulu, I was speaking English all the time and the trains were written 'Keep Britain white'." (Klaasen, 2000,2021)

These challenges were combined with a longing for home and a feeling of displacement. Vocalist and songwriter Sathima Benjamin's song 'Africa' released in 1974 – on returning to South Africa, expresses this sentiment:

"I've been gone so long, I've come home, To smell your earth, To laugh with your children, To feel your sun shining down on me." (Ansell, 2005, p. 236)

Pianist, composer and scholar, Nduduzo Makhathini gives some insight into a recording by Louis Moholo-Moholo, drummer of the *Blue Notes* and proponent of free, improvised music. Speaking about a specific song called 'Sonke', he says, "on it, Bra Louis talks about how the music took them through pain, but also how it became a way of living and laughing together. It's such a powerful song…to me, it's a representation of what we've all been through, and Bra Louis captured the experience of exile in the 1960s in a profound way. He was trying to connect with a construct of home" (Muller, 2019, p. 121). In his academic writing, Makhathini (2018) draws parallels between slaves in America and the South African exiles, who maintained a connection to their estranged homelands through their music.

"South African players with their political music had an impact on their colleagues overseas" (Makurube, 2000/2021). In London, the arrival of musicians in the 1970s – guitarist Lucky Ranku and vocalist Pinise Saul among others, gave rise to the 'London Township Scene' (Coplan, 2007). The new style excited European audiences and as a result, with the backdrop of the liberation struggle, the bands were booked to perform around Europe for anti-apartheid solidarity events (Coplan, 2007).

Hugh Masekela recalls in an interview, "I remember one time Marvin Gaye said to me… Man, I wish I could like sing all them songs that you singing because we be just singing about *love* and I

said 'Marvin, why don't you' and eventually when he was doing '*What's goin' on*' he said, 'Man I'm doing this, the people at Motown don't wanna – they scared but I'm gonna do it anyway" (Masekela, 2000/2021).

A major component of the ANC political strategy of the 1970s was to inform the world outside South Africa about the liberation struggle. This agenda paved the way for the formation of cultural groups producing politically-laced content – using art as a 'weapon of the struggle'. The first of its kind was the *Mayibuye Cultural Ensemble,* formed in London by South Africans who opposed the apartheid regime (Gilbert, 2007). Their agenda was to "raise awareness about apartheid, strengthen international solidarity, and obtain financial support for the ANC" (Gilbert, 2007, p. 428). A similarly aligned group formed a few years later was the *Amandla Cultural Ensemble*, led by trombonist and composer Jonas Gwangwa (Ansell, 2005).

Gwangwa speaking about Amandla:

"I started doing work for the ANC. I was called to come and help with music because there was a group of young musicians and singers who were in Angola – they were MK cadres, and I was supposed to help with their music, but when I got there, I just got into doing a play of sorts. Wrote some scripts, got a little bit more acting and everything, and came out with this show called *Amandla,* the cultural arm of the ANC. Travelling the world, telling the international community about apartheid and exposing the indigenous culture of South Africa…mobilising support – spiritual, financial, material" (Gwangwa, 2000/2021).

Being a deliberately political formation, *Amandla* performances would sometimes pivot during a show-run, to immediately respond to what was happening in South Africa. Gwangwa said:

"People always used to come and say: this story you're doing, is it a story or is it true? And everything was true. Because I always added or changed something to the script to tally with whatever's happening inside the country. Even mid-stream… we were in Moscow at the International Youth Festival, and they bombed the Kouberg power station, and I said: man, we're putting that in the show tonight!" (Ansell, 2005, p. 248).

Another politically-informed collective, *Medu* (meaning 'roots' in Sesotho), was a multi-discipline arts group combining music, visual art and spoken word formed in Botswana in 1978 (Serote, 2020). The capital city of Botswana, Gaborone in the early 1980s had become a hub for many South African artists (Serote, 2020). The success of their efforts was noticed by the then-president of the ANC, Oliver Tambo. On hearing about *Medu*, Tambo sent a note to the group to encourage their efforts by saying that "culture is a force that will unite people" (Serote, 2020, p. 21). Instead of focussing on the lamentable conditions, *Medu's* approach was to produce art that could inspire a proactive approach to the struggle against apartheid (Gule, 2020).

Medu was also successful in drawing the attention of white people within South Africa, who were subjected to constant anti-black propaganda. "My interest in Medu's posters originated in 1987 when, as a white male in apartheid South Africa, I reported for two years of compulsory

military training in the South African Defence Force (SADF)… The daily assault of brainwashing and propaganda was a different story. Everything written or spoken was couched in racist ideology, designed to make us, the young white soldiers, feel that we were fighting a war in 'god's chosen army' against the 'heathen black communist' threat." (Siebrits, 2020, p. 59).

There were tangible signs that the liberation struggle's use of art as a weapon was bearing fruit. The sustained pressure on many fronts – mainly from the international community, made the apartheid system increasingly difficult to maintain (Gule, 2020).

"The western governments had to turn around because the populations of their countries just said, according to our musicians, we shouldn't be friends with that government. America and Germany, France and Italy had to say 'listen we can't be your friends anymore if we want to stay in office because our musicians have contaminated our peoples' minds'" (Masekela, 2000/2021).

Trombone player for the African Jazz Pioneers Jasper Cook remembers, "it was just announced sometime late November or early December 1987, 'You are going to Amsterdam' – five words! Because it was couched in that way, I realised that [it] was obviously a secret thing. When we got there, it was quite (sic), [the] most wonderful experience for me. More particularly because I happen to be white, I was completely a victim of the information shadow if you'd like. I had no idea that the ANC had so successfully focussed on the incarceration of Nelson Mandela and that they had become so big and so respected. When I got to Amsterdam I found that our 102 from

South Africa were joined by another 200 exiled musicians – all of them with a commonality of purpose. [It] just blew my socks off" (Jasper Cook, 2000/2021).

1980-1990

By 1980, the liberation struggle was a part of everyday life with slogans calling for action and change being brandished on walls and t-shirts. Politically-informed cultural activity was primarily a tool to raise awareness locally and internationally about the situation in South Africa. Within South Africa, all forms of anti-establishment political expression were attacked by the authorities (Coplan, 2007), whereas international efforts had a better chance to succeed, and indeed made strides in building support for the anti-apartheid cause (Ansell, 2005). "Associated Actors and Artists of America – an umbrella organisation to all major performers' unions in the United States, with close to 250,000 members - unanimously voted that its members should not perform in South Africa" (Ansell, 2005, p. 181). The boycott also involved discouraging overseas promoters from booking South African musicians to perform in their countries (Ansell, 2005).

Hugh Masekela recalls:

"Because the international music community became our friends, they went to find out more about South Africa, and by the 1980s it was the rule rather than the exception to put political songs into your repertoire…And that's what really turned the country around because America, France, Germany had to say to [F.W.] de Klerk…that if [he] wanted to stay in office, things

would have to change, because 'musicians have contaminated our people's minds'" (Ansell, 2005, p. 253).

Although visible progress was being made by the liberation struggle, the imposed cultural boycott made it nearly impossible for local musicians to travel to perform outside the country.

Trumpeter, Dennis Mpale:

"You see, we didn't get the gigs anyway, unless it was something the *boere* wanted to promote overseas, like *Ipi Tombi.* Or we did get the invitations, but if they didn't like you or the project, they wouldn't give you a passport. Or only an exit visa: one-way. So I never saw what the noise was these liberals were making about the boycott cutting opportunities for us" (Ansell, 2005, p. 182).

Drummer, saxophonist and composer, Sipho Mabuse:

"The cultural boycott in South Africa was two-pronged in that it obviously enabled South African music to grow within its own means, but at the same time it also deprived us of growth outside… we were able to create an industry that was vibrant, that was explosive" (Ansell, 2005, p. 182).

Saxophonist and composer, Khaya Mahlangu:

"It was OK and not OK… But on the positive side we were able to get more into ourselves. People were able to appreciate that, hey, we have music here – music that we can call South

African and be proud of… I felt people got a chance to get into themselves, to understand and know who and what we are" (Ansell, 2005, p. 182).

New forms of music were developing in South Africa's black communities and the political messaging was apparent in their music. Regarded more as 'pop' musicians, Brenda Fassie and Lucky Dube had major success in the 1980s and were also using their music to disseminate politically informed music (Coplan, 2007). Also emerging in the 1980s was a unique spoken-word artist, Mzwakhe Mbuli, who combined his poetry with urban music. An excerpt of one of his pieces:

Let my mind interpret my dreams of Mount Kilimanjaro
Let my brain-power interpret the last struggle in Africa
Unless human rights are embarked in the statute books
Loyalty shall mean vengeance
Obedience shall mean rebellion
Conformity a bluff
And happiness a sign of danger
And Africa shall know no peace
Until we in the South are free
(Coplan, 2007, p. 297)

In Cape Town, a political music organisation was formed called, 'Musical Action for People's Power' (Coplan, 2007) "a musicians' collective that organised performances for political commemorations, rallies, and protests, but soon became the quasi-official source for what musicians should and shouldn't, would and wouldn't do for political reasons" (Coplan, 2007, p. 299).

The musicians, in responding to a situation where they were isolated from the rest of the world within South Africa, began to grapple with ideas around identity. Questions about personal identity as well as a collective 'South African' identity. Added to this were the interracial dynamics between marginalised communities; Black, Coloured, Indian and Asian.

Pianist and composer, Paul Hanmer said:

"For the first time, in the late '80s, I had to really look at what I was writing and where it comes from…I'm also talking about within the musical brotherhood/sisterhood, there are people [who] have looked at me and said: you are a bit paler than us, you wear glasses and you can read music – it means you can't play…[N]ot only did apartheid succeed in dividing people in terms of socio-economic class and colour… they divided our hearts from our minds, they divided our work from our play, they divided us from our truths" (Ansell, 2005, pp. 183-184).

Expression was highly socio-political, but censorship authorities were still operating with an iron fist. This drove some artists to find less direct ways of expressing themselves. Johnny Clegg said,

"[t]extually, censors forced us to develop a symbolic language which the audience would quickly understand" (Ansell, 2005, p. 206). Songs were coded in slang and metaphor to avoid unwanted attention. A song by Sello 'Chicco' Twala called 'We Miss You Manello' was an example of this. Although he solemnly told the media that the song was about a close, personal friend, whenever the song was performed, the crowds would roar, "We miss you, Mandela" (Ansell, 2005, p. 199). Another song written for Nelson Mandela by Chicco was with long-time collaborator Brenda Fassie, called 'Black President' released in 1988 (Coplan, 2007).

The cultural resistance movement was being fought in all spheres of the arts community by artists who felt empowered by a sense that their art had the power to make a difference, and also a sense of responsibility to use their art for social justice.

Author Richard Rive said:

"The writer does not only create literature but creates literature in a particular climate. If that climate is not conducive to his realisation of himself as a human being, then he must, through his art, try to change that society" (Ansell, 2005, p. 193).

Of the church music in the 1980s, Mokale Koapeng said:

"[A]s believers, our beliefs did not let us stand apart from what was going on, and although our church did not encourage political activism on the streets, creating indigenous hymns was a conscious contribution" (Ansell, 2005, p. 196).

Another wave of protest music came in the form of worker's unions. Unions typically had a choir made up of workers and the content sung by these groups was political and sometimes subversive (Ansell, 2005).

"Hlangelani basebenzi nibe munye
Ukase sinqobe abaqashi ngengeni
(Come together workers and be one
So we can defeat the bosses with our numbers)"
(Ansell, 2005, p. 191)

A choir composer from the Kellogg's factory Chris Dlamini said, "All our music is composed by taking into account the prevailing social and political situation and it aims to unify and mobilise the people into action" (Ansell, 2005, p. 192).

Due to eased restrictions of movement, black jazz musicians were allowed to perform for white audiences in designated 'white' spaces. Jasper Cook, a white trombonist who was a member of the African Jazz Pioneers, speaks about the strange conditions at some of the band's engagements for white audiences:

"In public venues everybody just loved it because it was cocking a snoot at the boys, the *boere*, but we had some funny situations; in a private home where the band was led to some plain fare in a back room and the host and hostess didn't quite know what to do about the honky" *laughs* (Cook, 2000/2021).

The repealing of major apartheid laws in the 1980s gave hope and a sense of achievement for all who were actively involved in the liberation struggle. In 1986, the pass laws and Mixed Marriages Act were abolished (Ansell, 2005) In 1989, South African president F.W. de Klerk announced the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, as well as the unbanning of the ANC and other political formations (Ansell, 2005).

1990-1994

With good intentions and freedom on the horizon, activist Albie Sachs called for a ban on the term 'culture as a weapon of the struggle' at an ANC seminar in Lusaka in 1989 (Gilbert, 2007). "The term, he argued, had elbowed out artistic nuance in favour of sloganeering and had led to criticism that evaluated righteousness above quality" (Ansell, 2005, p. 263). Some artists were offended by this. Trumpeter Dennis Mpale said, "It felt like being kicked in the guts…[l]ike no-one valued what we had done" (Ansell, 2005, p. 263).

In the years immediately leading up to democracy, violence took hold in much of South Africa. In Gauteng, 572 were killed in train violence between 1990 and 1993 (Ansell, 2005). There was also conflict between supporters of the ANC and those of the Inkatha Freedom Party. In response to these killings, spoken-word artist Mzwakhe Mbuli, in collaboration with Chicco Twala, recorded the song 'Papa Stop the War' (Coplan, 2007).

With the return of many exiles back into South Africa, musicians returned and began making and releasing music on home soil. Singer-songwriter Letta Mbulu's first album produced shortly after her return to South Africa was given the title *Not Yet Uhuru (Uhuru* meaning 'liberation'). An excerpt of the title track lyrics:

Thina singa voti bo
Silale mikhukhwini
Akukho mehluko kulelizwe
Qhawula makhamandela
(Those of us who can't vote
We sleep in squatter camps
There is no difference in this land
Break our chains)
(Tyali, 2018, p. 11).

Thematically, the song is a caution against the worldwide euphoria surrounding South Africa's democracy in 1994, arguing that much still needed to be addressed to achieve true liberation from the shackles of the past, hence the title 'Not yet Uhuru' (Tyali, 2018).

4.1 The 1994 Moment

Between 26-29 April 1994, the first free-and-fair non-racial elections were held in South Africa (Grundy, 1995). With the end of Apartheid as a policy having been announced in February 1990

by the outgoing president, F.W De Klerk, this was to be the start of a 'new dawn' (Minty, 1993), a historic moment and one which symbolised a moment of victory for fighters in the liberation struggle. After a landslide victory, the ANC took office with Nelson Mandela at the helm – South Africa's first democratically elected president (Grundy, 1995).

Due to the new political dispensation and the lifting of the cultural ban, "black South African performers were breathing the heavenly air of freedom" (Coplan, 2007 p. 7). Although the fight for liberation was fought on many frontiers and by many fighters, Nelson Mandela is afforded special significance as a symbol of the attainment of freedom (Mtshali & Hlongwane, 2014). A lyric excerpt from a song that came to prominence in the years leading up to democracy, entitled 'Nelson Mandela, usilethela uxolo' (Nelson Mandela, you bring us peace):

Sekudala ulwelinkululeko
(You have been fighting for freedom for a long time)
Kepha manje sewuyitholile
(You have now received it)
Ungashintshi kwesosimo
(Do not alter this position)
Usileth'uxolo
(You bring us peace)
Nelson Mandela
(Mtshali & Hlongwane, 2014, p. 523)

The new government adopted a conciliatory position, in which there would be necessary consultation with minority parties for major decisions, including the National Party – the designers of apartheid in a former incarnation (Grundy, 1995). With a hopeful spirit of peace and unity on the horizon, Chicco Twala – who had written several politically-conscious songs in the previous decade – penned the song 'Peace in our Land' in 1993 (Byerly, 1998). The song was a hit! I remember myself as a primary school learner in the '90s, being made to sing the song at every assembly, the words of which I remember to this day:

South Africa, our beautiful land
Let's show the whole world
We can bring peace in our land

Soon after democracy and the commensurate freedoms permitted which were previously denied, a forging of collective identity and counter-balancing of diverse individual identities led musical groups to experiment. A good example is the band *Mosaic*, a multicultural band of students formed at the University of Natal (Byerly, 1998). Their music was a combination of Indian classical music, traditional African components, North American jazz and classical art music (Byerly, 1998).

Pianist in the band Nishlyn Ramana:

"There are so many unresolved things. For me it sorts out my own identity. It's a means through which I can find out where I come from and where I'm going. The history of 'Mosaic' is the history of our becoming South Africans. The music was so truthful that I could articulate and discover things I had not previously articulated or discovered. All kinds of social and emotional things happened for me. It articulates my multiple identity and our collective one" (Byerly, 1998, p. 16).

Returning home from exile and ever conscious of the socio-politics of South Africa, in 1994 Hugh Masekela released his album, *Hope* (Litweiler, 2021). Elder statesman in South African Jazz by this time, Winston Mankunku released a tribute to Archbishop Desmond Tutu on his album 'Molo Africa' in 1998, entitled 'Song for Bra Des Tutu'. Desmond Tutu is a significant figure in South African history, possibly making his most memorable contributions around the time of democracy. He chaired the Government of National Unity's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which, according to the then justice minister Dullah Omar was "a necessary exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation" (Department of Justice and Social Development, 1995/2021).

Full of hope and optimism at the prospect of a united South Africa, he coined the term, 'The Rainbow Nation' (Habib, 1997). Although not overtly socio-political, the sound of pianist Moses Molelekwa's debut album *Finding One's Self*, released in 1994, was forward-thinking and hopeful about the future of jazz music. Speaking to Gwen Ansell in an interview in 1997 after

winning two South African Music Awards, he said “creating music people can dance to is important, because I think it‘s important to win younger listeners for jazz music…the scene has become conservative and that reflects in a lot of our good younger musicians being nervous to take risks” (Ansell, 1997a). A positive outlook for the future and an emphasis on taking risks in his musical works could be interpreted as a sign of the social climate of the time - a moment of immense potential.

Two significant developments in the jazz industry captured the exuberance and air of potential in Johannesburg in 1994 – the founding of the record label Sheer sound, and the opening of the jazz club, Bassline by Brad Holmes. Sheer sound released many of the well-known jazz albums of the early post-democratic era. For the local market and music lovers, the label managed to consolidate a sizable audience for the artists signed to the label. The two-night artist showcase at the end of 1997 drew in crowds of almost 1000 on each of the two nights (Ansell, 1997b). Four months after Nelson Mandela’s inauguration, the Bassline jazz club opened its doors in the multicultural bohemian suburb Melville (Coplan, 2017). It served as a vibrant space that brought together people of all walks of life to engage in lively exchanges, underscored by the jazz soundtrack on the Bassline stage (Coplan, 2017).

Looking at a range of song selections in various early post-apartheid jazz albums, there is a remarkable sense of reflection, displayed through the inclusion of earlier works in the South African jazz repertoire, perhaps because the new era meant that the music which was for so many years sidelined, could finally be unabashedly celebrated. The Voice Quintet, a

collaboration of bandleaders often seen at the Bassline featuring the trailblazing artists of the time, featured the South African jazz classic by Mackay Davashe, 'Lakutshon' ilanga' on their first album – released on the Sheer label. Also released on the Sheer label, saxophonist Zim Ngqawana released his album 'Zimology' in 1997 and closes off the album with 'You think you know me' – a composition by *Blue Notes* trumpeter Mongezi Feza. On pianist Andile Yenana's debut album, he features a composition by *Blue Notes* bassist, Johnny Dyani called 'Wish You Sunshine'. The album title by Yenana is also reflective, *We used to Dance*, which he said was among other things, referring to jazz as a music that was previously a music to dance to (Dlamini, 2019).

The positive sentiment was not shared across all spheres by everyone. With the emergence of new forms of music and perceived betrayal of existing forms was the cause of some ideological friction within the music and cultural community. According to Gule (2020, p. 46) "culture had been weaponised once more, but this time mostly for commercial reasons. Although some artists espoused new forms of social consciousness, the general trend was to glorify the consumerist tendencies portrayed in the media, especially music videos."

The post-democratic moment saw the rise of *Kwaito* – a music of the youth which, like hip-hop in America, captured and enraptured the minds of the youth in South Africa. Although kwaito songs were not generally socio-political "[a]n important exception was the rebellious Arthur Mafokate, whose independent anti-racist post-1994 election kwaito hit 'Don't Call Me Kaffir'

caused tremendous controversy both within the music industry and in the 'New South Africa" (Coplan, 2007 p. 328).

In the jazz community, confusion was evident – even the meaning of the word 'jazz' was in contention. Some comments from jazz musicians:

Barney Rachabane (saxophonist):

"The history of our jazz has been thrown away, so you can't blame [the youngsters] if they don't know about our heritage. So you don't know if the guys are playing what they want to, or are being given direction. There's confusion about who or what is (sic) a jazz musician" (Ansell, 2005, p. 279).

Gloria Bosman (vocalist, songwriter):

"You get to a point where you ask yourself what is real jazz at the end of the day - between New Orleans and Sophiatown" (Ansell, 2005, p. 280).

Bheki Mseleku (pianist, composer):

"Can you tell me what jazz means? A word that people can use about John Coltrane and Kenny G simultaneously? It says nothing about what the music is" (Ansell, 2005, p. 280).

Zim Ngqawana (saxophonist, composer):

"This name *jazz*. We did not create it, we were given it to corrupt our expression. People are embracing it, adding to it, *kwai-jazz* and all this nonsense, [when] we do not yet understand our music" (Ansell, 2005, p. 280).

With the newfound access to privilege, the idea of a socialist economy some in the ANC aspired to before democracy, was swapped out for the attainment of "privileges once reserved solely for whites" (Gule, 2020, p. 46). Although in the lead-up to democracy, there was a strong sense of the arts playing a significant role in the liberation struggle (Byerly, 1998), the government, in their demonstrated behaviour, downgraded its importance in the new South Africa. Member of cultural resistance group *Medu* and renowned poet Keorapetse Kgositsile said in 1992, "even now, the Department of Arts and Culture remains somewhat like a tolerated, mischievous stepchild of the [ANC] Movement, though in our various indigenous traditions and customs we have no concept of a stepchild and we have no indigenous language that…carries such a social aberration" (Ansell, 2005, p. 264).

4.2 Conclusion

Music has always been an important cultural asset. Throughout South African history, music has been engaged in dialogues with the life experiences of communities, providing a social commentary of its place and time. These engagements are not always explicit and direct. At times, powerful statements were made in music through subtle or indirect means. In any case, regardless of nature or characteristics, one can see social engagement throughout history.

In the 1800s, British missionaries in the Eastern Cape sought to 'civilise the natives' by providing an education in Western music. In a direct response shortly after, local composers placed emphasis on strong cultural enunciations in an effort to assert their identities (Ansell, 2005). The music was aimed at being "Xhosa without distortion" (Ansell, 2005, p. 9). In the 1920s, Sol Plaatje saw the need to form the Bantu Men's Social Centre to provide a space to "mould native character and enlarge outlook" (Ansell, 2005, p. 23). Conversations about cultural preservation were held by The South African Bantu Board of Music in the 1930s, with a mission of collecting traditional music in its original form. In the 1940s the *Bantu Revue Follies* performed in traditional African garb for their performances. These assertions of identity are a thread that runs throughout the history of South African music/jazz and is a noticeable feature in the music of current-day jazz composers.

The messaging in the music was not always easily identifiable as being socially engaged. In the Marabi era of the 1920s and 30s, Marabi was music for enjoyment associated with shebeens and all-night dance parties. How is it possible that oppressed people could make such 'happy' music? Speaking about the Marabi era, musician Wilson Silgee said "[i]t was all happiness, even when you have troubles in the heart, you get out having forgotten about them" (Allen, 1993, p.13). Marabi served to provide a sanctuary to help people forget about their everyday struggles. Even though the music was not confrontational, it was indirectly socially engaged. In the 1940s, bands worked hard to attain a favourable reception amongst white audiences because it was believed that white people were racist because they were ignorant and therefore great performances by Black artists could make an appeal to their conscience. Exceedingly impressed by a successful

run by *The Pitch Black Follies* for white audiences in the 1940s, writer Herbert Dhlomo wrote "I maintain that art can, is and will continue to play a great part in solving our problems" (Ballantine, 2012, p. 60). In some instances, the indirect engagement with social issues was to avoid conflict with the authorities. With censorship in full effect in the 1960s, the popular composition by Winston Mankunku Ngozi, 'Yakhal'inkomo' was, according to the composer, written for "the black man's pain" although the title did not reveal this (Ansell, 2005, p. 132). In the original liner notes, it was said that the composition was a dedication to John Coltrane - possibly to deflect the attention of censorship authorities.

Around the beginning of the 1900s, the first exposure to Black entertainers from North America fascinated local audiences and began an enduring endearment with entertainment assets from America. Initially impressed by their dress sense, Black people in South Africa came to look at Black Americans as a symbol of what they could aspire to be. With the rise of recorded jazz music in the 1920s/30s, traveling ships brought with them recent jazz recordings. These recordings impacted the local cultural economy — audiences wanted to hear the music of American jazz greats and musicians wanted to hear what the torchbearers of the tradition were doing. From clothes to cars to music, South Africans were infatuated with American culture. I would argue that this influence is still prevalent today in jazz music, with American musicians maintaining their dominance in jazz-oriented media. This influence has been identifiable in the music of local composers for decades. When musicians began traveling out of the country in the 1950s, popular vocal group *The Manhattans* tried to get a record deal in London. They were denied the deal because their music sounded 'too American'.

The oppressive laws of colonialism and later apartheid sparked direct responses in the musical compositions of the time. Shortly after the passing of the 1913 Land Act, composer R.T Caluza wrote a song that expressed his disapproval of the new legislation. The opening line of the song, 'iLand Act' is "we cry for our land" (Ansell, 2005, p. 21). The first formation of the ANC — after changing its name from the Native National Congress, adopted Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika (God Bless Africa) as its anthem — a prayer for salvation in difficult circumstances. Addressing the forced removals in Sophiatown following the Group Areas Act, a significant song in the South African Jazz repertoire, 'Meadowlands' was written. The song speaks about being relocated by white people to 'Meadowlands' in the Soweto township. By the late 1950s, Black entertainers had drawn a significant white following and these settings provided spaces for meaningful political conversations. In the 1970s many artists adopted a more militant stance in the struggle for liberation. New freedom songs like 'Senzeni Na' gained popularity — a line from the song says, "Sonosethu, ubumnyama? (Is our sin the fact that we are black?)" (Le Roux-Kemp, 2014, p. 256). Internationally, politically-aligned art groupings *Mayibuye, Amandla and Medu* among others used their performances to raise awareness about the plight of oppressed South Africans to international audiences in the 1970s and 1980s. In the early 1990s, with democracy on the horizon, there were mixed sentiments about the 'new dawn' — some were hopeful and others sceptical. Letta Mbulu's song 'Not Yet Uhuru' is critical of the new supposed freedom when most Black people were still living in poverty whereas Hugh Masekela released an album called *Hope* in 1994.

I have looked at significant social and political currents and the elicited responses from musicians pre-1994 and the 1994 moment – either in the literature of their works (titles and lyrics), commentary from interviews and symbolic acts which display solidarity with a broader social context. In centring musicians as commentators of their society, I aimed to highlight the social circumstances as observed and displayed by musicians through their works and the ever-changing character of artistic engagement with socio-politics. This provides a basis from which the core focus of my study is contextualised – a historical framework as well as a means of comparing attitudes and commitment to socio-political engagement with the work of current-day musicians/composers. Lastly, my research shows that much of South Africa's socio-political discontent today has clear traces to the pre-democratic eras, so an in-depth engagement with the past guards against a myopic understanding of the present – or to quote the astute title by guitarist and composer Vuma Levin, 'A string struck in the past resonates in the present'.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Interview Results

Introduction

This chapter delves into the interviews with the selected participants. After analysing and coding the themes raised by the participants in the interviews, I identified three overarching themes:

- Music reflects society
- Identity in post-apartheid South Africa

- Composers as social spectators

These themes are the pillars on which I base my following discussion as well as the related sub-themes that were mentioned during the interviews. Reading the interview transcripts reveals a complex engagement between composers and their social environment. I believe that all participants are socially-engaged through their work — the manner in which they are engaged is the difference between them.

5.1 Music reflects society

All interviewees recognised that music is inseparable from the social worlds where it is created and received. For some participants, they framed it as an active responsibility that the composer *should* use their music to address the issues faced by their communities. This idea follows the thinking behind Nina Simone's statement which inspired my research — "[a]n artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times" (Nina Simone, 2013). Another idea was that whether conscious or not, music reflects its society as the composers are themselves a product of their community and their thinking is informed by their social context. For one of the participants, it was only in retrospect and reflecting on previous work that they discovered these engagements with the social. The association between jazz and the social is multi-layered and complex.

The question posed to the participants which most directly interrogated this was, 'What is a composer's role in society?'

Participant 1: “music is closely linked to community”

Participant 2: “a composer’s role is to highlight the feelings of their community”

Participant 3: “the composer's role is defined by the listener”

Participant 4: “The composer is a member of society so whether or not intentional, the work is linked to their society…The composer is balancing between the individual and the societal”

“Reflection on the work uncovers a grappling with societal issues…There is no specific role a composer should have.”

Participant 5: “The composer’s idea of music’s role is influenced by their upbringing…The composer’s idea of music’s role is influenced by their upbringing…There is a sense of responsibility for an artist to reflect”

While these accounts from the participants display some differing positions, the consensus is that there is indeed an engagement between composer and society. What differs among the participants is the question of ‘responsibility’ that a composer *should* feel in terms of creating works that actively seek to reflect and respond to societal issues.

Using the literature, song/album titles, song lyrics and interviews with composers/artists, I will look at some musical releases by South African jazz artists to display the various types of engagement with the social, using the themes raised by the participants as a starting point.

5.1.1 Titles give an idea of thinking

I believe that a song title is a good indicator of the composer's ascribed meaning to a particular composition. "When we make something, we name it; we put a signifier on that "making" so that we can remember it, describe it," (Johnson, 2007, p. 710). Comments from the participants support this idea and elaborated further by highlighting intricacies in the titling process. One of the interview questions posed to the participants was, "what is your motivation when choosing a title for a composition?" My justification for asking this question was that jazz is, in large part, instrumental music and so in many instances, the only linguistic literature we have is the song title. For compositions that have lyrical content, such as songs and/or spoken verse, this is different of course because the compositions contain more language on which one can base an interpretation of the composer's intention and thought processes. In asking this question, I wanted to uncover the factors which inform the process of assigning titles to pieces of music and the thought processes which accompany their titles.

Participant 1 spoke about giving credit, through a title, to musical styles that influence a particular song and its style and therefore it is in tribute from a musical perspective.

Participant 2 said, "in the beginning it was very much a self-conscious thing of trying to reference what I was trying to do in an activist sense. And then tying those things to song titles."

Participant 3 speaks about what is happening in the composer's life at the time as what influences the idea of their titles emphasising that he looks outside the music. "Definitely yes we look elsewhere, well I look elsewhere for music and for titles."

Participant 4 said, “it’s not so much from literature, although sometimes literature can inspire song lyrics. It’s a bunch of things but I think it’s more the feeling.”

Participant 5 speaks about the title as an indication of what is happening in the composer’s life at the time. The participant said that the title is informed by “something happening in my life or something that I’ve learnt that I become inquisitive about.”

A revelation for me has been that titles of compositions are mostly an afterthought in the compositional process. The music is created first and then a title is assigned which fits the criteria defined by each individual composer. Participant 4 said, “I never write the song title before the song, I usually name it afterwards. And it’s like ‘what does this feel like?’ And does that have some kind of resonance with me?” When I was selecting material for my recital performance, I made contact with composers and asked them to send scores of their pieces that I had chosen. It was interesting for me that for one of the compositions, a working title – which was more descriptive of style, was the title on the completed score whereas the published title of the completed work was entirely different and overtly activist. This suggests conjunction of a musical process and a literary title assignment, based on each individual composer’s agenda.

5.1.2 Direct Social Engagement

Looking at some jazz titles and song lyrics released in the last five years (dating back to 2017), one can see clear and direct musical engagements with the social and the political. The literature of the music shows a proactive musical response to pertinent social issues.

***Exiled* - Thandi Ntuli, 2018**

Exiled is the second album released by composer, pianist and vocalist, Thandi Ntuli in 2018. Asked about the themes explored on the album, Ntuli said, "I think I was reflecting on how personal relationships are very (sic) actually similar to what happens in the world and I was touching and exploring on the experience of living in post-apartheid South Africa. I was exploring topics…A lot of the social issues that exist, post the oppressive past that we have." (SABC News, 2018). Behind-the-scenes footage from the album recording sessions shows Thandi Ntuli, in conversation with featured poet Lebo Mashile, contextualising some of the issues the album is grappling with. Speaking on the pervasiveness of apartheid legacy in current-day South Africa, she says "we forget about the fact that – we know that part of the strategy [was] deliberately to break up black families…to divide black people in[to] [separate] communities – Xhosas, Zulus, the Tsongas. And you must all *not* like each other…And if we deal with all those divisive things, the system can't touch us!" (Thandi Ntuli, 2018).

One can hear these themes being addressed in the music. The chorus lyrics of the lamenting song, 'New Way':

"This could be the start of a new way

Stand by me and say that it's ok

Let me be broken and hurting, process my healing

Let me cry, release all of this pain

You are free to stay, free to walk away

But don't dare say it's been a while now, move on from the past child"

(Ntuli, 2018, 1:25)

The last line, in my interpretation, is a direct reference to apartheid – a system whose effects are still felt in a country that renounced it three decades ago. Participant 4 said, "a major issue or tension for us as South Africans is the hangover from our freedom that is like we're sobering up to the fact that ahhh okay, this thing is not actually as we had imagined it to be". With all the euphoria in the early years of democracy, what has been emerging for some time, is the lingering legacy of apartheid, still palpable in today's society. Participant 5, in reference to the inadequacies of the democratic government, said "we're living in the repercussions of things that actually weren't solidified or sorted out then" Albeit less overt, many social ills today can be traced back to the apartheid system. In recognising and addressing this stubbornly enduring legacy, one has to confront systems that "continue to produce alienated Africans who are socialised into hating the Africa that produced them, and liking the Europe and America that rejects them" (Mashau, 2018, p. 3).

The discontent caused by this unrealised potential of the democracy project is well-articulated by Kwezi Gule in his contribution to the *Medu* memorial publication released in 2020:

"South Africans are now caught between a past that is still present, a future that never was, and another future not yet conceived" (Gule, 2020, p. 47).

***Life and death on the other side of the dream* - Vuma Levin, 2017**

A similar theme is found in the work of composer and guitarist Vuma Levin. Speaking to Gwen Ansell in 2017 about this album leading up to an album release concert, he says,

"It's meant to be an abstract representation of a conversation in post-apartheid South Africa… (Referring to Thabo Mbeki's 'I am an African Speech') In that speech, Mbeki presented an inspiring foundational principle for a post-colonial nation: a space where shared – even if antagonistic – histories, rather than genes, define who we are… Yes, that dream has run out of steam" (Ansell, 2017) A song title that stands out to me in this body of work - 'End of the Rainbow' is part of the 'ZAR History, Vol. 2' suite. Following Levin's commentary about the overarching post-apartheid theme of the project, I believe the title is referencing the 'Rainbow Nation' idea.

A well-meaning metaphor, 'The Rainbow nation' was coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the early days of South Africa's democracy, based on the hopeful idea of uniting a multi-racial society as in a multi-coloured rainbow (Habib, 1997). It was an attractive and emotive metaphor used by both presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki to gain broader appeal across racial lines (Habib, 1997). In an article for *The Conversation,* Gachago and Ngoasheng (2016) speak on the problematic nature of the Rainbow nation idea. Although a noble idea, based on South Africa's past of racial segregation, the term unto itself does not convey the complexities of the

post-apartheid South African reality. Favouring the idea of one human race, united in its diversity in the Rainbow nation, is an idea more convenient for the white minority, who still have greater access to privilege today (Gachago & Ngoasheng, 2016). In a simplistic comparison of society to a rainbow, one does not take into account the history of racial subjugation with deep socio-economic and psycho-social impacts, whose effects are still prevalent, in favour of an illusory idea of peace and harmony. As part of an inquiry into privilege, Gachago and Ngoasheng conducted an experiment at universities in Cape Town, called *The Privilege Walk.* The experiment involves presenting statements to participants based mainly on themes of race, gender, class and sexuality. If a statement is true, the participant takes a step forward or back based on the instruction. Examples are:

"If one or both of your parents have a university degree, take one step forward; if you rely, or have relied, primarily on public transportation, take one step back; if you are able to move through the world without fear of sexual assault, take one step forward; if you feel good about how your identity is portrayed by the media, take one step forward" (Gachago & Ngoasheng, 2016, para. 10). Sadly, in the end, in a country that was twenty-two years into its democracy in 2016, a white male is almost always at the front and a black female is at the back. This simple experiment clearly illustrates a social grid of the current state of our society – the supposed 'Rainbow nation'.

'Marikana cannot be forgotten' - Kyle Shepherd, *SWR New Meeting*, 2016

Some titles are easy to interpret, regarding the composer's intention and agenda. In pianist and composer Kyle Shepherd's composition, 'Marikana cannot be forgotten', released in 2016, the composer is shedding light on the killing of protesting miners by the police. The protesting mineworkers were fighting for better wages and improved living conditions when the incident took place in August 2012 (Dyanti & Masiangoako, 2020). This tragic incident in which 34 miners lost their lives has indeed not been forgotten, as hoped for in Shepherd's title. Dyanti and Masiangoako wrote in 2020 – eight years after the incident, that every year in August, there are rallying cries to the government to adequately resolve the matter with the families of the deceased mineworkers, who have not been adequately compensated and do not have a clear idea of who is responsible for the killings. The police acted in violation of the ethical conduct that is expected of law enforcement officials, meant to serve and protect, and it is thought that they chose the side of the mine bosses over the protestors. (Dyanti & Masiangoako, 2020)

'Being Woman pt. 2' - Titi Luzipo, *Titi Luzipo*, 2019

Vocalist Titi Luzipo released her debut album, titled *Being Woman* in 2019. Here is an excerpt of song lyrics from the album's title track:

How long must we feel this way?

What else do we have to say?

Being woman, woman

Ain't no play

Being woman, woman

Ain't no child's play

(Luzipo, 2019, 1:06)

In her own words in a SABC interview, "There was a time [when]… gender-based violence was on a high and every story was about how [a] woman is raped, you know, how women are abused… it was always dear to me, I always wanted to know what I could do as an active member of society… to eradicate femicide, to help to eradicate patriarchy, misogyny and so on and so forth" (SABC News, 2019).

By Luzipo saying "I always wanted to know what I could do as an active member of society," it displays a sense of responsibility to address a pressing social issue affecting women in South Africa. Promoting art as a medium to engage with the social, Participant 5 said, "a lot of the time things can't just be portrayed and shown in words only. It needs to be felt and experienced and heard."

Gender-based violence is indeed a worrying problem in South Africa. Here are some staggering statistics:

- "51% of women in SA say they've experienced gender-based violence.
- One in five women report that they have experienced violence at the hands of a partner.
- In 2019/20, 53 293 sexual offences were reported, an average of 146 per day

- In 2019/20, a total of 2 695 women were murdered in South Africa. This means a woman is murdered every three hours.
- Femicide is five times higher in South Africa than the global average." (Mthombeni et al., 2020, para. 15)

The president, Cyril Ramaphosa, in light of new bills set to achieve greater justice for victims of gender-based violence said, "The women of South Africa have had enough of lukewarm actions that do not address one of the most fundamental rights – to live in freedom of fear," (Mlaba, 2020, para. 5). Indeed, as stated in Titi Luzipo's song, being a woman in South Africa "ain't no play".

***uGaba the Migration* - Sisonke Xonti, 2020**

Saxophonist Sisonke Xonti released his second album in 2020 entitled *uGaba the Migration*. Speaking to jazz radio-show host, Brenda Sisane about the project, Xonti says, "I think about three years ago I realised that I've always been in this floating space where I'm not really conscious of what's happening around me. I was just living and doing things from day to day but not really taking things in. So it's (the album title) just about me reading a bit more, researching more about *my* people 'uGaba' first of all, and also I've sort of started to change the way I think, realising that the world we live in is not the world I thought it was. So that was a bit painful for me, you know to see all the bad things happening around the world so that was a shift in my consciousness, hence I named it *Migration* – the shift of my consciousness, being more aware… Whatever I go through, I go through it with my people ooGaba, uGaba is my clan name so my

ancestors are there with me migrating with me and through me, hence I named it uGaba the migration" (Sisane, 2020).

The solidarities he expresses on the album are varied and go beyond South African borders. In one of the titles on the album, entitled 'Minneapolis', he says that the song "is a dedication to the black lives [matter] movement. It was really inspired by the tragedy of George Floyd in Minneapolis. George Floyd was killed by a Minneapolis police officer who kept his knee on Floyd's neck for over eight minutes – over a minute after he had lost consciousness and was obviously not a physical threat (Hill et al., 2020). The incident received worldwide attention and a fervent critique of the enduring legacy of police brutality toward black people in America.

Another song on the album is more political and critical of South African politicians. "'Nomalungelo' has got a double meaning. I'm basically speaking to the powers-that-be, the people that we put into power who have now forgotten us, they live behind closed walls, high security gates, I mean they have forgotten about the people so I call them 'Nomalungelo' and I say 'nathi sifuna ukusela' – we also want a sip of what they're drinking" (Sisane, 2020). The critique of corrupt politicians comes at a time when the country is in the middle of a 'State Capture Inquiry' looking to uncover the misappropriation of an estimated 100 billion rand (Shubin, 2019) in state funds used for, amongst other things, the funding of lavish lifestyles of politicians and people in their inner circles.

5.1.3 Indirect/symbolic engagement

In reading the participant transcripts, there are markers that illustrate the social contexts and struggles of a wider community. One of the participants noted that the individual is a microcosm of society and therefore the "individual struggles are echoed in society" (Participant 2). If this notion is accepted, one cannot separate the individual from society. An analogy for this could be a conversation between two people where the speaker has autonomy for what they say in the conversation, but the language used has the cultural nuances informed by their social context. This would suggest that the composer's work is inextricably linked to society. This does not, however, necessarily mean that the composer is in an active pursuit to explicitly address societal issues through their music. In this segment, I will be exploring some examples of indirect engagements with the social.

In South Africa, performing as a multi-cultural band in a previously segregated society or performing music derived from previously-marginalised communities can be seen as acts of social justice. It is a creation of an alternate reality promoting ideas of social cohesion and understanding amongst people of vastly different backgrounds.

Participant 1 says, "For me if I think of the town that I come from and how there is (I think) amongst white people a considerable kind of racist fear thing and I think this kind of practice does have an impact in that I can go back and for example, play some of my music in those spaces…I'm a middle-class white guy and so the majority of the musics I play are of black origin and I'm fully aware of that." In South Africa's exceedingly racialized society, it is a social statement for a white person to play 'black' music in certain spaces as indicated by the

participant. The participant goes on to say, “this world that is supposedly modern is kind of archaic and moving backwards in many ways. And through the practice of breaking boundaries in music I hope we can instil a sense of curiosity and inquisitivity (sic) in the listeners.” Aware of possible preconceptions in certain spaces, the participant is actively seeking to challenge negative prejudices by promoting an alternative reality that engenders acceptance and understanding between different people. “Often (musical) utopias are wish-fulfilment spaces in that they symbolically surmount inadequacies that pervade the material contexts within which they are produced” (Ramanna, 2005, p. 205).

Trumpeter and composer Mandla Mlangeni has spearheaded various band formations in the past decade. In his musical projects, his chosen band names are almost always used interchangeably with their three-letter acronyms, similar in style to most political formations. In addition, the words that make up the band names appear to be politically influenced as well. His first album under the guise ‘Amandla Freedom Ensemble’ is sometimes shortened to the acronym AFC. The Native Groove Collective (NGC) is another band that he initiated in 2010. He regularly performs with another band ‘Tune Recreation Committee’, which shortened to its acronym, becomes TRC. I believe this was in some part influenced by another known TRC, the ‘Truth and Reconciliation Commission’. Propagated by the Government of National Unity and chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, it was believed in South Africa’s new democracy that “a commission is a necessary exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation" (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2021). Mlangeni’s life was violently thrust into politics at an early

age. His father, Bheki Mlangeni, a reputable human rights lawyer, was killed by a letter bomb mistakenly sent to him in 1991. The revelations surrounding the letter bomb and its intended target, Dirk Coetzee, were heard at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Barry, 2021).

Demonstrably aware of South African socio-politics, Mlangeni says in his 2018 interview with *All About Jazz*:

"The vision forward is actually one of dialogue, more communication, and more integration in the sense of art being the vehicle for that change. I feel for a large part that white South Africa has not come to the party. White South Africa in a sense wants us to forget where we've come from, and it does not want us to acknowledge. Then you find us also relegating our experiences to our darkest crevasses. And that's why you find such violent outbursts in our society. We haven't dealt with the turbulent past that we've come from" (Hawkins, 2018b).

One of the participants noted a possible way of interpreting the title of a composition with regard to its indirect social engagement. As the interviewer, I was looking to find out whether the participant thought there was a shift in the commitment of today's composers in responding to matters of social importance, compared to the pre-democratic era before 1994. I gave the example of the Duke Makasi composition released in 1969, mentioned earlier, called 'Inhlupheko' (Distress). The participant said:

"I'm thinking about that title ya (of) bra Andile, 'No Lights'. It's a recent song but it's also just like, from a lived experience of actually having no money to pay lights. And you can translate that in so many different ways. So there is a thread that runs but also different ways of naming it. Instead of saying 'Inhlupheko' one would say 'No Lights'". The rationale for this was that, according to the participant, "it's always political whenever it involves poor or black subjects". The participant went on to suggest that the language used in the post-94 era may be less explicit, but the composers of both eras were merely describing their struggles; struggles similarly caused by socio-political factors shared by black communities with a long history of subjugation. The song title mentioned by the participant, 'No Lights', is a composition by pianist and composer Andile Yenana released on his Sheer Sound debut album recording in 2002. In a paper called *Two Nations*, published a year earlier, Nattrass and Seekings (2001) speak about the correlation between racial classification and economic inequality in South Africa at the time when white people were, on average, earning three times more than black people. The paper opens with an excerpt of a speech given in a 1998 sitting of parliament by the then Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki. Addressing economic disparity along racial lines, Mbeki said "One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographical dispersal…The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor… This nation lives under conditions of grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure" (Nattrass & Seekings, 2001, p. 45).

Sonic references are another method of symbolic social engagement. Pianist Kyle Shepherd released his album *South African History !X* in 2012, and one of the themes is about celebrating

the Khoisan people, a marginalised community in most Southern African societies although they are "believed to be the closest representatives of our human origins" (Muller, 2019, p. 122). The celebration of this community can be heard through clicking sounds found in their language and performance by Shepherd on the 'Xaru', a traditional Khoisan mouth bow (Muller, 2019). Possibly a thematic thread underscoring the body of work, the album title includes the symbol '! X' which is found in Khoisan (Khoekhoe) language nomenclature (Omniglot, 2021).

Of course, the music itself can, using musical devices, mirror a response by symbolism. Participant 5 refers to a composition written inspired by a specific event, "the end of the A section has this kind of eternal cycle that feel[s] like 'where does it start or begin' and I thought that juxtaposed with the plight of this mother who was going through a lot of difficult circumstances… like it was a cycle of a lot of things."

5.1.4 Artist has a responsibility

"I think there is a heavy responsibility because somehow even as part of the community we all have to pull our weight… I would look at 'composer' from that perspective that he's got that responsibility with his work, that whatever he's doing meets that integrity and honesty to the very same community he's indebted to." (Participant 3)

The sense of responsibility is a position that seems to be formed in two parts. Firstly, by a situation that is worthy of a response, or a climate of subjugation and the like. The other factor is the currents and the characteristic climate of socially-informed artistic expression. In the past

decade, the world over, social media has given rise to major worldwide protest movements. The two most notable movements, brought to the fore on social media platforms, were the #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter movements. Possibly inspired by these global movements, the nature of artistic responses to social issues have become more overt in addressing these issues in recent years.

As mentioned earlier, the 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of overtly political messaging within the musical expressions among South African artists, partly due to the characteristic climate of protest art. Similarly, in North America in the 1970s, there was a marked interest in looking at jazz as a practice that could be used for spiritual upliftment, social transformation, and generally a more intellectual view of the music beyond being merely a form of entertainment. Developing a philosophy of looking at the tenets of jazz music as synonymous with freedom not afforded to black Americans, musician Wadada Leo Smith wrote an eight-volume manifesto in which he looks at jazz as a means of attaining transcendent personal freedom (Porter, 2002). A similar sentiment was shared by South African saxophonist Ezra Ngcukana during the apartheid days: "jazz and freedom go hand in hand, if you are jazz orientated you are free from apartheid you know what I mean" (Douglas, 2016, p. 140).

Participant 1 notes, regarding a return to more explicitly political music, said, "I think there's more critical work being seen in the [recent] years. You know, like… in the last 10 years or something like that" Participant 5 said, "I can see it's definitely moving towards that kind of political era again with music and the arts. I think rightfully so...the Black Lives Matter

movement. You can see the whole world is moving towards that and it's [understandable] that the artists lead the way and have these messages in the art they create." If one looks at jazz recordings of the past ten years, it is not uncommon to hear clear socio-political references linked to big social movements. On trailblazing American trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire's 2013 album, *The Imagined Saviour is Far Easier to Paint,* the song 'Rollcall For Those Absent' features the voice of a child saying the names of murdered black victims at the hands of police officers – there are many! (Akinmusire, 2013).

Excessive force by police that disproportionately affects black people in America and a general anti-black sentiment gave rise to the *Black Lives Matter* movement (Campbell, 2020). The #MeToo movement, conceived by a sexual abuse survivor, saw a groundswell of worldwide attention in 2017, revealing the pervasiveness of sexual abuse against women around the world (Metoo, 2021). Without extensive research, the striking impression for me at the time was that it seems that any woman who hadn't experienced some form of sexual transgression was the exception. In alignment with the #MeToo movement in the jazz world, fourteen female and non-binary musicians came together to form the *We Have Voice Collective*, a group aimed at combatting a culture of sexism and predatory behaviour in the jazz industry (Russonello, 2018).

In this case, the microsocial dynamics of the jazz industry were mirroring the macrosocial, worldwide #MeToo movement. The social movement inspired the action by empowering them, providing a safer space for the *We Have Voice Collective* to come forward and raise their concerns. These parallels indicate a serious issue that has seeped into many sectors of society,

worldwide. For South Africans, our parallel of the same issues is more commonly known as 'gender-based violence' – mentioned earlier in this chapter.

5.1.5 Music has multiple roles, not specific

When asked 'What role music plays in society', here are some of the responses from the participants:

"Music has no specific role in society"

"Music plays different roles in society"

"Music has multiple functions in society"

"Music has multiple roles"

Music has always been a big part of African culture, bringing people together and directing the consciousness towards collective experiences (Biko, 2004). Songs accompany every part of life in African culture (Biko, 2004). Where there is a struggle, there are songs to sing about it. Music is an essential part of society, especially in South Africa and for further specification, African culture. As such, it is seldom an art form unto itself, but more "an integral part of the culture… from the cradle to the grave" (Gregory, 1997, pp.123-124). As reinforced by the participants, the 'role' or 'function' of music is not specific. Music forms a part of enjoyment, entertainment, celebration, mourning, protest and all other facets of human life.

I will mention some examples in the South African jazz context and brief accompanying explanations.

Children's songs

Nantsi Ntswempe - Zoë Modiga, *Yellow: The Novel*, 2019

An isiZulu childrens song. The lyrics are:

Nantsi ntswempe

Bizi' zinja

Say' bamba

oh yapunewka

(There is a hare!

Call the dog!

We caught it!

Oh it slipped away)

(Zulu Kids Songs, 2019)

Struggle/Protest

'What is History?' – The Wretched, *Indaba Is*, 2020

Taking their band name from Fanon's book *The wretched of the earth*, their stance is overtly socio-political. In their recent song released on the 2020 *Indaba Is* compilation, the lyrics say:

"We find our humanity on the other side of death and despair

The settler's world is a hostile world

A world with an atmosphere of shot and fire"

(The Wretched, 2021, 0:37)

Healing

Ikhambi - Nduduzo Makhatini, 2017

"*Ikhambi*, the album title, is a Zulu word used by traditional doctors and herbalists to refer to a blend of healing herbs. Clearly, he intends his music to offer healing to the listener." (Burning Ambulance, 2018, para. 4)

In an interview in 2018 in reflection of this body of work, Makhathini says that "most importantly what links all my work are the healing properties of music and *Ikhambi* is a more intentional effort to channel that vibration" (Hawkins, 2018a, para. 38).

Solidarity

'Makubenjalo' - Thandiswa Mazwai, *Belede*, 2016

Thandiswa's words: "Makubenjalo must be part of the national anthem...Because it must be so! Makubenjalo means 'let it be so'. Let freedom reign! I believe it still isn't so. We still need the power of those words" (Tshikhudo, 2017, para. 2).

Enjoyment

Iyonde - Sisonke Xonti, 2017

In a 2018 interview whilst touring with his debut album 'Iyonde' project, Sisonke Xonti was asked in an interview, "What inspired the title 'Iyonde'?" to which he responded, "'Iyonde' is my second name. It means "to be enjoyed". That's what music is for me: it's just supposed to be enjoyed" (Panyane, 2018, para. 6).

Ritual Music

'Magwaza' - Johnny Dyani, *Witchdoctor's Son*, 1978

Johnny Dyani, an exile who was a member of the *Blue Notes*, recorded the traditional song 'Magwaza' featured on the *Witchdoctor's Son* album released in 1978. Dowling, Gobodwana and Deyi (2018) research this song which has been part of Xhosa tradition, sung mostly during initiation ceremonies when the initiate is being taken for circumcision. "The song is sung to instil bravery and national pride so that the initiate may develop a sense of himself as a powerful member of the group." (Dowling, Gobodwana & Deyi, 2018, p. 4) Although the song has gone through several permutations and even recorded as a pop song by singer-songwriter Stompie Mavi, the original song is a war cry to strengthen the initiate's resolve during the initiation process. The original words:

"So—which means father

ma—one who always does something

gwaza—stab

ndakugwaza ngalo mkhonto ("I will pierce you with this spear")"

(Dowling, Gobodwana & Deyi, 2018, p. 4).

Spiritual

'Somandla' - Mandisi Dyantyis, *Somandla*, 2018

The title track of trumpeter and singer/songwriter's debut album, 'Somandla', is a salvation prayer to the almighty.

Nkosi Somandla, Mdali weZulu, Sikhalela kuwe, Mdali womhlaba

(Almighty, Creator of the Heavens, We cry to you, Creator of the earth)

Sophelela phi na? Xa kunje, Sophelela phi na? Somandla

(Where will we end up? If things continue this way, Where will we end up? Almighty)

(Words and translation provided by the composer)

Another example of a spiritual dimension in jazz composition is the work of the late saxophonist Zim Ngqawana. Speaking about Zim Ngqawana's approach to his work in his later years, pianist and former student of Ngqawana, Nduduzo Makhathini says, "he was into teachings about dissolving, this Zen state of No Mind" (Muller, 2019, p. 121). Shedding light on his own musical influences, Makhathini says, the biggest influence for me initially was the Zionist Church, and their use of the drum, meditative chants, and prophecy" (Muller, 2019, p. 124). This shows another aspect of the engagement with spiritual spheres, where the church functions as a crucible – a space in which music and musicians develop. Indeed in South Africa, many musicians begin their musical training in churches and it remains an important developmental space for many

young musicians. Church music – specifically Christian-derived music, through exposure to British and American missionaries has, through synthesised development, become inseparable from the essence of what is perceived as distinctly South African (Coplan, 2007). A good example of this is the music of pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, whose hymn-like chord progressions can be traced back to his upbringing in the church. Ibrahim's grandmother was a founding member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, whose practices were inspired by visiting American missionaries as well as a vision to "Africanise African-American church traditions" (Ansell, 2005, p. 16).

5.1.6 Music pre-94 was more closely linked to politics

Participant 1 said, "pre-94 there's a lot more political work in the SA (South African) jazz context."

The impression of pre-94 requires further investigation to ascertain with reference to which era the participants were speaking. The character of politically or socially motivated art changed in nature over time and was not ubiquitous in its intensity. The 1970s and 1980s saw more of a militant, explicit political stance from the artists of the time whereas the music in previous decades, the 40s and 50s was less overt but still engaged. For instance, songs like 'Isililo' (Weeping) by Khaya Mahlangu were written in direct response to the 1976 student uprisings (Ansell, 2005). The song 'Senzenina' which has the lyrics "Sonosethu, ubumnyama? (Is our sin the fact that we are black?)" grew in popularity in the 1970s climate of intensified protest action (Le Roux-Kemp, 2014, p. 256). When participants speak of pre-94 as being more

closely linked to politics, my impression is that they are referring to the more direct forms of activist art.

It was also implicit in my understanding when taking on this research project. I had an impression lacking in the critical engagement of pre-democratic South Africa. What has emerged through my research is that the character of jazz and social engagement is not homogenous throughout history. One of the most celebrated compositions of the South African jazz canon, 'Yakhal'inkomo' (The bellowing bull) was a song "for the black man's pain" according to the composer Winston Mankunku (Ansell, 2005, p. 132). The title and liner notes did not expressly state this instead suggesting that the piece was a dedication to John Coltrane (Ansell, 2005). Although the engagements are traceable in every part of South Africa's history, the dominant characteristic style of engagement was shifting along an axis of subtle to explicit. In times perceived as being more explicitly engaged in socio-politics, there was a two-way engagement between the arts and socio-political movements: The arts' solidarity was predominantly characterised as socio-political, and political formations recognised the arts as a useful means of gaining support thereby co-opting arts and culture as a 'weapon of the struggle' for political ends. In more trying times, because of the vital need to organise effectively, one could argue in favour of arts being more closely aligned to politics and social struggles pre-1994. The ANC-affiliated cultural group *Mayibuye* often sang the songs 'Naants'indod'emnyama Vorster' (Here is the black man Vorster) and 'Dubula Ngembayimbayi' (We will shoot them with cannons) to raise awareness internationally about the situation in South Africa (Gilbert, 2007).

In today's era, similar collaborative engagements exist between musicians and political formations. Well-known musical artists are often booked to perform at political rallies as a marketing tool used by political formations to gain support. For some artists, they express alliances with political movements which resonate with their ideals. In the age of social media, this is done mostly through these mediums and channels where the artist will speak directly in support of a specific political formation or more symbolic acts like donning a political party's regalia. A more extreme case is popular singer Ringo Madlingozi, who has in recent years joined the ranks of the Economic Freedom Fighters and even has a seat in their parliamentary caucus.

5.1.7 Meaning of music is subjective

The meaning of music can mean one thing to a person and something completely different to another. In addition, when interrogating emotional responses to music, one can have a contradictory reaction to the emotional response intended by the composer. For instance, "many of us are daily driven to extremes of annoyance by advertising or telephone queue-holding jingles that have quite the opposite of their clearly intended amusing or uplifting effect" (Carr, 2004, p. 225). Or similarly, the context in which music is listened to can influence how that music is received and perceived (Carr, 2004). Participant 4 said of subjective interpretations, "even with songs that have lyrics, the interpretation, you're just like "Really? That's what you heard?" but I'm okay with that as well, I don't necessarily want to impose that on other people. If you liked it for whatever reason and you experienced it as this, then it's fine."

Speaking on our pre-history and fixation on sonic source and identity, Weale (2005) suggests that "sound is interpreted in a manner which supplies us with information about the source of the sound, its location in space relative to our spatial position and the meaning of the sound from our particular perspective contextualised by the environment in which the sounding content is heard and through our lived experiences of sound" (Weale, 2005, p. 29).

In a perfect example of ambiguity in interpretation, Weale (2005) recounts his visit to an art gallery with people who had not previously been exposed to modern art. At first, the people would ask questions like 'What does it mean?' After reading the accompanying inscriptions which provided thoughts of the pieces by the artists, there was an instant shift in consciousness where the viewers now provided insightful thoughts, influenced by the artists' written ideas as a point of departure.

5.1.8 Instrumental music is metaphoric/less direct

Where other pieces of art have a literary component, one can argue for more specific interpretations, whereas with only sound, it is arguable what specific meaning can be derived from sound alone (Carr, 2004).

Participant 2 said, "I think that instrumental music exists in the world of metaphor and certain things have, over time gained meaning through a snowballing effect"

Participant 1 said, “the modern music you hear is so coded with thousands of years of information…These stories tell things to you about migration patterns, about political tensions, about people breaking through political tensions.”

Carr (2004) highlights a spectrum of interpretations of music and emotion. On the one extreme, the position is of the listener’s emotional state of the time as the basis for the emotional impact of the music. On the other hand, is the idea that music inherently has its own emotional content and interpretations can exist on any part of this spectrum.

5.1.9 Music’s failure

Some interesting points were raised by some of the participants in speaking about music’s failure or difficulty as a tool for social commentary. Participant 5 said, “I don’t know how to write a song for the #MeToo movement or the #FeesMustFall movement – I don’t think like that even though I feel passionate about those things.” In Albie Sach’s document in 1989 (mentioned earlier) calling for an end to using culture as a ‘weapon of the struggle’, he warns against the use of ‘sloganeering’ in favour of ‘artistic nuance’ (Ansell, 2005). In this controversial article, Sachs laments about activist art reducing artistic expression to the depiction of ‘fists and spears’ (Gilbert, 2007) and suggests that “ideal art is that which bypasses, overwhelms, ignores apartheid, establishes its own space” (Gilbert, 2007, p. 422). Further to this, I posit that there are varying degrees of priority given to thematics? in individual pieces by composers. Depending on the composer’s designation in a given moment, they may for instance opt to prioritise sonic aesthetics over tangible social engagement, thereby creating art that is not activist. Although this

does not remove music from social engagement, it distances the musical expression from being explicitly activist in its engagement with its social environment.

Participant 3 speaks about various forces at play surrounding the engagement of music with the social, “I think it’s engaged in the back and forth of saying one thing but also at the very same time failing at that thing because again, the music has to be commodified. It has to be sold. So there are so many things that play into the chain of the whole thing.” For politically-affiliated cultural groups during apartheid, Gilbert (2007) argues that the focus on creating a performance that, along with their political messaging, sought to entertain, the ends of social justice would be lost on unassuming audiences. Furthermore, if a composer/musician is reliant on music to make a living, consideration of material prosperity as a motivating factor for artistic choices is worthy. As well as living within a particular social context or acting in solidarity as a composer, economics play a part in compositional choices. Working as bi-directional forces, social contexts and economics are, in varying degrees, at times possibly working in conjunction – if a socio-political sentiment is widespread (read wider audience potential), the art – in choosing to function in alignment, is possibly informed, both by economics and social solidarities.

5.2 Identity in post-apartheid South Africa

Identity came up in different ways for four of the five participants – whether as self-reflection, a deliberate theme attached to their work, or the lens through which they interpret their work. Identity is a layered concept with different options of possible interpretation.

Drawing from the teachings of philosopher Paul Ricœur, Martin (2013) highlights the complexity of identity construction – "any sense of selfhood demands, in addition to distinguishing between Oneself and Others, a consideration of the Other that implies both the perception of the Other as part of Oneself – Oneself is like the Other – and the discovery of Oneself as an Other" (Martin, 2013, p. 4). Further to this are the fluidity and multiplicity of personal and collective identities, which are always adjusting, necessarily but not exclusively affected by their socio-political contexts (Martin, 2013). An effective device for identity construction is music, which possesses the ability to express who you are and who you want to be (Martin, 2013).

In this segment, I will be looking at issues surrounding identity in democratic South Africa, as guided by the participants. Part of my inquiry in this study is a comparison of pre and post-1994 which led me to readings about post-apartheid South Africa. I also found resonance in readings on post-colonial identity.

In current-day South African jazz, "the drive to make music is rooted in a kind of post-apartheid embrace of the individual and collective freedom to use the music to explore the full range of what it means to be South African in the contemporary moment" (Muller, 2019, p. 116).

5.2.1 Post-colonial/post-apartheid identity

For this discussion, I borrow from research in the realms of post-colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism to explore identity in the context of the South African post-apartheid democratic

era; the era beginning with the first democratic elections in 1994 to the present day. Post-colonialism refers to a lasting impact of colonial forces on previously colonised communities post-independence (Dizayi, 2017) and post-apartheid, in the South African context, is the period after the politically designed system of racial segregation starting in 1948 and, although renounced in 1990 (Minty, 1993), effectively ended in 1994 with the transfer of political power to the African National Congress. The National Party government came into power in 1948 and formalised the system of apartheid, systematically separating people according to their racial classifications (Desai & Vahed, 2012) and effectively transitioned South Africa from a British colony to an Afrikaner nationalist state (Gule, 2020). With whites in the minority, this strategy of separating the non-white communities was a strategy aimed at reducing a combined threat (Henrard, 2003). The apartheid system, characterised by laws based on racial differences was replaced by an ethos of national unity in the democratic era (Desai, Vahed 2012).

The suppression of culture and identity at the hands of the imperialist western powers in Africa has been widely documented and is, in many cases, a harrowing indictment of the victims and their sense of self and their conception of self-identity. In Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's book, *Decolonizing the Mind,* he quotes Cheikh Hamidou:

"On the Black Continent, one began to understand that their real power resided not at all in the cannons but in what followed the cannons. Therefore behind the cannons was the new school. The new school had the nature of both the cannon and the magnet. From the cannon it took the

efficiency of a fighting weapon. But better than the cannon it made the conquest permanent. The cannon forces the body and the school fascinates the soul" (Thiong'o, 1986, p. 9).

In effect, both colonialism and apartheid in practice were systems characterised by western imperialism over indigenous African communities. Celebrated poet, Mongane Wally Serote says "like the European colonial rulers, the architects of apartheid held a gun in one hand and a Bible in the other as they targeted and attempted to destroy the culture of indigenous Africans" (Serote, 2020, p. 20) Leading Kenyan thinker Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o said, "Imperialism is total: it has economic, political, military, cultural and psychological consequences for the people of the world today" (Thiong'o, 1986, p. 2). In this segment, I am discussing primarily the psychological effects of imperialism on the formation of a post-apartheid identity. What has become apparent in various circles is that "the search for identity [is] a byproduct of colonial rule" (Dizayi, 2017, p. 4).

A paper by Natasha Afrin (2018) – *Edward Said on the Identity Question,* discussing the definitive ideas of post-colonial theorist Edward Said regarding identity, has shaped my understanding and provided a basis on which I interpret the related ideas from the participants. Said's long-standing engagement with post-colonial identity was informed by his personal lived experience and, in large part, was an attempt to articulate and possibly reconcile his own internal dissonances in negotiating his own post-colonial identity.

Participant 3 said, “I think identity is something that really comes out in our generation of music. Questions of identity, challenging these identities that we have inherited”. One of Said’s central ideas was “the question related to the fundamental right of an individual: the authority to define and redefine the contours of his/her identity” (Afrin, 2018, p. 119). Participant 5 echoes this sentiment, “I think I’ve always dealt with issues of identity. I guess a lot of artists in general deal with issues of identity and trying to figure out who they are or define who they are.” This grappling with identity is echoed in society at large looking to carve out and enforce their own identity. Said makes the point of a self-conception of identity which looks at separating from an imposed identity where one “develop[s] an individual personality that is against the ideals of colonialism and imperialism” (Dizayi, 2017, p. 3).

The *Amandla Freedom Ensemble*, led by South African jazz trumpeter and composer, Mandla Mlangeni, released an album in 2017 called *Born to Be Black: A Celebration of the Conscious Soul*. The album explores “black identity, black culture and black pride” (Hawkins, 2018b, para. 1). Mlangeni, in his interview about the album, speaks about the active roles musicians should adopt in facilitating social dialogue. In the interview he says,

“Black is beautiful. We come from a turbulent past, but let us also acknowledge the beauty. Let me acknowledge the light I can contribute to the world. Let's dismiss the negative associations with blackness and what ‘black’ is, and be the guiding light to bring audiences closer together” (Hawkins, 2018b, para. 18).

In vocalist Zoe Modiga's second album released in 2020, 'Inganekwane', she deliberately positions the work as pan-African, emphasised by the majority of songs being sung in her mother-tongue, isiZulu – a departure from her more eclectic first album *Yellow: The Novel*. In an interview about the album, she said, "The album really just came from identity and wanting to look at oneself. And for me, the best way that represented itself was through my mother tongue isiZulu and trying to claim that language back by narrating and expressing through it" (Dlwati, 2020, para. 5).

Participant 2 said "Man there's only ever been one issue that affects society and it's really anti-blackness or anti-black sentiments that have caused from (sic) slavery to apartheid, you know? We can cover those up with money and with capitalism and Marxism but I think there's a fundamental thing that we need to sort out in global relations. So it's only ever been one thing". Although the expression of anti-blackness may not be overt in current-day South Africa, there are subtle micro-aggressions that alienate people in democratic South Africa – especially people of colour. Participant 4 said, "We didn't grow up in a time where police were walking around with alsatians and people being asked for a pass book but there was definitely a policing, in different ways, on being a black person." The reaction to these sentiments is echoed in the jazz music being released, forging a distinct and proudly African identity - A conscious process of prideful *Afrikanization* (the title of a 2020 album by *SN Project*, led by young South African pianist and composer, Siphephelo Ndlovu). These themes are found in many albums of young jazz artists in South Africa. Ndabo Zulu, a trumpeter who released his album "Queen Nandi: The African Symphony" in 2019, spoke in an interview about a conscious effort to deliberately

imagine African-ness through this project. He says, “so I thought, what if we had something that is ours, something African, with our very own template that we could call a Nguni orchestration, with its own set-up of different elements and instruments” (Maliba, 2020).

The national unity ‘Rainbow nation’ narrative has been the cause for many disapproving engagements. In an overt critique of this idea of a South African collective identity, the national anthem has come under fire in recent years. Tying into the ‘unity in diversity’ ideals of the new democracy, the national anthem is sung in four languages combining Enoch Sontonga’s ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’ and the Afrikaans song with words by C.J. Langenhoven, ‘Die Stem van Suid-Afrika’ (The call of South Africa) (South African Government, 2021). Singer-songwriter Thandiswa Mazwai has been critical of the anthem. She said in an interview, “I grew up in the 80s and singing Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika, the song represented the struggle for our freedom as the oppressed people of this country. We would sing Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika to represent that struggle and to represent our hopes that one day we will be free. And as a young person ‘Die Stem’ represented the nationalism of those who oppressed us. That’s what Die Stem represented; it represented that nationalism – the nationalism of apartheid was represented by that song (Tshikhudo, 2017, para. 5). During Apartheid, Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika - “the anthem of the oppressed during Apartheid rule”, was banned (Mtshali & Hlongwane, 2014, p. 509). In a 2021 release by the band, *The Brother Moves On* – a re-imagination of jazz trumpeter Mongezi Feza’s composition, ‘You think you know me’, an excerpt of the lyric is in parallel with Mazwai’s sentiment:

"You think you know me

While you place Enoch Sontonga's prayer next to Die Stem

A Nazi war cry next to a prayer"

(The Brother Moves On, 2021, 1:57)

In a battle of symbolism, it is difficult to accept an anthem that combines musical signifiers that were on opposite ends of the struggle during colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. According to Coplan (2007), "[m]ore than any other piece of expressive culture, 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika' has come to symbolise the struggle for African unity and liberation in South Africa" (Coplan, 2007, p. 58).

Such engagements illustrate a quest to forge an identity that is proudly African but also critical of the apartheid legacy pervasive in many facets of today's South Africa.

A closely related discourse is that of 'decolonisation', a word to describe the acts of actualising freedom from colonial history in former colonies. The characterisation of decolonisation in the present moment is "about restorative justice through cultural, psychological and economic freedom" – a topical discussion in South Africa (O'Dowd & Heckenberg, 2020, para. 11). The decolonisation agenda is being fought on several frontiers but most significantly pronounced in the tertiary institutions. The student protests in 2015, starting at the University of Cape Town with the #RhodesMustFall movement, were attacking the "colonial signs and symbols" proudly displayed on their campuses (Naidoo, 2015, p. 182). The protests in Cape Town sparked what would become the #FeesMustFall movement at other universities around the country. A

memorandum of demands involved transformation policies with regard to staff and curriculum, the systematic exclusion of poor students and above all, it was a call for free, fair and decolonised education (Naidoo, 2015). Speaking about the need for an appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems in jazz training in South Africa, pianist and scholar Nduduzo Makhathini writes:

"There is an urgency that educators understand the "double consciousness" that South African musicians bring to formal jazz studies: the consciousness of music that is present in a performer's musical memory but never incorporated deliberately into the curriculum. We need to honour our own South African musical pasts as much as we need to know the history and styles of the American jazz tradition" (Makhathini, 2021, p. 25).

This is a pervasive sentiment in South Africa today, looking for ways to uplift the value of African knowledge systems in learning spheres that are dominated my western hegemony in education.

In political spheres, there is an argument that the decolonisation narrative has shown a potential to be weaponised, focussing on the politics of difference along racial lines (Long, 2018). Considering South Africa's past where society was made to be acutely aware of race, this can be understood as a lasting legacy of the apartheid regime. In his 2018 paper 'Unshackling the chains of coloniality: Reimagining decoloniality, Africanisation and Reformation for a non-racial South Africa', Mashau highlights the antagonistic race relations in South Africa and even suggests that

these frictions are on the rise. A practical example of this is a fairly recent incident in 2016, in which a white resident of Durban, Penny Sparrow, likened black people to monkeys – in 2016! (Mashau, 2018) The social media post by Penny Sparrow sparked a nationwide outcry from citizens angered by the racist and dehumanising post. Steeped in a colonial and apartheid past, South Africans are caught between finding ways to free themselves from their past and defining a self-determined future identity – a struggle that has roots in pre-democratic South Africa and is echoed in the themes expressed through music. Participant 2 said, "during the struggle for the end of apartheid, music functioned as a means of allowing black people to imagine a future self that could be empowered, could be proud and stand on equal footing etc but also as a way of destabilising the apartheid state."

Although race-based issues are indeed in need of focussed attention because of tangible race-based inequality, much of all discontents are often reduced to race alone. Psychologist and writer Wahbi Long says of postcolonial theory in relation to the student movements of South Africa, "Unwilling to frame their struggle in terms of the universal values of dignity, security and equality, protestors have opted for the particulars of white privilege and black pain," arguing that this position serves more to antagonise than it does to resolve (Long, 2018, para. 5). "The stereotypical production of ethnic identity, its mass circulation and unthinking consumption become integrated part of a global identity politics which aims at erecting divisionary walls between individuals, leaving them entrapped in an unceasing senseless war" (Afrin, 2018, p. 133). The issue with the politics of identity is that it reduces the thoughts and actions of different people to a singular shared characteristic such as race (Jankie, 2019), thereby infringing on one's

right to a self-determined identity – or an idea against identity formation altogether. Speaking on identity in his later life, saxophonist Zim Ngqawana said, "I had to drop all of that…I don't consider myself African. I'm not interested in that. It didn't help me…I have no identity. I am not interested in identity because identity is false" (Muller, 2019, p. 120).

Regardless of the freedoms we have been afforded post-democracy, race remains a pressing issue in South Africa today, where the individual is often defined first by their racial classification. This has an alienating effect and can be a barrier that prevents the nation-building project imagined at the dawn of democracy. One of the participants who identifies her/himself as 'mixed-race' (the product of a white parent and black parent) reflects on the South African racial landscape, "I've always felt this sense of never fully belonging anywhere, never fully being involved in anything or being accepted." Another participant said of the Coloured community, "Coloured people really have a hard time finding who they are in the South African context. I've always dealt with issues of being a Coloured person in South Africa and what that means; at the same time trying to bring awareness to the plight of Coloured people." The dominant narrative of white vs black has excluded minorities who find it difficult to feel a sense of belonging.

The Coloured community, given intermediary status in the racial hierarchy during apartheid, was factionalised by conflicting ideologies within their communities – some wanting to belong to the dominant white population, and others looking to denounce the term 'Coloured' and align with the black population and its struggles (Adhikari, 2006). In a sense of constant marginality in pre and post-democratic South Africa, a common refrain amongst coloured people is, "[f]irst we

were not white enough and now we are not black enough" (Adhikari, 2006, p. 472). In the Indian community, "despite being 'at home' in South Africa and their public visibility through cuisine, dress and festivals, many continue to feel that they are not deemed to be self-evidently the face of the nation" (Desai & Vahed, 2012, p. 505).

The politics of an identity based on race as a primary indicator are problematic, in that they alienate the racial groups from each other, causing them to retreat into their enclaves. Participant 5 says, "other South Africans don't understand Coloured people and have a certain opinion about them." I believe this to be one of the many hangovers of apartheid that used 'divide-and-rule' as a tactic (Serote, 2020). Through a strong assertion of cultural identity – which can be justified as a drive to dismantle the destructive legacy of apartheid, this assertion can inadvertently further some of apartheid's ideals by exercising 'otherness'. Now, in a society free from prohibitive laws based on racial classifications, people choose to assert their identities primarily on apartheid-designated cultural identities. Said comments on this phenomenon saying that although the development of nationalistic pride is an effective counter to colonialism, it can turn into a "kind of fetishisation of the native essence and identity" (Afrin, 2018, p. 129). Where it is important and necessary to reclaim a sense of self in previously disempowered communities, Said warns that "if the assertion of identity merely becomes a manifestation of patriotic zeal, and if it fails to transcend nationalistic concerns and demands, then it gets transformed into a miniature version of western hegemonism, replicating strategies of colonialism within a particular location" (Afrin, 2018, p. 129).

Although in the colonial and apartheid eras, race was an effective measure of social privilege, the democratic era has made this correlation less obvious with the rise of the so-called non-white middle classes. Zwelinzima Vavi, former president of COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) concluded in an article for the Sunday Times, that South Africa was "getting more unequal and this is no longer on the basis of race but has more to do with class and living conditions" (Desai, Vahed 2012, p. 498). Many application forms today, still require that one state their racial classification within the option boxes given: White, Black, Coloured, Indian/ Asian or other. Speaking about the 'Indian' community, Desai and Vahed (2012) say, "the irony is that a poverty-stricken resident of Chatsworth and a 'Houghton-ite' whose families are multi-millionaires are categorised under the all-inclusive label 'Indian' and compete as equals for limited places in schools, universities and on the job market" (Desai, Vahed 2012, p. 499).

These contradictions are palpable in the lived experience of many South Africans. Participant 2 said "I found that more often than not I was also making statements about the inherent contradictions and tensions in post-apartheid South African identity. I found that what gave me a sense of meaning was that in undertaking this personal journey as a composer, I was in the process of trying to (in the world of culture) provide solutions to the tensions in these mutually antagonistic, violent histories that form post-apartheid South African identities."

5.2.2 Western gaze

With the growing popularity of South African Jazz on the global stage, there has been an increased exposure and access to the international jazz market. This, compounded with an

increasing number of musicians who choose to study at tertiary institutions in Europe and North America, has provided several platforms for cross-cultural dialogues. The global north, often with a pre-conceived notion of what it means to be African, at times plays the part of imposing their ideas on African artists and expecting particular identity enunciations – *their* conception of 'African' from African artists. Participant 2 speaks about an encounter after a performance in which an audience member said, "you need to bring more of the music where you come from into your process". Although this may not be hostile by intention, it imposes a construction of identity on the musician. Participant 4 echoed this sentiment, "there's some expectation that we should sound like what African music would've sounded like if nobody brought their ships here and a settler colony began."

This friction is not new and not unique to today's generation of jazz composers. Hugh Tracey, an English musicologist who recorded and archived a wealth of South Africa's indigenous music, became the A&R man (person responsible for record label signings) for Gallo record company in the 1940s. His bias was clearly in favour of unadulterated, indigenous sounds. Assuming the role of cultural preservation he, maybe unwittingly, marginalised music that went against his idea of 'African'. Alan Silinga, the composer of undoubtedly one of the best-known South African jazz standards, 'Ntyilo Ntyilo', was rejected by Hugh Tracey on behalf of Gallo because the music he was making was not 'traditional' enough (Ansell, 2005). During his exile years in North America, Hugh Masekela was encouraged by Miles Davis to play more 'traditional' South African music. Miles Davis said in his autobiography, "Every time I saw Masekela, I told him to

just keep on doing his own thing rather than trying to play what we were playing over here. After a while I think he started listening to me, because his playing got better" (Ansell, 2005, p. 229).

Merely as musical preference, such attitudes are harmless because everyone is entitled to their own musical tastes. Where it does become damaging, however, is when power is attached to this preference, or expectant enunciations of cultural identity are capitalised. If, as a generalised sentiment, western festival bookers and A&R people at record labels in their professional capacity, enforce their preference of what satisfies *their* idea of what African identity is, they are involved in a form of imposed identity construction. This places a weight on the African artist to ensure they are living up to the version of 'African' that is expected of them in order to access professional opportunities – and they are African!

Contrary to this, many South African artists have opted for a kind of universality with regard to their musical identity. The porous nature of musical influence on composers is evident in the South African jazz of today with a myriad of musics from which composers draw inspiration in a globalised world. Participant 4 went on to say about a favoured South African composition style, "I almost feel like there's a beautiful weaving of all influences in a very unpretentious way". The history of the cross-pollination of jazz in South Africa is long. A composition like 'Dedication – to Daddy Trane and Brother Silver' by Winston Mankunku, released in 1968 on the *Yakhal'Inkomo* album, was evidently inspired by contemporary American jazz artists he admired. Another, more recent, is a piece by pianist Nduduzo Makhathini entitled 'Tyner's Visit', which is possibly a tribute to the American pianist McCoy Tyner of whom he says, "I had always been

looking for a kind of playing that could mirror or evoke the way my people danced, sung, and spoke. Tyner provided that and still does in meaningful ways" (Blue Note, 2021, para. 3).

There has also been a significant awareness of the music of Mali in recent releases. Pianist-composer Thandi Ntuli pays homage to Malian singer, Oumou Sangare, in her song entitled 'Sangare'. 'Bamako Love Song' by the eclectic band *Mabuta* is another reference to Mali and its music. These references to music beyond South African borders are a gesture of openness, embracing a variety of musical styles and somewhat an assertion of universality. Speaking on the idea of universality, Makhathini references the ideas of influential older-generation musicians Zim Ngqawana and Bheki Mseleku: "They were trying to disown the idea of being a Xhosa or a Zulu music; they felt the tags were limiting and restricting them from universality" (Muller, 2019, p. 121).

In response and a concerted effort to free oneself from the restrictive perceptions of the 'western gaze', Participant 2 says, "for me it was absolutely essential to create things that would respond to that that would allow African-ness when captured by the western gaze as not a culture that is fixed in time, belonging to the pre-colonial era."

5.3 Composers as social spectators

Guided by the themes brought up by the participants, this segment explores the composer's awareness of the social – their social consciousness. Although this falls slightly outside the core theme of my study, I believe it provides important insight into the composer's perceptions around

social issues as spectator subjects, speaking independently from their musical creations. As members of society, they experience the social as a lived experience and then it is the individual composer's prerogative how they place their work (or perceive the placement) as a response to particular social issues. It is argued by some that all music is, influenced by the social context from which it is created – Ballantine (2012, p. 13), informed by the work of Theodor Adorno says, "we cannot seriously hope to explain the features of any music, or explicate its meaning in history, without precisely grounding it in a social context – including, importantly, its political economy."

This is a compelling argument for me and it has been interesting to note that possible interpretations which link a composer's work to social struggles are at times beyond their symbolic understanding. For instance, if a composer chooses to promote 'blackness' or 'black pride' through their art, it speaks to many interlinked social issues, about decolonisation, anti-blackness, and age-old systems of subjugation through western hegemonic signs and signifiers. Although not combative in approach, it seeks to dismantle a system by promoting the alternative.

In our current social-media dominated world, many are informed by bite-sized information nuggets which do not delve into issues substantially and have the effect of providing a cursory understanding of social movements and the rationale which underpins them. A good example is the biggest student protest action in the past decade in South Africa, #FeesMustFall, thought by many to be solely about financial exclusion in universities. However, in addition to protesting for free education, the #FeesMustFall movement was also about decolonised education and a

critique aimed at the slow rate of progress at universities over twenty years into democracy (Naidoo, 2016). Decolonised education is in part about making room in the education system for African-ness, and the critique of slow transformation is an attack on the 'Apartheid Hangover'.

So, if a composer composes a piece of music that is promoting black identity in the South African context, they are, maybe unintentionally, speaking to the same struggles as the #FeesMustFall movement despite Participant 5's statement, "I don't know how to write a song for the #MeToo movement or the #FeesMustFall movement - I don't think like that even though I feel passionate about those things." When asked the question, 'What, in your opinion, are the major issues affecting society today?', Participant 3 responded, "there's only ever been one issue that affects society and it's really anti-blackness or anti-black sentiments that have caused from (sic) slavery to apartheid, you know?" This response has stuck with me and through my research has shown to be an important thread that ties together many challenges we have faced and still face in South Africa.

In speaking about the participants' personal experiences of injustice, they were not hard-pressed to remember examples:

Participant 3 said, "growing up in the 90s and going to these new multiracial schools that were partly Afrikaans 1st language, English second language, and the refusal for them to call you by your first name. Finding your second name or your Christian name – partly, we've had these real

actions of violence but I think also subtle mundane ones are really the ones that mess us up psychologically. Just refusing to say your name, I think that can go a long way."

Supporting this sentiment about the subtle racism experienced in school, Participant 4 said, "in many ways, there's a very subtle way of saying that blackness is not okay in those places."

Participant 2 said "The politics of exclusion for me have been the biggest injustice… Just not talking to you because you're black… things you know which all of us people of colour have experienced in South Africa."

A reminder that all the participants were born in the late 1980s and have lived the majority of their perceptible lives after democracy. With exposure to government integration efforts in the early democracy through inclusion at racially mixed schools, the accounts from the participants shed light on the subtle racism they experienced. It is also worthy to note that the participant who identifies as 'white' could not mention an incident that warrants the description 'a personal experience of injustice'. As recently as 2016, the Pretoria Girls School learners staged a protest against hair policies which, couched in subtleties, were anti-black. At the forefront of the protests was 13-year old Zulaikha Patel. She told CNN in an interview, "The issue of my hair has been a thing that's followed me my entire life, even in Primary I was told my hair is not natural, it's exotic, my Afro was not wanted or anything like that and then the issue followed me to High School" (Vilakazi, 2016, para. 4) Participant 4 speaks on the hair issue, "I suppose we're living in a social media age so hearing about a girl whose hair was called untidy just because of how

the hair is, but those things were rife in those times. My nephew is allowed to wear dreadlocks to school now. That was just never [allowed] in our time."

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

What has emerged from my data collection is that composers are linked to their social environment and this is evidenced in the work they create. The differences and nuances are in the nature of the engagement with social issues. Whereas one composer may have an activist agenda that they choose to attach to their work, another may be merely describing the world around them. In either case, the composer is influenced by their social context. In either case, the works of the composers are engaged with social issues, whether actively or not.

My research question was premised on the notion of the active intention of a composer's work, by the composer, in line with an agenda linked to social issues or social justice. In addition, my interest was in examining the composers' sense of responsibility in directly responding to these issues. After conducting the research and studying the accounts of the composers, my understanding has developed into a realisation that engagements with the macro-social are

present, however indirect or complex. The individual is a microcosm of the society from which s/he emanates and as a result, her/his expressions are linked to their social context.

6.2 Answering the research questions

6.2.1 Secondary research questions

What is the nature of the relationship between South African social contexts and jazz composition in the minds of current South African jazz composers?

The nature of the relationship is broad and varied. The social solidarities expressed through jazz composition are many because music is an integral part of human culture - 'from the cradle to the grave'. And in African culture, music accompanies most social aspects of life. Young jazz composers in this day and age are expressing their social solidarities through their music, directly and indirectly. One can see a variety of themes such as children's songs, spirituality, enjoyment, healing, political expressions, identity and mourning. Depending on a particular composer's characteristic style and compositional priorities, one sees engagements with social contexts in a

myriad of ways. In addition are the solidarities of each composer, which differ in nature and intensity based on particular circumstances of each composer's lived experience.

For example, a 'Coloured' participant in the study openly spoke about the intention to use their music as a tool to highlight the stories of 'Coloured' people as a way to uplift their community. Similarly, in responding to 'anti-black' sentiments, a black participant spoke of the active engagement with these issues. Assertions of identity are a demonstration of engagement with wider social issues which tie into the major student protest actions seen in the past decade in South Africa. In addition to being centred on issues of economic access for previously-disadvantaged students, the #FeesMustFall movement was also critiquing the enduring apartheid signs and signifiers in the education system, leaving mostly black subjects feeling marginalised because of a system that does not celebrate their identity. So, in expressing sentiments of 'black pride', a composer is engaged in these wider social dialogues.

How has a democratic South Africa affected jazz composers' musical responses to issues of social importance?

At the beginning of my research, before conducting the interviews, I used texts which shed light on the engagement of jazz with the socio-political context of South Africa before democracy. The highly politicised nature of everyday life is apparent in the music - demonstrated by restless energy in the musical approach, song titles, song lyrics and verbal accounts by musicians and composers in interviews. The inescapable realities of the oppressive apartheid regime were a

daily struggle that marginalised communities faced in every aspect of their lives. The impetus to conduct this research is precisely based on this appreciation of the pre-democratic moment, and looking to compare this engagement with the sociopolitical engagement of today's jazz composers. What I have discovered through my research is that the cultural resistance (which included musical works) in apartheid South Africa was a tool used politically, conceived in solidarity with the liberation struggle.

To tackle the apartheid regime with any hope of victory required the struggle to organise effectively and therefore unite towards a common goal. Socio-politically informed arts collectives, formed in alignment with political formations engaged in the liberation struggle, were made up of activists, visual artists, writers and musicians. This cross-pollination of disciplines steered the artistic expression of the time into political statements informed by the aims of the struggle. After analysing the accounts of the participants of my study, although the current socio-political climate does not strong-arm artists into creating heavily politicised work, all of the composers are engaged and demonstrably aware of social issues in their music. In addition, my research shows that individual struggles echo some of the pervasive issues faced by society – especially issues around identity. This signals a change in the nature of composers' responses to the socio-political as opposed to a lack of, or diminished commitment to responding to pertinent social issues.

The prevailing conclusion for me is that the composer is always engaged in dialogues which occur within their social context and this is enunciated in various ways. The response to social

issues can be a conscious expression of solidarity with the politics that resonate with a particular composer. The expression of one's identity is also a socio-political response in a country where identity and culture have been suppressed and marginalised, since the arrival of the first settlers and still apparent in today's society.

6.2.2 Primary Research Question

What are the views of prominent young South African jazz composers regarding their musical responses to social issues in a post-democratic South Africa?

The composers had varied perspectives about their responses and engagement with social issues – specifically issues of social discontent. Some felt a strong sense that, as the adage goes, 'An artist should reflect their times' inferring that their music *should* work in solidarity with a cause of social justice. What informs this viewpoint is that the composer is seen as a commentator for their communities because they have an amplified voice that has the potential to reach many, and so aligning to the struggles of their communities is an effective way to achieve social justice. This sentiment is in agreement with the Nina Simone statement which inspired this research — "[a]n artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times," (Nina Simone, 2013).

An opposing viewpoint posed by other composers was that the composer should not have to attach a particular narrative to their work because music serves multiple functions within society. Music made merely for the purpose of enjoyment also performs a social function for instance.

My initial thinking around the relationship between social issues and jazz music was through a characteristic style of politicised engagement reminiscent of the protest art of the 1970s and 1980s. During my research, a realisation emerged from encountering the era of *Marabi* in the 1920s and 1930s — a style of music designed for enjoyment. I came to appreciate that this form of engagement is also socially-aware because it was serving the purpose of providing relief from the everyday struggles of oppressed communities. One of the composers noted that 'the individual struggles are echoed in the society' which begs the question, 'can the composer separate themselves from their society?'. Using this viewpoint as a basis for understanding, the composer is always engaged in a dialogue with social issues, whether or not it appears to be political or activist. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o provides this apt idea:

"The arts present us with a set of images of the world in which we live. The arts then act like a reflecting mirror. The artist is like the hand that holds and moves the mirror, this way and that way, to explore all corners of the universe. But what is reflected in the mirror depends on where the holder stands in relation to the object. Other factors come into it too: whether or not the hand has chosen, consciously or unconsciously, a concave or convex mirror, a broken or an unbroken mirror" (Thiong'o, 2001, p. 206).

What emerged as a major informing principle for individual composers' perception of their social engagement was their positioning in the sociopolitical landscape of South Africa. Ideas they formed about their outside world based on lingering apartheid racial classifications were among the major determinants. For the black participants, with easily identifiable instances of first-hand

experiences of injustice, their social solidarities are more likely to be aligned to issues of anti-blackness. For the Coloured participant, her/his solidarities are in line with the Coloured cause and using her/his voice – through her/his music to amplify the struggles of the coloured people - a sense of feeling that this community is marginalised in South Africa and the resulting need to address this. For the white participant – to borrow from the new age woke terminology, looked at her/his social solidarities in the South African context as an *'ally'* careful about cultural (mis)appropriation and bringing to the fore an acute awareness of any possible engagements with black culture that could be damaging, in light of the history of systematic subjugation. All of the participants demonstrated an engaged social awareness, conscious of the current social discourses.

South African society is a complex social fabric made up of an abundance of varied identity positions and intersectionality. The issue of identity was one of the major themes brought up in the interviews. The grappling with identity by composers is echoed in the struggles of society at large, whether the agenda is one of decolonisation or self-determinism – the assertion of one's conception of their identity. The South African composer's social context today is entangled in a web of forces and is constantly negotiating between the political, the economic and the social. The politics of identity also play a big part in the context of South Africa, which is hyper-racialised and pushes the individual into racial categorisation as a precursor to most human interactions. The composer finds themselves in a position of having to balance these forces and then place their expression somewhere in between. An important insight by Dizayi (2017) is that issues of identity are characteristic of post-colonial states. Participants were looking at where

they fit into the greater South African social context — an issue I believe mirrors a substantial portion of the South African population. Looking at titles of songs from the past five years in South African Jazz, one can pick up on themes around social issues — titles such as *Exiled* (Thandi Ntuli) or *Life and Death on the Other Side of the Dream* (Vuma Levin) or *The Evolution of an Undefined* (Benjamin Jephta). Whereas the 1990s and early 2000s may have had a greater abundance of hopeful themes, our current day is interrogating our progress since the dawn of democracy. Desmond Tutu's idea of a 'Rainbow Nation' has fallen short in many ways and this is reflected in the compositions of young jazz composers.

When I envisioned my research initially, I was thinking more about overt political statements being expressed by young composers. One of the composers noted that they had observed a more overtly political stance in the music of composers in the last decade. I think that this is a worldwide trend in the jazz world, which I believe influences South African composers. One can possibly attribute this to being a fashion of the time, to stand for something more social justice oriented within one's composition. One can hear this on albums in the last decade from North America – still the jazz capital of the world and still has, to this day, a profound influence on jazz expression in other parts of the world. I have noticed the increased use of spoken word with an activist agenda as well as titles that are overt in reference to topical socio-political issues. Where there is more literary content in the work, by way of song lyrics or spoken word, the composer frames a clearer intention of their agenda. I believe it is a characteristic of this era, the 'wokeness' culture, in which socio-political references are somewhat fashionable.

Looking at a composer's response as a means of gaining social justice, where the composer actively looks to achieve the ends of social justice through their composition, the engagement does not need to be overt and direct to achieve this. Another interesting finding was that some composers would have a certain meaning in mind when publishing a composition and the listener (based on feedback given to the composers) could have a completely different idea of what a composition means. In this scenario, whose meaning holds more weight? Symbolism is a theme that appeared when one composer said, by playing the music of a marginalised society in certain spaces can be an act of justice, in getting audiences to appreciate those sounds as a way of getting the audience members to be more appreciative of the people from which the sounds are drawn from. In this case, the composer uses sound as a tool as opposed to a literary means (title or lyrics) to realise their socio-political agendas.

6.3 Limitations to the study

The study has been a focus on thoughts and ideas expressed through the accounts of musicians and composers and literary components of their works – song titles and lyrical content, as a way to construct 'meaning'. The study did not, however, place emphasis on the sonic materiality of composition. This is because of the difficulty to confine the bounds of 'meaning' in what is predominantly instrumental music. My focus was largely on composition intention, as demonstrably framed through accounts by the composers themselves, and the literary cues which make the process of interpretation clearer.

6.4 Conclusion

It has been an enriching endeavour for me to take on and conduct this research. For me, as a musician and composer, it has shed light on the ideas around society and the way music can be used to contribute in a meaningful way. An important realisation for me was that the composer need not be explicit with politically-charged 'sloganeering' to be socially engaged. Music, a carrier of memory, a means to bring people of all walks of life together, at the best of times, can be a tremendous force for good that can inspire the best in people. Jazz in South Africa has, since its early days, been engaged in a bi-directional dialogue with its social environment and is often acting in light or in spite of this environment.

From the early days of South Africa's first jazz music, Marabi, music for a good time closely associated with alcohol and dancing – often overnight into the following days because of restrictions of movement, curfews and the like – was a way to escape the painful reality of black life. With the recognition that art and music could be used effectively to achieve social progress, musicians acted accordingly either by striving for excellence – thereby making a plea to the conscience of the oppressor by displaying a social value or by aligning to political formations which resonated with their cause as a means of achieving social justice.

A theme that has been the most profound discovery for me through my research is that of identity. In chronicling musical expressions over an extended time in history, one can see that identity has always been a significant point of interest for artists and composers in South Africa. The dispossession of pride in one's identity through oppressive regimes elicits the desire to

reclaim power in a sense of self which, amongst other expressions, takes the form of an assertion of identity or acts which promote ideas of pride in one's identity. The examples of this are many – In the 1800s, black composers affiliated with the British mission schools looked to create music that was 'Xhosa without distortion' in response to British missionaries who thought their culture was barbaric. One of the most enduring pieces of music in South African history, our national anthem, 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika', although syncretic in its combined influence of European and African elements, used ideas of African spirituality – in its original version the words 'Woza Moya' which translate loosely to 'Descend Spirit' show a concerted expression of Africanness in the musical composition. In later years in the 1930s and the 1940s, systematic interventions looked to uplift the African's sense of identity – the Bantu Men's Social Centre was an important performance venue and centre for conversation around the black cause; Wilfred Sentso who set up a chain of schools which looked to focus on African styles of instrumental performance or the *Pitch Black Follies* wearing their indigenous clothing during theatre performances in the 1940s. Partly influenced by the civil rights movement in Black America, and a more militant approach to protest, the black power and black consciousness movements emerged in South Africa with their accompanying songs. Songs like 'Senzeni Na' which ask 'What have we done, is our crime the fact that we're Black?' were direct in their protest and centred around identity.

With the turn into democracy in South Africa, the Government of National Unity, in the hopes of uniting an ideologically segregated society, looked for a way forward to promote 'social cohesion'. One of the strategies was music. The national anthem became an amalgamation of

songs, Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika with a popular Afrikaans song by C.J Langenhoven and M.L. de Villiers, 'Die Stem van Suid-Afrika' aimed at symbolising a united nation celebrating different cultures that make up the 'Rainbow nation'.

In our current moment, all of the composers alluded to some form of identity expression through their work. The fixation with identity in our current moment speaks to me about individual and collective identity confusions, and the quest still, to find pride in one's identity. Complicated further in the South African context by the racial classifications and hierarchical stratification of races which divided groups further – outside of black and white, were the categorisations of Coloured and Indian/Asian. These dynamics play a significant part in the ideologies of current-day South Africa and govern much of our societal dialogues, which extends to its music.

It is my hope that this research plays some part in documenting the current moment transparently and in so doing, provides an understanding which can lead us, as a South African society, to a brighter future.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Information

Dear Participant,

My name is Bokani Dyer. I am a student at the University of Pretoria and I am currently enrolled for a Master's degree.

Research topic: The study is entitled "Exploring jazz composition as an agent for addressing social issues - perspectives from young South African jazz composers".

Rationale/Aims of the study: The study aims to investigate jazz music by young composers in South Africa and its relationship to issues of socio-political importance.

What will be expected of you? Your participation will involve a semi-structured interview which will take approximately 45 minutes of your time. The interview will be audio recorded. The information and your identity will be treated with strict confidentiality. You will be provided with a transcript of the full interview for your approval. Due the global Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting need to reduce physical human contact, the interview will be conducted digitally through one of the audiovisual conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet.

Approval: The study will only begin after ethical approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria, has been obtained.

Risks and benefits: By participating in the research you will advance understanding of the perspectives of young jazz composers with regards to socio-political issues in South Africa. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. There are no risks or direct benefits in participating in this project. If you decide to withdraw there will be no negative consequences to you, nor will you need to explain your reason. You are encouraged to ask any questions you might have about the study.

Who will have access to the results of the study? The research will be handled by myself as principal researcher, and my supervisor. It will be used for academic purposes only. The data will be archived at the School of the Arts (Music) for a minimum of 15 years. During this time the transcribed data might be used for further research.

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor if you require more information about the study.

Kinds regards,

Bokani Dyer (Researcher)

(Signature of participant)

(Signature of supervisor)

Name of supervisor:

email:

Researcher name:

Email:

Tel.:

Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

Participant 1

Bokani:

Letter of information reads: My name is Bokani Dyer. I am a student at the University of Pretoria and I am currently enrolled for a Masters degree. Research topic: the study involves exploring jazz composition as an agent for addressing social issues, perspectives from young South African jazz composers.

The study aims to investigate jazz music by young composers in South Africa and its relationship to issues of socio-political importance.

What will be expected of you? Your participation will involve a semi-structured interview which will take an approximation of 45 minutes of your time. The interview will be audio recorded, the information and your identity will be treated with strict confidentiality. You will be provided with a transcript of the full interview for your approval.

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting need to reduce physical human contact the interview will be conducted digitally through one of the audio-visual conferencing platforms such as Zoom, MS teams / Google Meets. For now we managed to organize an in person meeting, (Which you said you were fine with so I guess that's okay).

Approval: The study will only begin after ethical approval by the research ethics committee of the faculty of humanities University of Pretoria has been obtained – which I have obtained.

Risks and benefits: By participating in the research you will advance understanding of perspectives of young jazz composers with regard to socio-political issues in South Africa. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. There are no risks or direct benefits in participating in the project. If you decide to withdraw there will be no negative consequences to you nor will you need to explain your reason. You are encouraged to ask any questions you might have about the study.

Who will have access to the results of the study? The research will be handled by myself as principal researcher and my supervisor. It will be used for academic purposes only. The data will be archived at the school of the Arts University of Pretoria for a minimum of 15 years. During this time the transcribed data might be used for further information. Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor.

Participant 1:

Perfect

Bokani:

Okay great I want to know if you're okay with that?

Participant 1:

Yeah, Cool

Bokani:

Brilliant. So yeah as I mentioned in the letter of information the study is called exploring jazz composition as an agent for addressing social issues. I have a series of questions to ask you, you are free to elaborate. Because my interest in getting your ideas and personal interpretation of things. So please feel free to express how you feel about the subject matter. Sometimes I'll, maybe chip in and make it conversational.

Question number 1: what is your view of music in society?

Participant 1:

I think music historically has such a significant role in society, in communities. Give the same level of importance as sustenance in terms of food, nutrition, in terms of your physical well-being. All of the things we give a level of importance to would give the same importance to in the well-being of society.

I would give the same importance to music but as a part of culture, as a part of the practice of the arts whether it is visual arts or dance or music. I think it's been the case historically around the globe, pre-globalization and it's evident now as much as ever.

An art form that to some extent the average person's life is almost abstract and ethereal in how it works. This is something I find quite fascinating as a practitioner and that fact that it is something of a mystical artform to the average person – to me is further evidence of the kind of primal need for music in people's life.

For something that you can't see but you can only feel on a physical level, vibrational and through your ears… to have such a meaningful place in (I think) probably most people's lives is significant evidence that it has a very important part in the well-being of people.

Bokani:

Thank you. Okay question number 2. What are your thoughts about a composer's role in society?

Participant 1:

Given that music in its… I think. Or let's say this. As a practitioner of any artform, once you choose to share your work and perhaps take it onto the level of professional practice, the creation of the work is no longer about you and your own personal journey. It's about storytelling, whether it's abstract or explicit storytelling. It's an artform that is then shared and once you pursue to share your own work with people you have much more engagement beyond your control – with people's imaginations and their own stories and histories. And some of this you can articulate through expressing stories that many other people can relate to whether in the form of lyrics or any sort of direct storytelling fashion? But if you endeavour to create music that tells stories instrumentally let's say as an instrumental music composer… I think you're still trying to convey sincere experiences of your own that reflect not only your inner world but your outer world. Things that you experience in your society, daily life, in the country you live and in the broader world. These stories will permeate your process whether intentional or not they will because your daily being is influenced by your surroundings. Your immediate daily life, your immediate community and beyond. Certainly in these modern times we see the news from all around the world and we are greatly impacted by global stories more than any previous eras, and this has a significant impact on your mental space just as an individual which then translates in your creation as a composer. So firstly you're affected by these things and they will find a way to influence your work (again whether intentional or not), now the fact is you're sharing... and this is your job. Much like a doctor has a job that involves patients, we have a job that involves sharing music.

So you have some level of influence as a composer and that is to be considered because whatever you share can greatly impact people far beyond your control or understanding which is really wonderful and so to have consideration of this in your intention when you're making music? I think that is important and very powerful and to know that whatever you put out there can have a profound impact on other people's lives. Even much bigger than the creative process itself had on you. And to just be aware of that is very important especially in instrumental music where you can feel a little bit more abstract than when working on a song for example.

Ummm. So you can move people in a myriad of ways with music. You can amplify certain feelings, you can uncover certain feelings across the whole spectrum and this I think is why music is so significant in society because it has a way to bring things out and enhance things that no other practice in the world can.

Bokani:

Umm number 3: What in your opinion are the major issues affecting society today?

Participant 1:

I think it's issues around race, heritage, capital, migration. Issues around ownership and belonging, issues around fear… Yeah that's it.

Bokani:

Okay, a follow up question to that is… Has any of your music (in your idea and in your opinion of course) directly or indirectly responded to any of these issues. And tell me just a little bit about your music and how it addresses these issues? It doesn't have to be directly or indirectly of course but basically just in your opinion of things, how do you feel like those issues that you highlighted? Does your music respond on some level?

Participant 1:

Music has an incredibly porous nature in that it absorbs cultural information. The modern music you hear is so coded with thousands of years of information. Things that any studied musician or musicologist is able to articulate in certain academic ways, to really unpack how many historical stories are coded in stories, rhythms, harmonies and rhythms. These stories tell things to you about migration patterns, about political tensions, about people breaking through political tensions. There's an almost, kind of a vast well of information to unpack in recorded musics where you can tell a great deal of detailed historical stories through this information. And what I'm interested in as a practitioning musician not only as someone who writes music, a composer, but as someone who plays music, is to delve into as many vast rich heritages of rhythm and harmony and melody as I can- in this short life that we have. Because that enables me to connect on a sort of deep level beyond my limited knowledge of history or anthropology. It feels as though I'm able to connect in a different way with an anthropologically global story. Whether it's playing rhythms from South America, West Africa, studying modalities from India. That kind of thing I think, it's much more than a nerdy pursuit, in terms of what it can give the person digging into these things.

If you consider that and then you go beyond that and hypothesize that if I were to play in an ensemble and everyone in that ensemble has an equal love for the dig into these vast musical styles and expressions. There's a lot to be said for how that goes beyond the constructs of borders, the constructs of visas, things like that. And I hope that it can have a significant presence that kind of pursuit and inquisitivity. I hope that can have an impact when it is performed for listeners because more and more there's been a rise of right-wing tendencies in government, in

policy makers, in this idea of borders. It's something that is marketed really well to those that were inclined already. So this world that is supposedly modern is kind of archaic and moving backwards in many ways. And through the practice of breaking boundaries in music I hope we can instil a sense of curiosity and inquisitivity in the listeners. Hopefully that music will also reach people who aren't that way inclined, which is maybe a little harder because they don't necessarily come to those festivals or whatever. But hopefully through that practice you can actually get that message out, and it's a coded message but I think it's a powerful one.

For me, if I think of the town that I come from and how there is (I think) amongst white people a considerable kind of racist fear thing and I think this kind of practice does have an impact in that I can go back and for example, play some of my music in those spaces. I think that because my music is instrumental, that kind of thing can make people think a bit. At least I'd like to think so… It's much more coded than if it was lyrical and direct.

Bokani:

Yeah thank you. You had said that with instrumental music maybe the meanings can be a little bit more abstract. So I'm interested to know what is your impetus for choosing the title of a track for a composition. What kind of influences your thinking in terms of choosing titles? Because some pieces are named something which kind of gives you a good idea of what the composer might have wanted to bring out of an instrumental composition or maybe what they were experiencing at the time. So I'm just interested, for you, in terms of your process and your compositions, how do you come about naming and giving titles to your compositions?

Participant 1:

Well one thing is like I'm always aware of the risk of cultural appropriation. I'm a middle-class white guy and so the majority of the musics I play are of black origin and I'm fully aware of that. It's a choice that I make because of what I'm attracted to musically, like that's all it comes down to, but I'm aware that I come (heritage wise) from a different space to those musics so it's very important for me to always be cognisant of that and be respectful of the roots of the music that I play – as best I can, and even if I won't always get it right, it's about being aware and keeping your eyes open, and learning as you grow. So naming something as Bamako love song was just that it was a tribute, it's not at all a purist song but it's influenced by music from Mali and so giving it that name was a way to show why it was composed literally as that tribute. It's not at all purist again, it was a way to add the nod to the music of the title.

So sometimes that is a way of consideration and it's always like proving I'm aware of cultural appropriation or anything like that. It's just actually me being mindful all the time, or trying to be. My titles aren't always like that though, sometimes titles are more abstractified and just based

on something of a fictional setting or scene. Almost like something you would have in a fictional title you would have in a novel, something like that, less attached to the genre. I try to be aware that if I've really drawn from a specific area of music or geographical location of music then I might have an inclination to pay tribute in the name.

Bokani:

Okay Cool. Please name some South African Jazz composers who you admire and can you discuss some themes that you've picked up in some of your compositions.

Participant 1:

I'll take Johnny Dyani for example, what's cool about him as a bass player is that he's playing on his recordings, that he's got… these traditions of Mbaqanga, Marabi, things like that like distinctly South African sounds- idiosyncrasies, in his playing that you don't get from anywhere else in the world. Then it's mixed with a free jazz sensibility that was somewhat global at that time but originally comes from African American traditions. And something of a pioneer to the bass world at that time because the thing about those South African grooves and genres is that they're entirely unique. You don't find them anywhere else. Obviously, you can find similarities between the harmonies and stuff like that but the distinct characteristics that quantify. So like if you're a bass player and you are learning the rhythms, the articulation, the placement. These styles – like I was watching the video of Themba Mokoena the other day with Billy Monama, and Themba's playing on the guitar is so hard to do. It's sooo hard to do. If you gave that to any super famous, high level jazz guitarist anywhere in the world? It would be really hard for them to get that correct – that phrasing, the articulation, where the notes come and how they play it. It's incredibly hard to do and you know, that's the music that hasn't been put in the same pedestal as American jazz or classical music. But it's incredible and there's only a few artists that can still play that stuff that way – the correct way, not like a sort of jazz version. So Johnny had that and that's amazing because he's probably one of the only guys who ever really got that on the double bass, on such a brilliant level. Herbie Tsoaeli has got it too. There's only a few cats but like Johnny really had it and then his distinct sensibility with free jazz just this hybrid of different worlds that came out of working with Chris McGregor and all those guys. Also, profoundly socio-political in his music as were all of the artists in exile at the time – but that's distinct. His ability to marry these worlds in a very organic way. None of the genres he was working with were watered down in any way. So Johnny Dyani is one of the few last innovators of the double bass. Johnny I'd say; for sure Abdullah Ibrahim, Bheki Mseleku, all the greats and I think the thing that is the thread amongst all the great South African musicians which we study, is that they brought these traditions that were so rooted in geographic things. Cape sounds in Abdullah's music, the ghoema, all these things and then merging it with the music of Duke Ellington, all those things. How distinct the areas that these guys came from, how distinctly that the music of these areas is deep in the DNA of the music that they played later on.

Bokani:

That's very interesting. Okay great, So do you think that there's a distinction in themes expressed across jazz compositions? If you compare a pre-democratic South Africa and post. What are your thoughts on that? I don't know if you've given it any thought but like if you look at democracy 1994 SA, the composers before and after. Are there any distinctions or things that you could note about jazz compositions specifically?

Participant 1:

Pre-94 there's a lot more political work in the SA jazz context, work thematically and so on. Post-94 I think there's a kind of celebratory feeling towards it. Almost like a return to home in a sense. Some artists returned from exile and things like that but a kind of feeling of relief and looking forward to a brighter future. Which I think is evident in some of the music of the late 90s in SA jazz. Which probably correlates also in the production which was more correlating and smooth sounding. But it's just interesting to think that a lot of the raw stuff which was protest heavy pre-94 was also more analogue sounding and warmer and shit.

Bokani:

Yeah [giggles]

Participant 1:

But then music from the 90s was very bright and heavy on the treble... hahaha

Bokani:

Celebration Times

Participant 1:

So then it became more of a mix of things where people are more critical of the mistakes that have been made post-94. I think there's more critical work being seen in the years. You know, like… in the last 10 years or something like that, coming into the fold then there was pre-94.

Bokani:

Okay, thank you. The next question I think you have pretty much answered. So you don't have to answer it but if there's anything you wanna add, it reads. As jazz is largely instrumental – in your opinion can instrumental music convey.

Participant 1:

I think I did cover that, yeah.

Bokani:

Okay, cool so the last question is: What is your personal experience of injustice, if any, growing up in South Africa. I might have follow-up questions from that as well

Participant 1:

Fuck, that's crazy… Okay ummm.

Bokani:

So personal experience, you know I'm thinking you can speak about your own experience as feeling victimized or you can express your feeling about seeing injustice. So feel free to answer it from different sides as well.

Participant 1:

I think it's more like, in my junior school especially because that was early 90s into late 90 (I guess the 90s), just a lot more prevalent racism, sexism, homophobia (even post-94) from the positions in leadership in a junior school. Which was crazy to see.

Bokani:

Do you feel like there was any injustice directed at you? I guess it's quite a big question, But I'm interested in your thoughts and your experience as it was related to you. It could be now or when you were younger. But I'm interested in your feelings towards that.

Participant 1:

It's weird because I don't think anything strongly enough to give the gravitas of the word injustice and that's because I'm a white person. I come from a privileged background. So that's a crazy thing. For me to actually give the word injustice to anything. I don't think it warrants that, to be honest. Umm. Yeah, it's weird. It's not that I'm coming out blank but like… directly against me? I don't feel that there is one. There's obviously mild indiscretions as a human being in life but injustice is such a big word do you know what I mean? I dunno, am I misinterpreting it?

Bokani:

No, not at all. I'm just interested in your feelings and processing of things. So if you say that there's no injustice and that's how you feel then that's the correct answer. I've just been thinking about it and wondering about people's feelings of injustice. Maybe you look outside of yourself because I know you pretty well. I know that you took part in the Fees Must Fall protests that happened a few years ago in Cape Town. That's an experience of injustice because I feel like you saw that this is something that is an act of injustice and you chose to be a part of that. So I'm also looking at those things, outside of the personal, whether it's you personally or outside of you that you experienced.

Participant 1:

Okay because Fees Must Fall was something that I believed rather than being something that was about my own experience. Certainly, I can't think of… you, there's so much mistreatment that I've been privy to as just a day to day South African who's trying to be on the side of working towards equality, equal rights for all, working towards the things we should be seeing more of in a modern South Africa. So the principles of human rights and working towards equality aren't being seen to or attended to in modern South Africa at all. If you look at the bigger picture, there's basic human rights which aren't being attended to, I mean in townships all over the country in so many schools and so on, it's just like beyond. There's definitely way more that I could do as a participant that's trying to be part of a more progressive society but I think there's a

list of hundreds of things more that we all should be getting behind. As a survival thing, people are only able to deal with their immediate thing, which is understandable as humans. Sometimes you can only deal with what's around you. It's a much bigger thing because it's around late-stage capitalism, regardless of your views on capitalism. Late-stage capitalism and the handling of a lot of the policies in South Africa has kind of put us in this position that leaves our trajectory with not much changing – on a fundamental level – quick enough. And so for me it's of interest to have active discussions with people around issues of capital, land, trying to work towards a more just society for all. So that moves beyond indiscretions, it moves towards basic equity. Subjects around minimum wage. Things like that which I think are really problematic in this country. Without addressing something of a radical level, a lot of issues really won't change and could get worse (in terms of poverty level and things like that). These are injustices that face us as a country so you can't be… (sigh) you shouldn't be nonchalant or indifferent about these things. No matter what your background is, for the country to move forward, grow towards the kind of promise that we all thought was gonna happen in the mid-90s. For us to actually get there we need the majority of people in the country. Certainly people with any form of (relatively speaking) money in their pocket. Should really engage with this discourse and actively engage with how things have to constantly be looked at. We're foxing a really broken country that's been abused for 100s of years. So it's not quick to fix.

Bokani:

Yeah, and then as a last follow up. Do you think there is space for jazz composition within these challenges of injustices? In what way can jazz composition add a voice to these issues that we are faced with.

Participant 1:

It's a tricky one because jazz is less of a youth market than it used to be, and a lot of these issues are often communicating with youth movements to take things to the ground. Having momentum behind movements, it is often younger people who are more energised so it is a tricky one. I think there's a lot more that can be done when you have lyrics attached to the music, you can rally people behind a thought much more easily. In terms of instrumental music? Well you could draw a lot of distinct, physical outcomes to grooves and rhythms and energy that you put into music. So if you're playing to a certain kind of crowd and the song isn't giving them a buzz that can send them in a different direction and certain mood then you have to take a lot of things into consideration a lot more factors. Who is the crowd in the room? It might just be a bunch of old rich white people and I mean what are they gonna do? Nothing. Hahaha or maybe not you know? [hahahaha] So a lot of that is also worth talking about you know, performance space and how music can be taken to the streets. I saw a video of the BLKJKS playing as part of the NAC protests. They're not a jazz band but one could have a certain kind of momentum towards people

when you are playing to people on the street for free. Versus in a club that costsR200 or whatever. But that's a different topic I guess. Umm yeah, I think that's it because you could also have a certain intention for an instrumental track and it's not how it's interpreted by anyone else. A lot of energy comes from rhythm and dynamics and shit so you could maybe push people in a way that energizes whatever they're thinking maybe? I dunno, it's tricky.

Bokani:

No man, thank you so much. I really do appreciate it.

Participant 2

Bokani:

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this. I know I've sent this to you but I just need your verbal consent to be a part of this.

Letter of information reads: My name is Bokani Dyer. I am a student at the University of Pretoria and I am currently enrolled for a Masters degree. Research topic: the study involves exploring jazz composition as an agent for addressing social issues, perspectives from young South African jazz composers.

The study aims to investigate jazz music by young composers in South Africa and its relationship to issues of socio-political importance.

What will be expected of you? Your participation will involve a semi-structured interview which will take an approximation of 45 minutes of your time. The interview will be audio recorded, the information and your identity will be treated with strict confidentiality. You will be provided with a transcript of the full interview for your approval.

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting need to reduce physical human contact the interview will be conducted digitally through one of the audio-visual conferencing platforms such as Zoom, MS teams / Google Meets. For now we managed to organize an in person meeting, (Which you said you were fine with so I guess that's okay).

Approval: The study will only begin after ethical approval by the research ethics committee of the faculty of humanities University of Pretoria has been obtained – which I have obtained.

Risks and benefits: By participating in the research you will advance understanding of perspectives of young jazz composers with regard to socio-political issues in South Africa. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. There are no risks or direct benefits in participating in the project. If you decide to withdraw there will

be no negative consequences to you nor will you need to explain your reason. You are encouraged to ask any questions you might have about the study.

Who will have access to the results of the study? The research will be handled by myself as principal researcher and my supervisor. It will be used for academic purposes only. The data will be archived at the school of the Arts University of Pretoria for a minimum of 15 years. During this time the transcribed data might be used for further information. Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor.

Are you okay with all of that?

Participant 2:

Yeah, yeah it's all good.

Bokani:

Okay so I have a series of questions that I would like to ask you and I'd like to encourage you to be as elaborate as possible in your answers, I'm more interested in your thought processes around the thing so the questions are designed for an open ended discussion of your thoughts and your feelings about whatever subject matter has been brought up so just feel free and I might chip in if I want to explore something a little bit further.

Participant 2:

No problem.

Bokani:

Alright, here we go, okay question number 1: what is your view of music in society?

Participant 2:

Can you repeat that? Your image disappeared completely as well as your voice.

Bokani:

Oh, sorry man, question 1 is what is your view of music in society?

Participant 2:

That's a really broad question, My view of music in society? Well… my view is music is an expression of the human condition and as such has multiple functions in society, functions that are involved in social bonding: so ritual functions, dancing for instance is another example of social bonding so obviously within the South African context music has taken on a variety of roles some of which have been political some of which have been a-political and these would include for instance during the struggle for the end of apartheid music functioned as a means of allowing black people to imagine a future self that could be empowered, could be proud and stand on equal footing etc. but also as a way of destabilizing the apartheid state, as a way of relieving themselves of the existential anxieties around apartheid etc. etc. So the way in which black people related to and constructed music during apartheid kind of summarises the multiple roles that music can take. It can be nonchalant, in other words just people hanging in a bar or a shebeen or whatever enjoying themselves as a way of bonding but it can also be something that is used as a very subversive, overtly subversive, political tool for example the chants during marches, struggle songs, etc, etc and everything in between of course so that's a very broad question to give a definitive answer to but it's undoubtedly a function of the human beings' capacity as a cultural being as a cultural being and a cultural actor. It functions in that world of culture as a means of expressing various aspects of the human condition.

Bokani:

Okay great. Like I said before I'm not really looking for definitive answers, just thoughts from wherever the questions lead your mind to go in is kind of what I'm interested in and perhaps as we progress in the questions you might have other thoughts that you'll refer back to. Okay great second question is what are your thoughts about a composer's role in society?

Participant 2:

A composer's role in society… Well I think it depends on a number of things. First of all it depends on the intentions of the composer. Being a composer can be a completely self-indulgent thing where you're completely divorced from the needs of society at large and you're just servicing your own curiosities in a way, and trying to realise your own self-actualization and all sorts of things. Of course the individual exists in social structure, so even if you're being completely individualistic in your aims they will resonate with a broader social structure. As

such there is going to be a constant interplay between your individual needs and aims and how they function in a social context. For me personally, it has always been about that balance. On the one hand trying to use music as a means of negotiating my own individual identity but in the process, realizing that that individual identity exists in a larger social structure. As such, either wittingly or unwittingly I am commenting on a larger social structure because my individual identity emerges as a result of the larger social structure and exists because of it. So there's this constant interplay and circular relationship between the individual composer's end and how they find voice and meaning in a larger social structure. For me, earlier on it was always about trying to understand what it meant to be half black half white, Jewish. Starting out working-class and moving into a middle-class kind of lifestyle. Being born in political exile and how to reconcile all of these contradictions and the way that they manifest themselves culturally. I also went to a very liberal and open school but it was predominantly white at the time – Sacred Heart College. So how to try and reconcile all these contradictory worlds into a coherent self that made sense in a broader, post-apartheid South African context. And those various contradictory ways of being found their meaning in music. So growing up I would listen to Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix because my dad listened to them. When I would visit my mom's family, or rather, my family in Swaziland I would listen to gospel music from traditional Swazi choirs. At funerals the songs sung were very steeped in neo-traditional forms. All of these things spoke to different elements of that tapestry of seemingly contradictory cultural and personality traits, and of course that set of contradictory cultural and personality traits was mirrored at a society level in South Africa because that is what South Africa is. It's this patchwork of contradictory, violent histories and the identities that are attached to that. So for me in the process of trying to negotiate my own personal identity through music, I found that more often than not I was also making statements about the inherent contradictions and tensions in post-apartheid South African identity. I found that what gave me a sense of meaning was that in undertaking this personal journey as a composer, I was in the process of trying to (in the world of culture) provide solutions to the tensions in these mutually antagonistic, violent histories that form post-apartheid South African identities. For me that's what my role as a composer, and thinker, and creator is. My music has always been to try and create an imagined space in which we can rehearse and perform ways in which those violent histories are negotiated. That's not some kind of crude rainbow nation-ism where we all say "everyone is equal, and all of these musical forms are equal, and they should all just exist in harmony, and we need to love each other because we're all equal"… NO. It's a recognition of the imbalances that exist culturally in those various forms and how we foreground previously disadvantaged histories in the process. This is to try and (in a musical and cultural sense) create a model for how these things can co-exist and create some sort of beauty through that. That either the performer can rehearse and perform that or the listener can get involved in a kind of ritual sense by sharing in that space. For me there is a sort of political and social context to my world as a composer but I wouldn't then go and say that universally you can prescribe that sort of work to all composers. I don't think that there is any job or specific status that a composer needs to have in society. I'm just giving you my personal vantage point and my own journey.

Bokani:

Okay, but you kind of alluded to something when you said composers' aims might possibly appear to be purely individualistic but you had also said something about the individual emerging out of a society. So no matter how a composer's work might be viewed, somehow they are emanating from the society in which they exist and their work is a reflection to do with society whether it is conscious or actively engaged in.

Participant 2:

Yeah, I completely agree with that. I read somewhere that the individual is like society in microcosm. So whether you are meaning to or not, you are always in some way commenting on the social circumstances in which you find yourself. So those aren't necessarily bound to national circumstances. But in the case of South African composers often it is bound to the notion of the nation state because of our history, and in other countries that isn't necessarily the case. But I would definitely say that as a cultural agent you are a social actor engaged in some kind of social commentary, even if you don't want to be. Of course one has to untangle intention from consequence because those are two very different things. You can intend on just doing something because you loved it but there's always a larger and broader consequence to that. You can be involved in analysing those retrospectively or be oblivious to them. That choice is 100% up to you. I think most musicians of the past want to draw that rigid distinction between being involved in the analysis that happens retrospectively and just performing and being a cultural agent. I think the boundaries between those two things are becoming increasingly blurred in the modern era. Musicians are wanting to actively engage in looking at the consequences of their actions and not only analysing retrospectively but really playing an active part in shaping the discourse around it. So really shaping themselves as particular cultural agents.

Bokani:

Thank you very much. Next question. What in your opinion are the major issues affecting society today?

Participant 2:

I think the major issues affecting society today. First of all at the planetary level it's quite obvious that we're basically destroying our planet – climate wise. No matter what side of the ideological divide you sit on, that thing will be the end of us unless we sort the problem out. For a lot of those from a working-class background this is a very alien thing to think about because they're more concerned with everyday matters of the stomach. I think secondary to that is that

we live in an increasingly globalised community and the way in which power flows in that globalised community or the way they've been set up, have been done on the backs of centuries of violent exploitation and dispossession. No one has really dealt with the legacy of that violence rather, that legacy has been reinforced and dispersed in a subtle way across all these structures in society. To give the most glaring example of that would a be a question like race where it's clear to see that the global north was built on the back of slavery. The reason why America could rise as a global power is because they were able to extract human labour and human capital through the slave trade and then basically make 1000% profit because they didn't have to pay for any labour. And the same can be said to all the nations in old Europe. Obviously over time people this was repugnant, morally, and so all sorts of legislative moves were put in place to try and solve this problem. None of those legislative moves solved the underlying philosophical problem; which is that this thing was justified with the philosophical tendency of the Enlightenment. In such cases, many people were placed in a different scheme or hierarchy. According to that hierarchy you lived in a certain way and that you had a certain place in society as well as function. Now that thing is very deep. That Enlightenment logic and way of ordering things (taxonomically speaking) is very much embedded in our way of thinking. It's never really been disrupted, every time there's been an attempt to disrupt that it has either led to legislative reform or those attempts being co-opted to some kind of institution. As a result on a broad mass global scale, those inherent tendencies and ways of thinking have never been resolved. For example in Europe what you would have is the rise of the social wealth estate as a means of trying to address these social economic inequalities and as soon as that social welfare state recedes and life becomes hard? People then fixate again, on these subconscious fears and ideas about how the human is arranged on this hierarchy. They fall back on these same fears. So now we see in northern Europe people are worried about immigration, worried about the new swart gevaar, or the yellow gevaar (however you wanna call it). And it's because there are these unresolved contradictions that are at the heart of what led to the global capital project in the first place. So all of these contradictions, and these contradictions go in the line of race, gender, the nation state, sexuality, they go along the lines of class. None of these internal contradictions have been fundamentally resolved. You can legislate change but you need to change it on a psycho-emotional level by having genuine dialogue and engagement on these issues. I think culture and music in particular have a large role to play in terms of trying to resolve those contradictions because as cultural agents we can provide spaces in which to interrogate, rehearse and perform all of the solutions to the problem. In the way that I suggested with my own ideas compositionally. So you can create a space which you use aspects of pre-colonial Southern African musics but at the centre of your process. That can then become a way of some neo-Nazi from wherever coming to your concert and listening and engaging in a ritual space with you, and questioning themselves in a way and being involved in a shared musical experience. Of course it's not a material thing like giving money to a disempowered Khoisan, that's very important, but it's waging a war on a different front, on a level of signs and symbols and signifiers. So yeah.

Bokani:

This actually leads into my next question which is: has any of your music directly or indirectly responded to any of the issues?

Participant 2:

Yeah and for me that was really clear but I think part of the reason why it was so clear is because my conception of music developed in large although not exclusively as a response to having lived in the Netherlands for 6 years. And experiencing these subtle subconscious methods of exclusion that are in operation in those supposedly liberal states in the global north and as a way of responding to that within the level of the cultural sign, symbol and signifier; I developed my ideas around music and composition. So something that would often be said to me is "Oh you speak very good English for someone from Africa" or I remember at the end of one of my exams, my teacher said to me "you need to bring more of the music where you come from into your process" which I took to be very offensive because for me I had great passion for the music of Charlie Parker and Clifford Brown and all these people I transcribed were, for me, they were an accurate representation of what it meant to be black, South African. A reflection of my own existential subjective position of being black South African. But because they had a set idea of what it meant to be black and South African it was inconceivable for them that these things could be a legitimate, authentic way of expressing your black South African-ness. So for me it was absolutely essential to create things that would respond to that that would allow African-ness when captured by the western gaze as not a culture that is fixed in time, belonging to the pre-colonial era. But rather one like every other culture in the world is emergent. We receive a variety of cultural signs and signifiers and we respond to those in an authentically South African way. So you listen to the music of umm I don't know Robert Glasper and feel a sense of ownership just as much as an American does. It's completely different to someone who lives in New York but you respond to that music in an authentically South African way and when you incorporate it into your own process, it's not an incorporation based on imitation. It is an incorporation based on you reflecting in an authentic South African way on the South African condition and then consolidating that into your artistic process. As such, when you translate that cultural sign, signifiers through your own music – you are responding to the South African condition. That way of being, this notion of Africans as emergent cultural actors doesn't exist in the global north's imagination. The only authentic way to be African is to wear a traditional cloth or a dashiki, hat or whatever. Only then are they like "Now this person is African, we can see it". For me it became very important for me to destabilise that but not only that, to say the knowledge systems we have in South Africa and Africa in general are valid knowledge systems that have been suppressed for too long and not viewed as legitimate forms of knowledge and cultural production on their own terms. There has been a mirroring of colonialism in the cultural sense, especially within contemporary classical music where you literally find composers, large portions of modern 20th-century modern classical canon comes from a kind of cultural colonialism where you go in, look at the structures and treat them with a very ethnographic gaze. You analyse and deconstruct them then you just bring them into your own process as secondary

actors in that process. I also wanted to respond to that. So from my 4th year it became very important to me trying to generate a sound that on one hand empowers marginalised black African histories but on the other hand reveal African cultures and identified rather than fixed and locked in a certain place. That has continued to be more or less (ideologically) what informs my process.

Bokani:

Great, thank you. Umm what is your impetus when choosing a title for a composition?

Participant 2:

Yes, in the beginning it was very much a self-conscious thing of trying to reference what I was trying to do in an activist sense. And then tying those things to song titles. On my first album *The Spectacle of an-Other* the album title comes from an essay written by Stuart Hall. So it's very clear that there's a two to one to the academic literature that I was reading and a musical outcome that I wanted to achieve. For my second album *Life and Death on the Other Side of the Dream* I got very much into the writing of Louis L. Gordon who describes himself as a black existentialist. For me it became more important to focus on the idea that one could view black people as existing outside of their struggle for equality. They could simply be viewed as human beings with the same struggles and desires as the rest of the human race. They fall in love, they worry about where the next meal is gonna come from, they go outside for a walk in the sun. It's not always about the struggle, there are also everyday ways of trying to find meaning and value and existence that black people have as inherent to their character. By emphasizing that aspect of black being, that in itself is in a way. And then *Antique Spoons* was almost like a love letter. Because I'm black how often is that you… well I mean now you see it more now because we've basically realized there's a market for it. But before, in like the last ⅘ years. If a black person was given a lead role it would only be some kind of a historical movie about slavery or whatever. There was never a romantic comedy where your black person is a lead. Unless it was a black movie, for black people. Anyway that album *Antique Spoons*: Politics of love lost etc. the reason why this has a political dimension is because it is a political statement to advocate for black people as purely existential beings. You can't just be a lover and a husband and whatever, the deaths in America prove this. Black dude from South Africa who was just killed was literally just that. He inevitably got ensnared in the political structure of life in America. So yeah the naming of titles changed depending on what my artistic goals were, there's almost never a purely musical name for a title. So it's never like "Oh I used 5/4 so this song is named 5" hahaha or other cases. Which is fine, people can do it but for me it's never been so much the case. It has also not always been purely political. For instance *Antique Spoons*' titles come from key memories I had in that relationship. Or the end of that relationship. *Life and Death in Dream* is more of a relationship between the existential and the political.

Bokani:

Great, thank you. Umm please name some South African jazz composers whom you admire. Can you discuss some themes you have picked up in some of their compositions?

Participant 2:

In terms of what I consider my older generation are guys like Marcus (Wyatt) and Carlo (Mombelli) which is strange because they're not that old. I have a unique journey in South African jazz because I'm not steeped in that canon. So a lot of people will talk about Winston Mankunku who I love, Abdullah Ibrahim, the sort of Godfathers of South African jazz in a way. And I don't emerge from that tradition at all. I emerged from a much later strand, I grew up listening to the music of Marcus and Carlo basically, and through them I discovered everything else. What I like about Carlo's music is his use of sound, texture and dynamics. So rather than focusing on changes and melody it's really about the dynamic arc, the textural components of composition, the use of reverse and this concert where he had his daughter playing video games. The use of bells and prepared instruments and philosophically I like it as well because it is 100% South African, there's no doubt about that but it doesn't use any of the tropes that I was referring to before where you have people reflecting on the on the existential subjective context of being a South African but without the overt reference to what those traditions may or may not be. With Marcus it's a bit the opposite where he did use the tropes, especially his second album *Africans in Space* (which is my favourite album of his) there is a lot of the archetypal chord progressions we find in traditional South African music; so the I-IV-V, the use of modal progressions, odd time signatures to clearly abstract upon the passages in bow music that you find. But that, in total and complete conversation with forms that are outside of that, forms from western art music: European jazz and American jazz. It's super clear in his music that he found a way of consolidating all the influences and therefore advocating for the idea that SA jazz exists at a global level. It is not just a regional thing and as such South Africans exist as global cultural actors. Also this idea of reconciling mutually antagonistic histories that I spoke about earlier, later I heard that music of guys such as yourself, Nduduzo. In particular Nduduzo's later music has been very influential in the work that I'm undertaking at present. Ndabo as well. Not only are we at a conceptual level of consolidating ideas from African traditions (I-IV-V / odd time signatures). At a complete technical level you literally use those instruments and practitioners in that music and that adds a layer of textural breath to the music that I find incredibly beautiful. But then also we try to look more at the practices in that music. The ritualistic practices of that music and how we can place those practices at the centre of your process and allow them to inform your music making. So I would say that those are the three main things. The textural thing (Carlo), from Marcus and then of course through him Abdullah. This notion of hybridity and all of the political and musical consequences of that. Much later on from guys like Nduduzo and Ndabo with what they're doing now, tradition but tradition where you're placing it much like

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o advocated for: "adopting the liberating perspective and really placing it at the centre of the process", and allowing your own theoretical and political concerns to emerge from placing this thing at the centre rather than bending it to your will and your own musical vision.

Bokani:

Great, thank you. What are your thoughts regarding themes expressed in jazz compositions in pre-democratic South Africa?

Participant 2:

In South African composers or in general?

Bokani:

I think South African composers because what I'm kind of looking at is 1994 as being a turning point and looking to see if there is some kind of distinction in commitment to an active commentary of matters of social importance. I ask this question looking to see if there are any overriding themes pre-94 just being in a democratic state. So yeah, give me your thoughts around that?

Participant 2:

For me questions about cultural production are mirrored at musical production and what I mean by that is within black life there has always been on the one hand people who want to focus on existential matter some people who want to focus on political matters, again the most crude example would be people making movies about slavery. So I'm being super extreme about my characterisation but it's just to give you a very clear idea of the spectrum. And, I believe in South African cultural production that what is common to both of those, is that irrespective of the aims they end up being political undertakings. Whether they want to be or not, to go right back to the beginning, because the individual is a social actor and as such is a political actor. If you're a black person, even just writing a black romantic comedy is a political statement. So having said all of that. In pre-democratic South Africa, my sense is that those two polls on people existing on the spectrum existed. And so you had highly politicised acts of cultural production and you also had people who just jamming and blowing. To me, oddly enough, I think they're called the jazz messengers? What were they called again? Yes, jazz epistles. Those guys in my opinion were

more interested in making music for the intellectual intrigue in a way. They were really trying to imitate the intellectual and technical innovations of bebop. And on the other end of the spectrum, oddly enough would be something like Abdullah Ibrahim's Mannenberg which is clearly a political statement. Or even more extreme would be the whole Amandla thing that happened in the 80s when Jonas Gwangwa and them traveled around the world. I think that those tendencies have continued into post-apartheid. You have people who are very politically orientated in their production. Mandla is a very good example of that and then you have other people who just wanna make music because they don't consciously have a political aim in their music making. I would for instance say someone like Sisonke's first album would be an example to me where it's just "Oh I like the sound of this, this and this and I wanna play. This is just me making something that I think sounds beautiful". Of course it changed over time. I think his second album, while not necessarily activist, is clearly political. It's about the negotiation about identity in some way or another. So I think that these things exist on a spectrum in black cultural life in general. But that spectrum cannot be divorced from the overarching position that black people find themselves in which is as political actors. So even if people just want to write love songs as some people do, or just want to celebrate traditional music as some people do, they are unwittingly producing highly politicised cultural objects. So one would have to distinguish between intention and consequence. To go back to the beginning of what I was saying. Ultimately, I guess it depends on what you're trying to investigate. Yes I agree with you that in general, from an intention standpoint, music being involved in political life. Music not jazz, jazz I wouldn't be too sure of because like I said intention and consequence are two different things.

Bokani:

Thank you. Ummm you've probably answered this but I'll ask it anyway if you have any further thoughts: As jazz is largely instrumental – in your opinion can instrumental music convey and how do you do this in your music?

Participant 2:

Yeah, I agree that the signifier in instrumental music is a lot more complicated than those where music has words. It's really clear that meaning in instrumental music functions in interesting ways. I think it's disingenuous to say that instrumental music is not a signifying system. Some would say that the moment you remove words all meaning is lost. But this is not entirely true because even with words there is a diffusion of meaning. So you can say something but you can speak in idioms and in the process of speaking in idioms the words don't necessarily mean what they mean on the face of things. So a cat can be a cat that you see but in an idiom a cat can be something very, very different from the cat that you see with your own two eyes. I think that instrumental music exists in the world of metaphor and certain things have, over time gained meaning through a snowballing effect. So when you hear a I-IV-V chord progression, because

that thing has been played to death over the past 100 years, you know what images it evokes with the collective unconscious of the South African's mind. In other words; from a metaphorical and rhetorical standpoint, that regression or musical trope has gained particular meaning. When you combine different progressions or musical tropes that have over time gained meaning, you're able to make statements of emotion. And evocation more than statements like "that is a cat, that is a dog", statements of implication. I think that is the kind of level in which meaning functions in music. It's slippery but it still exists. But then again, I think that meaning in all spheres of life is slippery. So for me, the way I use it was really that. There were certain key tropes that I liked and I tried to find ways of making them speak to each other. Of course in the beginning it was very obvious, ummm with a song like in 'The Interregnum' form my first album it's super clear. It starts with a I-IV-V and then a modal thing and then there's an odd time signature that comes from Moses Molelekwa's kind of vamp. So it's super clear what the references are and if you're a person in the know you can understand how that song functions on the level of metaphorical signification. Later on I tried to still make those statements but make them far more implied. With an album like *Antique Spoons* the song 'Palmas', there are elements of prepared music there, elements of Zimbabwean music, Carnatic music, contemporary western music at the harmonic, melodic and structural level. All of these things sort of play together with one another in a way that's not immediately clear to the listener that this is a South African xyz. To me that's how I do it.

Bokani:

Okay thank you. So my very last question is: What is your personal experience of injustice, if any, growing up in South Africa.

Participant 2:

Several experiences of injustice, I remember going on holiday with my family and everyone staring at us because my brother is black, my sister is black, my other sister is coloured (mixed race like me), my mom is black, my dad is white. So we would all rock up on the beach together and some fancy beach in Durban and you can imagine how people looked at us hahaha. When we wanted to go to the shops to buy things, people wouldn't talk to my mom, they would talk to my dad. I always felt like I was on the outside growing up. So I always felt like even when I was hanging out with my friends from Sacred Heart who were more or less race blind at that age. It always felt like oh but they look different to me because mostly they were white. I hung out with black friends because my IsiSwati wasn't so good. I eventually just stopped because I was embarrassed that it wasn't so good and they would make fun of me. Of course they didn't make fun of me to abuse me or something, this is a common cultural thing. If you're bad at something as a kid you know how you'd make fun of a kid but it's a kind of loving thing. People used to call my brother the black shadow because he was so dark. My dad got super angry but it wasn't

like a racist thing, just them making fun of him because he's really black. His black friends obviously because if it was his white friends that would've been different hahaha. So I've always felt this sense of never fully belonging anywhere, never fully being involved in anything or being accepted. That's just always an overwhelming feeling that I've felt and probably unfairly that I carried with me into my adult life. So it's a pathology that I've carried with me always in a way that is reinforced by some things that have happened later in life of course. The politics of exclusion for me have been the biggest injustice and those would range from very subtle things to very violent things like people calling you a Kaffir and not wanting you to go into certain places because you look a certain way. Just not talking to you because you're black like really extreme things you know which all of us people of colour have experienced in South Africa. So yeah for me the sense of injustice has been real and been there but not to the same degree as somebody who is living in the township, is poor and is fucked basically. But definitely in other ways I have and in music I try to create a world in which we can understand how to manage and process that injustice. It does exist, it will always exist, so just trying to create a naive rainbow nation like a lot of our white compatriots like to do, many of whom I respect, say things are completely equal. They may feel a sense of injustice and I may empathise with them but I just don't believe it. I don't believe things are very cool, I believe the world is very unjust and power relations between races still exist. On all levels! Even if you're a really, really rich black dude. Yes from an economic standpoint you may be emancipated but the struggle is still real for you in other ways. So yeah, that's been my experience of injustices in South Africa.

Bokani:

Great. Thank you so much for your time.

Participant 3

Bokani:

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this. I know I've sent this to you but I just need your verbal consent to be a part of this. So the letter of information reads: My name is Bokani Dyer. I am a student at the University of Pretoria and I am currently enrolled for a Masters degree. Research topic: the study involves exploring jazz composition as an agent for addressing social issues, perspectives from young South African jazz composers.

The study aims to investigate jazz music by young composers in South Africa and its relationship to issues of socio-political importance.

What will be expected of you? Your participation will involve a semi-structured interview which will take an approximation of 45 minutes of your time. The interview will be audio recorded, the

information and your identity will be treated with strict confidentiality. You will be provided with a transcript of the full interview for your approval.

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting need to reduce physical human contact the interview will be conducted digitally through one of the audio-visual conferencing platforms such as Zoom, MS teams / Google Meets. For now we managed to organize an in person meeting, (Which you said you were fine with so I guess that's okay).

Approval: The study will only begin after ethical approval by the research ethics committee of the faculty of humanities University of Pretoria has been obtained – which I have obtained.

Risks and benefits: By participating in the research you will advance understanding of perspectives of young jazz composers with regard to socio-political issues in South Africa. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. There are no risks or direct benefits in participating in the project. If you decide to withdraw there will be no negative consequences to you nor will you need to explain your reason. You are encouraged to ask any questions you might have about the study.

Who will have access to the results of the study? The research will be handled by myself as principal researcher and my supervisor. It will be used for academic purposes only. The data will be archived at the school of the Arts University of Pretoria for a minimum of 15 years. During this time the transcribed data might be used for further information. Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor.

Are you okay with all of that?

Participant 3:

Yeah, I'm okay with all that. Who's your supervisor?

Bokani:

Magheshan Naidoo.

Participant 3:

Okay cool.

Bokani:

Okay cool, so I have a list of questions to ask you based on my subject matter and I'm looking for you to be free to elaborate on your thoughts and just feel free to not hold back on your questions. Sometimes I might ask more questions to open up the discussion but I feel as though it's more of a discussion than anything else.

Participant 3:

All good.

Bokani:

So, the first question is, what is your view of a musician's role in Society?

Participant 3:

Yeah, no I think music plays a varied sort of roles in society. It also depends which society we speaking about. But in a sort of general, nuclear society. Which we would call under many cultural like societies. There's different roles that music plays. But also, when you come to think about the music role in a metropole like Johannesburg I think the function of music takes on a different spin. So I think music's function varies in societies but I also think it always has a particular functionality from wherever it's birthed. I don't know if I've answered you [giggles].

Bokani:

Totally, I think what also happens with these questions is when we get deeper into the question then you might [Participant 3 interjects: "yeah reframe it "] the other question. Exactly. Yeah. I'm totally happy with that and that's cool. Thank you. Okay question number 2. What are your thoughts about a composer's role in society?

Participant 3:

I think the composer's role is important and also problematic in a sense that the composer becomes the individual in society who is able to synthesize how everyone else is feeling. So I mean there's always been a tension between the individual and the communal. So when we think of music that is practiced within a community? The composer always becomes a blur… like who composed the song? I think the idea of the composer is generative in a way that composers become sort of like artists who are able to think through whatever a community is going through. But there could be problematics in that kind of assertion in speaking for other people.

Bokani:

Yes yes, okay. Thanks, that's very interesting. Okay so do you think there's a sense of responsibility? That question for me is speaking more in a sense of responsibility. Do you feel that there is any responsibility that a composer should take on?

Participant 3:

Yeah no definitely. I think there is a heavy responsibility because somehow even as part of the community we all have to pull our weight. You know? For the communal output. And so in that sense I would look at 'composer' from that perspective that he's got that responsibility with his work, that whatever he's doing meets that integrity and honesty to the very same community he's indebted to. But then of course, complications arise in terms of freedom of speech and freedom of thought. So I think there's always a complex relationship and that's where the complications arise. The things that you must adhere to and the things that you can say no to. And I mean this depends accordingly with each undertaking. But I think there's a heavy responsibility to be able to have that kind of awareness or those kinds of optics to be able to see when you should follow or when you should lead.

Bokani:

Mmmh, mmh, okay great thank you so much. The next question is: What in your opinion are the major issues affecting society today?

Participant 3:

Man there's only ever been one issue that affects society and it's really anti-blackness or anti-black sentiments that have cause from slavery to apartheid, you know? We can cover those up

with money and with capitalism and Marxism but I think there's a fundamental thing that we need to sort out in global relations. So it's only ever been one thing… I think [hahaha].

Bokani:

Okay, a follow up question to that is… Has any of your music directly or indirectly responded to any of these issues. And tell me just a little bit about your music and how it addresses these issues or how it is engaged through your music? So like commentary, you know, whether active or inactive. If you could just discuss how you would place your music in response to these issues.

Participant 3:

Yeah, Of course I mean I think we've always engaged (whether we like it or) in a political act. There's a saying that the personal is always political. So my music has always been engaged in that thing and a song that can sort of really exaggerate on that motion comes from my first album; a song called 'Slaves Emancipation'. The name of the album is called Project ELO and the song is called slave emancipation. So even in that song we were thinking through the idea of emancipation vs freedom because there's a distinction and I mean this is also part of a study that I did for my MA and looking to go through it again for PhD now. Also the incapacity for me to be able to speak about such a situation. There's always a thing about our music that is a suggestion towards these big ideas but there's also something of failure that happens in trying to describe that moment. Trying to describe this moment of emancipation within that song I think that what I was always trying to do was gesture towards those kinds of places in the past. But also there's a failure in that thing because obviously the music is really involved or rather engaged (I like the word that you used to sort of describe).

I think it's engaged in the back and forth of saying one thing but also at the very same time failing at that thing because again, the music has to be commodified. It has to be sold. So there are so many things that play into the chain of the whole thing. So there's always been engagement within the music and my music in particular in terms of socio-political landscape and all these things that politically have always been tied toward a black sonic in particular. I've always been interested in this thing from the blue notes, Louis Armstrong, carry on. There's so many spill outs of music but also art in general that speaks about these conditions of political struggle. So yes my music has always been speaking towards these things but I also think there's a failure in this. There's this project that I've been trying to do and I've released a couple essays speaking about the black sonic and this idea of the political thrust and also this idea of being involved in a project of failure; how does one come to terms with that?

Bokani:

Okay thank you. Next question is what is your impetus in choosing a song title, are there non-musical related questions that influence your decision?

Participant 3:

Yeah definitely like we were saying, there are all these instances where songs… Yeah I'm thinking now in particular that song (maybe to bring it to South African contexts) 'Yakhal' Inkomo' by Mankunku. There was a particular thing around the 70s of people dying. So there was this thing of the bellowing cow umm and then Wally Serote also writes poems of 'Yakhal'inkomo'. Speaking of the crying of the bull whenever one of his friends is being murdered or massacred. So I mean there's always those links outside of the music. Definitely yes we look elsewhere, well I look elsewhere for music and for titles.

Bokani:

And following on from that what is the intention? Is it to influence the listener to direct their attention in a certain way?

Participant 3:

I think you're right, I think title or rather, language can do that because it's sound there is no actual interpretation of what an actual note can say in terms of linguistics whatever you know? So I think titles do help that framing of a thing so yeah definitely.

Bokani:

Yeah that's also one of the questions that comes later but I'll ask now. Because jazz is a largely instrumental music. It's interesting to speak on that framing and sort of what messages can be conveyed in the sound. And that's kind of my interest in where the title lies because it makes me ask the question about the intention behind the title and the kind of framing musically.

Participant 3:

Yeah, yeah.

Bokani:

Okay Cool. Please name some South African Jazz composers who you admire and can you discuss some themes that you've picked up in some of your compositions?

Participant 3:

Umm, does it have to be contemporary within your focus?

Bokani:

No, I think I'm open to discuss. I guess my interest would just be if you covered a few but not all from the same era that would be great for me.

Participant 3:

Okay cool. To start with the 60s or 70s umm Gideon Nxumalo who did Jazz fantasia at the Wits great hall. That for me is canonical in terms of South African composition and South African jazz playing. I mean from all the jazz cats that were there from the Kippies. And this was actually earlier I think… mmm, I don't know when this recording happened actually now I have to go find out le nna. So all these cats also his compositions. The big band open arrangement, I think it really was truly something special in terms of compositional abilities and also orchestration in terms of orchestrating the band, the right people to do the right parts. Of course Dollar Brand Abdullah Ibrahim for the breadth of work and thinking about space in playing. And Chris McGregor, Blue Notes; that sensibility of big orchestrations, I'm really interested in the idea of big orchestrations but also in these big orchestrations which don't necessarily involve extensions in terms of harmonic expansions. So how to deal within a 7th with such a big sound and such a big band. How to play these sort of small intervals and how to keep those swinging. And then of course bra Lu (Louis Moholo) the few that he has done just around the voice have been special for me to see all the ways you can work with voice and drums. Andile Yenana… you know I can think of ummm bra Herbie. I mean there's so many from that generation you know? Your dad. Like there's so many cats from within the generation that had a post-bop with a South African turn. From all the horn players Mankuku's you know? There's so much in terms of compositions from these things that happened in the 40s. And when you think 40s you think World War II, so to think already during World War II these guys were playing like that. It's fucken crazy. So from there to know and obviously with all the cats doing work, yourself included… bo Mandla, bo

Nduduzo, bo Ayanda. All that breath of composition that has all these things. It's amazing to check out the lineage and be a part of it somehow.

Bokani:

Sure, thanks. Okay. The next question is… So I'd just like to look at the year 1994 as a turning point in South Africa's history. Or maybe not if you don't think so – it's completely up to you – but I'm interested in your thoughts around jazz composition. Do you think there is an apparent distinction that you can pick up pre-94 and post-94 in terms of jazz composers and their responses? It's totally open to how you think because I obviously don't want to influence you by narrowing the question too much but I'm interested in that time; before and after. Do you have any thoughts about jazz composition in response to issues that were very prevalent in that time, compared to now? Do you think there's a difference in terms of matters of political importance when it comes to a general overview?

Participant 3:

I think it's interesting that you're doing this thing now because I just enrolled for a thing now ko Wits in politics, a PhD that I'm doing in politics. So it's looking at the sonic you know? So it's an interesting thing to crack through and the question you're asking in terms of pre-94 and post-94 could also be argued in a way e reng post-94 cats were allowed to really study in these universities – Natal being a prime example where post-94 all these cats were studying there. Even pre-94 but there's a thrust that happens post-94 in terms of jazz education and just access to education for black people; that propels a better skill set in terms of the practice itself. I think that's the change that happens. Where pre-94 most cats were self-taught, or community taught. Post-94 there's a real open in terms of universities and places of higher learning that then taught these things and sort of makes it possible for an industry to be built. And there was an industry before but I think in terms of jazz it was always sort of mixed. You could never – and again the problematic term of jazz, so when you say jazz are you referring to the 1920s big band sound from the Americans? Or are you talking about the 1960s 1950s blue notes sound – which was very not what we talking about in terms of form and structure. The avant-garde was always the swing, post-bop, bebop and all these things. So to be able to know all these technical terms comes post-94. To be able to speak music periodically about music go re "this is what's going on, and this is the style". I think this is the great shift that happens. I don't know if it takes away from the music or if people were playing even harder before because they needed to learn so much more than us who were fortunate to go to universities and study.

Bokani:

Okay thank you. I'm also interested in themes around what people might have been going through. So you know Soul Jazzman – 'Inhlupheko'. Or 'Yakhal'inkomo', and even like something from the Jazz African Pioneers which is like 10/10 special; things like the last train out of town and things like that. Even things like Meadowlands you know? The struggle is very much embedded in the music (at least that's my impression) because of the signposts. Even something like Meadowlands for example alludes to this forced removal "utlwa makgowa ba re a re yeng ko Meadowlands" you know? So I'm kind of questioning this thing of pre-94; the system was so oppressive almost that I don't know if the musicians could really escape that, and so I think the reality is so obvious in the composition. Thematically, and I'm just wondering if the turning point into democracy has that kind of impact on that and why?

In my opinion, we are still faced with a lot of things. People are going through a lot of things. So yeah, this is kind of what I'm thinking – do you have any thoughts about that?

Participant 3:

If you look at, like you were saying, post-94? The kind of music that came out – not that it was apolitical because it's always political whenever it involves poor or black subjects across board. But I think the thrust towards university access. Accessing a certain class lifestyle has certain sensibilities around how we succumb to art. Where you can get a standard for example like the sunny side of the road as a pose to a standard that you would call 'Inhlupeko'. So I think this accessing into an upper avalanche structure in terms of being able to access these big institutions has an impact on how one starts to name the world. I think one then, starts going into circles that (yes) still have their own set if struggle, but then has different ways of articulating it. Most music that comes from outside of institutions has always had those things. I'm thinking about that title ya bra Andile No Lights. It's a recent song but it's also just like, from a lived experience of actually having no money to pay lights. And you can translate that in so many different ways. So there is a thread that runs but also different ways of naming it. Instead of saying "Inhlupeko" one would say "No lights". I think the language is not so vulgar anymore. We've ways to circumvent it but it still is like we're saying the same kind of things.

Bokani:

Sure, sure, sure. Okay no awesome thank you. And then my very last question: what is your personal experience of injustice growing up in South Africa?

Participant 3:

You know, man I have so many I can't think of one but I just think for the longest time growing up and also growing up in the 90s and going to these new multiracial schools that were partly Afrikaans 1st language, English second language, and the refusal for them to call you by your first name. Finding your second name or your Christian name. Partly, we've had these real actions of violence but I think also subtle mundane ones are really the ones that mess us up psychologically. Just refusing to say your name, I think that can go a long way.

Bokani:

Yeah, I know all about that. No I think we're good. I think we're great. Thanks so much for your time and I'll send you the transcript once it's ready. Awesome thanks so much brother. Take care.

Participant 3:

Hola, Mpintj'aka

Participant 4

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this. I know I've sent this to you but I just need your verbal consent to be a part of this. So the letter of information reads: My name is Bokani Dyer. I am a student at the University of Pretoria and I am currently enrolled for a Masters degree. Research topic: the study involves exploring jazz composition as an agent for addressing social issues, perspectives from young South African jazz composers.

The study aims to investigate jazz music by young composers in South Africa and its relationship to issues of socio-political importance.

What will be expected of you? Your participation will involve a semi-structured interview which will take an approximation of 45 minutes of your time. The interview will be audio recorded, the information and your identity will be treated with strict confidentiality. You will be provided with a transcript of the full interview for your approval.

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting need to reduce physical human contact the interview will be conducted digitally through one of the audio-visual conferencing platforms such as Zoom, MS teams / Google Meets. For now we managed to organize an in person meeting, (Which you said you were fine with so I guess that's okay).

Approval: The study will only begin after ethical approval by the research ethics committee of the faculty of humanities University of Pretoria has been obtained – which I have obtained.

Risks and benefits: By participating in the research you will advance understanding of perspectives of young jazz composers with regard to socio-political issues in South Africa. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. There are no risks or direct benefits in participating in the project. If you decide to withdraw there will be no negative consequences to you nor will you need to explain your reason. You are encouraged to ask any questions you might have about the study.

Who will have access to the results of the study? The research will be handled by myself as principal researcher and my supervisor. It will be used for academic purposes only. The data will be archived at the school of the Arts University of Pretoria for a minimum of 15 years. During this time the transcribed data might be used for further information. Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor.

Are you okay with all of that?

Participant 4:

I'm cool, man.

Bokani:

Okay great stuff, so before I start with any questions I just wanted to say that I am mostly interested in your ideas so I would like you to kind of flesh out your thoughts. So just expand and elaborate on your thinking about stuff so you don't have to feel too bound to the question or the way I've asked it. Any kind of thoughts that arise from what I've asked you can just totally go for it. I might interject at some points in time but for the most part I'd like it just to be free to express yourself.

So question number 1: What is your view of music's role in society?

Participant 4:

I think music definitely plays different roles in society. I don't think that there's just one use for music. It's part of our sacred or spiritual experience, celebratory experiences. Yeah, it's just a part of different facets to human life. So I think it's part and parcel of who we are as people and music has different uses.

Bokani:

Thank you. Okay question number 2. What are your thoughts about a composer's role in society?

Participant 4:

This is a tricky one because I know there's many people who have said that the artist's role is to kind of reflect the times and to some extent I agree with it, but to some extent I also feel like where's the freedom of expression in that? I think that some people have the freedom to just speak about something that is not so serious in terms of the universal human experience or the community's experience. Some people have the liberty to just make music for the sake of music, and as much as I do think that artists have a role to play because of how influential our art is on society and sometimes how we shape thinking of people, or reflect what's happening around us; I also think that it's okay for people to give the meaning to the music. I think that we cannot, for example dance music, there may be times where we feel tempted to criticise people who create dance music because of whatever. "It promotes a ratchet lifestyle, debauchery, whatever and it promotes certain things that we maybe don't like about society but I don't think we actually realise the human need to actually enjoy life and let go. I do think it depends how the music is being used, I think the composer's role can only really be defined by the people who find meaning in that composer's music and by that specific composer. I don't think there's a universal role for all composers.

Bokani:

Mmmh, awesome thank you. Next question: What in your opinion are the major issues affecting society today?

Participant 4:

Wow, that's quite a loaded question. DAMN! Okay umm, I mean I can only comment from my perspective. Because I think where I am and how my surroundings are, is not the same as in another part of the world. I think what I'm finding is a major issue or tension for us as South Africans is the hangover from our freedom that is like we're sobering up to the fact that "ahhh okay, this thing is not actually as we had imagined it to be"'. That shows itself in many ways, whether it's unemployment – huge numbers of unemployment in the youth. Whether it's just issues around access because of the way that our society is organised, whether it's violence, crime, the kind of moral degeneration. Okay, I don't know if it's degeneration because I haven't been here pre-94 to see how society was different but I definitely think there's an erosion of high value systems, coming from the fact that there's high desperation and high poverty levels in our

country. So survival is like the name of the game for – I don't even think just people who are so called the poor – I think it's survival on many levels. People who have corporate jobs find themselves in constant survival mode. It's not necessarily about the amount of money you earn, I just think that the struggle to just live a decent life in South Africa for people who come from previously disadvantaged backgrounds.

Bokani:

Mmmh, and has any of your music directly or indirectly responded to this? So however you may feel that there is a relationship that doesn't have to be overt, just your thoughts on how your music has possibly responded – if you think it has, and the nature of that relationship or engagement.

Participant 4:

I definitely feel it has, indirectly, because I've never really dealt with society as a whole in terms of what I interrogate. It's using myself sort of as the experiment or my own inner questionings and workings that translate themselves (I suppose) in a way that's relatable to many people because these struggles that we think are very personal are actually quite common among our generation. One for example is our idea of identity, what we call African or South African, or whatever we identify with. How I've often felt limited to some extent with what is expected of what I'm said to be and simply because in the way I feel we have been described, we kind of feel like there's a homogenous version of being black or being African but there's so many ways for us to express this and there's so many valid ways for us to exist. That haven't been made room for necessarily. I think a lot of the things that I have struggled with have been the subtler things in society and not so much the very obvious things like inequality, but the subtle things that speak to how we move in this world. So I think in that way, me dealing with myself and that being some of the finer things that speak to people in our generation, I think that's how I've spoken to social issues, situations we find ourselves in. Mmmh, I mean I definitely think you are engaging with the thing because if you are looking the prevailing attitudes and a need to express yourself based on that then I think there's definitely a kind of almost direct way of engaging with that. Even though I understand what you saying about not tackling really obvious issues.

Bokani:

Okay awesome, next one is: what is your impetus when choosing a title for a composition? Are there non-musical choices that influence your decisions?

Participant 4:

Good question, well for a song that has lyrics, generally the title comes from somewhere in there with the lyrics. For songs that don't have lyrics I kind of try and find what the song feels like but I never write the song title before the song, I usually name it afterwards. And it's like "what does this feel like"? And does that have some kind of resonance with me. Umm yeah I think it's not so much from literature, although sometimes literature can inspire the song lyrics. It's a bunch of things but I think it's more the feeling. Sometimes maybe I'll think of a name and it just feels wrong… just like hmm mmm, no. So it's what I think the song calls for or feels like.

Bokani:

And then in that process of assigning a name, especially instrumental music, because when there are lyrics the story that you are telling can be tied closer to the title for the most part. For instrumental composition, I know you said it's how it feels to you but is there any interest from your side to think about framing or meaning for an audience or does that not play a part in your process. If you name it something in particular, are you looking for an audience to resonate with that title, find a similar kind of meaning, so the title becomes a departure for the listener to say? Are you thinking of that? Or is that not part of your process or not at all?

Participant 4:

I think it has been in many instances, something where I wanna kind of give you a clue as to where we're at. I think words help to anchor the work that you do. Obviously people feel and experience them differently but if you give them a word or a title for the song, you're kind of giving them a place to start off with. But, like I said earlier, it has to resonate with me to some extent before I feel like I should be able to speak about it. So it can really feel like "mmm hmmm I believe myself with what I'm saying". So there has to be some kind of resonance with me but it is like a clue that I give to people listening as to what energy or feeling was around the song.

Bokani:

Mmmmh, okay. Awesome! Thank you. Next question is: Please name some South African jazz composers who you admire and can you discuss some themes that you've picked up in some of their compositions.

Participant 4:

That's a cool question. I think the way Moses Molelekwa has always brought in a strong and very rooted sound to not just the piano as a western instrument but to jazz. I really resonated with that… his way of writing. Harmonically he's not necessarily like a Bheki Mseleku who uses a lot of jazz harmony in his composition but it's that kind of simplicity that African music has which doesn't feel like it's lacking. So that's what I really love about him as a composer. Of course then there's Bheki Mseleku who I really love. I think I love his cyclical way of writing. It feels orderly, and I somehow love order. Hahaha I don't know how to explain it, it just feels very symmetrical and I love that because I also feel like his symmetry is not very much like 1, 2, 3, 4. It's in 3s and it feels natural. You know they say we love 6/4 or 3/4 in our time signatures and it's hard to get away from but that's a rhythm that's very much intrinsic in our music. So I love that, I'm very attracted to that.

I really love your composition as well. Does this feel awkward haha?

Bokani:

Yes [laughs], but say what you were gonna say.

Participant 4:

No, no. I love your compositions because I also feel like it's kind of doing that thing that I love hearing where I'm just like "this guy is definitely not trying to be a version of an African that has not been influenced by other music. I don't know if it's in my head but I feel like there's this weight as South African artists to be African artists, and it's like "what is that?". There's some expectation that we should sound like what African music would've sounded like if nobody brought their ships here and a settler colony began. But I almost feel like there's a beautiful weaving of all your influences in a very unpretentious way, in your music which I appreciate as well… Oh and Ndabo Zulu.

Bokani:

Thank you very much. Awesome. Next kind of theme I'd like to discuss is regarding 94 as a turning point in South Africa's history. If you relate that to jazz composition. Do you have any thoughts about this? I'm kind of interested in musicians living in the apartheid era and comparing them with musicians of today and saying is there a possible difference in an engagement with social issues, and if there is a difference; what is that difference and why is that difference. There's a ton of songs that from the title like 'Yakhal'inkomo' are indirectly engaged with political commentary. Things like 'Inhlupheko' by Soul Jazzmen. Even a song like 'Meadowlands' is kind of talking about forced removal. So it's like there are a lot of

compositions that you can say ahh okay this is what these composers were living through, or expressing through their music. So can you just discuss your thoughts about pre- and post-democracy in terms of jazz composers and engagements.

Participant 4:

I think the engagement has always been there; it's just that the conversation shifted because of what happened in society. I remember really feeling like I wanted to be in Johannesburg just because of how the music from the 90s and 2000s would have such an exciting exuberance about it. It really felt like we have just gained our liberation and it's lit. And still, it's not like the political messages did not exist. There's something very political about affirming your African identity even if you're not saying "I am an African". It's kind of like saying how that 70s black consciousness in a different way in the 90s and 2000s. Artists like abo bra Zim Ngqawana really bring so many influences from traditional South African music with just the use of instrumentation as well. Same as Moses who I had mentioned. I think that the political element of South African music. Somehow it's almost like an archetypal, undercurrent in our music somehow. Even if we're not necessarily being direct and speaking about a specific issue (like in the case of 'Meadowlands'). But, it is still very much a reflection of society because even now I still see that work being done with the artists from now. Although our engagement with it is on our spirits as people, I think identity is something that really comes out in our generation of music. Question of identity, challenging these identities that we have inherited from that era. I definitely think that comes through but I think that's all various expressions of the same thing – which is reflecting on society and oppression. Now it's very much the effects of the oppression on our spirits, on our psyches. I hope I answered the question.

Bokani:

Thank you okay, this is the next question but I think you've kind of covered it. I'll ask it anyway: As jazz is largely instrumental – in your opinion can instrumental music convey and how do you do this in your music?

Participant 4:

That's tricky because I think as a composer I've mostly been feeling driven more than… See, I think different people have different processes, some people have a motif that they make grow into a composition. I have that as well but it's also very feeling driven and so I guess I don't necessarily want to convey ideas until I've got the full thing in front of me, until I've got a sense of what I want the song to be called. It sort of unravels itself in the process of composing. I don't

generally, unless someone's commissioned me for something, have the idea in the head while I'm making the music.

Bokani:

Mmmh and then once the music is there and you have the title, you perform the piece of music? How have you found it in your own experience? Because for me personally, I've heard so many different interpretations of something you know? Somebody was saying they were listening to my song and it sounded like they were in a James Bond getaway scene. Hahahhaa, and I was thinking that's totally not where my mind was at.

Participant 4:

And now you're like "What did I do?" hahaaa.

Bokani:

One of the interesting things about how you interrogate meaning that the composer themselves assign and once the music is released into the world, the responses and interpretations can be interesting and quite different to the way the composer intended.

Participant 4:

Even with songs that have lyrics, the interpretation you're just like "Really? That's what you heard?" but I'm okay with that as well, I don't necessarily want to impose that on other people. If you liked it for whatever reason and you experienced it as this, then it's fine.

Bokani:

Awesome, umm. Great, thank you so much. I have one last question and it is: What is your personal experience of injustice, if any, growing up in South Africa?

Participant 4:

[Deep sigh] I think because we live in a democratic South Africa, we didn't really see injustice as obviously as our parents did. But I think there's a lot that people who go to private schools go through. That is a whole book of its own and it's funny because the high school that I was at came under fire last year because Eusebius had this thing of these conversations with black girls who went to these different Christian private schools and things coming out. Plus you know, I suppose we're living in a social media age so hearing about a girl whose hair was called untidy just because of how the hair is, but those things were rife in those times. My nephew is allowed to wear dreadlocks to school now. That was just never in our time. I think in a sense the injustice of those schools is the fact that many of the time we were made to feel grateful for that space because "Oh we are the ones accepting black students"". Those were the schools during apartheid to accept black students. But in many ways there's a very subtle way of saying that blackness is not okay in those places. A specific thing that happened I remember in high school, they used to give things like colours and half-colours for different things and there was a girl who had the exact same grading as I did in piano. We got grade 8 the same year, and I got half-colours and she got full-colours. Those things happened a lot, they happened with sports, everywhere. When you leave these places you realize there's actually a lot of violent things happening, very undertone but definitely I would say violent treatment of people of colour. A friend of mine in grade 9 when we were being told to choose subjects, was advised by the life school teachers on a subject combination that would essentially not give her an exemption in matric. So she wouldn't be able to go to university. Her mother, luckily, being very present and checking on the subjects she chose was furious. Came to school and was like "how could you advise my child to take subjects that are not gonna get into university?". So you know those things did happen. We didn't grow up in a time where police were walking around with alsatians and people being asked for a pass-book but there was definitely a policing, in different ways, on being a black person.

Bokani:

Mmmh, mmmmh. Yoh, crazy. Okay, awesome. Thank you so much, thank you for your time.

Participant 5

Bokani:

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this. I think you're the only one that sent it back and you're my last interview hahaha. I just need your verbal consent to be a part of this. So the letter of information reads: My name is Bokani Dyer. I am a student at the University of Pretoria and I am currently enrolled for a Masters degree. Research topic: the study involves exploring jazz composition as an agent for addressing social issues, perspectives from young South African jazz composers.

The study aims to investigate jazz music by young composers in South Africa and its relationship to issues of socio-political importance.

What will be expected of you? Your participation will involve a semi-structured interview which will take an approximation of 45 minutes of your time. The interview will be audio recorded, the information and your identity will be treated with strict confidentiality. You will be provided with a transcript of the full interview for your approval.

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting need to reduce physical human contact the interview will be conducted digitally through one of the audio-visual conferencing platforms such as Zoom, MS teams / Google Meets. For now we managed to organize an in person meeting, (Which you said you were fine with so I guess that's okay).

Approval: The study will only begin after ethical approval by the research ethics committee of the faculty of humanities University of Pretoria has been obtained – which I have obtained.

Risks and benefits: By participating in the research you will advance understanding of perspectives of young jazz composers with regard to socio-political issues in South Africa. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. There are no risks or direct benefits in participating in the project. If you decide to withdraw there will be no negative consequences to you nor will you need to explain your reason. You are encouraged to ask any questions you might have about the study.

Who will have access to the results of the study? The research will be handled by myself as principal researcher and my supervisor. It will be used for academic purposes only. The data will be archived at the school of the Arts University of Pretoria for a minimum of 15 years. During this time the transcribed data might be used for further information. Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor.

Are you okay with all of that?

Participant 5

I'm cool, I read it so yeah.

Bokani:

Okay great stuff, so before I start with any questions I just wanted to say that I am mostly interested in your ideas so I would like you to kind of flesh out your thoughts. So just expand and

elaborate on your thinking about stuff so you don't have to feel too bound to the question or the way I've asked it. Any kind of thoughts that arise from what I've asked you can just totally go for it. I might interject at some points in time but for the most part I'd like you just to be free to express yourself.

Participant 5:

Okay cool, I guess we're just gonna have a conversation then.

Bokani:

Yeah I have the questions here and based on how you answer I might just come in and ask further questions but it's pretty much open to you and your thoughts about stuff. Okay. So question number 1: What is your view of music's role in society?

Participant 5:

Wow. Okay umm music in society I think has multiple roles, and it's almost like a personal thing of how people interact with music and the arts in general. Consciously and subconsciously I think music for me, I use it as a positive tool to uplift my environment and the people around me. It's partly to do with how I was brought up, you know coming from the church. I've seen the power that music has to kinda have this effect on people that they can be in touch with something higher than just themselves and in that experience they become more motivated and inspired to live a life and overcome a lot of the obstacles that they have. So whether they think of music as that I don't know but I can see that that's what music does for them. So I think music has a fairly positive impact in my society and community that I grew up in. It was used as a tool for overcoming the circumstances that a lot of people grow up in.

Bokani:

Okay great. Thank you. So then the second question kind of follows on that and it is. What are your thoughts about a composer's role in society?

Participant 5:

I think I wouldn't put it down to only a composer but an artist's role in society, people that create things, I think is to reflect society. Either where they come from, to reflect who they are, what is going on in their immediate surroundings. To kind of give a metaphorical or creative way of showing what's happening in society because I think a lot of the time things can't just be portrayed and shown in words only. It needs to be felt and experienced and heard. It's almost like a deeper level of philosophy but it's like I think an artist and like you say a composer's role is to incorporate all of what they're surrounded by whether it's the identity, the community they live in, something they're very passionate about. A problem or even just something positive they want to shed light on.

Bokani:

Mmmmh, so you feel a sense of responsibility in a way to portray these things?

Participant 5:

Yeah, I do think there is that sense of responsibility to tell your own story or tell your version of a story through your art.

Bokani:

Mmmmmh, okay. Thank you. Next question is: What in your opinion are the major issues affecting society today?

Participant 5:

That's a very difficult question to answer, I think inequality is one of the issues affecting our society today. The measure of a man, using that term genuinely, the measure of someone and having value added to people and how they weigh up in society, and how we treat people differently according to the value that they have. I think that's one of the major issues that we are faced with in society. Another issue that almost has the same amount of weight I think is definitely the global destruction of earth, and the planet. Global warming as it were and how humans are treating our environment as well as the repercussion contributing to our environment for future generations. I think those are specific but also very general because there are many problems but those are for me two of the main things that society is facing.

Bokani:

Mmmmh, so bringing it to your music, has any of your music directly or indirectly responded to these issues? So yeah, I mean it's pretty open to your interpretation. The relationship with the engagement of these issues can be indirect as well but I'm just interested in your thoughts about the issues that you have kind of noticed. So just thinking about your music and how you may or may not have responded to some of these issues.

Participant 5:

I think I've always dealt with issues of identity. I guess a lot of artists in general deal with issues of identity and trying to figure out who they are or define who they are. So indirectly I've always dealt with issues of being a Coloured person in South Africa and what that means. At the same time trying to bring awareness to the plight of Coloured people. The idea that Coloured people really have a hard time finding who they are in the South African context. That message in my art has evolved I guess because in the beginning I would also consider myself apolitical. I was just trying to uplift anyone in my environment and kind of inspire people, anyone. Over the years of deeper introspection and a little bit of research it has kind of swayed itself towards really a message of being a Coloured person in South Africa and what that means. But the other Coloured people without trying to generalize what that is. Yeah, that message has changed and it's still to do with identity but now it's kind of changed to bring awareness to people like me, that we exist in South Africa and what are the challenges that we are facing.

Bokani:

Mmmmh okay great. Thank you so much. Next question is what is your impetus when choosing a title for a composition? Are there non-musical choices that influence your decisions? Basically what informs the process of "okay this is gonna be the name of this composition"?

Participant 5:

It's different for me, it's like… my process of composition I guess I try to be organic. So I don't like to sit down and go "okay I'm gonna compose". Some things happen and then melodies will form or an idea will form and I'll feel that. Maybe at that point I don't have a name for a song but at the same time whatever the genesis of the song is happening in this evolution of the song; there's something happening in my life or something that I've learnt that I become inquisitive about. And maybe passionate about then it's almost like me going back from then and going "This little idea I can develop. How can I use this idea to paint a picture of this other things that I'm learning?" I wrote a song called song for Ellen Pakkies I've always had that melody and for

me it could've easily just been "oh play the melody, play the B section, have an improvisation section", but when I learnt about Ellen Pakkies and who she was I was like "Oh I have this thing that is very emotional (for lack of better word)". The end of the A section has this kind of eternal cycle that feel like "where does it start or begin" and I thought that juxtaposed with the plight of this mother who was going through a lot of difficult circumstances – what eventually led her to kill her own son, like it was a cycle of a lot of things. These two things come together and I had an idea that I could cycle this thing until it grows and it grows till eventually the mother can't take it anymore. Obviously it became very literal when I put Jitsvinger on the track, on occasion you could hear the words and actually feel the emotion with what he's saying. So I don't normally go in like I have this issue and I need to write a song about it. Even though I might feel that way, that's not how I write it. I don't know how to write a song for the Me Too movement or the Fees Must Fall movement, I don't think like that even though I feel passionate about those things. I think I float between what happens creatively in my life and what I learn or discover upon my society.

Bokani:

Mmmmh. Okay, very interesting thank you. Please name some South African jazz composers who you admire and can you discuss some themes that you've picked up in some of their compositions.

Participant 5:

Wow, that's interesting. Okay let's start with Moses Molelekwa, Mark Fransman and the whole of *Tribe*. Marcus Wyatt, You Bokani, Kyle, Thandi Ntuli. Obviously Winston Mankunku, Zim Ngqawana. Themes I mean with all the composers I've mentioned it always goes back to what I've said about composers or artists putting themselves and their surroundings and community in the music. So I can hear with every composer, where and what they come from – what they think about life and certain issues. I wouldn't say that any of the composers I necessarily mentioned drives one agenda. Even though they might have songs that have a theme, I wouldn't say that because you can see that whatever agenda has to do with where they come from and who they are and their views on these things. So I think that's a lot of what I drew from those composers.

Bokani:

Okay sure, great. Great! And then the next question and the kind of theme I'd like to discuss is regarding 94 as a turning point in South Africa's history. If you look at the parallel in terms of jazz composition. Are there any distinctions that you can pick up, or comparison, whatever your thoughts may be pre-94 and post-94? In my personal experience, looking at the themes expressed

(pre-94 jazz music) there is a lot of evidence of what people were going through and a lot of the times you could relate that to the conditions they were living under. So yeah what are your thoughts now living in a democratic SA. Do you think it's the same kind of thing? If you could just shed some light with your thoughts in regards to jazz composition post-94 compared with pre-94.

Participant 5:

Shuuu, okay. I think I used to think, when I started out in composing music, and looking at the people around me doing similar things… I used to think that we were not as political as pre-94 but I think that's normal. At the time it's in a way supposed to be like that because of the sacrifices that happened before. We're supposed to have a different life now, and a more privileged life – which I did for a large extension of my life in South Africa compared to my parents. So that reflected in the type of music that I created and I'd seen the people around me create as well. Creating music to break the barriers of creativity in a sense. Not to focus on pushing so much of a political message but just to push the music as an art form forward and to create music for people to enjoy and uplift. Now it's almost starting to change where the direction in people's art is starting to change because now we are living in the consequences and repercussions of what happened during apartheid. Things that happened during the changeover in 1994 and being born into a born-free generation where we're living in the repercussions of things that actually weren't solidified or sorted out then. So now we have things like the Fees Must Fall movement, Me Too movement and also my own exploration as a Coloured person in South Africa. Realising that we should have never still been subscribing to this term. The repercussions of being subscribed to the term Coloured and what are the repercussions in our community. So it's been a journey for me, these things have existed for a while but I had to have gone through that phase of thinking I was apolitical and now in a sense being so passionate about who I am and where I come from. Trying to make people know what is happening in this community because of what happened in 1994 and what did not happen when the changeover happened. So I can see it's definitely moving towards that kind of political era again with music and the arts. I think rightfully so because the whole world even with the Black Lives Matter movement. You can see the whole world is moving towards that and it's only that the artists lead the way and have these messages in the art they create. Draw inspiration from what's happening around them.

Bokani:

Mmmmh awesome. Thank you okay, just two more questions: As jazz is largely instrumental – in your opinion can instrumental music convey and how do you do this in your music?

Participant 5:

Yeah that's a difficult question to answer because art is so subjective. I can tell you that I wrote a song for whatever reason doesn't necessarily mean that you're gonna feel the same way about the music. I think I believe in something higher than myself. I believe that when I write with a certain intention and message that I want to try to convey. Maybe people won't get exactly what I wanna say but I've had encounters with people about my music and I thought it's funny that it was exactly what I tried to do but didn't know it was gonna work. I didn't know writing this thing that it's gonna make you feel angry or sad, or inspired necessarily. I just know that's maybe what I would like to do? Like I say when I write music I do like it to be organic and so I try not to be too mathematical or calculated. I try to absorb the feeling that I want to get if I was listening to the music. Hopefully someone that comes out in writing the music. Sometimes I get it right and sometimes I don't but I think that's normally my process.

Bokani:

Yeah yeah. I've realized from having these conversations that music is a very subjective thing and people interpret music in their own way. That's just something I've been checking out. Okay cool and then the very last question and it is: What is your personal experience of injustice, if any, growing up in South Africa.

Participant 5:

It's not something that comes immediately because it just shows you what kind of society I was born in. So I was very privileged, the way I was raised and so I think to a large extent my parents are kind of responsible for safeguarding me or protecting both my sister and I from our immediate society. Ummm I think it's like there's a few things I can say but… hmmm let me think about it. I think over the past few years just the way I've, through research and speaking with people in general, just the way my community (as in the Coloured community) has this feeling of disillusionment and feeling despondent. How that cycle between their mental state and also how they are viewed in society and where they are in society. Problems of drug abuse and gangsterism it's very sad looking at the cycle of how the one informs the other and it just stops social mobility within my community. Going back to what I was saying about what didn't change post-apartheid, ummmm viewing Coloured people as black or African or South African. I mean we understand why things were done a certain way but at the same time you can't build a new democratic society under apartheid naming regimes. That doesn't work and I don't even like the term reverse apartheid because that's not what it is but it causes this thing where still the community that I'm surrounded by does not have the social mobility that other people in SA have. It's a combination of a lot of things; how we think, the government not paying attention to these people. It's also a combination of other South Africans that don't understand Coloured

people and have a certain opinion about them. It's so complex but I think for me it's what my art revolves around. That's a big injustice and I want to centre my message around.

Bokani:

And you identify with these struggles not because it's necessarily you as the subject but because you feel that you are part of this community and therefore it affects you in this way?

Participant 5:

Yeah, that in combination with the fact that I feel now I have a voice. Part of the problem is that Coloured people don't have a voice so the ones who do I think should use it responsibly and I think we need to say something about it or show people what we think about this topic.

Bokani:

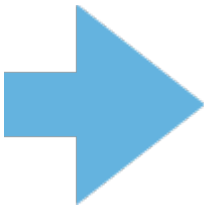
Awesome man! Thank you so much that's it.

Appendix C: Coding Example

Step 1: Gathering Themes from each interview

Participant Comments	**Theme**
"Pre 94 there's a lot more political work in the SA jazz context, thematically and so on." (Participant 1)	South African Jazz Pre-94 was more political
"A composer's role in society… Well I think it depends on a number of things. First of all it depends on the intentions of the composer." (Participant 2)	A composer's role is based on the composer's intention

Step 2: Cross-referencing and organizing themes from interviews to find major themes

Themes		**Major Theme**
South African Jazz Pre-94 was more political (Paricipant 1)		South African Jazz was more political during apartheid pre-94
Music was used as a political tool during apartheid (Participant 2)		
Current composers are not as political as pre 94 (Participant 5)		