

JAZZ IN SERVICE OF THE STRUGGLE: THE NEW BRIGHTON STORY

by

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Abstract. This article contributes to the substantial body of publications on South African jazz with information on jazz performance and performers in New Brighton, a township adjacent to Port Elizabeth noted for its vibrant jazz scene and outstanding jazz musicians. The article covers several decades from the heyday of swing bands in the 1940s–50s through the 1960s–70s when New Brighton’s premier jazz combo, the Soul Jazzmen, were at the height of their artistry. The role of swing bands in New Brighton and surrounding communities as the training ground for members of the Soul Jazzmen and other local musicians of note is discussed, as well as how the Soul Jazzmen in turn were tutors for musicians of the next generation who became widely recognized artists, composers and arrangers. This is followed by a focus on the Soul Jazzmen and compositions by its members that protested against the apartheid regime in the 1960s–70s. The article is informed by historic photographs, newspaper clippings and information from oral history interviews that richly document how jazz was performed in service of the anti-apartheid struggle in New Brighton.

Keywords. South African jazz, 1940s–70s, New Brighton, swing bands, the Soul Jazzmen, protest songs.

Introduction

New Brighton, a township of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, has been home to many outstanding jazz musicians over the years since it and Korsten were created from 1901–1910 to replace Port Elizabeth’s inner city slums. The Red Location, built in 1902–03, was the first and thus the oldest of seven residential areas developed to house a large influx of black labourers on land purchased by the city and named New Brighton in 1903 (Baines 1994: 9–10, 39–40).¹

Local jazz musicians interviewed as part of an oral history project,² such as tenor

¹ New Brighton and Korsten were established approximately 10 kms north of the Port Elizabeth CBD, outside the city limits from 1901–1910 when destruction of inner city slums and forced removal of their residents was necessary due to an outbreak of bubonic plague in 1901. By the 1930s–40s the population grew significantly due to the need for black labour and Port Elizabeth’s reputation as a “friendly city” (Baines 1994: 39–40).

² The ILAM/Red Location Music History Project (conducted 2009–13) grew out of a 2008 meeting with Erroll Cuddumbey (1950–2010), pianist/composer/jazz lecturer at Nelson Mandela University, during which he took me to meet the Soul Jazzmen’s then leader, the late Dudley Tito (1941–2016), at his Avenue A workshop in New Brighton. Soon after my colleague, Dr Lee Watkins and I conceived the project in cooperation with the Red Location Museum and a modest grant was awarded by the National Heritage Council which provided funding for 12 months from March 2009. In 2012 the Rhodes University Mellon Jazz Heritage Project provided a stipend for continuing with interviews. The Red Location Museum and the South African Post Office, through Mr Twiggs

saxophone player Howard Mabendeza (1926–2014) and others born in the 1930s and 40s, remember the music scene since the 1940s when they began to actively perform in local swing bands. They told me that New Brighton had from their earliest memories been a hotbed of jazz performance and that the vibrant jazz scene spilled over into neighbouring Korsten. They described New Brighton as a place where there was music in the air, in the streets, in the township halls and in the shebeens (T. Ngcwangu interview 4 September 2012; C. Attwell, P. Mbambaza and P. Pasha interviews 20 September 2012). Renowned pioneering South African painter, George Pemba (1912–2001), born and raised in Korsten, bears witness to this with his painting “*Saturday Night*” (1965), among others, depicting the social milieu of the time (Figure 1).



Figure 1. “*Saturday Night*” (1965) by George Pemba. Oil on board. (Image courtesy of S. Hudleston).

Xiphu, and Rhodes University Research Division assisted with costs of curating the *Generations of Jazz* exhibition as a permanent installation at the Red Location Museum, printing the exhibition catalogue and a concert featuring local jazz artists that opened the exhibit on 27 June 2013. All funding is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks are extended to Patrick Pasha, my research assistant, and to the many musicians and community members interviewed who have provided additional information during informal conversations.

This remained the case in the 1960s and 70s in New Brighton/Port Elizabeth, in spite of the increased controls imposed by the apartheid regime and their negative effect on the flourishing jazz scene of the 1950s throughout South Africa. The creation of pass laws and legislation controlling black employment in white areas in 1945 and the Group Areas Act of 1950 set the stage for the destruction of opportunities for black musicians. The effects of these laws came to a head in the 1960s and caused many accomplished South African jazz artists to leave for Europe or the USA. Their departure left a vacuum that significantly damaged the exceptional development of South African jazz of prior decades (Ballantine, in Breakey and Gordon: 1997: 2–3).³ Although the jazz scene in New Brighton/PE remained vibrant, conditions for performers became very difficult due to the enforcement of pass laws, Special Force raids of shows and musicians' homes, arrests and incarceration of musicians and on-going harassment (S. Lebakeng interview, 22 May 2009, T. Ntsele interview, 29 May 2009).

In spite of wide-spread knowledge of the vibrant scene in New Brighton, most New Brighton jazz artists formative in the development of South African jazz over the years up to the 1960s–70s have remained in obscurity.⁴ This is largely due to their lack of opportunities to record and become known nationally and internationally because they did not relocate to Johannesburg, the hub of South Africa's recording industry. Yet, these artists and the groups they formed had a broad impact through performances in many of the cities and towns of the Eastern Cape and beyond. There was a steady flow of performers moving between New Brighton/Port Elizabeth, East London, Queenstown, King Williams Town, Fort Beaufort, Bedford and Grahamstown that, by the 1950s–1960s expanded to Cape Town and Johannesburg. Local artists had opportunities to perform with many well-known South African jazz musicians, both when these musicians came to New Brighton and when the New Brighton artists travelled to the larger urban centres. This situation gave jazz artists based in New Brighton agency. They were respected by their peers whose careers were based in Johannesburg or the other major cities of South Africa. And they were constantly performing, which fed their creativity (P. Ntsele interview, 29 May 2009, D. Tito interview, 29 May 2009, P. Pasha interview, 27 August 2009, J. Ntshinga interview, 7 June 2012).⁵

³ This exodus included local artists such as Dudu Pukwana and Johnny Dyani who went to Britain with Chris McGregor's band, the Blue Notes. Others left New Brighton for greater opportunities in Johannesburg and Cape Town such as the Soul Jazzmen's drummer, Lulu Gontsana, who moved to Johannesburg and Duke Makasi and Tete Mbambisa who moved to Cape Town.

⁴ Recent attention is found in J. Eato's release of Tete Mbambisa's *Black Heroes* CD (2012) with a richly informative and illustrated 24pp booklet and Chris Albertyn's publication, *Keeping Time* (2013), which includes images of Soul Jazzmen members Big T Ntsele, (on dust cover and facing the title page), Peter Jackson Jr, Tete Mbambisa and Duke Makasi. Additional attention exists in Albertyn's re-issue of the Soul Jazzmen's 1969 LP *Inhlupeko* (2015) plus information on band members found on his blogspot, <http://electricjive.blogspot.com>.

⁵ Well-known jazz artists who interacted significantly with New Brighton's jazz community, some of whom were original members of the Soul Jazzmen, include Dudu Pukwana (1938–1990) from Port Elizabeth's Walmer Location; Nick Moyake (1933–1966) from an Eastern Cape farm in Addo; Pat Matshikiza (1938–2014) from Queenstown, Christopher Columbus "MBRA" Ngcukana (1927–1993) and Abdullah Ibrahim (b. 1934) from Cape Town's Langa and Kensington townships respectively;

The dearth of scholarly attention to the history of jazz in New Brighton/Port Elizabeth and the Eastern Cape generally⁶ in spite of the growing body of publications from research on South African jazz⁷ is perhaps partly due to the way its performers were marginalized from the recording industry and the resultant lack of nationwide and international exposure. This article seeks, in some small way, to address this lacunae by presenting historic photos of New Brighton's swing bands with identifying information on the bands, their leaders and how these groups provided the training ground for the next generation of musicians, some of whom became members of the Soul Jazzmen, New Brighton's premier jazz combo.

Information from oral history interviews conducted from 2009–2013 are the source of much of the information presented. Additional information comes from what few recordings exist of local musicians performing in the small combos they had formed by the 1960s (most made by the SABC Transcription Service) that I located in the SABC Library in Port Elizabeth and the SABC Archives in Johannesburg. Scans of the photos and newspaper clippings from the time that various people had saved, most notably those of local jazz historians in their own right; drummer, Richard Hatana (1938–2015) (Figure 2) and tenor saxophonist, Dudley Tito (1941–2016) (Figure 3), and the identifying information they provided contribute significantly to the article's content. The Hatana Collection consists of photos of swing bands, individual artists who were band members and newspaper clippings about band members' funerals while the Tito Collection includes photos from his personal scrapbook, newspaper clippings, and posters that document his career, that of the Soul Jazzmen and the jazz scene in New Brighton/Port Elizabeth generally from the 1960s forward.⁸ The article goes on to present historical information on the Soul Jazzmen followed by a discussion of several compositions by its original members: vocalist and bass player, Thamsanqa "Big T" ("Psyche") Ntsele (1946–2013),⁹ tenor sax player, Duke Makasi (1941–1993) and pianists, Buggs Matiwani (1946–1985)¹⁰ and Tete Mbambisa (b. 1942).

Johnny Dyani (1945–1986) and Tete Mbambisa (b. 1942) from East London's Duncan Village, Martin Ngijima (dates unknown), Chris McGregor (1936–1990), Robbie Jansen (1949–2010) and Winston "Mankunku" Ngozi (1943–2009) from Cape Town, West Nkosi (1940–1998) from Nelspruit and Hugh Masekela (1939–2018) from Johannesburg, among others (P. Pasha interview 27 August 2009, D. Tito and T. Ntsele interviews 29 May 2009, S. Lebakeng interview 22 May 2009).

⁶ Three master's theses on New Brighton/PE jazz musicians exist: L. Hughes 1999, U. Goosen 1999 and N. Butete 2012.

⁷ Publications on South African jazz include C. Albertyn, ed. 2013; L. Allen 1993, 2000; R. Allingham 2009; G. Ansell 2004; C. Ballantine 1991a, 1991b, 1993 (2012); D. Coplan 2017; L. Dalamba 2006, 2008, 2014 (not accessible); C. Devroop & C. Walton, eds. 2007; S. Douglas, ed. 2013; J. Eato, 2013, 2017; V. Erlmann 1991; S. Gordon and B. Breakey 1997; G. Kubik 2013, 2017; Y. Huskisson 1969; C. Muller & S.B. Benjamin 2011; M. McGregor 1995; B. Pyper 2014; L. Rasmussen, ed. 2003a, 2003b; J. Schadeburg 2007; D. Thram, ed 2013 to mention a few.

⁸ The Richard Hatana Collection and Dudley Tito Collection were scanned with permission from their owners and are archived at the International Library of African Music, Rhodes University.

⁹ Thamsanqa Ntsele's nick-name, Psyche is also seen spelled Psych and Psyche. Local journalists reporting on his performances, credits on SABC Transcription recordings and his obituary use the spelling Psyche, thus my choice of it. His other nick-name, Big T, will be used most often in this article to speak of him.

¹⁰ Buggs Matiwani is sometimes seen as Bucs Matiwani. The first name Buggs is used here as this is how



Figure 2. Richard Hatana, drummer and swing band historian. Photo courtesy of Hatana Collection.



Figure 3. Dudley Tito, tenor sax, rehearsing with Big T Ntsele, bass, in his Avenue A workshop, a small one-room studio built behind his house in the early 1970s for rehearsals and teaching. Over the years, Dudley covered the walls with the newspaper clippings, photos and posters of local jazz events seen in the background. Photo by D. Thram.

it appears in print in a newspaper article in the PE Herald covering his funeral held in New Brighton.

The early years

Black South Africans were infatuated with African American music from their first exposure to it through visits of American minstrel shows from the late 1800s to early 1900s. The impulse was to imitate the fresh new styles from the USA. By the early 1900s shellac records were being imported into South Africa. The first American jazz recordings entered the country by the early 1920s. The introduction of the radio, the gramophone and jazz recordings brought from the USA by merchant seamen served as the catalyst for early township music in the 1920s. Female vocalists and pianists, such as Emily Motsieloa of the Merry Blackbirds (Figure 4), were common during this era, as they were in vaudeville in the USA (Ballantine 2012: 4–6, Erlmann 1991).



Figure 4. Merry Blackbirds, probably 1937–38. From left, Enoch Matunjwa, Ike Shuping, Emily Motsieloa, Peter Rezant (leader) Mac Modikoe, Tommy Koza and Philip Mbanjwa (as indentified in Ballantine 2012: 196). Photo courtesy of Hatana Collection.

It was in the Eastern Cape that jazz first started to take on a distinctly South African character, possibly because the British Missionary Society school system in the Eastern Cape and the exposure to European hymnody and Western classical music it afforded produced a black elite class that included capable musicians who embraced the new art form called jazz.¹¹ Stage bands and vaudeville acts worked closely together to create a respectable ‘concert and dance’ tradition while marabi, played on piano or organ with accompaniment from pebble-filled cans, developed into the 4 bar cyclic style of dance music played at township shebeens and house parties. By the 1930s marabi had incorporated guitars, concertinas and banjos as it evolved to the marabi/swing fusion that fuelled the pennywhistle craze of the 1950s (Ballantine 2012: 6–10).

¹¹ The famous Matshikiza family from Queenstown is an example of this (pers. comm. P. Pasha 27 September 2018).



Figure 5. PE Bantu Jazz Band, the oldest photo of a “dance band” that pre-dates the swing band era discovered during this research. The photo is thought to date from the 30s–40s. Photo courtesy of Patrick Pasha.

Travelling vaudeville troupes and dance concerts (commonly referred to as “concert and dance”) strengthened the impact of black music in the country.¹² Schools began to teach syncopation and the new styles. By the 1940s a unique South African musical language was being born that joined local innovations with influences of American big band swing. Radio broadcasts and the growth of the recording industry allowed these styles to gain huge popularity from the 1940s–50s onward as South African jazz became rooted in marabi and the mbaqanga that followed it. Influences of traditional South African music such as the whole step chord progression of Xhosa *uhadi* and Zulu *umakweyana* bows found in Abdullah Ibrahim’s composition “*Mannenber*g” and Tete Mbambisa’s “*uMsenge*” — a favourite of Soul Jazzmen’s bassist/vocalist, Big T Ntsele — added to the uniqueness of the music.

As early as the 1930s African musicians began to realize they needed to stop imitating American jazz and create a jazz particular to South Africa that drew on their own culture (Ballantine 1991: 188–91). With African American jazz artists as role models, it was felt that jazz offered a vehicle for black musicians in South Africa to achieve musical and social equality. As Ballantine points out,

... it was precisely the musical idiom in which and through which urban black people were

¹² For a comprehensive history of concert and dance in South Africa see C. Ballantine’s “Concert and Dance: the Foundations of Black Jazz in South Africa between the Twenties and the Early Forties”. *Popular Music* 10.2, 121–45 (1991) and *Marabi Nights* 2012: 16–53.

proving to themselves and to the world that they were the equals of whites (without in the process abandoning valued aspects of their culture, or of their history as blacks who were assuming aspects of Western culture) (2012: 10).

Regrettably, this use of jazz as a claim to a right to equality with the white population fuelled the apartheid regimes' enactment of legislation intended to inhibit its development and enable the censorship of radio airplay. As jazz was increasingly suppressed by the apartheid regime, the reaction was to use jazz as a form of resistance to the wholesale oppression being inflicted (*ibid.*). This is witnessed in the protest song compositions of Big T Ntsele performed by the Soul Jazzmen in service of the struggle, as discussed later.

From the 1940s forward acceptance of the social and political philosophy known as New Africanism caused a turning point in the constitution of black South African jazz. The turning point was manifested in the birth of mbaqanga, a unique South African dance music originally referred to as African jazz. Mbaqanga emerged from a blend of the cyclical structure of marabi with the heavy beat of the Zulu *indlamu* dance and influences of American swing, but with a distinctive melodic style rooted in neo-traditional South African music (Ballantine 2012: 79–82). Soul Jazzmen trumpet player, Victor Miza (1939–2009), told me about how he played mbaqanga with the Synco Downbeats; and how everyone, even the Soul Jazzmen, played mbaqanga due to its popularity; but, artists also remained committed to playing American jazz and their own compositions that were forging South Africa's unique jazz sound (Interview, 19 June 2009).

Meanwhile, stage musicals with their own live bands were touring the country, including all the major towns and cities in the Eastern Cape. They were inspired by Hollywood musicals viewed at bioscopes that featured swing band vocalists such as Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and Nat King Cole. Of note is Patrick Pasha's opportunity in the early 1960s to play with a band made up of mostly Eastern Cape musicians that toured the country with Ben "Satchmo" Masinga's (1936–1981) musical, "Back In Your Own Backyard". The show, taking its title from a pop hit from the USA, was created by Masinga assisted by legendary tenor sax player/band leader from Fort Beaufort, Victor Ndlazilwana of Woody Woodpeckers and Jazz Ministers fame. Dudu Pukwana was commissioned as music director. The show featured Thandi Klaasen and Letta Mbuli as vocalists. Instrumentalists were Nic Moyake on saxophone and Dudu Pukwana on saxophone/piano; Elijah Nkonyani, trumpet; Martin Ngijima, bass; and Dick Khoza on drums. Patrick Pasha remembers that Pat Matshikiza (piano), Johnny Dyani (bass) and himself on saxophone were brought in when Pukwana, Moyake and Ngijima were called to Johannesburg to join the Castle Lager Big Band Chris McGregor was forming there for the 1962 Castle Lager Jazz Festival. Speaking of Pukwana as arranger, he said, "He actually did a very good job, the backing was outstanding" (P. Pasha interview 27 August 2009, pers. comm. 9 October 2018).¹³

Returning to the late 1950s, the first major style of South African popular music to

¹³ See Rasmussen 2003b: 62–63 for P. Pasha's description of his touring with this show and discovery of Johnny Dyani practicing in a hall in Fort Beaufort and bringing him into the show's band.

gain international fame was pennywhistle jazz (later coined kwela by white teenage fans) played on the streets by township youth; it was music rooted in marabi that imitated the popular vocal jazz, big band swing jazz and jazz instrumentalists of the time, but also sometimes drew on migrant and neo-traditional African songs (Ballantine 2012: 8). The result was an up-beat, catchy, very danceable style that had widespread appeal among white youth and the population at large. In 1958, the recording “Tom Hark” by Elias Lerole and his Zig-Zag Flutes went to the top of the charts in the UK and soon was a hit around the world (<http://electricjive.blogspot.com/2014/11/tin-whistle-jive-and-roots-of-kwela.html> accessed 15 October 2018). As full participants in the kwela craze, New Brighton’s Dudley Tito and Whytie Kuluman,¹⁴ members of the Soul Jazzmen from the early 1970s, played pennywhistle as teenagers before taking up their tenor and alto saxophones (D. Tito interview 21 June 2011).



Figure 6. Bowery Boys Band from top left, Dudley Tito, Poppy, Tinini and Zweli (surnames not known). Photo courtesy of Tito Collection.

¹⁴ Whytie Kuluman is sometimes found spelled Whitey or Whitie Kuluman and other times his surname is given as Kulumani and Kuruman. In this article I use the spelling found on the Yamaha flyer, Whytie Kuluman (see Figure 24)

1950s–60s Swing Bands

Most of the musicians I initially interviewed were instrumentalists and vocalists in the 1950s swing bands and acapella vocal jazz groups of Walmer Location, New Brighton, Korsten and Uitenhage (nearest city northwest of Port Elizabeth), which were thriving at the time. They were teenagers and young adults when American jazz shifted into the be-bop era after World War II. From the time they were children they heard the sounds of the American swing bands such as those of Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Bennie Goodman, Woody Herman and the bands' vocalists Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Nat King Cole, and Frank Sinatra, among others. Local vocal groups imitated popular American vocal groups like the Mills Brothers, Four Freshmen, and Inkspots. They learned by listening to records and by spending countless hours practicing in the recreation halls scattered throughout the townships. By the time any of these musicians had a chance to be recorded the norm had shifted and they were playing in small combos, not swing bands. No recordings of the many swing bands active in this community exist, although photographs collected by local jazz historian, Richard Hatana, document the bands and who played in them.

Despite legally enforced racial segregation, the black swing bands and vocal groups performed "in town" at venues such as Crispin Hall and Feathermarket Hall.



Figure 7. Richard Hatana, left and Howard Mabendeza, far right carrying his saxophone, on their way to a gig at Feathermarket Hall. Photos courtesy of Hatana Collection.

Most instrumentalists learned “by ear” although some learned to read music. Many musicians had day jobs and played simply for the love of the music. House parties were held in Korsten where people had gardens around their homes. Church and community halls in New Brighton provided “respectable” environments that gave the music wider acceptance, even among church-goers. Swing jazz was not the *marabi* of alcohol-laced shebeen parties. The halls were packed on weekends with youth dancing to swing music (R. Hatana interview 25 August 2010, C. Attwell and P. Pasha interviews 20 September 2012).

New Brighton, Walmer Location and Uitenhage were noted for their excellent swing bands and vocal jazz groups. One of the earliest was Swanee’s Swing Aces formed in 1947 by pianist Swanee Segoe (Figures 8a and b). Band members included Howard Mabendeza on tenor saxophone and Richard Hatana on drums. This band was noted for its players’ ability to read notation and play from charts.



Figure 8a. Swanee’s Swing Aces, with leader Swanee Segoe standing.
Photo courtesy of Hatana Collection.



Figure 8b. Swanee Segoe, founder and leader of Swanee's Swing Aces at the piano.
Photo courtesy of Hatana Collection.

Pianist, Count Nakhosoke, better known as Count Attwell, (b. 1930) (Figure 9) and Lent Magoma (dates unknown), tenor saxophone, formed the African Rhythm Crotchets in 1953 when they returned to New Brighton from attending Healdtown Academy, where both honed their musical skills while attending high school. Dorothy Masuka performed with them on one of her first visits to New Brighton. The band kept going in various combinations of players for over 30 years (Count Attwell interview 20 September 2012).



Figure 9. Count Attwell rehearsing with Dorothy Masuka in New Brighton.
Photo courtesy of Count Attwell.

Another popular swing band was the Junior Jazzmen from Walmer Location, established by trombonist/composer Mike Ngxokolo and Lumkile Jacobs in 1954 (Figure 10). Vocalists Thami Ngcwangu and Nomzamo Mkuzo sang with the band. Noted instrumentalists Dudu Pukwana, Patrick Pasha, Richard Hatana, Christopher Columbus Ngcukana, Derrek Xujwa, Big T Ntsele, Dudley Tito and Victor Miza, were among its members over the years.



Figure 10. Junior Jazzmen with founders Lumkile Jacobs, second sax from right in middle row and Mike Ngxokolo, third from left, back row. Photo courtesy of Hatana Collection.

Other swing bands included the Broadway Yanks, Bishop Limba's Swing Band,¹⁵ Barnacle Bills, King Cole Basies and the Jazz Pioneers, all based in New Brighton. The King Cole Basies band was formed in New Brighton in 1952 by trumpeter Keki Njekilana and Ray Pandle, both teachers (Figure 11). Members included Leonard Duru, piano; Thami Ncwangu, vocalist, Fatu September and Tinky Zwane on saxophones, Sizwe Kapi on drums (Richard Hatana's teacher), and, Ntabi Charles also known as "Charlie Moss" on bass (Big T Ntsele's teacher) (T. Ntsele interview 29 May 2009, R. Hatana interview 25 August 2010).

¹⁵ Bishop Limba's Swing Band was sponsored by the Bantu Church of Christ and as such served as proof in the community that jazz had become respectable dance music (K.T. Pemba interview 28 June 2010).



Figure 11. King Cole Basies rhythm section, from left: Leonard Duru, piano, Ken April, guitar, Sizwe Kapi, drums, Ntabi Charles, bass. Photo courtesy of Hatana Collection.

New Brighton vocalist, Nomzamo Mkuzo (1938–2016) (Figure 12a), noted for her beautiful, strong voice and her own compositions that reflect amaXhosa culture, began her musical career singing with the Barnacle Bills (Figure 12b). She was recruited by founder, Ken Tshoshobe, when just 15 years old (Butete 2012: 152–58). She also sang with Junior Jazzmen and Friendly City Six on the invitation of Richard Hatana (N. Mkuzo interview with N. Butete 22 May 2009, R. Hatana interview with N. Butete 13 November 2009).



Figure 12a. Young Nomzamo Makuzo waiting to go on stage with the Barnacle Bills swing band. Photo courtesy of Nomzamo Makuzo.



Figure 12b. The Barnacle Bills band with leader Ken Tshoshobe on clarinet.
Photo courtesy of Hatana Collection.

K.T. Pemba, a local promoter and artist and son of the famous New Brighton painter, George Pemba, painted back-drop murals and banners for shows and set up the sound (Figure 13) (K.T. Pemba interview 28 June 2010).



Figure 13. Bishop Limba's Swing Band with K.T. Pemba mural backdrop.
Photo courtesy of Hatana Collection.

The Uitenhage Musical Rhythm Aces (UMRA) and Garden City Slickers originated in Uitenhage. Dudu Pukwana and Patrick Pasha played in the Uitenhage Musical Rhythm Aces while attending high school in Uitenhage.¹⁶ UMRA (Figure 14) was a swing band formed in 1948 by their teacher, Joseph Nyati, who managed to obtain donated instruments for band members. Both went on to play with Walmer's Junior Jazzmen, Broadway Yanks and the Jazz Maniacs (P. Pasha interview 27 August 2009). None of these swing bands were ever recorded, even though their popularity continued well into the 1960s.



Figure 14. Uitenhage Musical Rhythm Aces with Patrick Pasha, in sun glasses, on tenor sax and Dudu Pukwana at the piano. Photo courtesy of Patrick Pasha.

Vocal jazz groups composed isiXhosa lyrics for imported jazz standards and imitated the harmonies of *acapella* vocal groups from the USA. Tete Mbambisa founded the Four Yanks (Figure 15) in East London who were managed by drummer, Dick Khoza (Rasmussen 2003: 142). New Brighton vocal groups, among many others, included the Symphonaires, formed in 1953 by vocalist Thami Ngcwangu and the Question Marks, founded and led by Welile Ntshekisa. Members of the Question Marks were teenagers Thami “Big T” Ntsele, “Sharp Boy” Peyi, Zola Nomgqokwana and Kavala Mangqoyi. They were backed by Ntshekisa on piano.¹⁷ Their popularity brought them performances in New Brighton nearly every weekend and tours throughout the country (T. Ntsele interview 29 May 2009, T. Ngcwangu interview

¹⁶ UMRA is identified as Uitenhage Musical Recreation Artists by P. Pasha in an interview with Lars Rasmussen (2003b: 61). It seems the band was mostly known by the initials UMRA, thus the confusion over what the initials represented.

¹⁷ Unfortunately no photographs of the Questions Marks were ever located.



Figure 15. The Four Yanks. Photo © Oupa Galela. Photo from L. Rasmussen, ed. 2003b: 144.
Note: Johnny Dyani sang with the Four Yanks.

4 September 2012). The Yankee Brothers (Figure 16) from Uitenhage, led by founding member, Poni Bantam, also formed in the 1950s. The Yankee Brothers is the only vocal group that survives and continues to perform as a trio over six decades later.



Figure 16. Uitenhage's Yankee Brothers, from left Wanele Ginger, David Denugo and leader Poni Bantam singing at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, June 2013. Photo by D. Thram.

The most famous vocal quintet from New Brighton was Basin Blues, backed by the Rhythm Downbeats, led by Christopher Columbus Ngcukana and featuring Dolly Rathebe as lead vocalist. Formed in 1952 by Welcome Duru (1933–2009), composer/vocalist/actor, Basin Blues (Figure 17) was the first New Brighton band to have a hit commercial recording with *i'Sileyi Sam*, released as a 78rpm by Troubador. Their second hit, a Duru composition entitled “*Sindy*,” was first recorded in 1956 in War Memorial Hall in New Brighton, but the quality was so poor they had to go to Johannesburg to record it again. Their 1958 hit, “*Wenyuk'umbombela*” (Train song), also composed by Duru, endures to this day as a signature song of South Africa. Unfortunately no recordings by the original artists have survived, but Miriam Makeba and Harry Belafonte’s cover recording of *Wenyuk'umbombela* made it an international hit (Msila 2014: 131–33, D. Xujwa interview 28 August 2012, T. Ngcwangu interview 4 September 2012).



Figure 17. Newspaper clipping reporting on Dolly Rathebe singing with Basin Blues. Clipping courtesy of Hatana Collection.

The talented baritone saxophonist, multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, composer and teacher “Christopher Columbus” Ngcukana (1927–1993), commonly called “MBRA” (Figure 18) and his influence in New Brighton was often mentioned in interviews. Described as a great musician and band leader from whom they learned,¹⁸ Ngcukana moved to Port Elizabeth from Cape Town in 1953 and joined the Junior Jazzmen swing band. In 1954 he formed the group Rhythm Downbeats with Coleman Stokwe,

¹⁸ See S. Douglas 2013: 161–66 for a transcription of an interview with jazz composer and trumpeter, Feya Faku, talking about how he learned from Christopher Columbus Ngcukana in New Brighton.



Figure 18. Left: Ezra Ngcukana and his father, Christopher Columbus Ngcukana playing together. Right: *PE Herald* newspaper clipping describing Ngcukana as one of South Africa's top African musicians. Clipping and photo courtesy of Tito Collection.

trumpet, Hubert Tini, alto saxophone, Gwedile Tini, bass, Dick Khoza, drums and Phillip Mbambaza, piano. It was later joined by Derrek Xujwa, bass, Paul Zokufa, piano, Dudu Pukwana and Nick Moyake on saxophones; all musicians who were playing in various local bands at the time.

Ngcukana, who reportedly picked up his nickname Christopher Columbus because of the way he discovered things, travelled back and forth to Port Elizabeth, but mainly worked out of Cape Town and Johannesburg where he played with Chris McGregor's Blue Notes before returning to Cape Town in December 1963. His son Ezra became an accomplished saxophone player who worked with New Brighton musicians in the 1970s–80s (P. Mbambaza interview 11 September 2012, D. Xujwa interview 28 August 2012, P. Pasha interview 27 August 2009, Rasmussen 2007: 178).

The 1960s–70s

In the wake of the Sharpeville Massacre of 21 March 1960 and the aftermath state of emergency and mass arrests, more and more musicians — if they could find a way — left the country. Those who stayed behind were inspired by how jazz supported the civil rights movement in the USA. Police harassment was common at performances in local halls as a clipping (Figure 19) about the Soul Jazzmen's original pianist, Sonwabo Makubalo, documents.

Not only were there jazz shows every weekend, New Brighton was also the place where local theatre productions by playwright/activist, Athol Fugard and the Serpent Players were staged regularly. These weekend shows were part and parcel of the struggle against the apartheid regime. In 1962 Fugard and the Serpent Players produced the German play *Woyzeck*, which protests the dehumanizing effects of mistreatment. It featured local stars Mabel Magada and Norman Ntshinga with the Friendly City Six jazz combo (Figure 20) providing music created for the production (D. Xujwa interviews 28 August 2012, 31 October 2012; Athol Fugard interview 13 January 2015).

By the 1970s, rehearsals at Dudley Tito's Avenue A workshop became the school for many fledgling artists (Figures 21a, b, c) including now famous New Brighton jazz musicians of the next generation, such as Lulu Gontsana (1960–2005), drummer; Zim Ngqawana (1959–2011), composer/flute/saxophone player and highly respected improviser; widely recognized composer/arranger/trumpet/flugel horn player, Feya Faku (b. 1962) and bassist/ composer/arranger/ educator, Lex Futshane (b. 1964) all of whom became internationally respected as outstanding jazz artists.



Figure 19. Report on assault of Sonwabo Makhubalo at the small Centenary Hall in New Brighton, date unknown. Clipping courtesy of Tito Collection.



Figure 20. Members of the Friendly City Six from left Mike Ngxokolo trombone, Derrick Xujwa bass, Richard Hatana, drums, Ken Louw, trumpet. Photo courtesy of Derrick Xujwa.



Figure 21a. The Soul Jazzmen in Dudley Tito's Avenue A workshop: sitting George Tyefumane with Lulu Gontsana on his lap; Standing, from left: first person unidentified, Dudley Tito, Monde Sikhutshwa, Whytie Kuluman (head down), Big T Ntsele, Duke Makasi, all late. Photo courtesy of Lulu Gontsana Collection.



Figure 21b. From left, Monwabisi Sabani, keyboard; Joe Daku, Soul Jazzmen vocalist, instructing Zim Ngquwana, sax and Feya Faku trumpet. Photo courtesy of Tito Collection, circa mid-1970s.



Figure 21c. Dudley Tito at the piano in his workshop, 2013. Until his passing in 2016, Dudley's Avenue A workshop was used for rehearsals and a place of learning for young aspiring jazz musicians. Photo by D.Thram.

The Soul Jazzmen

New Brighton's legendary Soul Jazzmen were founded by Monde "Monk" Sikhutshwa in 1964 from the youth he had been nurturing with listening sessions in his living room. The Be-Bop era in the USA had brought with it smaller combos; the formation of Soul Jazzmen was in step with this trend. Band members were inspired by American jazz innovators such as the Jazz Crusaders, bassist Charles Mingus, pianist/composer Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and Horace Silver, among others.

Original members of the Soul Jazzmen were George Tyefumani, trumpet; Duke Makasi, tenor saxophone; Whytie Kuluman, alto saxophone; Lungile Cengani, also known as Peter Jackson, drums; Sonwabo Makubalo, piano; and Big T Pyche Ntsele, bass, all of whom have passed on. In 1968 the group was joined by Tete Mbambisa, piano; Dennis Mpale on trumpet and Mafufu Jama on drums.



Figure 22. The core of what became the Soul Jazzmen at the Salt River Town Hall: Vuyiswa Ngcwangu (or possibly Nosisi Rululu), Duke Makasi, Dennis Mpale, Nick Moyake, Big T Ntsele, Tete Mbambisa. Photo (cropped) courtesy of Ian Bruce Huntley Collection (see <http://electricjive.blogspot.com/2013/07/nick-moyake-and-soul-jazzmen-1965.html> for additional information).

The Soul Jazzmen went to Johannesburg in 1969 intending to relocate. While there they recorded their only commercial LP entitled *Inhlupeko* (trans. Distress) (Figure 23) as a quartet with Tete Mbambisa as arranger and pianist, Duke Makasi on tenor saxophone, Big T Pyche Ntsele on bass and Mafufu Jama on drums.

While in Johannesburg they played many live shows, but Ntsele tells of how he was forced to come home when he was arrested and abused while incarcerated for lack of a pass book. In 1970 Big T re-formed the group in New Brighton bringing in Dudley Tito, tenor; Victor Miza, trumpet and the late Buggs Matiwane on piano. In 1972 Lulu Gontsana was invited to join the band, a precocious drummer at the age of twelve. The combo made several recordings for the South African Broadcasting Company (SABC) in the 1970s with vocalists Vuyelwa Qwesha, Joe Daku, Hector Ketane and Wela Matomela. The recordings were used for radio airplay and never



Figure 23. Front cover of the Soul Jazzmen's vinyl LP released by City Special (CYL1000) in 1969 and re-released by Matsuli Music (MM107 UK) in 2015. The title is spelled Intlupeko on the record labels.

released. The Soul Jazzmen never managed to release another commercial LP due to the lack of a recording industry in Port Elizabeth or a backer to finance a recording (T. Ntsele interview 29 May 2009, V. Miza interview 19 June 2009).

However, they performed constantly in the 1970s in New Brighton and beyond. The Soul Jazzmen embodied the spirit of the struggle as they entertained crowds with their jazz repertoire nearly every weekend at St Stephens Hall. In 1972 they added 18 year old Vuyelwa Qwesha as their first female vocalist after noticing her perform in a local theatre production (V. Qwesha Luzipo interview 22 May 2009). The Soul Jazzmen scored a major success when they won first prize at the Michelangelo and Woolmark National Jazz Festival in Johannesburg in 1975 with a line-up that included Buggs Matiwani, piano; Whytie Kuluman, Castor Basine and Dudley Tito saxophones; Victor Miza, trumpet and Bux Sandi, drums. The prize was supposed to give them a chance to perform at the Newport Jazz Festival in the USA (Figure 24 and 25). Unfortunately difficulties with obtaining passports led to their substitution by the festival organizers with the Johannesburg band, the Jazz Messengers. This was a huge disappointment. It prevented the Soul Jazzmen from making the trip to the USA and having a chance for international exposure. It did not, however, change their popularity and the recognition they were afforded when, in 1979, at the height of apartheid, the Soul Jazzmen was the first group from the townships of Port Elizabeth to play at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown (Figure 26) (T. Ntsele and D. Tito interview 29 May 2009).

3. Soul Jazz:

The Soul Jazzmen can only be described as being amazing artists. We were fortunate in being able to attend an evening of Jazz at a local hotel where these wonderful musicians performed. This band of African musicians won a National competition for jazz bands – that makes them the best jazz group in the country. They have been invited to attend the Newport Jazz Festival and have recently toured the Transkei and South Africa.

The group consists of:–

Yamaha Tenor Sax (1)	YTS-21	Dudley Tito
Yamaha Tenor Sax (2)	YTS-21	Custor Basine
Yamaha Trumpet		Victor Miza
Yamaha Alto Sax	YAS – 21	Whytie Kuluman
Electric piano		Bucks Matiwani
Bass		"Big T" Ntsele
Drums		Bucks Sandi
Drums		Little Lulu (14 year old)

"Little Lulu" the 14 year old drummer can only be described as amazing, his rhythms, the speed at which he plays, his style, is nothing short of unbelievable!



The Complete Band – from left to right:

Big T Ntsele – Bass; Little Lulu – Drums; Custor Basine – Tenor Sax; Victor Miza – Trumpet; Dudley Tito – Tenor Sax; Buck Matiwani – Piano; Whytie Kuluman – Alto Sax.

Figure 24. Write up on the Soul Jazzmen, Yamaha instrument company advertising flyer, circa 1975. Courtesy of Tito Collection.

Always hugely popular and respected as one of the best jazz combos in the country, the Soul Jazzmen never failed to continue playing their highly competent and creative jazz, with members changing over time as players either left New Brighton for Cape Town or Johannesburg or passed on. At the outset of the ILAM/Red Location Music History Project in 2009 band members Big T Ntsele, Dudley Tito, Victor Miza and vocalists Vuyelwa Qwesa Luzipo and Shirley Lebakeng were among the first musicians interviewed. Nearly a decade later, the only former members of Soul Jazzmen who survive



Figure 25. Soul Jazzmen newspaper clipping from 1975 reporting the news of Soul Jazzmen's likelihood to win the festival competition. Courtesy of Tito Collection.

since the deaths of long-time leaders, Big T Ntsele in 2013, tenor saxophone legend, Dudley Tito in 2016 and vocalist Shirley Lebakeng in 2017, are Tete Mbambisa, pianist/arranger and vocalists Vuyelwa Qweshu Luzipo, Hector Katane, and Wela Matomela. A portrait of the Soul Jazzmen's star vocalist/bassist and his protest songs follows.

Thami "Big T" "Pyche" Ntsele

Born and raised in New Brighton, Big T's musical career began as a teenager when he travelled the country singing with the "Question Marks" vocal quartet, although as a child he was already playing a homemade oil tin guitar and performing with his friends (Figure 27).

He learned to play double bass from Ntobi Charles, who played in three local swing bands: King Cole Basies, African Rhythm Crotchets and Dalton's Keynote Combo. From a young age Big T free-lanced with big bands in the area such as the King Cole Basies, Junior Jazzmen and Magoma's Combo before he became a founding member



Figure 26. Clipping from the East London *Daily Dispatch* on the wall of D. Tito's Ave A workshop reporting on the Soul Jazzmen playing at the National Arts Festival in July 1979. Photo by D. Thram.



Figure 27. Early photo of Big T Ntsele playing a homemade oil tin guitar with his friends. Photo courtesy of Tito Collection.



Figure 28. Big T Pyche Nstle, probably late 1960s to early 1970s, with his electric bass seated in front of original Red Location shacks. Photo courtesy of Tito Collection.



Figure 29. Big T singing with the Soul Jazzmen circa 1975. Photo courtesy of Tito Collection.

of the Soul Jazzmen in 1964 when he was 18 years old. His youthful prowess can be attributed to his learning from a very young age by singing with the Question Marks, listening to Monde Sekhutshwa's recordings, having lessons on double bass from swing band player Ntabi Charles and by sitting in with local swing bands.

From the mid-1960s through the 1970s the role of jazz in the struggle against apartheid in this community was through local weekend performances, often in St Stephens Hall, and/or at political gatherings of the ANC such as ANC fund raising events billed as "Save the Children" shows. These shows, often held at Rio Cinema, are an example of where the Soul Jazzmen featured Big T as they entertained crowds while Big T delivered a forceful message of resistance to the realities of apartheid with his songs and their lyrics.

A charismatic singer who often improvised lyrics on the spot that reflected events that had just occurred in the community, Big T was well known for his anti-apartheid protest songs, "*uNolali*," "Tear Gas," and "Bastard" and his haunting instrumental, "Tears for Sharpeville"; he moved audiences throughout the difficult years in the height of the struggle. His protest songs were hits and Big T was the Soul Jazzmen's star. The programme for Big T's memorial speaks of how crowds responded to *uNolali* by nearly causing a stampede in the hall (Figure 30).

Big T told me (Interview, 29 May 2009) about the harsh treatment he received from the apartheid regime's Special Branch both in Johannesburg and New Brighton. He talked

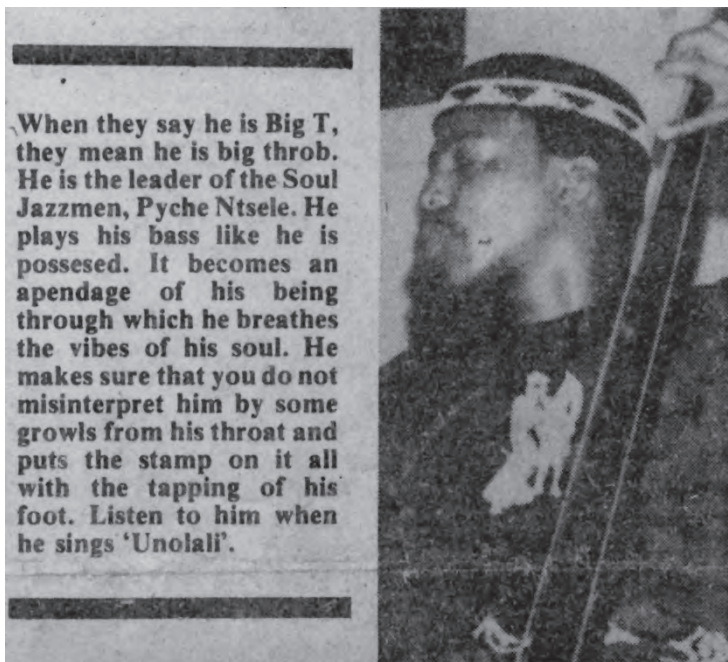


Figure 30. Newspaper feature, circa mid-1970s, describing Big T's powerful musicianship. Clipping courtesy of Tito Collection.

about how he was arrested and for the first time in his life put in jail in Johannesburg with hardened criminals who abused him and beat him up. He went on to say,

I wrote songs like “Tear Gas” because that was what was happening to us. We were tear-gassed most of the time when we had shows. Like for instance there was a time we had a show at Rio Cinema... called “Save the Children”. In fact, we were hired by these political organizations, like ANC, and sometimes they would take us by force and not pay us anything — and we played to packed crowds. That was for a good cause tho’.

Special Branch officers intruded on Save the Children events looking for excuses to arrest people and threw tear gas bombs to disperse the crowd. Big T was a target for them because of his songs which spoke out against the injustices of apartheid. Even female vocalists were arrested, as was the case with Shirley Lebakeng at a Save the Children event in 1976 when she was singing with Black Slave, a popular New Brighton fusion group led by Jury Ntshinga. She was put in jail and threatened and bullied while incarcerated.¹⁹

Big T continued,

Another song I composed was “*uNolali*” — Nolali was the superintendent, the mayor, someone like that. I ask, “Why do you make us pay too much rent? Why is there no money? Why do you demolish our shacks Why Nolali? Where do you want us to live? Why do you take anything from people? Why do you take us away from Port Elizabeth?” They used to send us to Grahamstown, King Williams Town, places like that, risking our lives. It was inhuman treatment of human beings.

And then there was “Bastard,” I composed that one for Vuyelwa. So these people they used to come and knock on the door at four a.m., they were like inspectors, wanting to know who were these people? Were they from East London or Grahamstown. Where is your pass? Those people were like bastards to me, you know. Inhuman people. Wake up – go home go home. I was singing about what was happening in front of me.

Recordings of Big T Ntsele performing are few. An undated SABC transcription service recording of Big T’s song, “Bastard,” was made by the Soul Jazzmen with Vuyelwa Qweshu as vocalist in the Port Elizabeth SABC radio studio, probably in the early 1970s. The title was disguised as “*LeNdoda*” due to potential censorship by the SABC. Big T’s bass playing can also be heard on an obscure 1968 recording, “Mankunku Jazz Show” recorded live at the Y Theatre in Orlando and put out by Ray Nkwe on JLP, a label he probably created for that purpose. It includes “Love for Sale” and “Give Me the Simple Life” by the Soul Jazzmen with Vuyiswa Ngcwangu on vocals on the latter item (J. Eato pers. comm. 16 September 2018). As mentioned above, Big T is the bassist on the Soul Jazzmen’s LP, *Inhlupeko*, recorded on 6 January 1969 in a Johannesburg studio and released by Gallo subsidiary, City Special. Big T was recorded live singing and playing bass with the Soul Jazzmen by David Marks at the 1975 Michelangelo and Woolmark National Jazz Festival at Jubalani Stadium in Soweto on Buggs Matiwani’s “Save the Children” and his own song, “*uNolali*”. These are the only two items by the Soul Jazzmen on the compilation from that event released on Atlantic by WEA Records as a David Marks 3rd Ear Music Production in 1976.

¹⁹ For a full account of this incident in Shirley Lebakeng’s own words see Butete 2012: 139–42.

Big T was especially fond of singing Tete Mbambisa's composition "*uMsenge*" (a plant good for stomach problems) to the extent that he referred to it as 'his song'. A recording of Big T singing it exists as the last cut on an undated SABC Transcription Recording of the Soul Jazzmen with a full line up consisting of Victor Miza, trumpet; Whytie Kuluman, alto saxophone; Dudley Tito, tenor saxophone; Mike Ngxokolo, trombone; Bucs Gongco, keyboards/arranger; Peter Jackson, drums; Wela Matomela, vocals/keyboards and Big T Nstele, bass. In addition, Big T sang "*uMsenge*" at the Jazz Heritage Concert produced by the ILAM/Red Location Music History Project held on 27 March 2010 in New Brighton. To see a video clip of Big T singing "*uMsenge*" visit the ILAM website, www.ru.ac.za/ilam or You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59vuLzoEY8s>.²⁰

Soul Jazzmen's Freedom Songs and their imprint on South African Jazz

Readers are invited to listen to five recordings of Big T Ntsele with the Soul Jazzmen found on the DVD disc affixed to the back cover this journal. Listen first to the recording of Big T's song, "Bastard", sung by Vuyelwa Qweshwa [CD track 3]. The lyrics are:

WAYEJIKELEZ' IMIZI YABANTU	He was roaming around peoples' houses
KANT' IYOYIKA LE BASTARD (x 2)	Only to find the bastard is afraid
UPHUMIL' UMPINGA	Mpinga went out to look for the bastard
WALANDEL' URADEBE	Radebe followed also
AYIKHO LE BASTARD	They couldn't find the bastard
UPHUMIL' UMPINGA	Impinga went out to look for the bastard
WALANDEL' URADEBE	Radebe followed also
ABAYIBONI LE BASTARD	They can't see the bastard
HE NDODANDINI, HE NDODANDINI	Hey you, man, Hey you man
HEY WENA ... BASTARD	Hey you, bastard
AQUL' AMADODA, ZAQUL' IZIZWE	The men grabbed their knobkerries, also the villagers
AYIKHO LE BASTARD	They took their knobkerries to go find the bastard
BAQUL' ABAFAZI, ZAQUL' IZIZWE	The women grabbed their sticks, also the villagers
	to go find the bastard
AYIKHO LE BASTARD	But the bastard has run away
THULA NDIVILE RADEBE, O...HO	HUSH - Don't worry Radebe, if you can't find him
THULA NDIVILE RADEBE, IYO...HA	HUSH - Don't Worry Radebe, if you can't find him
(Lyrics transcribed and translated by Vuyelwa Qweshwa Luzipo)	

The lyrics and the feeling of this song evoke a sense of the hopelessness of people trapped in oppression. Notice that "Bastard", after its evocative introduction, sounds like mbaqanga. Listen next to Big T singing on Tete Mbambisa's "*uMsenge*" [CD track 4]. This song, about an indigenous plant used to cure stomach problems, might be considered a metaphor for the need for medicine for the senseless oppression of the apartheid regime. It carries a decidedly isiXhosa character because of the way it vamps between two chords a whole step apart, thus evoking the tonal language of *uhadi* bow

²⁰ Copies of the live documentary film on DVD produced by ILAM from the Jazz Heritage Concert held as a culminating event of the first year of the ILAM/Red Location Music History Project are available from ILAM.

music. Now listen to Duke Makasi's "*Inhlupeko*" [CD track 5] recorded in 1969, and then Big T's "*uNolali*" [CD track 6] and finally Buggs Matiwani's "Save the Children" [CD track 7], the final two both recorded live in 1975 and both with Big T singing.

The Soul Jazzmen's performances at the Michelangelo and Woolmark National Jazz Festival of "*uNolali*" and "Save the Children" are artistically superb and intensely energetic. The forceful playing by the Soul Jazzmen embodies the frustrations, the anger, the outrage and utter exasperation they felt enduring the intense realities of the apartheid regime in 1975. The music screams as Big T asks "why Nolali?" on "*uNolali*". The recording of "Save the Children" runs for 8 minutes. It opens with the bass playing solo, the bass is joined by a single line on a drum, and then the piano comps a simple line while horns eventually begin to play a semblance of melodic material over the repetitive bass pattern and piano comping. The song feels like an example of free improvisation such as that of the players' contemporaries in the USA, John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. The emotion expressed is tender. It sounds as if the song cries out and sobs over the injustices of the historical moment being lived through.

But, to return to "*Inhlupeko*" recorded in 1969, this was/is post-bop jazz, in the tradition of John Coltrane, but with a remarkable South African tinge. Gehard Kubik (2013: 15), who heard the Soul Jazzmen perform in Johannesburg in 1968, says "Although inspired by post-bop jazz and John Coltrane in particular, this music was unique and different from any jazz of the same period in America". As these five recordings allow us to hear, the Soul Jazzmen used their prowess as jazz artists to protest against the harsh realities of living under the apartheid regime. The Soul Jazzmen were powerful. They contributed to South African jazz in a way that corresponds to commentator Lewis Nkosi's incisive insight regarding jazz in service of the struggle:

The validity of what these musicians are doing...does not, of course, lie in protest; which, if anything might even be a limiting factor: the better accounting for their talents lies in their ability and willingness to transmute, in a way in which South African writers often fail, the raw violence they feel about a world which has victimized them, into a universalized artistic statement (1966: 35).

Due to their music heritage and their experience living under apartheid, they forged a unique sound that went beyond their learning from American jazz recordings into the realm of communication from the depths of the soul that musical expression affords. They achieved the level of expression that they consciously aspired to, given their choice of Soul Jazzmen as their moniker. Big T said to me one day, "for me, jazz is like religion. It's a spiritual thing". In spite of their marginalization from the recording industry, the musicians who joined forces in the recordings discussed here left a lasting imprint on the sound of South African jazz. Herein lies the legacy of the composers, Big T Ntsele, Tete Mbambisa, Duke Makasi, Buggs Matiwani and the performers, the Soul Jazzmen.

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Discography

Soul Jazzmen

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Soul Jazzmen recordings on accompanying CD

CD track 3: "Bastard" by Thami Big T Ntsele. Vocals, Vuyelwa Qweshsha.

CD track 4: "*uMsenge*" by Tete Mbambisa. Vocals Big T Ntsele.

CD track 5: "*Inhlupeko*" by Duke Makasi.

CD track 6: "*uNolali*" by Thami Big T Ntsele. Vocals, Big T Ntsele.

CD track 7 "Save the Children" by Buggs Matiwane.