RAIDING GENRES, REMAKING CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICAN JAZZ DISCOURSE: THE STUDY OF THE CHOICES AND IDEALS BEHIND MY COMPOSITIONAL PORTFOLIO.

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Music, in the Graduate Programme in The School of Music, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

I declare that this thesis is my own work. All references, citations, and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master in Music, in the Faculty of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is presented as an autoethnography that documents the process of composing a portfolio of works that are identifiable as Jazz. Autoethography is understood here as both a theory and a method. While my personal perspective is central, the social milieu in which I am positioned is also important as I understand composition as a process that is dependent on, and motivated by, context. In this way, composition is seen as closely tied to identity.

The pieces fall into three ensemble categories: those composed with particular musicians in mind, those composed for specific instrumental combination; and those composed for a big band format. In the first category, my focus as a composer is to write music with a particular set of musicians in mind. In the second category, I compose and arrange for instrumentation. In the third category, my focus is writing for a big band, in which I create a simulation; I use recording software to programme the instruments.

The intention is to interrogate and analyse how and why I made the compositional decisions, and to expose my perceptions of how the process of composition unfolded. Underlying my compositional strategies is the idea that as a fundamentally improvisational idiom, jazz can accommodate musical characteristics and techniques associated with other established genres like Rock, *Goema, Gqom*, Latin, and Afro-Cuban music.

The motivation for my approach to composition is to bring the jazz idiom closer to the diverse musical environment which I experience in Durban.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

I am a young musician from Durban, a city on the east coast of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. I grew up in an area called Queensburgh and was raised in a Christian home. My father is a musician, a drummer to be more precise, and I was exposed to music at an early age, so that the sound of music and drumming everyday was not foreign to me as I had grown accustomed to it. When I was a child, there was never a day where my father forced me into learning music and drumming; instead my love for music came about naturally. The more I heard music, the more I wanted to play the drum kit.

I cannot imagine life without music because I feel that expressing myself through any other medium would be detrimental to my character and purpose. Music is a fundamental part of who I am. Most of the stories about my childhood have to do with music, specifically rhythm. I have heard stories from my family of the things I used to do while still in my mother's womb. When my mother was pregnant with me, she sang a lot and also attended church on a regular basis. During 'praise and worship' which consisted of congregational singing led by a choir and live band, my mother's stomach would move violently from side to side, usually when the drums were played and she recalls being embarrassed by this. My father who is a professional drummer played in the church band at that time.

One day, while at a party which played loud music, my mother fell ill and was rushed to the hospital. The doctors had to induce labour because I was in distress, hence I was born a month early; it was as though the music had beckoned me. At the age of 2, while still in my nappies, I used to crawl onto the stage at church where my father played the drum kit and he would hold me while playing. It was only natural for me to crawl in the direction of that familiar sound. At my granny's house where I stayed most of the time, it was normal for me to bang on pots and pans with spoons,

emulating the drum kit I knew from church. My uncle who is also a drummer, would put me on his lap and give me the sticks to play with whenever the drum kit was set up. As a toddler, these were my very first encounters with the drum kit as well as with music. Exposure to music at a young age made it difficult for me not to fall in love with it. My passion for playing the drums grew when I accompanied my father to church band rehearsals. I think that observing my father's every move while playing is where I learnt to conceptualise the role of a drummer in the band as well as how to play the different parts of the drum kit and where to place them in the context of the music. I also learnt a few hand and feet combinations in the process. Everything in my daily life became a set of drums for me, and I would imagine the sound of each drum and cymbal whether playing on my lap, on pillows or even on the car dashboard. It was almost as if I was a walking drum template. I soon started attending drum workshops with my father and even played at a few. This is when my love for drumming flourished. The turning point in my life occurred when my father put together a band consisting of fathers and sons for a Father's Day church service. I was only 10 years old and we had to perform one item. Although I was very nervous, I was nevertheless excited at the same time. At the rehearsals, I realised how demanding playing with a band is! Keeping time, remembering the parts, and listening to the rest of the musicians was new to me as this was my first time actually playing in a band. It was now the real thing and not pots and pans. I improved at each rehearsal and slowly adapted to the playing styles of the other musicians. The day finally came and as we moved onto the church stage, the sight of a thousand people sparked fear in me. I sat behind the drum kit and readied myself to play. I knew that if I messed up the song it would make me feel inferior, because I knew that my father was well known in the Durban community and especially in the Gospel music scene. So I decided to emulate everything that he did while playing with the church band, and succeeded. People enjoyed every bit of it and complimented me on my drumming. On this day, my confidence as a performer grew and I immediately knew what I wanted to do for a career; I wanted to be a musician. I started watching DVD recordings of concerts and bands as well as

listening to music on our CD player. The first artists and bands I can remember being exposed to were, Michael Jackson, Casiopea, Led Zeppellin, Byron Cage, George Michael, Tananas, Chick Corea, Dave Weckl and Nathaniel Townsley. My music library grew as I started listening to modern pop music as well as Gospel music. I listened to artists such as Akon, T-Pain, Chris Brown, Rihanna, Shakira, Timbaland, Justin Timberlake, Israel Houghton, Ron Kenoly, Debra Killings and Martha Munizzi. I learnt something new every time I listened to music and there were different elements from each song that inspired me. Either the beat, the bass line, a chord progression or melody inspired me so much that I wanted to create music that incorporated these elements. After moving to a new church in 2008, I was called to play with the Youth band and we practised every week for our Friday Youth meetings. This is where I learnt to play with other musicians and the negotiation of musicality between the musicians and myself inspired me to be more active on the band stand. In the process, my music repertoire increased. At this point, American Gospel music was my obsession and I started to immerse myself in that style of drumming. Drummers like Chris Coleman and Derico Watson inspired me to become a better drummer. The one thing to which I always listened critically was the sound of their drum kits. I loved how they were tuned as well as the punchiness and attack that their drums produced. In late 2009, I started travelling out with the Youth band to do outreach programmes and I also began playing the drums for the main church services on Sunday mornings. At the rehearsals and also the Sunday services, I felt more involved as a drummer and the interaction with the other musicians led me to improvise sporadically. I ultimately realised that listening to so many Gospel and funk-fusion bands in this period was becoming tedious and boring. I had realised and felt that music should evolve into something different, and aspire to sounding different from that which preceded it. With this mindset, I would experiment with different beats on many of the gospel songs. Some beats worked, and some did not. It was a learning experience filled with a much excitement and sometimes disappointment as the other band members had their own perceptions of how music should be played. Because of a few disagreements with some of the band

members, I had decided to keep the beats simple and learnt to try and hear other beats and phrases while playing the original groove. As time progressed I started listening to some of the local bands play renditions of jazz standards such as Chick Corea's *Spain* and Paul Desmond's *Take 5*. At this point, the idea of swing and mainstream jazz was foreign to me and I had no interest in pursuing these styles on the drum kit. Gospel and funk music was what I wanted to play.

In my matric year, the time came for me to make a decision about my choice of study at University. My first choice was a Bachelor of Law and my last choice was music. The day finally came when I received a letter from the University stating that I was on a 'waiting list' for Bachelor of Law, but accepted with a firm offer for music. I decided to pursue music as it was the only thing that excited me and I could not see myself pursuing any other career. In 2013 when I began studying jazz at UKZN, I met and played with many musicians and realised that the world of music is much bigger than I had thought. It became evident just how much I did not know, and how much I needed to learn. While studying jazz drums, I also studied basic piano skills and fell in love with the piano. My favourite time of the day was in the morning as I used to experiment with chord progressions on the piano an hour before our theory class. I did this every day for 2 years. As I enjoyed listening more to piano players than drummers, I started listening to a great deal of jazz at this time; Bill Evans, Wayne Shorter, Thelonious Monk, Elvin Jones, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Robert Glasper, Snarky Puppy, to name only a few. In 2015, I began performing with many more musicians including some of my lecturers, increasingly opening my mind. I was inspired mostly by our local pianists such as Neil Gonsalves, Sibusiso Mashiloane and Burton Naidoo, and I learnt new concepts and approaches to music every time we had an encounter on the band stand. I have performed with many local and international musicians and have always learnt in the process. The music I listen to is constantly changing. The artists I am currently listening to are; Tupac Shakur, Nate Smith, Malcolm Braff, Calvin Rodgers, Antonio Sanchez, Hiromi Uehara, Charles Mingus, Tigran Hamasyan, Shai Maestro, Christian McBride, Fela Kuti, Bheki Mseleku, FKJ, Tom Misch and many more. Apart from grasping new techniques and

approaches as a drummer, I have also gained more knowledge as a composer and indeed I have found a real passion for composing music. These past experiences and encounters have shaped my musical perspective in such a way that I do not see music as being classified by genre, but as music without borders and limits, and the notion of jazz has helped me to conceptualise music in this way. I perceive music in general as being the seven continents joined together, but with jazz being the Earth, and this is my approach to the composition portfolio that correlates with this thesis. My intention behind this project is to achieve self-awareness as a composer and is also an attempt to create music that draws from the various musical styles that have influenced my approach to composition.

The intention of this thesis is to track my composition process and reflect on my experiences, encounters, findings and the choices that I make as a composer based on my personal experiences as well as my training as a jazz musician.

CHAPTER TWO

Background to my approach to Music Composition

Many people have asked why I have chosen a career in music. I do not really think I *chose* music – it is rather a passion that I cannot ignore and my connection to it is too strong for me not to make it a career. I think of music as a communicative praxis. As humans, we are programmed to communicate our lived experiences to others. As a composer my intention is to communicate my experiences, perspectives and emotions through music. Music is my way of being in the world (Frith in DuGay and Hall 1996) and it is through music that I make sense of the complex, diverse and somewhat anxious environment in which I live in South Africa in the 21st century.

Music is thus intertwined with my identity and the way I experience myself both as an individual and in a social context. Identity itself is not static; it is constantly changing and responding to the context within which it is embedded. As Simon Frith notes, identity "is *mobile,* a process not a thing, a becoming not a being … our experience of music - of music making and music listening - is best understood as an experience of this *self-in-process*" (1996:109). With these thoughts in mind I recognise that my compositional approach is very personal, and strongly motivated by how I experience myself and the world around me. Frith's idea that "our musical pleasures are defined by our social circumstances," is very relevant here as it my social circumstances that are responsible in a significant way for my aesthetic sensibility and for what sounds are available to me (Frith 1998:269).

On many occasions, I have asked myself why I compose music rather than perform pieces that are well known. In the last two years, I have come to realise that it is through the creation of music and musical ideas that I have a voice; without this my individuality would be lost. Communicating through music is my way of having my voice heard as a unique figure in a society where music is constantly changing. Music is a form of communication that invites people of various ethnicities not only to hear and feel its frequencies, but to also experience its impact and emotion.

While music-making is universal, its meanings are not. For example, the sound of jazz music and what it means to me could be entirely different from how somebody else would perceive it, especially if there are different musical backgrounds and cultures involved. Music allows creators to express their feelings and emotions, and invites listeners to not only experience what creators are expressing, but to feel and perceive that music through their own interpretation based on their personal experiences. Despite its infinite forms and structures, this form of communication is a shared experience and provokes a sense of broad response from listeners across the world and throughout different eras. Tia DeNora says "Music is not merely a 'meaningful' or 'communicative' medium. It does much more than convey signification through non-verbal means. At the level of daily life, music has power" (2000:16). For me, the power of music lies in the fact that it is a way of life, it is a meaning-making strategy through which I engage with the world. The way I structure my music, the choices I make could be seen as "devices for the organization of experience, as referents for action, feeling and knowledge formulation" (DeNora, 2000:24). If one views music in this way, it is difficult to ignore the power of music and music composition.

In the same way, I feel that the spirit of jazz gives it a very particular kind of power, more so than many other types of music. Apart from musical communication that is transferred from creator to listener, it is the musical *conversation* between the musicians and the improvisational necessity that gives jazz its ability to create a different sound and portray a different meaning each time it is played. Imagine having a conversation with someone, and every time the dialogue turns out to be the same. Would it not be boring for both parties, not to mention the people listening to the conversation? Not only does jazz have its own form, structure, harmony, and rhythm, but jazz is indeed improvisational in a sense that as musicians we get to approach the music with our own feel, phrasing, articulation, and energy. It is an opportunity to be unique to the extent that we can play what we feel and play in the manner we wish. Our emotions are felt by listeners who are attentive to our solos and the bands collective sound. I love how tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins

thinks about jazz. Rollins states that, "The art of improvisation and reaching people with spontaneous music is what Jazz is all about" (*What is Jazz*, April 2014).

A musician who can tell a story through music and especially through improvisation, is indeed a jazz performer. When we read a novel, we find ourselves curious to find out what happens later in the chapter and are often focused on what the author is saying. Good improvisers are like good authors in a sense that they always capture their audience with whatever they are saying. Although we love the idea of hearing stories, no one wants to be told the same story over and over again. There would be no progress or development and nothing to look forward to. I feel strongly that the influence of performance on composition and vice versa, plays a vital role in reinforcing the tradition of jazz; it is this relationship between performance and composition in the jazz idiom that really comes to the fore whenever a composition is on the brink of realisation. I consider this to be a prominent feature in my compositions and arrangements.

A further important element I think about is rhythm. It may be an obvious one since I am a drummer, and my focus in any ensemble setting is on rhythm and its articulation. This is something I feel that is the core element in music because in my experience, the ordinary listener is more responsive to rhythm than to harmony or melody. LaCombe (n.d.) states that: ''without rhythm, humans would have no sense of patterns, and music would simply sound like non-integrated noises of nonsense.''

Although rhythm, harmony and melody are the three most fundamental elements in music, in my view rhythm is the most important. Since rhythm is a strong regular repeated pattern of movement or sound, there would be no melody without rhythm, and harmony would have no structure due to the absence of regular patterns. A melody is a sequence of single notes, or rather a selection of notes that are arranged in a combination of sounds and silences. Melody is made up of patterns of sounds and silences; without these patterns, the melody would sound like a splatter of random notes rather than an organised statement. Harmony can

exist alone, but with rhythm, it can prove to be more 'musical' by having intensity that gives music its momentum.

Everyone has their own way of listening to music; many identify the elements that attract them first. Some may hear the bass line first, while others may hear the saxophone. When listening to a piece, I can perceive the music in two ways; I could hear the rhythm first before the harmonic movement and melodic lines start to make sense in a layering kind of motion; or depending on how bodacious the piece, I could hear the combination of rhythm, harmony and melody simultaneously and thereafter it is easy to breakdown the elements and how they are informed by one another. This is how I hear and perceive music, and I take on the same approach when dealing with composition. For example, in my composition *Beauty in Reverence,* I take on a layering approach, where the vamp was first created, thereafter the harmony was chosen, followed by the melody which was placed in what I consider to be 'sweet spots' or rather where the melodic phrases stood out best. Another one of my compositions titled *Double Minded* is an example of the opposite approach. Its opening phrase is something to which I did not give much thought, instead I heard all three elements at once in triad formations. At the time, I did not know where the idea came from, but later on realised that I had heard Chick Corea experiment with upper structure triads in the introduction of his tune *Cloud Candy* not too long before. Looking back at my listening repertoire, *Double Minded* and *Cloud Candy* have different feels, textures and instrumentation, but it is Corea's percussive use of upper structure triads that inspired the intro of *Double Minded* and this happened unintentionally.

Figure 2.1: *Double Minded* introduction (bars 1 - 4)

The reason for this discussion of the above examples is to provide a general overview of my approach to the twelve compositions in the accompanying portfolio.

When approaching these compositions, I take on an inclusive or rather democratic approach to the compositions and their development. Therefore, the choices I make are easily influenced by my performance milieu as well as the contributions of other musicians in the band. The fragments of ideas that I create can either be perceived as layering, or as an amalgamation of the three elements i.e. rhythm, harmony and melody. While allowing the compositions to evolve, my initial focus is the rhythm. I think about how local and international audiences would respond to the rhythm of each composition and I try and make it as percussive as possible in order to create rhythmic interest. For example, in my original composition *Mzansi Rising* (see appendix figure 1)*,* the rhythm and groove can be perceived as danceable and percussive while the melody rests upon the groove in a floating motion, and the harmony is static. My understanding of harmony and melody is dependent on my jazz training at university from the years 2013 to 2019 as well as my experience on the band stand as an accompanist to many diverse artists and especially pianists. I found that while performing with other artists, some rhythmic phrases that resounded in my sonic environment after the performance started to sound more like melodic ideas. The choices I make with regards to harmonic and melodic options are dependent on what the rhythm implies, thus the rhythm is my guide and the foundation on which harmonic and melodic content will be layered. Based on my jazz aesthetic and understanding of what attracts listeners, I develop a harmonic form that I feel is different from that of my other compositions and that sounds good to me. The same approach applies to my choices for melodic phrases and the melody as a whole. My arrangements of jazz standards and popular pieces also engage a compositional method; each arrangement is an attempt to reimagine the piece, hence composition and arranging are intertwined. Throughout the process, I choose to let my ideas evolve into what can be considered the final product and I am willing to accept the compositions are ready to take a shape of their own. Each stage of the process is influenced by factors surrounding its development, such as the influence of musicians who were involved in recording the music for the composition portfolio, and the response and input of the audience at live

performances. Feedback from audience members after our live performances enables me to get a broader understanding of what people enjoy. The above process is how I take charge of the creation of my music. In Chapter Four I will explain in depth the processes as well as the factors that contributed to each of the twelve compositions.

CHAPTER THREE

Theory and Methodology

This thesis is built on a variety of resources that encompass different perspectives that speak firstly, to very personal ideals and motivations, and secondly to more public debates and perspectives. This section is concerned with positioning myself and my way of thinking in relation to the tasks that are undertaken in this project. These are multidimensional:

The most important task is the one in which I engage with the act of composing and arranging music. Chapter Four below gives a detailed account of this process. In this section I will undertake a broader reflection on some ideas and theories about music and more particularly jazz; how its production is linked to other social issues such as the manner in which we engage with one another; how we communicate; and how jazz can indeed address the postcolonial mission of claiming a communicative praxis that gives value to local ideals and ways of being. The second task deals with my approach to the documentation of the compositional process and the analysis thereof. Here, both autoethnography and grounded theory are fundamental to the formulation of this thesis theoretically and methodologically. At its core, this project is experiential, as well as experimental.

Theorising music; theorizing jazz.

In the previous chapter I positioned myself and this project in the context of identity theories. My concern here is with the following questions:

- What is jazz and what is expected from any piece of music to qualify as jazz.
- How does a jazz composition work?
- What are some of the expectations that need to be met in order for the music to be understood as jazz?

Jazz music developed out of the interaction of a multitude of different styles and is thus inherently syncretic:

> Jazz developed in the United States in the very early part of the 20th century. New Orleans, near the mouth of the Mississippi River, played a key role in this development. The city's population was more diverse than anywhere else in the South, and people of African, French, Caribbean, Italian, German, Mexican, and American Indian, as well as English descent interacted with one another. African-American musical traditions mixed with others and gradually jazz emerged from a blend of ragtime, marches, blues, and other kinds of music. At first jazz was mostly for dancing. (In later years, people would sit and listen to it.) After the first recordings of jazz were made in 1917, the music spread widely and developed rapidly. The evolution of jazz was led by a series of brilliant musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, and Miles Davis. Jazz developed a series of different styles including traditional jazz, swing, bebop, cool jazz, and jazz?rock, among others. At the same time, jazz spread from the United States to many parts of the world, and today jazz musicians--and jazz festivals--can be found in dozens of nations ((https://americanhistory.si.edu/smithsonian-jazz/education/what-jazz).

As is evident in the above quote, jazz developed into a series of many different styles therefore the evolution of jazz is infinite and further developments of the genre over time are inevitable. Jazz is itself inherently available for variation and change; as with identity discussed in the previous section, it responds to the context within which it is made. Musicians, and their different musical personalities will inevitably impact on the creation of jazz. Hence I place a strong emphasis on the role that different musicians and audiences have played in the making of the portfolio of music submitted for this project:

> Jazz musicians like to play their songs in their own distinct styles, and so you might listen to a dozen different jazz recordings of the same song, but each will sound different. The musicians' playing styles make each version different, and so do the improvised solos. Jazz is about making something familiar--a familiar song--into something fresh. And about making something shared--a tune that everyone knows--into something personal (https://americanhistory.si.edu/smithsonian-jazz/education/what-jazz).

The term 'jazz' is widely known by many nations, and only some are attracted to its sound, and therefore, my goal for this project is to make jazz accessible to broader

audiences by incorporating elements of different styles of music into my compositions, in the hope of contributing to the jazz tradition and also recontextualising it to have a broader reach locally.

The purpose of the following quote is not to differentiate between jazz and classical music, but rather to point towards a deeper consideration of the meaning of jazz from a jazz musician's perspective: "While Classical music may strive to conform the musical tones to orchestral sonorities, Jazz music thrives on instrumental diversities; the player's individual 'sound' becoming the desired proficiency. This is where the passion is, a kind found nowhere else (*Define Jazz-What is Jazz?* n.d. Southern Public Media online).

It is indeed the instrumental diversity mentioned in the quote above, that is clearly an apparent characteristic of jazz, in a sense that jazz musicians are constantly on a quest to improve their individual 'sound' as well as find new ways of 'renewing' music, and creating a different experience for themselves and for their audiences. While engaged in the process of this project, most of the compositions were brought to life in the realm of performance. It was interesting to watch the audience from time to time as their reactions were different throughout the entire performance. The compositions were new and seemed to spark a lot of interest. Feedback from a few audience members as well as musicians, helped me to realise the parts of each composition that stood out in each performance.

Jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis states: "The real power of Jazz is that a group of people can come together and create improvised art and negotiate their agendas ... and that negotiation is the art" (Burns, 2001). This negotiation is evident in my compositions as the musicians with whom I have chosen to explore my ideas, are virtuoso musicians in their own right. Their artistry and different cultural backgrounds also assisted in making my compositions diverse. The musicians and the concept of each band will be discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

Jazz as a democratic process.

There are a few musical styles in particular that I enjoy performing; jazz music, due to characteristics such as room for self-expression, conversational inevitability, and improvisation; funk music, because of its interlocking grooves that create a feeling of dance; and Afro-Beat music, because of its dynamic percussive rhythms that create a 'ghosting' feel. My understanding of 'ghosting' or rather 'ghost notes' from a rhythm perspective, are notes that are much softer than others. These notes are felt more than they are heard. The love for performing jazz, funk and afro-beat music are a consequence of performing extensively with artists and musicians who are specialists in these styles. The cultural domain of the study is the performance space available to musicians in Durban, South Africa. As a full-time working musician living in Durban, the environment in which I operate consists of diverse musicians, each with their own cultural upbringing and musical background. In Durban, I have performed with many musicians and bands that are involved in Jazz, *Maskandi,* Blues, House, Latin, Funk, Fusion, Rock, Gospel, Afro-beat, Soul, Hip hop and Eastern music. While Some of the musicians perform a bit of every style, most musicians are specialists in a particular style. Some musicians are South African born, while others, born in Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and New York, are now living in Durban. This environment offers a range of opportunities to play and experiment with different genres because the peculiarities of the performance context are a consequence of people from different backgrounds playing music together. Therefore, my compositional process is influenced immensely by my performance milieu as well as my encounters with music in general. It is in this sense that I think of music-making as a democratic process that accommodates conversational interaction between different points of view and ways of experiencing and expressing ideas and relationships.

In the common practice of jazz, one would have to adopt the language of jazz; how to play the blues; bebop; how to swing; the art of improvisation; and making the music up together. These essential components of jazz exist within a routine that

jazz musicians follow. In line with this common practice, jazz musicians are often 'pushing' against this routine in order to create new and personalised ideas. For example, one could change a standard 12 bar blues form into a 17 bar form and alter its harmony. This change would still make it the blues, but personalise it. Therefore, I consider the processes which I use to compose the music for this project to be jazz since I often work with, and against, its common practice in order to achieve a fusion sound in my music by 'raiding' and adopting stylistic elements from other genres. Some of these elemental features include rhythm, feel, melody, timbre and harmony. My love for jazz is the driving force behind this project, hence I compose music within the jazz ethos. Jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis describes the components of jazz:

> The main three components are the blues, improvisation – which is some kind of element that people are trying to make it up – and swing, which means even though they're making up music, they're trying to make it up together. It feels great, like you're having a conversation with somebody (CNN, 2009).

Imperative to the 'conversation' and 'making it up together' is a commitment to the collective spirit and a dialogical approach to music making. This is the jazz ethos. The blues, improvisation and swing are fundamental characteristics of jazz, but they have evolved in sound as jazz has been adopted by different cultures and generations of musicians. My composition portfolio represents my contribution to this evolution and it will draw on my formal jazz training, as well as my experience on the bandstand working with various musicians and the variety of musical styles that represent my performance milieu. The choice to compose music for musicians who understand the jazz language well enough to have a conversation as well as bring their own artistry in a broad range of musical styles, is the choice to compose a series of musical solutions that serve the function of negotiation. I find that this idea of composing music for a set of particular musicians, promotes musical discourse and camaraderie amongst these musicians and their respective contributions to the initial composition, and this plays a vital role in the evolution and development of that composition. The fact that each band member can contribute to the initial

composition as well as negotiate performance based ideas with one another is what, in my opinion, can make a set of music sound diverse and reach a broader audience.

Genre:

One of the general intentions of this project is to "raid" genres that fall outside the realm of jazz. The notion of genre is not clear-cut; it is often closely associated with the notion of style:

> Both 'style' and 'genre' are terms concerned with ways of erecting categorical distinctions, of identifying similarity between different pieces … but the initial unresolved question was whether the similarities thereby identified existed on the same hierarchical level or whether some were subordinate to others (Moore, 2001:432).

Moore goes on to identify three types of relationships between the two terms:

1. They are used to mean very much the same thing.

2. They are similar but style sits as a descriptor of some aspects of genre.

3. The terms "have different areas of reference" (2001:433).

Franco Fabbri defines genre as "a set of musical events … whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules" (Fabbri, in Moore 2001:433). Moore notes that Tagg like Fabbri, "situates style clearly as a subsidiary of genre" (Moore, 2001:433). The position taken by Leonard Meyer, in his extended attempt to come to grips with the notion of musical style, is encapsulated in his opening definition: "Style is a replication of patterning, whether in human behavior or in the artifacts produced by human behavior that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints" (Meyer in Moore 2001:433). — Here genre is positioned as a subsidiary of style.

From this brief engagement with the definitions of genre and style it becomes apparent that these terms indicate identifiable musical procedures, or compositional strategies that locate the musical discourse within a system of meaning making which often implies that there are expectations of music that need to be met in order for it to be recognised and accepted as a genre or style. My

strategy here is to raid genres for style. Thus it is not my intention to move outside the jazz genre but to keep these other resources (*Maskanda, Gqom*, Funk and others) as subsidiary to the jazz ethos. The work on Mahler by Guido Adler locates style as a product of the environment. Mahler's style is seen here as rooted in the "forms and melodies intrinsic to Austria" (Moore, 2001:435)

Engaging in 'genre-raiding' is not a new concept, as it is evident in the works of many artists. Internationally it has precedents in the works of artists such as Chick Corea and Robert Glasper, and locally in the works of artists such as Bheki Mseleku, Winston Mankunku, and Neil Gonsalves.

This is how I think of style, I look to the sounds of my sonic environment and draw them into my compositions which extend, remake but do not breech the expectations of jazz.

Documenting the composition process.

There are three theoretical perspectives which underpin how I have conceptualised and actually effected this research.

1. The empirical perspective: this identifies the project as being rooted in experience rather than established theory. The idea behind empirical research is that propositions are tested or explored at the research site. Hence, an experimental approach. For example, what would happen in my composition if I included a *Gqom* loop as a foundational part of the rhythm? Using an experimental approach explores this proposition, and then monitors and reflects on the consequences of this action.

2. Autoethnography offers an appropriate theoretical and methodological home for this project. "Autoautoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011:273).

My task for this project was to compose and arrange music for three ensembles which each have a different permutation. The first involves composing with a particular set of musicians in mind. The second was concerned with composing for particular instrumentation, and the third involved composing and arranging for a big band. This third permutation is a studio project in which I will programme all the instruments using music software and employ solo instrumentalists to feature on the pieces. The task of writing music for these three bands was one that I had set out for myself as a way of meeting the requirements as set out in the Masters Degree guidelines.

My observations of the creative processes are documented in the form of a journal and cell phone recordings. These processes such as the birth of each composition, as well as the rehearsals with the band members are analysed and reflected on in order to understand in what way the music is meaningful to me as well as its place in society. Furthermore, I am very responsive to the interaction not only between performers but also with audiences and in this sense, this project fits in well with the autoethnographic approach. ''Autoethnography explicitly acknowledges, calls to and seeks contributions from audiences as part of the ongoing conversation of the work'' (Holman Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013:25).

''Auto-ethnographers value narrative truth based on what a story of experience does—how it is used, understood, and responded to for and by us and others as writers, participants, audiences, and humans'' (Bochner, 1994; Denzin, 1989). For this project, my compositional process and the way I think about music is informed by my personal experience. Using autoethnography as a method helps me to recognise my social environment and personal experiences in the choices that I make musically. "One characteristic that binds all auto-ethnographies is the use of personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience" (Holman Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013:21). I am exploring how musical techniques and compositional strategies, sourced in different idioms, can be appropriated into a jazz discourse that captures the social environment to which I am exposed. The reflection on the process of research is a reflection on what has happened in order to 'make' these

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compositions. The decisions of how to go about this research lie with me (the composer), in the same way as the decisions of who, what, when, where and how to research, made by any researcher lies with "institutional requirements (e.g., Institutional Review Boards), resources (e.g., funding), and personal circumstance (e.g., a researcher studying cancer because of personal experience with cancer)." (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011:274).

3. Grounded Theory has also informed the way I have approached this project. Grounded theory may be defined as "the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:2) There are a number of features that characterise a Grounded Theory approach: "simultaneous collection and analysis of data; creating of analytic codes and categories developed from data and not by pre-existing conceptualisations (theoretical sensitivity); discovery of basic social processes in the data; inductive construction and abstract categories; theoretical sampling to refine categories; writing analytical memos as the stage between coding and writing; and the integration of categories into a theoretical framework" (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001:160).

Grounded theory is relevant to this project since as the composer I am looking to primary data as a source of information that needs to be coded in order to develop 'grounded' propositions. The primary data is the fragments of ideas that I have been documenting in the form of a journal as well as mobile phone recordings. Keeping a journal throughout the composition process is an autoethnographic technique and is fundamental in a sense that the events that happened 'in the moment' were constantly documented. The analysis of my conscious decisions is intended to facilitate an understanding of the relationship between the music that I have composed and the meanings that might be attributed to it.

That said, I do believe that the analysis of the compositional process cannot be fully understood through verbal descriptions, instead the research is realised more effectively in the music itself. In this way the research is conceptualised as the

compositional action as well as the analysis thereof. It thus falls within the ambit of 'practice AS research' (Cook in Doğantan-Dack, 2015)

Grounded theory is useful as an analytical tool that also is intended to enable me to extract more theories about composition while democratising the process — Democracy in a sense that composition is about communicative action that has meaning and purpose in people's lives.

Essentially this is an account of my personal approach to composition, thus the research site and focal centre is the portfolio of compositions. From the beginning of the compositional process, I kept a journal that documents the fragments of ideas through mobile phone recordings, the instinctive decisions I made as a composer (with regard to aesthetics), the shaping and development of the compositions and arrangements in each of the rehearsals with two of the three bands, and how the performance aspect impacted the pieces. Audio recordings of the band performances, as well as keeping notes of the events and developments of the music, has helped me to reflect directly on my compositional process. Although the compositions exist within the jazz ethos, each one of them is composed with an anti-canonical intention and this is conceptualised as fundamentally improvisational thus open to experimentation with new ideas and without knowing where the process will go. Rather than having set ideas about what needs to be 'done' for each composition, a significant part of the compositional process has been experimental. Various ideas are tried out, explored and realised through the action of composition and then performance. The process is set in motion by composition and then observations are made during the performance, thus the compositions could change along the way. Therefore, there are recordings of the works incorporated as part of my submission of the compositions and arrangements. Generally, my approach to composition is driven by improvisational encounters and explorations that happen while performing with various artists and bands. These ideas of musical exploration and improvisation sometimes resound in my mind and most frequently, these are rhythmic phrases. The realisation and reconceptualisation of these rhythmic phrases prompts me to layer harmonies and finally melodies, in which I rely mostly on my

jazz training and early musical influences as stated in the Introduction. After a broad analysis, I make observations as to the parts that 'stand out' as cultural referents. For example, a melodic phrase can be perceived as having an Indian influence due to certain embellishments that sound like something from the far east, or the rhythm of a piece may be perceived as Latin due to its percussive and rhythmic contour that could be heard in a Latin artist's music. After these observations are made, I make choices that link these cultural elements together, even if they sound like different cultural influences. Although this is what I feel makes my music diverse, the music can still be felt as jazz primarily on account of its improvisational nature.

The genre idea is often an ownership ideal that aims to constrain and control music within an old order linked to ideals of nationalism, imperialism, and even ethnic and racial purity. The approach here is one of genre flexibility motivated by the quest to seek not only a local style but even more specifically a personal style founded on my own experience. The search for my sound as a composer is driven by my musical heritage, as well as through sonic experience. More frequently, pioneering musicians and composers are embracing new expressive modes that are not married and bound to a genre or location of experience. For example, pianists like Robert Glasper who leads his group The Robert Glasper Experiment, explores fusions of jazz and hip hop, thus inviting the cross-reference of these genres noted for intellectual sophistication as well as its hedonism, and this cross reference serves as a mechanism of transcendence.

CHAPTER FOUR

Compositional Process

The composition portfolio comprises twelve pieces that I have divided into three contrasting ensembles. The first ensemble is a quintet consisting of tenor saxophonist Salim Washington, guitarist Ethan Naidoo, pianist Sanele Phakathi, bass guitarist Prince Bulo and myself on drums. The analysis of my approach to the compositional process emphasises this first ensemble as the musical activities that I set out for the band included rehearsals, live recorded performances, and also a live studio recording. The repertoire for the second ensemble is likewise a quintet but with two guitars, keyboard, bass guitar/synth bass, and drums. The third ensemble is a big band and it comprises four trumpets, five saxophones, four trombones, guitar, keyboard, synth bass, and drums. For convenience, I will use the terms, 'first band', 'second band' and 'big band' respectively. The first band's repertoire consists of five original compositions and that of the second band, two original compositions and two arrangements (one popular tune, and one jazz standard). The big band's repertoire consists of one original composition and two arrangements of jazz standards. For the first band, I composed music with the band members in mind, while for the second band, I composed for instrumentation rather than instrumentalists. The process for the compositions for the big band was different; here I have programmed all the music using Logic Pro X as well as a midi keyboard; the composition and arrangements for the big band are not based in performance as I have created a simulation of the real big band, and employed a few instrumentalists to feature as soloists on the pieces. On one hand, the choice to create this simulation is a compromise in terms of not having a spontaneous musical conversation between the instruments, while on the other hand, I found myself free enough to make choices without being limited to constraints; I did not have to think about coordinating rehearsals for many band members, finding a studio big enough to accommodate and record a big band (16 to 17 musicians), and each musician's technical ability before composing and arranging the music.

For two of the three tunes, I have recorded acoustic drums for more authenticity and to target more of a live feel. While I respect the tradition of jazz and its standard drum tuning, I opted to have a rock sounding drum kit in all my compositions. This has more of an attack and is heavy in timbre, with a much darker tone colour. Because many of the compositions are groove-based and built on a propelling ostinato bass line, I chose to use electric bass for all the compositions and arrangements. The electric bass has a much heavier tone weight than an upright bass, and by using a rock sounding drum kit, the heavier sounding bass drum is intended to 'lock' in with the electric bass. In fact, the choice of not using the traditional jazz bop drum kit as well acoustic instruments such as the piano and upright bass, points to a non-traditional jazz sound.

First Band – 5 Compositions

The first band consists of five band members namely; Salim Washington on tenor saxophone, Ethan Naidoo on guitar, Sanele Phakathi on keyboard, Prince Bulo on bass, and myself on drums. One of the pieces features Zoe Masuku on vocals. I have chosen these musicians as they are virtuoso musicians in their field of performance. The five pieces were composed with these band members in mind, taking into consideration their cultural backgrounds, musical preferences, and their current positions in the music industry. Growing up, I always wanted to have my own fusion jazz band as I have been a long-time fan of the Chick Corea Elektric Band, and this is the sound that I had initially imagined. I have worked with each of these musicians separately on many occasions in different musical settings and I have rehearsed and performed with Salim Washington for a few of his jazz shows around Durban. In these instances, the repertoire consisted of his compositions which I had the pleasure of learning at the rehearsals beforehand, and the rest of the repertoire comprised jazz standards such as Joe Henderson's *Inner Urge* and John Coltrane's *Naima.* I was drawn to Washington's sense of improvisation and the fact that he is a specialist in jazz. On many occasions, I have witnessed him improvise through many harmonic changes, and for me, it told a story each time. In my music, I intended to

employ many improvisational features between some of the different sections, and I thought that the notion of having Washington improvise between these sections would be a conversation in itself. I also thought it would be interesting to have Washington and Naidoo together in one band knowing that they come from different backgrounds and are specialists in their fields. Ethan Naidoo is a specialist in the rock genre. I have accompanied him at both of his B-Practical Music performance recitals in 2013 and 2014. Naidoo was a music student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal at the time. The music consisted of arrangements of cover songs and jazz standards that he had put together and contained a fusion of jazz, djent which is a sub-genre of metal, and funk. Learning the material for Naidoo's recitals inspired me to experiment more with different styles of music and to try fusing elements from these different styles. I have performed with Sanele Phakathi at corporate events in which he was the bandleader. We performed mainly popular South African jazz standards such as Miriam Makeba's *Malaika* and Abdullah Ibrahim's *Royal Blue*, and some American Jazz standards such as Wayne Shorter's *Footprints*. I have also played with many artists in which Phakathi was also on the bandstand. Every time we played music together, it was a great experience as we were conscious of each other's musical thinking and therefore the negotiation in which we were making up the music in a conversational manner was always present. I could relate to Prince Bulo in the same way. Bulo and I have performed together on many occasions such as birthday parties, awards ceremonies, music workshops, restaurants, and jazz clubs. It is always easy to perform with him because we share a common improvisational energy and a similar understanding of rhythm particularly in relation to the improvisational energy in which the solo section can divert from its normal form, such as in the solo section of my composition *Mzansi Rising*. Here, Bulo and I backed each soloist with a different approach and different rhythmic phrases without discussing it before the recording. In any band, the rhythm section (drums, bass, piano/guitar) is vital in providing the foundation to the music, and because there is this common goal to give off an energetic performance, I feel that Bulo and I could perform as a duo on any occasion. The musical personalities of the

performers in the first band strongly direct the performance of the compositions. Their input and ideas will be discussed later in the chapter.

An important source that influenced my music for the first band is the recordings of other artists, namely Chick Corea, Antonio Sanchez, and Charles Mingus. There are elemental features from the three above composers that are absorbed into the five original compositions. These are Corea's contribution to jazz fusion that incorporated Latin jazz and the use of synthesizers in his music that aids in the electric sound; Sanchez' rhythm, precision, dynamics, and polyrhythmic structures; and Mingus' prominence in collective improvisation and free jazz, which create windows for achieving different textures and contrasting moods, resulting in a narrative sound, and a wealth of theatricality. An analysis of the process for each of the five compositions follows.

Beauty in Reverence

Beauty in Reverence started with a chordal vamp and bass line in the key of C and in the 6/8 time signature. The idea initially came about during one of my piano practice sessions when I was experimenting with 'slash chords' i.e. Fmaj7b5/E and F2/A. Because I do not play the piano with a band, I often experiment with bass lines in the lower range of the keyboard. I play keyboard in the church band and as there is no bass player in this band, I have grown accustomed to playing bass lines with my left hand while I play chords in my right hand. After playing this vamp over a period of a few days, I started to imagine what the drum groove for this tune would sound like and I started to hear the rim of a snare in a static motion, on every second beat. My understanding of the groove is that the bass guitar and kick drum 'lock' with each other in such a way that both instruments play the same accents. I decided that the kick drum and bass guitar will be played on the same accents. I immediately proceeded to the drum kit and formulated the groove. While playing the groove, I realised that it sounds similar to the introduction of Pat Metheny's *The Way Up*. The placement of the snare drum rim is on beats 2, 4 and 6. This gives it a feeling of forward motion. The **introduction** and the **A section** of the tune consist of the chord

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progression Fmaj7b5/E moving to F2/A. While formulating this vamp, I was drawn to its mysterious sound; it creates a somewhat meditative mood. This is due to the flat 9 interval in the Fmaj7b5/E and the sharp 5 interval in the F2/A. In my opinion, without these tensions, the chords would lose that mysterious quality.

Figure 4.1: *Beauty in Reverence* (2-bar thematic vamp in 6/8)
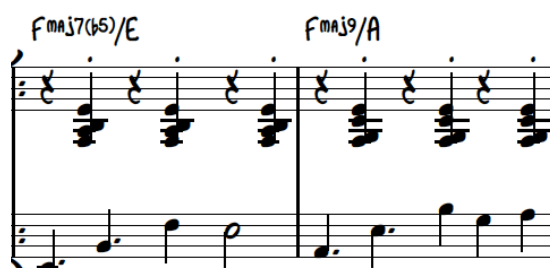
For the **bridge (B section)** of the tune, I wanted a contrast of brightness to that of the **A section** as I wanted to create an assertive response. Still in the key of C, I experimented with four chords and the progression that sounded the best to me at the time was Cmaj7, Dm9, Em7, and Am7. I placed the chords on the same rhythmic accents that the bass guitar and bass drum were playing. When listening to the harmony of these two sections, I think of the **A section** asking a question, and the **B section** answering it. After the harmony was confirmed, I started to notate the piano and bass parts for the chart using Sibelius - a music notation software. I proceeded to compose melodic phrases for the **A section**, in which I experimented with many notes belonging to each chord. I also thought about Salim Washington's tone on the tenor saxophone, and how it could give the melody a floating motion. The melody ended up being mostly diatonic and in straight 8th notes. I then notated the melody for the **A section** as the tenor saxophone part, with the thought of the guitar joining only on the **B section** for more emphasis. I was happy with how the **A section** sounded after listening to it on Sibelius. Using Sibelius, I slowly started creating a melody for the **B section** using the following random selection method: using Sibelius, I started by filling each bar with 8th notes with every note being the note C. I then removed some random notes from each bar and proceeded to move some notes up and down the C major pentatonic scale depending on which chord it

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belonged to. Although I could state that it was created randomly, I initially wanted the melody to be pentatonic and rhythmically intricate, and it began to sound like I wanted. I then listened to the **B section** on Sibelius and enjoyed the sense of authority that is produced, and it sounded more rhythmic and energetic than the **A section** melody. Essentially, both sections of the tune were created with a layering motion in which the harmony was the main idea, followed by the bass line, followed by the rhythm and groove, and finally the melody which I placed in the 'sweet spots' of the entire structure. Looking at the **B section** of the chart, one could see where the groups of C notes lie, and its repetitive sound helps it to reference its 'home' key. Straight after the **B section** is played twice, there is a four-bar drum solo, Here I felt that it was a smooth transition from the **B section** to the solo section. For the solo section, I chose to use the vamp chords which are Fmaj7b5/E and F2/A, but instead of having one chord per bar, I made it one chord per two bars as I felt that this gave a nice sense of space for the soloists to express themselves freely.

I decided to name the piece *Beauty in Reverence* because at the time the introduction vamp was created, I was thinking about the society we live in, and the lack of respect that is evident in so many situations. I have witnessed many situations where there was disrespect and it turned out to be 'ugly'. I have seen a teenage boy argue with an elder in a slandering manner; little did the boy know that people were watching him. When he was confronted by a few people older than himself, he appeared to be embarrassed and hung his head in shame as he had now realised that people were observing his actions. If one has reverence for something, one can consider this as beautiful, hence the title *Beauty in Reverence.*

Brainstorm-Ing

Brainstorm-Ing can perhaps be best described as an experimental conversation that consists mainly of improvisational ideas and some orchestrated parts. It began with an idea of four notes that are looped together in a repetitive motion. I chose to use the 4/4 time signature because the four notes were divided equally in a bar due to there being four beats in each bar, and this created a pulse that is felt naturally. I

chose the notes *E, F#, A and B* intentionally because they all exist in the major keys of D, E, G and A. As a result, the musicians have more options of approaching improvisation from four different tonal perspectives. These four notes which form a looping motion are prerecorded by the guitar, and the entire piece rests on this loop. I chose to have the piece begin with the guitar loop, and the keyboard, guitar and sax improvising freely since my other tunes did not begin with improvisation. I thought this would break the monotony of all five tunes starting in the same way. Regarding a harmonic structure, I chose not to have chords underneath the melody as I wanted there to be space and felt that the melody could make more of an impact with the absence of chords. When approaching melodic options, I was thinking and composing in the key of D major due to the loop of four notes, i.e. *E, F#, A and B.* These are the core notes that make up the D major pentatonic scale.

Figure 4.2: *Brainstorm-Ing* (guitar loop)

Using a piano, I proceeded to compose a melody for the **A section** in which call and response takes place. I considered the drums improvising throughout the melody but also playing some of the accents with the other instruments. Using Sibelius, I started to notate the melody and decided to share it among the guitar, keyboard, saxophone and bass guitar. My aim was for a musical conversation to take place between the musicians. The melody is mainly in the key of D major and also consists of a selection of chromatic notes in which I wanted the melody to move away from its home key (D major) at times, thus creating melodic tension and contrast. The melody starts off with the guitar playing a diatonic descending phrase starting on the tonic (D) and ending on the dominant (A). I wanted this to be the opening line of the melody since it reminded me of a guitar riff influenced by *Maskandi* music. *Maskandi* is a kind of Zulu folk music that originated in South Africa. It is music driven and led by the guitar and mostly (of that which that I have heard), its melodic

phrases always seem to descend. Due to these fundamental characteristics, I consider the opening guitar melody to be a reference to *Maskandi* music. I thought that this melodic reference would be symbolic as it originated in South Africa, hence I am utilising these local sounds as I am a South African composer and my objective is to 'raid' genres in order to 'remake' South African jazz discourse. I then proceeded to compose random phrases and share them between the four instruments. The melodic phrases were composed with random intervals with the aim of achieving an atonal sound. For example, straight after the opening guitar phrase, the keyboard responds with descending minor second intervals that are played together. These semitones which are played together descend in a perfect fourth movement which moves out of the key (D). After laying down more melodic content by choosing random intervals, I end this section of the melody by composing a unison line which is played by the entire band. I thought that this would be a nice contrast to move from shared melodic phrases to a unison line in which the whole band emphasises the end of the section.

The **trading fours section** is where I wanted something common to the jazz tradition, and decided to have the bass guitar and drums 'trading fours'. Trading fours is a technique in which musicians alternate their solos with each other. Each soloist improvises for four bars, hence the time for each soloist is of equal duration. I chose the bass guitar and drums to trade solos as the other three instrumentalists had already improvised in the beginning of the piece.

After this, the **collective improvisation section** and 'organised chaos' starts. I used Charles Mingus' *Pithecanthropus erectus* as a reference for the collective improvisation and some of the dynamic content. Mingus orchestrated his composition in which there is a confirmed melody accompanied by a harmonic movement, which rests on a swing groove. Thereafter, there is a sense of organised 'chaos' in which the band starts to improvise together as a collective. Although there is this collective improvisation, it rests on an underlying rhythm in which the rhythm section implies a 6/8 time signature. This collective improvisation, that sounds somewhat organised and arranged, inspired the collective improvisation for my

piece *Brainstorm-Ing.* After the collective improvisation, I had decided to compose a **djent riff section**. Just like Mingus' approach of composing for his band members, I composed some of the content with guitarist Ethan Naidoo in mind. I was thinking of Naidoo's recital in which I had accompanied him in the years 2013 and 2014. Naidoo's approach to *djent* music, a subgenre of heavy metal, inspired me to reference those stylistic elements in some parts of *Brainstorm-Ing,* especially the **djent riff section**. These elements consist of the drums, bass and guitar playing loud, rhythmic vamps together, that is heavy in texture and that produces a 'tight' and 'punchy' sound. To achieve this sound, the bass guitar usually plays in the low register, producing very low frequencies. The guitar is played with a distortion effect and the player uses palm-muted chords, which create a short, muted and 'thumpy' sound. The use of palm-muted chords with distortion are idiomatic in heavy metal, and djent music. The drums are played at a high volume, but rhythmically with the guitar and bass guitar. From a jazz perspective, the sound of djent music is anomalous to jazz, hence this creative divergence is different from the norm. My thinking here was to create an element of surprise by changing the texture and density of the band's sound. Using this djent vamp as foundation, I decided to compose a unison melody for the saxophone and keyboard since I felt that the djent vamp sounded empty without a melody. I had composed this vamp intentionally as I thought that it would be a nice contrast to the rest of the tune; moving from space and open improvisation to a 'tight' and 'heavier' instrumentation.

For the **B (head-out) section**, I decided to compose another melodic phrase in which the whole band plays together in unison. I did this by choosing random intervals such as fifths, e.g. E and B, and continued to formulate a melody based in the key of D major, and moving out of the key using a combination of intervals. By experimenting with many intervals, I eventually worked out a unison phrase that I felt sounded like bebop. Although there is no underlying harmony, the choice of notes implies altered tensions in the key of D, with its rhythm being mostly 16th notes. As stated in the beginning of this chapter, I have always been a fan of the Chick Corea Elektric Band. After listening to and reviewing this unison phrase of the

B section, I can relate it to the melody of Chick Corea's *Got a Match? Brainstorm-Ing* ends with this phrase (Bars 49 to 51); all band members playing this unison line, together. It is almost like everyone reaches a consensus. When I listened back to the arrangement on Sibelius, I immediately thought of a board meeting where members of a company are suggesting ideas as well as their opinions. I thought of arguments happening, but at the end, everyone finally agrees on a common goal. This is how I came to the title *Brainstorm-Ing*

Double Minded

This piece came together with two initial ideas that are not related. I first came up with the title *Double Minded.* I have heard many people quote the bible verse:

> "'A double minded man is unstable in all his ways'' (James 1:8, KJV).

Without any music in mind, I thought about the form of the piece. The form here gives expression to a sense of ambivalence. My initial idea was that there would be more than two sections, and that I would have some of the sections alternate with each other in order to create a feeling of uncertainty. The second idea was a melody that was played as triadic formations over a static pedal point. This was to be used as an introduction to the piece. As stated in Chapter Two, the opening phrase of the piece is something to which I did not give much thought. While experimenting with triads on the piano, I created a melody and this is accompanied by a pedal point. A pedal point in music is a sustained note, usually played by the low register of an instrument such as the bass guitar. I felt that this idea of a melody played in triad chords layered over a pedal point sounded familiar. At the time, I did not know where the idea came from, but later on I realised that I had heard this exploration of upper structure triads in the introduction of Chick Corea's *Cloud Candy*. The creation of this melody also gave me an idea of the tempo, as well as the groove and rhythmic feel of this piece. After finalising the introduction of the piece, I notated it on Sibelius. I allocated the chorded melody to the piano with the saxophone and

guitar playing the top note of each chord. I gave the bass guitar one note to 'pedal' on, and I wanted the drums and cymbals to create space as well as a kind of 'wash' and openness. This introduction would be according to tempo. Straight after playing the introduction on the piano again, I found that the last chord resolved easily to Dbmaj7#11 and then to F13sus4; these chords have the function of the IV and VI chords respectively in the key of Ab major. This is where I decided to bring in a *Goema* based groove (indicated by the floor tom of the drum kit). I felt that this groove would take the listeners by surprise. *Goema* is a style of music that originated in the Malay communities of Cape Town, South Africa. The music being of a lively nature, creates a rhythmic feeling of trance, and it is usually played at fast tempos.

For *Double Minded,* the foundation of this groove consisted of the drums playing the groove on the floor tom and bass drum, the bass playing a rhythmic ostinato (repeated pattern) line, and the keyboard playing chords in an ambient manner. This *Goema* influenced groove and ostinato bass line is also the driving force of the A section. For the **A section**, using the chords Dbmaj7#11 and F13sus4, I created short melodic phrases on the piano. I started by using an upper structure triad on the first chord and from there I created a descending melodic line using similar rhythms. The melody ended up being percussive, and that is what I love. After I decided that the A section should repeat itself for more emphasis, I proceeded to modify the introduction and use it as an **interlude**. I made the root of each triad the melody note an octave higher and chose to use the same harmonic movement as I felt that this is the theme of the entire piece. I decided to add an additional four bars that consisted of 7th chords over the pedal point on A in order to create more harmonic tension. The four bars consists of *Db7#5* (two bars)*, Ebmaj7#5* (1 bar) and *Cm7b5* (1 bar). I chose these chords randomly, and altered the chords in order to fit in with the melody line, e.g. the melody note on Ebmaj7 is B, hence I sharpened the 5th to get *Ebmaj7#5.* The dense sound that these three chords created served as a 'stepping stone' to **extend the interlude (bars 27 to 32)** with a phrase that the band can play together. For this extended interlude (bars 27 to 32), I first notated a

random melody that did not belong to any particular key, and I then chose random chords and altered some notes of the chords to fit in with the melody. This was merely an intervallic process in which I selected notes without thinking about their relation to a tonal centre. I approached the underlying harmony in the same way; I wanted the set of chords accompanying the melody not to be placed in a specific key. At this point, the bass guitar moves away from the pedal point and plays the harmonic progression. My intention here was that I start, and end this extended interlude (bars 27 to 32) with the same chord, i.e. *G/Ab*. For the **B section**, I used the last chord from the previous section as a guide to indicate the first chord, and I felt that *G/Ab* resolves easily to *Ebmaj9/G.* I considered the chord *Ebmaj9/G* to be the VI chord of the new key, which is Bb major. In the same way I had decided to have two chords for the **A section**, I also chose to have two chords for the **B section** (*Ebmaj9/G* and *Dm9)*, only because the introduction and interlude are so complex in terms of the harmonic structure*.* I then built its melody through an intervallic approach, using perfect fourth intervals. This is made evident in the first four notes, namely *G, D, F* and *C*. I then added chromatic notes in a few places in order to cut out the monotony of the 4th intervals. Although it seemed that I may have been using random methods to achieve this sound, I imagined the melodies in my mind before notating them on Sibelius. After the **B section** is played once, I chose to have the extended interlude played again before repeating the **B section**. This is where the feeling of musical uncertainty is created, and a sense of ambivalence is expressed. For the **solo section**, I decided that it would be good to use the **B section** harmony, i.e. *Ebmaj9/G* and *Dm9,* since this would give the soloists enough time to 'breathe' without thinking too much about the solo section form. After these sections were notated, I thought about the drumming for this piece. All I wanted was high energy and for the music to sound dense. I was certain that the *Goema* rhythm would only be for the **A section**. For the rest of the piece, I had improvised and built the grooves at the rehearsals with the band. I then decided that everyone in the band would solo, with the drum solo being the last. The solo section is where I intended for the musicians to express themselves freely.

For this piece, I wanted the band members to play the orchestrated parts as written. However, I did leave 'room' for them to express themselves in their solos as the focus for the band members was in the improvisation section.

Mzansi Rising

Mzansi Rising is an idea that started off with an ostinato rhythm influenced by *Gqom* music (see Appendix figure 1).

> *Gqom* – a dark and hypnotic club sound from Durban, South Africa – is the latest sensation in the lineage dedicated to the drum and the dance floor; its palette of stripped-back rhythms, demanding tom rolls, driving Zulu chants and spooky strings and pads standing in stark contrast to the sunny melodies and soulful vibes that one often associates with South African house. The name *gqom* itself means something like "bang" or "ricochet" – pronounced with a Zulu tongue click at the beginning followed by a throaty "om," the word itself mimics the sound of a kick drum hitting (Host, V. 2017).

Mzansi Rising started with a bass drum pattern in which sounds like *gqom* music as it is not placed on all four quarter notes (1, 2, 3, 4) as opposed to house or disco music, instead the bass drum pattern contains a repetitive and syncopated pattern. My initial thought was for the piece to have a heavy, repetitive rhythm, and the melody to have space, allowing for an improvisation feature by one of the musicians to take place. I composed *Mzansi Rising* with bass guitarist Prince Bulo in mind as he is currently involved in producing many *gqom* artists as well as composing his own *gqom* music. Before making a career as a *gqom* artist and producer, Bulo studied jazz at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and he is therefore familiar with the jazz idiom. Unlike my approach in my other pieces, I adopt a minimalistic approach to harmony; most of the melody as well as the improvisation sections rest on one chord, i.e. Emin9. It is the VI chord in the key of G major. The entire piece is in 4/4 time signature. I composed this piece in layers; the bass drum pattern was imagined first; the bass guitar using only the low E note, was notated with the bass drum accents, hence the bass guitar and bass drum had the same rhythm; I notated the keyboard part and gave it one chord which is Em9; the snare drum and hi hat pattern was confirmed; and the melody for the guitar and saxophone was notated.

When I was composing the **A section** melody for this piece, I was thinking diatonically and with two added notes not in the key of G. These notes are *F* and *C#.* After I notated the **A section** melody, I left eight bars for the keyboard and saxophone to improvise. I felt that because the **A section** melody is short in duration, Phakathi on keyboard, and Washington on tenor saxophone could respond with an eight bar improvisational feature. I then decided that the **A section** should be repeated and proceeded to compose the harmony and melody for the **B section**. I wanted the **B section** to be a quick, loud statement with a contrasting harmonic movement to that of the **A section**, hence it only consists of one bar. In that one bar, I chose to have four chords played as accents with a busy melodic line as it gave the music more momentum. I decided that every time the **B section** is played, there would be four bars of Em9 that followed as a 'resting' place. I then proceed to compose a **band riff** (bars 31 to 33) that leads into the solo section. In order to create space between the last bar of the riff (bar 33) and the solo section, I decided to add in a one bar drum feature. After this, the **solo section** is composed and happens over one chord, i.e. Emin9. I chose to use one chord for the solo section as I wanted each soloist as well as the rhythm section to find ways of expanding a simple idea with each of their own personalised styles.

Both the **B section** line (bar 21) and band riff (bars 31 and 32) were inspired by Chick Corea's *Got a Match.*

Figure 4.3.1: *Mzansi Rising* (bar 21)

Figure 4.3.2: *Mzansi Rising* (bars 31 and 32)

My aim for this tune was for it to be danceable. I chose this title because of its symbolism. *Mzansi* is an informal name for South Africa. The word *Rising* that follows it is a reference to all the diverse music that is evolving in South Africa.

Reality

This piece was composed through the experimentation of combining two minor pentatonic scales, each belonging to a different key, i.e. G minor pentatonic and A minor pentatonic.

Figure 4.4: *Reality* (thematic vamp played by piano)

The two notes from each scale are played simultaneously with the interval of a major 9th a part, i.e. *G* and *A, Bb* and *C, C* and *D*, and *D* and *E.* This idea of 9th intervals played together became the thematic vamp for the introduction, **A section, B section**, and last four bars of the **C section**. Before the realisation of this idea, I was thinking about pianist Sanele Phakathi's approach to pentatonic scales. While

witnessing some of Phakathi's improvisation features at some of his own performances, I noticed that he would sometimes combine two pentatonic scales a perfect fourth apart and play this in an ascending motion. I loved the momentum and forward motion that this creates, prompting the rhythm section to respond with other musical phrases. This idea of combining pentatonic scales inspired the thematic vamp for *Reality.* I wanted this piece to portray African roots while still incorporating other musical styles that did not originate in Africa; styles such as *djent* and swing music. In other words, this is a multicultural representation - African, European and American.

> The Bembe originate from the northwest forests of Democratic Republic of the Congo. They are representative of numerous ethnic traditions including Lega, pre-Lega, Boyo-Kunda, and Bemba. They are a tough and proud people who absorbed other populations and their systems of thought in the process of carving out their current homeland in a time of widespread conflict and under economic pressure from European invaders and slave traders during the 19th century. Their desire for more land continues to result in conflict in the area today (Atkinson, 2010).

Reality can be described in relation to the ethnic group *Bembe.* I consider its musical narrative to be a 'fight for land'. Not only does *Reality* represent these different cultures such as African, American and European, but it also represents the conflict between these perspectives musically. Most of the piece which consists of the underlying thematic vamp of major 9th intervals, represents people of *Bembe* ethnicity. Other musical styles such as *djent* (European) and swing (American) also come into play which represent the invaders and slave traders.

According to percussionist Kim Atkinson:

> The word "Bembe" means different things according to context. "A Bembe" is an Afro-Cuban religious ceremony where participants sing, dance, experience trance state, receive consultations, make offerings, etc. as part of the tradition known as Lukumi or Santeria. The sacred Bata drums are usually played in this ceremony (Atkinson, 2010).

As Atkinson states, the word '*Bembe'* means different things according to context. Most of this piece alludes to the rhythm in which Atkinson describes as *Bembe:*

''Bembe is an Afro-Cuban ritual rhythm that has made its way into popular culture via Latin jazz and salsa'' (Atkinson, 2010).

This piece consists of five sections; **A, B, C, Djent movement,** and the **Solo section.** For sections **A**, **B**, the last 4 bars of **Djent movement** and the **solo section**, I chose to have an Afro-Cuban feel; I utilised the *bembe* pattern which has a triplet feel and its pulse can be felt in 2's. **Section C** consists of a swing feel (American), and the **Djent movement** indeed consists of a djent vamp (European) that creates an element of surprise. For the **A Section**, I decided to have a melody that consists of long notes that belong to both the G minor pentatonic and A minor pentatonic scales. The **B Section** consists of a thematic vamp, but also has accents in between played by the whole band. These accents represent the 'fight for land'. After these accents are played, the **C Section** comes in which I see as indicating that the Americans now rule the land and this moves to the *Djent movement*. The *Djen*t vamp represents European culture and this indicates that they have taken over the land, and its accompanying melody is a response to the Americans. I chose for the last 4 bars of the **djent movement** to move back to the Afro-Cuban thematic vamp, and this represents the 'taking back' of land by the *Bembe* people and this leads to the solo section. The **Solo section** has an Afro-Cuban feel. Although there is much improvisation and musical conversation taking place in the solo section, the *Bembe* rhythmic pattern is still felt. I wanted most of the piece to retain this African theme as it is based on an African ethnic group.

My approach to harmony and melody was experimental and partially intuitive. The chords for the **A Section** were a result of both the pentatonic scales combined, thus the chord became Gm6. The Gm6 chord is not played, but rather implied in the thematic vamp that the bass, piano and guitar play. My starting point for the melody was a perfect 5th interval, namely A and E. From here, the creation of the melody was intuitive and also experimental, in which most of the notes were used from the thematic vamp and some notes were chosen and arranged according to my imagination. The harmony for the **B Section** was also experimental and again, I chose chords instinctively. I chose not to have a melody because I wanted the

thematic vamp and band accents to be the focus and main feature. The **C Section,** *Djent Movement***,** and **Solo section** harmony was also experimental in nature. After reviewing a few harmonic options, I chose the chord progressions that I felt had musical flow and coherence. The end of the solo section harmony leading back to the start of the solo section form reminded me a bit of gospel music, hymns in particular. In hymnal music, the use of chords where a major triad is place over its 3rd (e.g *D/F#),* is commonly used as passing chords, and diatonically as the III and VII chords. The use of *D/F#* moving to *G13sus4* is a reference to this 'hymnal sound'. Just like the **A section**, the melody for the **C section** and Djent movement is also partially intuitive as well as experimental.

The title *Reality* was chosen after the piece had been created. I chose this title because life is unpredictable. Anything can change at any time, even if no one knows what is happening.

Overview and findings from the composition process for the First Band.

While scoring the charts for the musicians, I knew how I wanted the band to sound, but I did not know what to expect. I had sent the charts to the musicians two weeks before the first rehearsal. As stated earlier, this band consists of Salim Washington on tenor saxophone, Ethan Naidoo on guitar, Sanele Phakathi on keyboard, Prince Bulo on bass guitar, and myself on drums. Vocalist Zoe Masuku features on *Beauty in Reverence.*

Rehearsals:

At the first rehearsal, I was both excited and nervous. The musicians were excited to learn my music. I was more than happy to take suggestions regarding the

compositions. The musicians made a few suggestions only with regards to the arrangement of these pieces.

Beauty in Reverence: The first two rehearsals proved to be challenging. The band first started to play the piece at a slower tempo than I had envisioned. Although we had played through the piece, the tenor sax had sounded unnatural and it was not in sync rhythmically with the guitar. Washington then mentioned that I had scored the melody only in the upper register of tenor saxophone which I had not realised was the case. I then corrected the melody for the tenor saxophone by transposing the entire melodic range down an octave. At the next rehearsal, the melody started to make sense as the saxophone had more of a natural sound in which the body and warmth of the horn was felt. This was the first lesson that I learnt at the rehearsal. Although the texture of the melody was better, the rhythm of the **B section** melody between the saxophone and guitar were still not together in the way that I had imagined. However, the piece was still playable and I hoped that it would get better with time and practice. For the solo section, it was agreed between Phakathi and Bulo that Bulo would be the first to improvise. I thought it was interesting for the bass guitar to solo first as the dynamic range of the band became much softer which changed the mood of the music.

Brainstorm-Ing: At the first rehearsal, the band had played through the written parts (sections A and B). Some of the 16th note phrases (bars 18, 49 and 50) were not articulated as I had imagined when composing this piece. Each band member had his own feel, therefore the phrasing of the rhythms was not in sync. I had noticed that while playing these phrases, the band slowed down the tempo. This was understandable as the music was still new and the band was playing together for the first time. I can remember that at these rehearsals, it felt as though we were not playing together as a band and there was a sense of rhythmic 'conflict' between the guitar and saxophone. After playing through the form a few times, the piece improved in terms of improvisation and musical conversation, but the orchestrated parts still lacked rhythmic precision.

Double Minded: At the start of rehearsing this piece with the band, Washington had pointed out that the tenor saxophone range was too high. Despite this, Washington was still able to play the notes. He played through the melody, but the saxophone sounded sharp in tuning, and thin. For the next rehearsal, I transposed the melody an octave lower, and the saxophone sounded more natural than when it was an octave higher. For this composition, the guitar and saxophone could not sync rhythmically with each other. I remember that we practised this piece at a much slower tempo (about 30 beats per minute slower) in order to get the melodies together. Bulo suggested that the phrase from bars 27 to 32 could be used as linking material in order to transition into the next soloist. Each soloist had to cue in this phrase. This made the transitions between soloists exciting. Initially, I could imagine Antonio Sanchez playing drums for this piece and I tried to emulate his approach to Latin jazz, but my own ideas and interpretation seemed to take precedence. The drumming for the solo section turned out to be a combination of the *Goema* and Latin rhythmic styles, and this was achieved mainly through intuition.

Mzansi Rising: There were no suggestions from the band members. My main issue here was the rhythm of the melodies between the guitar and saxophone. I felt the rhythm section was well coordinated.

Reality: There were no suggestions from the band members. The arrangement had remained the same. I remember the **B section** and **Djent movement** being the most difficult sections for the band to play. We had rehearsed these sections at slower tempos until the band was comfortable.

Performances:

Beauty in Reverence: This piece was performed at a much slower tempo than stated on the chart. This was due to the guitar and saxophone melodies not syncing at the original faster tempo, thus the band agreed to perform the piece at a slower tempo. Although the tempo was slower, it did not feel rushed and seemed to have a better flow.

Brainstorm-Ing: At the live performance, this piece fell apart. The guitar loop which was prerecorded by the guitar was inaudible when the band had played, thus the pulse of the loop was difficult to keep track of. At times, the rhythms of the melodies were played slightly behind and in front of the beat by each musician and this created something of a 'lag'. The musical conversation that I had imagined took place, but I felt that it made less of an impact as the orchestrated parts were rhythmically disjointed. Therefore, to my mind, everything sounded improvised.

Double Minded: The rhythm of the melodies between guitar and saxophone were not together. It created a feeling of 'looseness'. I enjoyed the solo section for this piece the most. Opposed to each musician's solo, there was always a sense of musical conversation taking place between instruments the rhythm section. I loved this idea of call and response between the rhythm section and the soloist, as well as between each musician, while supporting the soloist.

Mzansi Rising: This piece and *Double Minded* had more or less the same performance tempo as well as complex rhythmic phrases. The way I felt about *Double Minded* in performance was the way I had imagined this piece.

Reality: This piece was not performed due to time constraints. The audience members (and musicians) were mostly jazz and gospel supporters; only a few were rock and pop supporters. Audience members that I have met after the performances gave me mostly positive feedback. Three musicians have also told me that my music sounds like that of Frank Zappa, which was a surprise to me as I had not listened to Zappa's music before. Although there were a number of musicians that enjoyed the compositions and improvisational sections, some musicians made a few comments to me after the performance; the guitar and saxophone were not synchronised together while playing the melodies; the sound of the bass guitar was too 'muddy' and had too much of 'bottom end'; the electric guitar had a 'thin' sound; and the intonation of the saxophone was inaccurate in relation to the piano, guitar and bass guitar. I gladly accepted the positive and negative feedback as I knew that it would help me be more aware in the future.

The studio session:

After two rehearsals for the studio recording, the band was confident and ready to record the music. The studio session took place the following day. Although I was confident, I was really concerned about the rhythm and tempo issues between the guitar and saxophone. I decided that the band should record to a metronome for all the pieces. Because we had rehearsed twice before the studio session, my expectation was that we could record each piece once, or twice at most. The studio session proved to be difficult as it turned out to be just like the rehearsals and performances. The guitar and saxophone melodies were not rhythmically consistent, and the rhythm section had made mistakes with regards to some of the vamp and ensemble accents. While recording, I knew that a good deal of editing would have to be done. However, the sense of time and rhythmic awareness was much better than the performances as the monitoring (in terms of sound) was sufficient - each musician had his own set of headphones and monitor mix. After the studio session, I had chosen to take responsibility of editing the band. Naidoo also indicated that he wanted to re-record all the guitar parts.

After receiving the final guitar parts from Naidoo, I proceeded to listen to the band and started to edit the parts that I felt could be more in sync. Using Logic Pro x - a recording software, helped me to do this. I first started editing the rhythm section; a few ensemble accents sounded 'loose', therefore I brought its rhythm together in line. The guitar which was re-recorded was much improved in terms of the melodies being rhythmically accurate. I used the guitar melodies as a reference and edited most of the saxophone melodies in accordance with the guitar. I also realised that the intonation of the saxophone was inconsistent. I attempted to alter the pitch of the saxophone and it did improve and the tuning inconsistencies were less evident. From listening to some of the guitar parts, an idea came to mind; to add sound effects and additional synthesizer sounds in some areas of the pieces. When Naidoo sent the re-recorded guitar parts, some of the sounds and ambient fill-ins that he utilised inspired me to incorporate more sound effects and electronic sounds. At

first, I had just wanted a standard quintet recording, but after listening back to the pieces, I could imagine other electronic sounds and effects accompanying the band. I also thought of the Chick Corea Elektric Band and Corea's use of electronic sounds. Therefore, I thought of keeping in tradition with one of my childhood influences.

Beauty in Reverence: While synchronising the guitar and saxophone melody parts, I realised that the melody did not sound the way I had imagined; the lack of embellishment, articulation and dynamic range made it less impactful. Initially, the melody was composed for tenor saxophone and guitar, but having listened to the recording many times, I realised that the melody would flow better with the voice as the main feature. I decided to use vocalist Zoe Masuku to sing the melody as I had previously performed with her in other ensembles, thus I knew that I could trust her musicality. The performance context has changed *Beauty in Reverence* in terms of a tempo change. Because of the rhythmic inconsistency of the guitar and saxophone, a slower tempo has helped the melodies sync together, and this tempo change has made the groove of the piece feel danceable. The disjointed phrasing of melodies by the guitar and saxophone has also caused me to hear the melody in another way, i.e. with voice.

Brainstorm-Ing: For bars 49 to 51, Bulo chose not to play the unison line as he felt that it was not suited for the bass guitar and because of time constraints, he had suggested that I fill in the line with keyboard synth bass when editing the band. I was pleased to do this.

Figure 4.5: *Brainstorm-Ing* (unison line - bass)

The performance context for all five pieces has enhanced the compositions as the individual styles of each musician have to some extent shaped the music. Improvisation and 'room' to converse through a music medium, aids in a more interesting story, especially when musicians from different musical and cultural backgrounds, as well as different age groups, interact. However, my task to compose for the band members was not entirely successful. There were some challenges that called for solutions which I sought in music production rather than in composition. I found that the timing and synchronisation issue between Naidoo and Washington was a recurring problem. At the first rehearsal, I had initially thought that this problem would diminish as we rehearsed and performed more together, but the studio session proved that these issues were not going to dissipate with time. For *Beauty in Reverence*, instead of recomposing a melody in a feel to which Naidoo and Washington were more accustomed, I chose to ultimately use vocalist, Zoe Masuku to sing the melody. After the studio recording, I edited the guitar and saxophone parts for the rest of the pieces in order for the guitar and saxophone to sound in sync. The choice to solve these problems in the music production phase rather than recompose material that the players were comfortable with, gives rise to the question: Was I composing music with these band members in mind? I would say yes, to the extent of improvisation. Taking into consideration the problems and my chosen method of solutions, I now feel that I was composing with the improvisational qualities of these musicians in mind, rather than composing pieces for their styles and aesthetic requirements. I have come to terms with my approach to composition; my love for precise 'heads', in which each musician should have a good sense of rhythm and play the main sections together in sync while the improvisation sections are conversational and interactive. Even though the musicians I chose were not always able to execute and articulate their written parts, the essential balance of precise 'heads' and conversational improvisation sections is something that I would not sacrifice. In retrospect, I think that my choice of musicians worked in terms of my music adopting their virtuoso improvisational qualities, but was not quite as successful in the execution of melodies that I have

composed. In the process of becoming more self-aware as a composer, I now understand that of paramount importance to me, is to realise the music as I 'hear' it. This is something that I find I cannot compromise.

Second Band and Big Band

My approach to analysing the composition processes for the 'second band' and 'big band' differed from my approach to the 'first band'. This analysis is thus positioned in a different kind of discussion, namely a clear breakdown of broader compositional intentions as well as my general aesthetic sensibility. My intention is for these bands to produce a style that articulates 'local' sounds while still existing in the jazz idiom. There are many influential sounds; traditional Zulu music (*Indlamu* dance); *Maskandi* music; Afro-beat music, which originated in Nigeria, Africa; and *Gqom* music. The music also draws from other genres such as rock, Latin jazz, soul, Gospel (hymnal) and swing music. Due to my experience in playing the keyboard at church, some of the harmonic progressions I chose to use for the pieces are a result of accompanying the pastor while he or she would deliver a sermon. By musically 'enhancing' the sermon, I would find myself experimenting with intervals and chords to fit the mood of the content preached. An influential source for these two bands is the recordings of local and international artists which will be discussed separately for each band.

For the most part in jazz, the composer is also the arranger, especially when orchestrating music for a small ensemble and a big band. The composer can already be 'hearing' or rather imagining the arrangement and instrumentation and to this degree, the process of composition and arrangement are intertwined.

For my compositions, the process begins with two, or sometimes three intervals, which may develop into an intriguing fragment of a potential phrase or melody. I then experiment with these fragments from two perspectives: The first is intuitive, in which the key in which the phrase is finally placed, influences my choice of notes. This has to do with instrumental technique. My first instrument is the drum kit, and

second is the piano. Although I have knowledge of the piano from a theoretical perspective, I have not focused much on technique. Therefore, I am more comfortable composing in some keys than others. This plays a major role in making choices when approaching a selection of notes. The second is from a technical perspective, in which I relate these developed phrases to tonal axis, e.g. diminished and tri-tone axis'.

Second Band – 2 Compositions and 2 Arrangements

In this band, my focus was on composing and arranging music for instrumentation, i.e. two guitars, keyboard/synthesizer, bass/synth bass, and drum kit. The idea of two guitarists in one band was initially inspired by the jazz album *I Can See Your House from Here,* which features virtuoso guitarists Pat Metheny and John Scofield. The band consists of Metheny and Scofield on guitars, Steve Swallow on bass guitar and Bill Stewart on drums. The musical conversation between Metheny and Scofield, is what caught my attention. However, I decided to add keyboard to the ensemble for two reasons; the music I orchestrated is composed from the piano, hence the piano is my point of reference; I wanted to add in other keyboard sounds such as a synthesizer lead and a pad layer. Again, I chose to use a rock sounding drum kit since the general aim of this thesis is to 'raid' genres. While some processes were thought out, other processes were partially intuitive and experimental.

The two compositions, *The Calling* and *Life is Precious,* started off by experimenting with intervals on the piano. These intervals developed into the formation of chords, and thereafter led to the selection of chord progressions. After these chord progressions were finalised, I started to build melodies through intervallic choices. I selected the notes along with different rhythmic placements of these notes according to how I 'heard' the music.

For the **A section** of *The Calling*, the interval that I began with was a sharpened 5th, namely C and G#. This became the root motion of the chords. The chords which I imagined upon these root notes had the quality of major 7 with a flattened 5th.

Figure 4.6: *The Calling* (intro – piano and bass)

The melody for the **A section** likewise has a sharpened 5th and this intervallic theme can be found in the **B section.** The harmony for the **B section** was inspired by Wayne Shorter's *Speak no Evil* and *Deluge*. The melody for this **B section** is informed by the harmony in which I chose notes that belonged to these chords. The **C section** and the **solo section** were inspired by Bheki Mseleku's *Vukani*. The Latin drum groove for the **A section** was inspired by John Coltrane's *The Night Has a Thousand Eyes,* where Elvin Jones was the drummer. I found these recordings to be the most influential in the development of *The Calling.* My aim was to combine elements such as harmonic structures and rhythms from these recordings and interpret them in a way that the different elements would complement each other. The combination of these jazz recordings along with my intervallic choices, were more of an experiment. My plan here was to 'wait and see what happens'. The development of *The Calling* was through intuition and was influenced by the recordings mentioned above. I chose this title due to my early exposure to music, and the journey that the music has taken me on.

Life is Precious was also composed through intervallic formations in which I was exploring with 4th and 5th intervals on the piano, and this became the melody for the **A section**.

Figure 4.7: *Life is Precious*
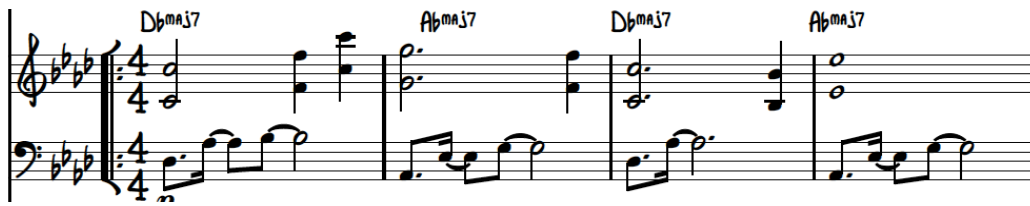
I decided to use the same melody for the **B section**, and to change its harmony to create more of a serious mood than that of the **A section**. For the harmony, I take on a minimalistic approach; the harmonic structure is diatonic at best, with its harmonic rhythm for the **A section** and **B section** moving at one chord per bar. The **C section** harmony is an interpretation of harmony from church hymns.

For this piece, I chose a laid-back approach with a 'straight-eight' feel, and a modern hip hop swing groove coming into play now and again for rhythmic variation. The rhythm and groove for this piece was thought of last after finalising the melody. I devised the title *Life is Precious* after hearing many stories about children being murdered, hence this piece is child-like at times and is intended to serve as a reminder that life is precious.

While the general aim of this thesis is to 'raid' genres, I found that both *The Calling* and *Life is Precious,* each took on a development of its own. I chose to arrange *People Make the World Go Round* (composed by Thom Bell, Linda Creed and George Perry) and Paul Desmond's *Take 5,* in an attempt to relocate their sound within Africa.

People Make the World Go Round

I thought about the rhythm first. I wanted the groove for **sections A** and **B** to portray Zulu roots and chose a traditional Zulu rhythm, which normally accompanies the traditional Zulu dance known as *Indlamu*. On the drum kit, the groove is played using the floor tom and bass drum in a swing feel, with strong emphasis on the down beat as is typical of *Indlamu.* Upon this groove, I chose to use the same phrasing of the original melody but in a swing feel, and displaced some notes to

create rhythmic interest. I formed the harmony and harmonic progression using notes from the melody, hence the chords were informed by the melody. For the **solo section**, I changed from the traditional Zulu groove into a traditional swing groove as I felt that there should contrast.

Take 5

The main thematic feature that I intended for this piece is the perfect 5th interval. The piano is the driving force behind this arrangement.

Figure 4.8: *Take 5* (piano theme)

For the **introduction,** I chose to re-conceptualise the **B section** melody of *Take 5* in a 7/4 time signature, which informed re-harmonisation of this melody. The **A section** is driven by the piano, with the other instruments emphasising figures on some of the bars. I wanted this kind of 'organised' conversation, instead of the melody. The new **B section** is where I decided to reimagine the **A section** melody of *Take 5.* I assigned the melody to the bass guitar, guitar, and the piano (left hand playing melody in perfect $5^{th's}$). My aim here was to retain the original notes of the **A section** melody, but at longer durations apart. In keeping with the tradition of free jazz, the **C section** is where I wanted a body of free, open musical conversation to create a different texture from that of the **B section. Sections D** and **E** are solo sections for the guitar. The Afro-Beat groove here is influenced by Nigerian multi-instrumentalist and pioneer of the Afro-beat genre, Fela Kuti. **Section F** is a 4 drum feature which I felt would be a fine transition from the solo section to **section G**, which has a funk groove. The second half of the **section G** till the end of the piece is

in an Afro-Beat feel. I chose to have this 4/4 Afro-Beat groove in two sections of this piece as it has danceable qualities.

Overview and findings from the Second Band

These compositions and arrangements were only performed once. Although there were more written parts for this band than for the 'first band', the art of musical conversation and improvisation did take place where it was necessary. I did not get to record this band live in studio as each musician had other commitments. Instead, I decided to record the keyboard, bass (with bass samples) and the drums separately at my home studio. I then sent the audio files off to two guitarists to record their written parts. Although the pieces are performance based and have the element of musical conversation, the duration of the improvisation sections were structured in advance as each of the guitarists had to record separately, and I also had the task of recording the other three instruments. Through this process, I felt that the melodies were in sync as the guitarists had freedom to record their parts on their own. In the music production phase, I did not do much editing as I felt that the instruments had complemented each other

Big Band – 1 Composition and 2 Arrangements

In this band, the pieces are not based in performance. The process of creating these pieces was different. I chose to create a simulation of the real big band by using a recording software which contained software instruments to record the music. Therefore, both improvisation and musical conversation in this band are limited. My intention here was to have an electronic fusion sound, but all within the jazz spectrum. In order to achieve some improvisation, I employed instrumentalists to feature in the solo sections.

Crooked Stares, Giant Steps

This is an arrangement of John Coltrane's *Giant Steps* which started off as an experiment (see accompanying chart in composition portfolio). The harmonic

progression for the original *Giant Steps* is built upon an augmented axis which suggests three keys, namely B, G, and Eb. My starting point was once again taking the 'what if' approach. I asked myself, "what if I had to use a diminished axis instead of an augmented axis?" Hence, the melody is built on this diminished axis. Because I did not alter the melody in any way, I had to alter the qualities of the chords built on this diminished axis in order to complement the melody. I had also decided to experiment with the 5/4 time signature and my intention was to create a rather loose afro-beat feel within this 5/4. Around this **A section** in 5/4 where the melody is played, I chose to add sections. I decided on an **introduction** that had the same feel as the **A section**. The piece developed from these 2 sections into the **solo section (C, E, G** and **I)** which is where the featured soloists take place. This **solo section** rests on an afro-beat influenced groove. Between each of the soloists, there are four bar ensemble phrases (**D, F, H** and **J**) that are each used as a transition to the next soloist. After the drum solo (**K**), I intended for section **L** to be a recapitulation of the **A** section. The outro (**M**), is a reference to John Coltrane's multi-tonic chord changes. The aim for this arrangement was to be as complex and technical as possible. I added *Crooked Stares* to the title because of the piece's rhythmic and harmonic density. The word *Stares* is a 'play' on *stairs* which is related to steps. The title has to do with unexpected turns in life, and the moral of the story here is, the more crooked stares (or stairs) you encounter, the more giant your steps will be.

Little Sunflower

My aim was to localise an American jazz standard and introduce jazz to people who are fans of dance music. I intended to have a static drum groove which was inspired by *Gqom* music.

Figure 4.9: *Little Sunflower* (drum groove)

The description of *Gqom* music can be found under the composition *Mzansi Rising.* I chose to keep the original melody with the same harmonic progression for most of the 'head'. I re-harmonised at certain places (bars 30 to 36) as I 'heard' the music. I decided to add in a short improvisational feature, thus no spontaneous musical conversation takes place.

One Blood One Race

My initial thought for this composition was for it to be more complex than my arrangement for *Giant Steps,* in terms of greater theatricality as well as incorporating references to many different stylistic elements. My starting point was an ostinato created from the piano which was assigned to the guitar. The guitar plays this thematic ostinato at selected parts throughout the piece.

Figure 4.10: *One Blood One Race* (Guitar ostinato)

The ostinato has all the notes of the Eb major pentatonic scale, and can be heard throughout the whole piece; this is the main theme. For the most part, the harmonic and melodic choices have been experimental, and were led by intuition. There were a number of artists that were influential in the development of this piece; Fela Kuti in terms of the Afro-Beat influence (bars 26 to 40); an improvisational reference to John Coltrane (bars 231 to 238) as well as *Coltrane changes* (bars 245 and 246); and The Clayton Hamilton Orchestra in terms of horn articulations (bars 171 to 187). With regards to the drumming, I chose to reference genres such as rock, jazz, and Afro-Beat for more complexity and textural variation. The title *One Blood One Race* was chosen without thinking about the piece. The title simply means that since we all have red blood, we are considered as one race.

Overview and findings

Although the idea of improvisation and musical conversation was limited, the task of composing and arranging for big band was easier than for the first two bands. I felt I could compose more freely as I was not limited by local constraints. I feel that to a certain extent, I have accomplished my task for this band; while it was easy and convenient to programme all the instruments as it saves time, I feel as if the lack of spontaneous conversational improvisation makes the music less of a contribution to the jazz tradition. While recording the drum parts for two of the pieces, I felt that I was over compensating for something that was not there. As complex as *One Blood One Race* and *Crooked Stares, Giant Steps* are, the absence of musical conversation was tolerable.

CHAPTER FIVE

Reflection on the Process

There is a considerable amount of instinct and intuition involved in composing music. I have grown up expressing myself musically; thinking in music; and relating to other people through and with music. Hence, I find music to be a natural medium of expression. For the most part, my conscious ideas about how I go about composing music, (for example, the idea that a particular feature of *Maskandi* music would work well in a composition), are worked through both instinctively, and with conscious cognitive intent. That said, in most instances the intuitive aspect has taken precedence.

The points below are possible consequences of the analysis through the Grounded Theory approach which looks to the domain of practice to source new and relevant ideas and theories:

Taking a 'what happens if' approach has produced a series of ideas or theories about what jazz is and how it works. This approach has also enhanced some of the established ideas about jazz, e.g. that the improvisational ideal which in many ways defines jazz, is the primary source of "new stories". The improvisation element is what gives jazz its interest and what keeps it relevant and alive in different eras and different contexts. Both musicians and audiences love it because through improvisation each performance offers a new story. Improvisation is also a source of inclusivity – it provides all the musicians with an opportunity to insert something of themselves into each performance and this opportunity gives people a 'voice'. In so many aspects of contemporary life, people feel (and indeed often are) silenced. In this domain, there is a flexibility that offers an alternative and indeed perhaps because of this, I think that there may be a lesson to be learnt that could perhaps filter into non-musical contexts.

A further related point that emerges as a consequence of my analysis of the compositional process, is that the constraints on what is available as a musical

resource within the jazz idiom are often the consequence of power-driven ideologies that adopt a discriminatory approach to resources that are rooted in the so-called 'popular music' domain. This kind of 'jazz-snobbery' is exclusionary and non-democratic and indeed limits the relevance of jazz for a broad audience of people from different backgrounds.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, jazz actually grew out of the interactive relationship between different musical styles and genres. I believe that my 'raiding' of other musical genres is in keeping with the history of jazz.

While reviewing my compositional process for the three bands, I realised that it is always different; I never approach composition in a formulaic way. My compositional process seems to vary from piece to piece as my starting points and initial thoughts are not always the same. My exposure to various styles of music has impacted on my 'sound world'; on reflection I realise that some musical phrases that I have used in these compositions have been embedded in my unconscious mind for some time. My state of mind at the time of conceptualizing the idea, the choice of musicians, and the instrumentation often contribute to the direction of the composition process. In most instances, my starting point is at the piano as I experiment with a selection of intervals and intriguing chords. For the development of the pieces, I considered the drum part last even while I find this ironic bearing in mind that I am a drummer. There are mostly 'fragments' of ideas that I hear and imagine, and how I approach the decision making process ultimately determines the final product. These decisions are informed by context. For example; my intention to 'localise' the American Jazz standard *Little Sunflower* was behind my decision to integrate the groove of a trending and popular local genre (*Gqom*) with the original form. It was my choice to use this groove that is familiar in my milieu, and it was my aim to introduce jazz to a *Gqom* audience. My understanding of, and engagement with my environment, provides the context for my compositions. It is this aspect of jazz that has been able to counteract the imposition of ideas about how society should be structured, by serving as a musical voice of contestation. . From this study, it becomes apparent that music as a non-literal expressive form, and more

particularly jazz as a way of arranging and giving expression to different ideas and relationships, may counteract oppressive expressive dominance where expressive freedom is constrained by predetermined expectations.

The performance situation of the 'first band' revealed a number of rather different issues: To begin with, I had begun engaging the musicians on the assumption that they were all accomplished performers and experienced (albeit in different ways) in jazz. The issues that arose from the 'first band' proved to be challenging as I found that the guitar and saxophone could not play the melodies in sync. My expectation was that because we are improvisers and have all dealt with jazz, the musicians would be able to adapt quite easily to the material over a period of time, and would be self-aware when playing with each other. However, this did not transpire. Perhaps this was due to the different musical and cultural backgrounds, as well as the age difference between the musicians. These are issues which need to be taken into account when setting up similar projects, or indeed when engaging musicians for performances. Referring back to the quote by Jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis: "The real power of Jazz is that a group of people can come together and create improvised art and negotiate their agendas ... and that negotiation is the art" (Burns, 2001).

After completing the tasks I had set out for the first band, this negotiation that Marsalis speaks of, is only evident in my compositions with regards to the improvised aspect of the art as the musicians with whom I have chosen to explore my ideas, are proficient in this aspect of jazz performance. Although, the improvisation sections might have been the highlight, the interpretation of the melodies did not sync up with each other, and for me, this lack of synchronization between the saxophone and guitar were both discouraging and frustrating. As a drummer, I am rhythmically aware of the melody, harmony and groove, and when these elements are not executed as I intended compositionally, the music loses its value. Due to the melodies sounding rhythmically disjointed after listening to the recording of the band, I decided to edit the melodies at my home studio. This had

another unforeseen outcome. Editing these pieces revealed my passion for music production, and music engineering, and this developed mainly out of necessity.

Apart from the musical challenges, I also had to face engineering challenges. The final mixed and mastered product that I had received back from the engineer did not sound as I had first imagined, and this led me to re-master the music to make it more acceptable to my initial expectations. At this point, I had realised that the compositional process extends right through to the final production stage which is indeed the main stage of shaping the sound of the final product. I find this to be important to me because amidst all the challenges, I can still make choices in the final production stage and have more control over the process. At the start of this project, I did not know that I would play a vital role in making the studio recordings conform to what I had imagined. Nevertheless, the addition of the final production stage to my approach as a composer and arranger directs me in achieving the desired sound I imagine from the very beginning of the process.

When asked what qualifies as jazz during an interview with Len Lyons, Chick Corea replied, "The user is the one who creates the style. I don't ask myself, 'Does this work as jazz?' I'll create the music I need without thinking about style" (Lyons, 1983:265). Vague as it may be, this quotation explains a great deal about how Corea thinks about music, in that he seems to be focused strictly on creation rather than conformation.'' (Lynch, 2012:7). Just like Corea, this is the approach that I favour when composing and arranging music. I think this has a lot to do with my exposure to many genres over the years. Even though there is deviation from the established jazz idiom, I still consider my music to be a contribution to the jazz tradition. I think that by using jazz as a process and by 'raiding' genres such as *Gqom, Goema, Djent*, Afro-Cuban, and *Maskandi,* I am able to achieve my own sound. By taking a 'what if' approach to the composition process, I feel that reimagining stylistic elements from these genres in the realm of jazz initiates an evolutionary process, thus the sound of the twelve pieces are complete, but only for now!

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APPENDIX

Composition Portfolio List:

Original compositions (5):

1) Beauty in Reverence   *by Riley G*

2) Brainstorm-Ing   *by Riley G*

3) Double Minded   *by Riley G*

4) Mzansi Rising   *by Riley G*

5) Reality   *by Riley G*

Small ensemble (4):

1) The Calling   *by Riley G*

2) Life is Precious   *by Riley G*

3) People Make the World Go Round   *Arrangement*

4) Take 5   *Arrangement*

Large Ensemble (3):

1) Giant Steps   *Arrangement*

2) Little Sunflower   *Arrangement*

3) One Blood One Race   *by Riley G*

Extra material (1)

1) Double Minded Live   *by Riley G*

Figure 1: *Mzansi Rising*