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COMPOSITION IN CRISIS:
CASE STUDIES IN SOUTH AFRICAN ART MUSIC
1980-2006

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Johannesburg, 2008

Abstract

This dissertation explores a crisis in South African composition through an analysis of the field of art music in the period 1980-2006. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1993) and Thomas Kuhn (1970), I argue that the field of composition shifted from an autonomous to a more heteronomous mode of production during this period, and that this shift was embodied in a change of artistic paradigm. In chapter one I show how an 'autonomous' paradigm during the 1980s upheld the Eurocentric outlook and value system of apartheid, and how it was replaced in the early 1990s by a more 'heteronomous' or 'cross-cultural' paradigm. The composer case studies (chapters two to four) show how Kevin Volans, Peter Klatzow, and Hendrik Hofmeyr contributed to aesthetic and social change in the field, especially with regard to the inclusion of African elements. Chapter five is a critique of the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra as a 'Proudly South African' post-apartheid institution, showing how its programming policy is detrimental to the interests of composers. The Conclusion reflects on the dominated position of the field of composition relative to economic and political imperatives in the field of power, and considers how a prolonged and continued crisis has challenged the very notions of what constitutes artistic value in the field.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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Thomas Mathew Pooley

30th day of May, 2008

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation was written in Johannesburg although some of the ideas expressed here were developed over a longer period, beginning with my studies as an Honours student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2005. Thank you to Christopher Ballantine and Beverly Parker who supervised my early research on cross-cultural art music at that institution. The subsequent development of these ideas was the product of important collaborations that happened during my time at Wits. The most important of these was the role played by my supervisor Christine Lucia. She read this work with a careful yet critical editorial eye, providing me with perspectives gained from a wide-ranging knowledge of the field, and was generous with her own research materials. She also helped me to develop a theoretical model that intersected with her own work on Pierre Bourdieu (1993), and this, together with the work of another important scholar, Thomas Kuhn (1970), helped me to develop a new way of seeing the (musical) world.

This way of seeing was complemented by a perspective from those who had first hand experience in the field during the past three decades. I undertook numerous interviews, both formal and informal during the past two or so years. Most of those interviewed were composers or arts administrators and their comments punctuate this work with invaluable insider insights. Despite the crisis in the field, all interviewees were generous with their time and resources and provided me with scores, recordings, publications, and other information that was invaluable. I am very grateful for this assistance and would like to thank the following in particular: Kevin Volans, Peter Klatzow, Hendrik Hofmeyr, Hans Roosenschoon, Roelof Temmingh, Mokale Koapeng, Sara Gon, Shadrack Bokaba, Gary Roberts, Stephen Jurisich, Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph and Michael Blake. The latter deserves special mention for lending me rare scores, recordings, and books on contemporary art. The Irma Stern Museum has kindly given me permission to reproduce the paintings *Arab Priest*, *Congo River*, and *Peach Blossoms*, and for this my thanks.

This research would not have been possible without a study grant from the National Research Foundation (NRF), and a Prestigious Masters Scholarship from the same

source. The University of the Witwatersrand also provided generous financial assistance towards my studies.

This work was written during a difficult period, but the pressures of life in Johannesburg were tempered by delightful times with friends and loved ones. I met Karin midway through my stay on the highveld and she has brought me endless joy. My family also deserves a special mention: Justin, Joanne, Penny, and Joanna were always hospitable and encouraging and this was greatly appreciated. Simon made some important historical observations on this work and was always a sounding board for my ideas. My most heartfelt thanks go to my mother for her unstinting support and belief, and without whom this research would not have been possible.

Thomas Mathew Pooley

Johannesburg, May 30 2008

List of musical examples

Fig 1a *Nyamaropa I* 'basic version' of the tune

Fig 1b *Nyamaropa IV*

Fig 2 *Mbira* extract from letter A

Fig 3 *Nyamaropa* chord progression

Fig 4 *Matepe* pattern IIA player 1

Fig 5 *Matepe* pattern IIIA player 2

Fig 6 *Matepe* chord progression

Fig 7 *White Man Sleeps* (original) repeat structures in the Fourth Dance

Fig 8 *Cicada* bar 1 interlocking between the two pianos

Fig 9 *Leaping Dance* bar 1 interlocking between the two pianos

Fig 10 *Kneeling Dance* bars 15-20 sudden change to mantra-like stillness

Fig 11 *Incantations* bars 1-3 full score

Fig 12 *Arab Priest* bars 2-9 solo bassoon

Fig 13 *Arab Priest* bars 14-17 solo flute and bassoon

Fig 14 *Arab Priest* bars 29-30 synthesized sitar

Fig 15 *Arab Priest* bars 29-36 full score

Fig 16 *Arab Priest* bar 99 flute & 1st violin

Fig 17 *Arab Priest* bar 106 flute & synth

Fig 18 *Arab Priest* bars 7-8 viola & synth

Fig 19 *Arab Priest* bars 102-103 bassoon

Fig 20 *Arab Priest* bars 99-104 full score

Fig 21a *Nag*, bar 1 opening motif

Fig 21b *Nag* bar 20 fugue theme

Fig 21c *Nag* bar 91 closing motif

Fig 22 *Notturno* bars 3-6 opening motif from A

Fig 23 *Notturno* bars 41-43 bridge material (motif) x

Fig 24 *Notturno* bars 14-17 opening motif from B

Fig 25 *Notturno* bars 42-45 B^1 with appoggiatura motif derived from A in middle voice

Fig 26 *Notturno* bars 72-85 Coda (thematic material from B in upper register over accompaniment figures (x) derived from A)

Fig 27 Theme from *Variazioni sopra una mazurka di Chopin*, bars 1-5 (Chopin's Mazurka in F minor, Op. 68 No. 4, bars 1-5)

Fig 28 *Variazioni sopra una mazurka di Chopin* bars 79-83 palimpsest from Var. 2

Fig 29 *Variazioni sopra una mazurka di Chopin*, bars 118-122 palimpsest from Var. 3

Fig 30 'Preludio' from *Partita Africana* bars 1-6

Fig 31 *Kalunga* bars 1-3 beginning of the first section (in which Hofmeyr simulates African drumming techniques)