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Ximatsatsa: exploring genre in contemporary Tsonga popular music

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Introduction

It was 24 March 2009, a month before South Africa's fifth democratic election. I had spent the night at a friend's place in Garankuwa, a township north of Pretoria. I needed to be early for an 8.30 a.m. appointment with producer Joe Shirimani, in whose Soshanguve studio – just north of Pretoria we were set to meet. As the taxi drove through various townships, children in colourful uniforms made their way to school. *Ventures*, the local taxis, hooted constantly to the men and women waiting along the sides of the streets. Men in orange overalls were digging near the road in preparation for the 2010 World Cup, I assumed. More interesting to me were the political parties' election campaign posters stuck on the street poles.

ANC: Working together we can do more

DA: One future, One nation

UDM: Now it's the time for all South Africans

As I saw these posters, the promises they represented and the history they carried with them, I began to think about what democracy in post-apartheid South Africa meant to me as a young Tsonga person and to Tsonga people in general, an ethnic minority with a history of marginalization. I remembered the images of the xenophobic attacks that spread throughout the country the previous year– in May 2008– in which some Tsonga people were attacked because they were thought to be foreigners (See Hassim, Kupe and Worby, 2008).

Socio-cultural marginalization

Cultural and social marginalization has existed for some time. In *Social Development and the Empowerment of Marginalised Groups*, Debal SinghaRoy states that the concept of cultural marginalization was first defined in sociology in the mid-sixties (2001: 31). SinghaRoy presents this concept and investigates the types of marginalization and their impact on society. In addition, SinghaRoy argues that the concept of social exclusion is when certain persons have no significant role in society, or 'they tend to be excluded from regular productive systems within society' (ibid.). SinghaRoy's discussion shows that marginalization can manifest in various ways.

A way in which cultural marginalization manifests itself is evident in Lydia Nyathi-Ramahobo's study of Botswana ethnicities. Nyathi-Ramahobo argues that in Botswana there are about fifty-five distinct indigenous groups speaking approximately twenty-six languages. However, only Setswana is recognised as the national language and English as the official language, leaving the other ethnic groups' languages marginalised (2002). She points out how the media, for example, only disseminate information in English and Setswana.

Similar to the language marginalization of Botswana's minority ethnic groups is that experienced by popular American Indian musicians. Neil Ullestad explores how popular American Indian music is marginalised by the mainstream, denied access to mass media and represented as part of a cultural past instead of a musical present. Ullestad argues that an ethnic-based cultural marginalization leaves the artists with two options: remain traditionalist or pursue commercial assimilation, which means adapting to the popular musical trends in the area in order to gain wider recognition. An example of this is how certain of these musicians combine elements of traditional American Indian music and popular music styles, such as rap and rock (1999). In these accounts the marginalization of these groups is mainly influenced by their minority and powerless status.

The marginalization of Tsonga people began soon after their arrival in South Africa. In his study, historian Patrick Harries postulates that because the Tsonga lacked unity, a paramount chief, and consisted of large formless populations, they were treated with hostility and resentment by other South African locals (1989: 95). This marginalization infiltrated its way into party politics of the early twentieth century when the South African Native National Congress, now the ANC, threatened to marginalise unorganised ethnic groups such as the Tsonga. Further exclusion was endured by Tsonga speakers in the mines, an important working and living space for black South Africans, where black people were housed according to their ethnicity. Harries concludes that the Tsonga 'within the black urban areas ... were marginalised as a minority group' (1989: 101). In addition to being marginalised politically and socially, the Tsonga also experienced exclusion in the domain of culture. An example of this occurred in radio.

The history of radio broadcasting in South Africa dates back to the 1920s. However, it was only in 1959, a decade into the apartheid era, that 'Radio Bantu was set up as a series of

seven radio stations targeting the Black population with the slogan, "one nation, one station". Each station targeted a specific ethnic group, located within a geographic area, with specific languages and music to create a sense of belonging to these specific ethnic groups' (Hamm, 1991: 251). This is further supported by historian Sekibakiba Lekgoathi who states that in addition to the two official languages at the time, English and Afrikaans, in 1960 'only Zulu, Southern Sotho and Xhosa languages' were provided with radio broadcasting services. Northern Sotho was added five months later (2009: 578). It is interesting to note that even though by the 1950s a Tsonga ethnic identity had been established and 'Tsongaland' was already in existence in accordance with the Native Land Act of 1936 and the Bantu Self Government Act of 1959 (Harries, 1989: 94-105), Radio Bantu Tsonga only came into existence in 1965 (Shikwambana, Interview, 2009), six years after the establishment of the other black radio stations.

Most literature on the Tsonga people attests that the Tsongas' marginalised state is partly due to their foreign history and as already mentioned, their previous lack of unity, a paramount chief and their minority status (Harries, 1989; Leibhammer, 2008). But if we introduce the concept of a 'minority group', by which the Tsonga may be characterised, the ongoing marginalization of the Tsonga in contemporary South African society is evident. Kristen Hernrard describes a minority group as:

> numerically smaller than the rest of the population of the state. The members of this non-dominant group have ethnic, religious and linguistic characteristics different from those of the rest of the population and show, even implicitly a sense of mutual solidarity focused on the preservation of their culture, traditions, religion or language (2007: 188).

According to this definition, the Tsonga as a minority group are likely to be subjected to marginalization, as Will Kymlicka argues: in a polyethnic nation, minority ethnic groups often suffer marginalization (1995: 2). I do not claim that the Tsonga are the only minority group in South Africa; there are other minority groups who have experienced greater marginalization such as the Khoi and the San. Nevertheless, the Tsonga are non-dominant and possess a recognised ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity which they are eager to preserve, as we shall see later in this study.

The marginalization of minority groups in South Africa has not gone unnoticed. The official languages of the country are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga,

Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. The country's constitution states: 'Recognising the historically diminished status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages' (South African Constitution, 1996: 1245 ss 4-8). This ideal is of course open to various interpretations in its implementation. However, it clearly acknowledges that certain languages, a major part of ethnic identity, have been and continue to be marginalised. Henrard argues that it refers to the official black indigenous languages when talking about 'diminished languages' (2007: 190).[1]

The South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), the state-owned broadcaster, possesses the power to support previously marginalised groups by virtue of its dominant position in the media. Pressure from viewers and listeners has also been received to cater for such groups. During the apartheid era, television disseminated programmes and news only in English and Afrikaans at first. It was only in 1982 that black African languages were introduced on television. Xitsonga was among the languages that were not included. Moreover, even after apartheid, the SABC failed to cater for the well-established and increasing Tsonga population. This failure by the broadcaster caused anger among the Tsonga which led to a series of public complaints. Articles in newspapers carried tittles such as 'Two languages marginalized' (*Saturday Star*, 2000), referring to Xitsonga and Tshivenda; 'SABC's super discrimination against its Tsonga viewers' (*Sunday Times*, 1994); 'Tribalism is everywhere' (*Sowetan*, 2005); 'SABC must use all languages' (*Sowetan*, 1996); and 'Selling Out' (*Sowetan*, 1996), which referred to former Limpopo province premier Ngoako Ramatlhodi's failure to represent the Xitsonga and Tshivenda languages properly to the SABC.

In response to these accusations, the SABC made some (minor) moves to cater for these languages as well. In an article titled 'N Province to get SABC coverage', Khathu Mamaila wrote, 'SABC group chief executive, Mr Zwelakhe Sisulu said yesterday he was confident that Venda, Tsonga and Ndebele would be catered for on television channels by the end of this year' (Mamaila, 1996: 4). Today these previously excluded languages enjoy a fair amount of airtime and there are other programmes hosted in these languages, such as

[1] Some of the efforts with regard to the Tsonga language include: names such as *Khomanani*, the Tsonga word for 'Let's stand together' or literally 'let's hold hands', and *Ekhurhuleni*, 'place of peace', are names now used by the South African government. *Khomanani* is the slogan for the government initiated HIV/AIDS campaign. *Ekhurhuleni* is the new name for the East Rand metropolitan area in Gauteng.

Zwahashu, Shift and the children's programme *Takalani* Sesame now includes these languages in the show.

In addition to the efforts taken by the SABC to strengthen the language representation of previously marginalised ethnic groups, musicians capitalise on from the improved circumstances of these languages. In the increasing need to cater for marginalised languages, non-Tsonga musicians have started including Xitsonga lyrics in their songs. Ringo Mandlingozi, one of South Africa's Xhosa Afro-pop stars, included Xitsonga lyrics in his song 'Baleka' ('Run'), and the lyrics of DJ Black Coffee's house track 'Masingita' are solely in Xitsonga. What these examples show is the increased prominence, even if slightly, of Xitsonga in the national linguistic landscape. But what have the fortunes been of Tsonga music, and in particular Tsonga popular music, in the academic world?

Tsonga popular music: a lacuna in the discourse on black South African popular music

The Reverend H.A. Junod of the Swiss Romande Mission played a significant role in writing the history of the Vatsonga. His first publication on Vatsonga was a grammar and conversation manual published in 1896. This was followed by a 'Xangana' dictionary and grammar book in 1909 and a missionary novel, *Zidji* in 1910. Though these studies are significant, it was his two-volume monograph, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (1969 [1913]) that was to become the most important study on Vatsonga.
It is on Junod's work that most subsequent studies on the Vatsonga draw and expand. Though there are minor differences in these accounts, they agree that the Vatsonga settled in areas that are today called Limpopo and Mpumalanga, after emigrating from Mozambique due to trade opportunities, wars and other pressures (Junod, 1962; Kirby, 1936; Johnston, 1972-1983; Chabalala, 2003). Junod's study explores almost every aspect of Tsonga life and society from childbirth to death, their economic, spiritual and cultural life. His approach is that of 'armchair ethnography', in which he is the omniscient authority and in which his subjects are silent.

Following Junod's work, Percival Kirby embarked on an enormous documentation project of the musical instruments of South African 'natives', which gave birth to his book, *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South* (1934). Kirby uses a comparative approach

using western methods and terminology to describe, discuss and analyse South African indigenous instruments, which he classified into different categories. Included in his investigation are some Tsonga musical instruments. In the section on drums, for example, Kirby describes the Tsonga *mantshomana* (sic) drum which is used 'in the exorcizing of the evil spirits which are believed to "possess" certain individuals' (1934: 42). The Tsonga *shiwaya*, a form of 'wind instrument', is described and analysed in the chapter on whistles, flutes, and vibrating reeds. Kirby used western notation to demonstrate the notes and melodies played on this instrument (128). Although he spent some time in the field studying the 'natives' music' and learning some of their instruments, he predominantly relies on other writers' observations as the basis for his work.

The single most important scholar of traditional Tsonga music has been Thomas F. Johnston, the only author to have devoted himself to extensive research on Tsonga indigenous music. In his doctoral thesis 'The Music of the Shangana Tsonga' (1971) and several of his articles (1957-1983), he employs a similar approach to that of Junod and Kirby. It is similar in that he too employs western systems in analysing the music. The major difference between the earlier work and Johnston's is that while Junod was more interested in the life of the tribe as a whole, Johnston focused on the music and how it functions within society. In his own words, in the first volume of his book Junod 'gives a description of the social life of the tribe by depicting its customs in relation to the individual, communal and national life' (1962: 1). It is only in the second volume that brief descriptions of Tsonga music are given together with accounts of spiritual, mental, religious and moral practices. In his discussion of Tsonga music, Junod describes the melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic structure of the music, while Johnston progresses to describe the context in which the music is produced.

The abovementioned studies are some of the major works on Vatsonga and their culture. There are two notable recent studies on Tsonga culture. One is Dunisani Chabalala's thesis, 'The Role of Music in Spirit Possession Healing amongst the Tsonga People of South Africa' (2003), in which he unravels the role of music in a *tingoma* (possession) healing ritual, investigating the various stages that a possessed individual goes through and the role that music plays in these stages. Furthermore he explores the relationship between *tingoma* and socio-political trauma suffered by the patient during their healing process while interrogating the healing process itself.

Chabalala's study is mainly influenced by his personal experience and therefore incorporates an 'insider's view', that is the knowledge and experience he possesses as a Tsonga. In contrast to his predecessors, Chabalala uses pulse notation in the analysis of the music. The pulse notation is used, according to Chabalala, as an acknowledgement of the difficulty of representing African music in western notation. The other recent study on Tsonga music is Osborn Chauke's thesis, 'The Xitsonga songs: A sociolinguistic study' (2004). Similar to Chabalala, Chauke draws on his position as a cultural insider. In contrast to the previously mentioned studies, Chauke only focuses on song words: on the classification of songs, the structure of song texts, and the influences, such as political and religious, on song texts.

There has, therefore, been a fair amount written on Tsonga 'traditional' or indigenous music. The same cannot be said about contemporary popular Tsonga music; very little literature exists on this subject. A lone instance is Rob Allingham's entry in *World Music: The Rough Guide* (1999) in which he gives a brief overview history and a description of popular Tsonga music. A more recent study which includes brief sections of popular Tsonga music is Max Mojapelo's *Beyond Memory* (2008). Mojapelo's book – 'his diaries' – is compiled from interviews, CD sleeves' notes and print media material collected while working as a radio presenter at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). This is possibly another instance of the marginalization of Vatsonga culture, and it is perhaps not surprising that although much has been written on black South African popular music (Anderson, 1981; Coplan, 1985; Erlmann, 1991; Meintjies, 2003; Allen, 2004; Ansell, 2004; Muller, 2008), there is little written on Tsonga popular music. This attests to the point made by minority studies: that a minority group, whether it is a minority due to ethnicity, religion or language, is almost always subjected to marginalization in some form (See Kim, 2006; Berry, 1970; SinghaRoy, 2001; Nyathi-Ramahobo, 2002; Byrne, 1999; Ullestad, 1999).

This study aims to interrogate 'Tsonga music', a category used by many, including the South African Music Awards (SAMAs); one of the few SAMA categories (others include Afrikaans, Venda and Pedi music categories) to be named by ethnicity. Five artists – General MD Shirinda, Thomas Chauke, Jeff Maluleke, Penny Penny and Joe Shirimani – and their music have been selected as case studies. These artists' music falls under this general category of Tsonga music. However, they all produce music that 'participates' (Brackett, 2005: 76) in more specific styles and genres, such as Tsonga disco or Tsonga neo-traditional.

By exploring the meanings of the various labels subsumed under Tsonga music for its practitioners, I question why the music is labelled the way it is and how these genre labels, which participate in global genre histories and local ethnic histories, interact with the Tsonga music category. I explore the diversity of music subsumed under the category of popular music and consider their interrelations with folk music, global popular music genres and world music. In sum, this study explores what Louise Meintjes calls 'genrefication' (2003: 19) in popular Tsonga music and the meaning this has for its practitioners in a 'glocalized' (Robertson, cited in Steger, 2003) music market.

The musicians included in my research were selected because of their domination of the selected subgenres or because they have played an important role in shaping the specific subgenre. For example, General MD Shirinda played a role in shaping the subgenre known as Tsonga traditional or Tsonga neo-traditional, while Thomas Chauke is currently the best-selling artist in this category. Though the abovementioned artists are the author's main focus, they are not the only ones given attention. The late Paul Ndlovu's and Peta Teanet's life and works are featured as they both contributed to shaping the Tsonga disco subgenre.

Methodology

The research for this study was mainly conducted through semi-structured interviews with musicians and other music industry practitioners. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, a digital camera recorder, and later transcribed and translated from Tsonga to English. Follow-up interviews were conducted with certain informants. The interviews were carried out at the interviewees' respective working areas or homes. Though this was advantageous in that it may have put them more at ease, it was strenuous for me because most informants were located far from Johannesburg. The researcher could therefore not undertake follow-up interviews with all of them. Participant observation was employed to acquire supporting data by attending a studio session and live performances of certain musicians.

N'wa Madalane: Daughter of Madalane: Factors that mediated my research process

Ahee (Greetings)
Mivulavula na Ignatia, ni suka ni ri la Wits. Ni endla endla research hi music waxitsonga. A ndzi kombela nkarhinyana wa n'wina (You are speaking with Ignatia. I'm calling from Wits. I'm doing research on Xitsonga music. Can I please have a minute of your time?).
Ignatia..eeh wakamani?(Ignatia who?)
Madalane
Oooh, ndza vona i N'wa Madalane (Ooh I see, it's daughter of Madalane).

This was the researcher's first interaction with General MD Shirinda. After the greetings, my request was stated for an interview and the nature of the research was explained. This conversation is cited to point out the phrase "*N'wa Madalane*", which means daughter of Madalane or born of Madalane. In Xitsonga culture, this form of address is often used by people to refer to women younger than them. Shirinda's use of the phrase means that he had deduced that I was younger, and therefore to him I was like a child. If he had thought I was older and perhaps married, he would have used '*Mhani*' or '*Manana N'wa Madalane*', which literally means mother or mother born of Madalane, the Xitsonga way of saying née Madalane. Carol Warren and Jennnifer Hackney caution that informants may impose roles upon researchers which may steer the questioning in a different direction (2002: 36). It is discussed here how the position of a child and other positions occupied vis-à-vis the writer's informants, influenced the relationship with them.

Warren and Hackney assert that being given the role of a child in the field leads to the interviews being 'characterised by a sense of trust, openness, and sincere helpfulness such as the type offered to our children in our society' (ibid). The interview proceedings with most of the informants had a sense of openness and helpfulness which may have been brought about in part by my position as a 'child'. Shirinda was not the only one who referred to me as '*N'wa Madalane'*. Alternatively, some of my informants, who were mostly men older than me, referred to me as '*N'wa nanga'*, literally 'my child'.

Though being placed in the role of a child may be beneficial in some field research situations, it has its shortcomings. Literature in social science research teaches researchers to study the cultures of their subjects. Warren and Hackney provide examples of how the lack of cultural

knowledge can lead to embarrassing or uncomfortable situations for both the researcher and the informant. For example, anthropologist Hazel Weidman undertook research in Madras, India. After being told several times by the local women that she should wear a sari, Weidman insisted on wearing 'long dirndl skirts and blouses'. It was only a few weeks later that she realised that she was wearing clothes that are typically worn by schoolgirls in that society (2002: 22-23). In the locals' eyes she had dressed herself as a young girl.

Furthermore, Michael Patton cautions that 'researchers cannot simply presume that they have the right to ask intrusive questions' (2002: 392). This is because topics that are acceptable for open discussion in some cultures may be taboo in others. Because an ethnic Tsonga identity is shared with my informants, the problems that an 'outsider' researcher may experience were mitigated. In one sense, however, the writer's cultural insider status placed boundaries on the research. There are questions that could not be asked because in Xitsonga culture it is considered disrespectful for a child to ask such questions. Moreover, the researcher was not only seen as a child, but also as a stranger. This further placed limits on the types of questions that were appropriate to ask.

Patton states that questions about age, education, and occupation are 'standard background questions' in research (2002: 351). Whereas questions about education and work could be asked freely, matters related to age could not be pursued because it is inappropriate in Xitsonga culture for a child to ask a person older than them about such matters. Another example is that of General MD Shirinda and his wives. It is commonly known that Shirinda works with his wives as his backing singers. As part of Shirinda's music-making process, it would have been beneficial to discuss in depth his working relationship with his wives. However, as an unmarried woman, this researcher is prohibited by culture from enquiring about such matters. Shirinda initiated the conversation about his wives at his own discretion, and did so to teach me how I should conduct myself as a young Tsonga woman, a good example of the advantage of being a culturally uneducated child!

The child position imposed upon me by my informants was further accentuated by my inability to express myself in Xitsonga. Patton points out that it is difficult enough to be certain what 'a person means using a common language, but words can take a different meaning in other cultures' (2002: 392). Being Tsonga, my informants communicated with to

me in Xitsonga, allowing them to express themselves freely. Sometimes the interviews proceeded in Xitsonga and English. This researcher made informants aware that her Xitsonga is not fluent. Growing up in a township where Zulu, Ndebele and Sotho are the predominant languages, these languages together with English were spoken at school and on the street with friends; while Tsonga was only spoken at home. In an attempt to explain things clearly, my informants would occasionally include English words in their responses to questions. This placed them in a powerful position. Simultaneously, this was experienced as a sign of courtesy and respect. As a university student, I stood the chance of being intimidating to certain informants because most of them did not possess any formal education. My inability at times to articulate in Xitsonga lessened this threat, placing them in a position of knowledge as I then became their language student. While this works well in the sense that one gathers more data, the problem arises in translation. Meaning can be lost in translation. As Patton says, 'some words and ideas simply cannot be translated directly' (2002: 392). Consequently, the information becomes 'contaminated'. It is no longer clear whose perspectives are being represented, mine or my subjects. For this reason, though predominantly direct quotations from the interviews were used, it is important to indicate that translations make the information secondhand. It was endeavoured though to keep it as close to Tsonga as possible. Being young and being Tsonga were but two of several factors that affected the research process. As Maurice Punch argues, the conduct and success of research in the field 'can be affected by a myriad of factors including age, sex status, ethnic background, over-identification, rejection, factualism, bureaucratic obstacles, accidents, and good fortune' (1986: 23).

Lara Allen has tackled the subject of who has the expertise to research black South African music. This was brought out by debates claiming that white scholars cannot adequately represent black people. Allen, a young white woman, interviewed black South African musicians, Sibongile Khumalo, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Ebony, Rebecca Malope, and others. Her experience revealed that 'shared identity does not furnish the ability to effectively research and represent others; only the development of investigative analytical and writing skills can assure this' (2006: 52). Allen asserts that the musicians were more concerned about who she was as a person and whether she had respect for them and their work and whether she could be trusted rather than being anxious about her racial identity. Rebecca Malope's responses underlined the irrelevance of racial identity in research, 'I don't understand why they say no. No, it's wrong! They're wrong. How can I – if I was a journalist and then I have

interview Celine Dion. Celine Dion is a white person, you understand?' (62). Ebony commented on the issue of building rapport with informants: 'as long as you've got a good relationship, we've been together. And whereby you are always willing to listen to what I'm asking from you. ...but if you've got good communication then I don't think there's anything wrong with it' (ibid). Sibongile Khumalo on the other hand raised the point about the importance of the informant's culture stating that 'it depends how much you as a person are willing to be guided by the people who live the culture – are willing to find out exactly what is indeed happening in the culture' (ibid). Concern about respect for informants and their work is implicit in Yvonne Chaka Chaka's comment. She told Allen: 'in fact I would love you to do it properly ... Those other people, they just do these things and they add their sauces and creams and what have you, without even doing proper research. So I'd actually love you to do it correctly' (2006: 63).

These comments clearly denounce shared identity as the basis for effective and responsible research and representation. Contrary to Allen's situation, Christopher Dunbar Jr. (2002), an African American scholar, worked with young African American males. Unlike Allen, Dunbar shared racial identity with his subjects. However, that did not prevent his informants from being suspicious of him and his research motives. Though Dunbar shared racial identity with his informants, he came from a different background and consequently his informants could not 'honestly relate their experiences with him' (Dunbar, Rodriguez and Parker, 2002: 281). These accounts attest that sharing a common racial, or in this researcher's case ethnic background, does not guarantee effective nor 'correct' and responsible representation. Sharing an ethnic identity with informants does not necessarily mean shared meaning, especially because of different backgrounds.

My gender too may have affected the research process. In *Gender Issues in Ethnography*, Warren and Hackney outline female researchers' experiences in the field. Some of these experiences include: being denied entry to certain areas or people, being adopted as children, being proposed to for marriage and sometimes being sexually abused (2002). Similarly, Terry Arandell (2007) tells of her experience while interviewing divorced men. Arandell writes how some of these men 'put her in her place' by taking over the interview in an attempt to maintain their position as 'men'. Some of them by contrast only spoke with her precisely because she was a woman.

Louise Meintjes' account of her interviews with black South African music producers Hamilton Nzimande and West Nkosi, suggest that she underwent some scrutiny. Meintjes describes the 'looks' she received from West Nkosi on her first encounter with him. She further illustrates how she 'praised' Hamilton Nzimande, to gain credibility – it could be presumed– during her first interview with him:

> I let him know that I know he's an important figure in the history of black South African music, a star in his own right. I explained again how I want to learn and eventually write about 'traditional' and *mbaqanga* music as experienced, remembered, and narrated by music-makers themselves ... I tell him I'm not a journalist, a foreigner, or an expert. I remind him I'd witnessed a session of his a year ago in the old Gallo studio. I am researching a thesis (2003: 30).

Meintjes' emphasis on not being a journalist or foreigner but rather 'researching a thesis' implies an attempt to gain credibility with her informant.

On the other hand, Allen (2006) found herself being 'mothered' by some of her respondents, mainly showing concern for her safety as a young woman. These relations indicate that being a woman can have both negative and positive impacts in the field, depending on the context. As a young woman, inappropriate remarks or sexual innuendos from certain respondents was sometimes experienced, a common challenge for women in the field. Two suggestive marriage proposals were received as well. The setback identified from such situations was the romanticising of their stories and exaggeration of information by informants in an attempt to impress and woo the writer. One musician related a story of how famous he was, and loved that during one of his performances some audience members died because the stadium was too full; a story for which there does not appear to be any record. I found myself 'mothered' and 'fathered' by some informants. This was the case after mentioning that I was township bred; they felt I needed to be taught how to be a 'proper' Shangaan young woman.

Lastly, Allen remarks on how being a professional musician helped her research. This researcher also found that being a musician created an advantageous position. The informants raised subjects that I felt, had I not been a musician, they would not have raised. While attending a studio session in Soshanguve, a township outside Tshwane, a point of discussion rose from some of the musicians and technicians present. These were the late Rhengu Mkhari, a sound engineer, Chris Mkhonto, known by the stage name General Muzka, and Penny Penny. The discussion centered on the issue of concert organisers. The musicians argued that concert organisers in Limpopo often overlook local musicians for big events,

hiring stars from Gauteng instead. They complained about how some of these stars do not perform live, whereas the local musicians usually make an effort to do so. They also claimed that their Tsonga ethnicity influenced concert organisers' choice of line-up; in that they felt there is an under-representation of Tsonga artists at such events. I felt these issues were raised because the musicians knew of my position as a Tsonga musician and could therefore relate to their concerns.

Though being a musician may have worked in this regard, it worked against me in other areas. In one studio session, I was allowed to stay in the studio while the producer was listening to material he had recorded before the session began. When they wanted to add new material, I was kindly asked to leave the studio. Having worked with professional musicians myself, such as South African gospel icon, Pastor Benjamin Dube, and having witnessed many studio sessions, I am aware that when artists are recording they often do not allow outsiders in the studio. Nevertheless, my argument that I was asked to leave the studio because I am a musician and not because I was an outsider imposing on their work, is based on the fact that I had explicitly asked if I could stay throughout the entire session. It had been pointed out to them that my recording device would be switched off when the recording began and that I would only be observing and taking notes. Besides this elaborate request and being initially granted permission to stay, I was later gracefully asked to leave the studio, a decision which could have been influenced by my position as a potential rival musician. To sum up therefore, my research process was mediated by various factors including my age, ethnicity, being a young woman and a musician.

Ximatsatsa

Ximatsatsa is an affectionate Tsonga word implying 'sweetheart', 'darling', or 'my beauty'. I chose to use it as part of my title because it appears in songs by many of the musicians who feature in this study.

Chapter 1

Mabula Ndlela – **The Pathfinder:** The **emergence of contemporary Tsonga popular music**

Scholars of black South African popular music have given accounts of the life and work of famous musicians often relating to the musicians' contribution to certain musical styles. For instance, Coplan shows how Simon Nkambinde (1937-1997), known as Mahlathini, was discovered and made famous by Rupert Bopape, and how after the success of Mahlathini's 'groaning' singing, this trend became a common feature of every *simanje-manje* group (2007: 228).[2] Lara Allen (1993) dedicates a section of her thesis on pennywhistle kwela to Willard Cele, relating the role he played during the 1950s in popularising the pennywhistle through his participation in Donald Swanson's film *The Magic Garden* (1993: 37-40). Following these types of accounts, in which a seminal figure is shown to influence the emergence of a popular music genre, this chapter relates the story of General MD Shirinda and the role he played in the development of contemporary Tsonga traditional music.

The chapter is divided as follows: The first section introduces a theoretical idea that has been productive for thinking about the origins and development of black pop music in South Africa. This feeds into the next section addressing Shirinda's emergence in the music industry and how he became an influential figure in the development of contemporary popular Tsonga music. Some of the musical influences present in Shirinda's music is then discussed. Lastly, this research paper presents certain challenges within the music industry raised by Shirinda, concluding with a discussion on how Shirinda's story is apt for the discussion of Tsonga popular music.

Urban black South African popular music

Some scholars describe black South Africa popular music as 'crossover' (Allingham, 1999: 636), 'fusion' (Ballantine, 1989: 4), 'cross-fertilization' (Coplan, 1985: 193), and 'hybrid' (Allen, 2003a) due to the music's use of musical elements from more than one musical

[2] *Simanje-manje* is 'a style of *mbaqanga* usually featuring a male lead singer and a four-member female chorus, performing blends of urban neo-traditional and marabi vocal music backed by Western instruments at stage shows and on records' (Coplan, 2008: 443).

culture. Generally, these concepts are used to describe the presence of more than one style or genre in the music. In 'A Brief History of South African Popular Music' (1989), Christopher Ballantine explains how this 'fusion' developed. He argues that by the 1880s, Africans were already capturing American minstrel troupes' music 'for their own ends' (306). He goes on to say that by the 1920s Africans 'began forging extraordinary performance style, vibrantly alive with American minstrelsy, spirituals, missionary hymnody, Tin Pan Alley and Hollywood tap dance … as well as Zulu traditional idioms' (306). Along the same lines, Coplan described *mbaqanga* groups of the 1960s and 70s as 'multi-ethnic', articulating that they reflected the 'blending of various local African musical traditions in the urban areas' (1985: 185). Coplan argued that *mbaqanga* 'ties jazz, fusion music and indigenous music' (193).

In *Afro-American Music, South Africa, and Apartheid* (1988), Charles Hamm suggests that the cross-fertilisation or fusion process goes through three stages: importation, imitation and assimilation. By importation, he refers to the process through which the music is brought into the country. Imitation, for Hamm, is when South African musicians 'perform … songs in the style in which they were done in the United States or Britain'. Finally, the music is assimilated by merging the imported styles with 'black South African performance traditions' (1988: 5). This analysis pertains to much black South African popular music. But the writer's argument with Tsonga popular music is that an extra stage of assimilation exists. Unlike most urban musicians of the time (who drew inspiration from Western and American music and then localised it by incorporating traditional elements to forge new styles), Shirinda also took inspiration from new popular music genres recently emerged within the country, in addition to Tsonga music. He explained how he 'copied' (Interview, 2010) artists such as Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens, for example, combining their style of music together with his own style to create what today would be labelled Tsonga traditional or Tsonga neo-traditional music (as opposed to indigenous music). This was to mark the beginning of Tsonga popular music as a parent genre with subgenres subsumed under it. What follows is an account of Shirinda's role in the development of Tsonga popular music.

Tsonga traditional music: *Mabula Ndlela* – The Pathfinder

It took us about six hours to get from Johannesburg to Malamulele, a rural town in Limpopo province. The researcher had asked a friend, Jimmy Makhubele, to assist on this first trip to

the area, which he is very familiar with. I was going to be sleeping over at an informant's home, whom I had never met. By the time we reached the taxi rank at Malamulele, it was too dark to make out anything about the place. All that could be seen was the butchery at which we had been instructed to rendezvous. After a fifteen minute wait, a gentleman pulled up in a white Toyota van. We were then driven to a village called Makhasa.

On arrival we were escorted into a large brick house. Outside, children sat on the stoep watching television and inside, some of them were sitting on the floor watching television. We sat on a sofa and the 'old man', General MD Shirinda, sat on a sofa with his legs mounted on a leg supporter. After we were settled, he stood up and came to greet us. He was very excited to see us. I had been communicating with him for some time and finally, on the 25th April 2010, was going to interview him. While passing greetings, the women came, one by one, all six of them. They either knelt on the floor or sat in order to greet. Then the children followed. It was quite an extraordinary sight. I had heard that Shirinda had six wives and about forty-four children, and now I was witnessing it.

After the extended greetings, there were explanations of our family histories. After having failed to elaborate on my surname, a lesson was offered about the Shangaan people (who were not to be called Tsonga, according to Shirinda) and from where the Shangaan people originate.[3] After this lesson, I was escorted to my room. That was the home of the General MD Shirinda. Shirinda is regarded as 'the one who started it all' (Shikwambana, Interview, 2009), the 'father of Xitsonga music' (Tshikudo, 2007), and personally described himself as '*mabula ndlela'*, the one who paved the way, the pathfinder for contemporary Tsonga music. This anecdote is told here to point out Shirinda's way of living as a self-proclaimed traditionalist, because his views on culture and tradition influence the way he labels his music. This is discussed in the following chapter.

At the start of this research, Shirinda was unknown to me. It was while at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Music Library in Polokwane that I came across some of his recordings, and began asking questions about him. His name then came up while interviewing James Shikwambana, who at the time was the marketing manager for Munghana

[3] It is a common practice among the elderly to enquire about one's family history. In this case Shirinda asked for my family history and I had limited knowledge in this regard. He then filled in some gaps, which were later confirmed by my grandfather.

Lonene FM, the Xitsonga radio station. General MD Shirinda is credited by most, including Tsonga music practitioners, as the father of Xitsonga music**.** In *World Music: The Rough Guide* (1999), Rob Allingham briefly mentions General MD Shirinda and The Gaza Sisters as the 'the first prominent group' of what he referred to as Shangaan/Tsonga Traditional or Neo-Traditional music. Similar sentiments appear in Elmon Tshikudo's article 'Works of Xitsonga music pioneer in the spotlight' (2008), in which Shirinda is described as the 'father' of Xitsonga music. Born Khokhozeya Shirinda on 24 January 1936 in kaMashayeli, Xipindi, Maputo, Mozambique, Shikwambana, former Munghala Lonene marketing manager, said that:

> Shirinda is credited for creating the sound of Xitsonga music, the music that we play today. When we hear George Maluleke, Thomas Chauke, some up and coming young boys, the influence came from him, he created the sound of Xitsonga music, the guitar, the way the guitar sounds, he's the one who…the rhythm…he created the rhythm (Interview, 2008).

Shirinda was trained as a traditional healer by his father at the age of twelve, becoming the seventh generation in his family to be a traditional healer. To this day he still practices healing, explaining that:

> The owner [ancestor] of the healing gift wanted his gift. So since he wanted his gift, my father who was a healer then taught me according to our Shangaan culture. He taught me to be a healer. He initiated me, to be a healer, how to heal, showed me trees (herbs), taught me bones. They are called bones because it's bones that belong to various animals that are mixed to form tinhlolo (bones). So I started my work in 1948, I was twelve years old (Interview, 2010).

Dunisani Chabalala describes the process of 'appeasing Ancestor spirits though music' which a person goes through in order to become a tradional healer in the context of Tsonga culture (2003: 1). One of the signs that a person is 'possessed' by ancestors, as stated by Chabalala, is a long period of sickness (2003: 50).[4] Shirinda recounted that his training as a traditional healer was a result of him being constantly sick. Chabalala also focuses on the role played by music in a *tingoma* ceremony. Shirinda's training as a traditional healer is worth pointing out as it is commonly known that traditional healing in African contexts coexists with musical practices, which for Shirinda also influenced his professional music practice, as will be discussed later in this paper.

Shirinda's family moved from Maputo to South Africa when he was still young, due to lack of water in their Mozambican village. His father was summoned by his in-laws, the Chaukes, who had migrated to South Africa first.

[4] The Tingoma is the ceremony undertaken to appease Ancestors through music (Chabalala, 2003: 1).

> We settled at kaXigalu. When we came here, my in-laws who took (married) two of my aunts got here first, the Chaukes. The Chaukes took (married) two of my aunts. So they are the ones who went and fetched my father. They said brother come with the old lady because there is no water. Come where we are so that they can get water for you just nearby. So when we got to kaXigalu we found that still, the water is still far, so we moved to Tshifudi. It is called in Venda Tshifudi. It is t s h i. Tshifudi. T s h i. Tshifudi. So that's where we settled and that's when I learned the guitar (Interview, 2010).

The emphasis and repetition of the word 'Tshifudi' caught my attention and Shirinda also stared straight into the camera while saying it. Sitting next to him around a diningroom table, my assistant was in front of us with the video camera. Shirinda made it clear, through his constant gaze at the camera, that he was not just addressing me, but rather educating anyone who would have the opportunity to see the recording. I listened while uttering ums in between as he continued to narrate the story about his family. His constant repetition of words and emphasis on correct pronunciation of words revealed his strong sentiments towards language and the correct use thereof, another aspect of his life which influences his views on genre labelling.

The family's migration attests to what various scholars have established about the history of the Tsonga people in South Africa. Patrick Harries gave detailed accounts of some of these migrations in his essay 'Exclusion, Classification and Internal Colonialism: The Emergence of Ethnicity among the Tsonga-Speakers of South Africa' (1989). Though Harries describes the first migration as being caused by wars, such as the Gaza Civil war of 1858-62, he acknowledges that immigrants came to the country independently (1989: 83). Neissa Leibhammer argues that Tsonga people immigrated to South Africa for better living conditions (2007). Shirinda's family's story is one of many stories of families who came to the country for a better life.

His father, the patriarch of the Shirinda's, played an important role in his life, not only as a parent and because of the traditional healing that he passed on to Shirinda, but also because he was a musical man. He played the *xitende* (a single string instrument which is played with a stick), *timbila* (Tsonga xylophone) and concertina. Shirinda also learned how to play these instruments.

> In '58, I then longed (wished) to sing (music). I played the *xitende*, I played *xipendani*, I played *mqangala*, and I played *xizambi*. What I didn't know, I played it but I wasn't good, it's the concertina. My father used to play *xitende*. He played *timbila*. He played concertina. So I also played *timbila*. So from there, in '58 I desired the guitar. So I learned the guitar. Then I

> knew it a little. There is no person who can learn alone. The person who taught me well, it was a Shangaan man from Mozambique. He used to play guitar (Interview, 2010).[5]

Multi-instrumentalist, Lulu Masilela, a long time colleague and friend to Shirinda, pointed to Shirinda's father's musical influence on his son: 'MD Shirinda enjoyed all the influence from his father. His father was a [traditional healer] and of course a guitar player. So he mixed his musical ideas with what his late father used to play' (Interview, 2010). While Shirinda began playing these indigenous instruments at an early age, his career as a musician only began in the early 1960s.

Shirinda's journey into the music business began with him listening and watching other musicians playing the guitar. Shirinda vaguely remembers a trip to visit his grandparents, where he saw Julia Makhoyani, a musician from Mozambique, playing his guitar and wishing that he could play like him. In the 1960s, he recalled having had informal guitar lessons from Alexandra Jafete and Fani Pfumo, both musicians from Mozambique. Shirinda developed a strong desire for performing while listening to and watching the performances of artists like Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens in Johannesburg at places such as Jabulani Amphitheatre, one of the few entertainment venues available for black performers during the 1960s (Coplan, 2008: 235). When pressed for more information, Shirinda could not elaborate further on these experiences, indicating it was very vague in his memory.

The first step Shirinda took in embarking on a career in music was to start his own band. In 1961 Daniel Shirinda and the Gaza Sisters was formed. The female backing was a trend in urban popular music at the time and had developed during the 1950s (Coplan, 2008: 228). Shirinda confessed to naming himself Daniel after a guitarist from Tzaneen (a town in the Limpopo Province of South Africa)– Daniel Marivate– whose guitar playing he admired. Allingham notes how in the 1960s groups recorded, using different names for different companies (1999: 643). Likewise, Shirinda indicated having released records using different names. One of his other names was MBS Ngonyama. This story though is preceded by an experience with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC).

[5] *Xitende* is a 'braced gourd-bow' which uses a gourd resonator and is played by striking the string with a stick or reed; *xipendana* is the 'thick handled bow' and it is played by plucking the strings with a metal safety-pin; the *mqangala* is a 'hollow cane-bow' which is placed between the cheeks during playing; the xizambi is a notched friction bow containing a rattlestick; *timbila* is the thumb piano (Johnston: 1975: 765-768). Shirinda made a clear distinction between the lamellophone and the Chopi *timbila* (the xylophone), while claiming that he played both.

In the 1960s, the 'rediffussion' radio broadcast that had been established in the 1940s to disseminate information to black South Africans was replaced by Radio Bantu (Coplan 2008: 227, Muller, 2008: 35). In order to ensure that apartheid's 'separate development' ideology was reinforced on the airwaves, cosmopolitan music styles were repressed and ethnic language-based music styles encouraged (Coplan, 2008: 225). The SABC began searching for and recording musicians that played indigenous music. Charles Hamm explained, 'the accumulation of the SABC's recorded repertory of "Traditional Bantu music" was started between 1936 and 1947 by Hugh Tracey in his capacity as Director of the Natal Studios (Tracey 1973). SABC recording teams began penetrating the "native reserves of Vendaland, Thongaland, Secucunuland, Zululand and Basotholand" where "Bantu songs", which were rapidly disappearing, [could be] rescued from posterity' (Annual Report 1957, cited in Hamm, 1991: 150). It was during one of these endeavours that Shirinda was discovered and requested to record music for the SABC. In his earliest recordings, Shirinda performed indigenous vocal music accompanied by a *swingomana* drum (a traditional Tsonga drum, see also Kutu, 1989), rattles, guitar and sometimes the pennywhistle.[6] Shirinda recalled being first recorded in 1962 and performing for the SABC in 1963. In 1965, when Radio Bantu Tsonga was established, Shirinda recalls recording some songs for the station. Shikwambana confirmed this: 'when the radio started they had something to play and [Shirinda] was one of the guys in the 60s and then he continued dominating' (Interview, 2009).

Following these recordings for the SABC, Shirinda pursued a career as a professional musician. He tells of how he used to travel to Johannesburg where he would busk on streets and audition for record companies, an experience that did not come without challenges.

> I have never worked for a white person. I was a traditional healer right, and I wanted to sing, so my pass was not registered that I work, so if they found me they could have arrested me ... We would leave and go catch the train and go back to where I used to stay – Chawelo.[7] One day, I did not even have a penny; I went from town to Chawelo by foot ... We suffered in this music business. These days, it is the land of plenty... Then, things went by, I used to walk until my shoes got finished trying to get a recording deal. They would tell you come tomorrow at 17h00 in the afternoon. You would get there at 17h00 and sit. Things were very difficult back then. You would sit there until 20h00, there is no one, and they lie to you. They are not there. So you would have to take the 22h00 train and go back where you stay. And you do not have a pass (Interview, 2010).

[6] The music was made available to me by the SABC Media Libraries, which is in possession of about three hundred of Shirinda's songs. Most of these recording under the SABC Transcriptions catalogues are catalogued as songs rather albums because they were not recorded as albums. Most of these recordings do not have dates on them and are still on LPs. Only a few of Shirinda's commercially released CDs are available at the Auckland Park branch. These are *Madala Kanje* (2001), *Buti Rhandzekile* (1996), and *Gama Ra Nsele* (2006).
[7] Chawelo was an area reserved for Tsonga-speaking people during apartheid.

This experience is unfortunately not uncommon. Coplan relates stories of how some musicians had to perform Afrikaans songs in order to receive a 'musician's pass, which entiled performers to 'go to any town under the European promoter who is held responsible for their activities' (2008: 211). He mentions how the urban areas were cleared and black families uprooted and moved to ethnically divided townships (234). Shirinda was however never arrested for not having a pass because, as he explained, 'they never arrested me because traditional healers "wash and clean" [themselves] so that they don't get arrested. Traditional healers can "bathe" away all this bad luck so that it's left behind. That bad luck, I never got it' (Interview, 2010). Though he experienced these challenges, Shirinda eventually landed in the hands of *simanje-manje* producer Hamilton Nzimande, and from there, to put it in Shikwambane's words, 'he dominated the airwaves' (Interview, 2009).[8]

Prior to his encounter with Nzimande, Shirinda's music was rooted in indigenous Tsonga music. By the time Shirinda met Nzimande in the 1960s, the popularising and commercialising of indigenous South African music was well under way, already begun in the 1950s with musicians such as John Bhengu, known by his stage name Phuzukhukela (Muller, 2004: 142). Both Masilela and Shikwambana mentioned that there were Tsonga musicians who were recorded before Shirinda. However, what would set Shirinda apart from these other Tsonga musicians was that Shirinda was the first to have his music popularised not only through the introduction of western instruments, but also through the broader reach of radio airplay. Thus he became *mabula ndlela*, the pathfinder.

Musical Influences

> Besides the influences of indigenous Tsonga music, Shirinda acknowledges being influenced by two musicians in particular: Daniel Marivate and Mahlathini. Marivate's guitar playing mainly consisted of strumming which can be heard in some of Shirinda's earlier recordings. However, Marivate was also a choral composer, conductor and singer (see Olwage, 2008: 36), and his vocal style is thus (mission station) choral rather than indigenous. He employs four-part male harmonies in his music, a feature which is not evident in Shirinda's music.[9] 'I copied Mahlathini'. I then asked him whether it was only the sound of Mahlathini's voice that he copied or

[8] Hamilton Nzimande was a record company producer who according to Meintjes 'discovered and procuded a broad range of artists and spearheaded numerous stylistic innovations'. Some of these artists include John Bhengu, known as Phuz'ushukela, the Soul Brother and the Beaters (Meintjes, 2003: 39).
[9] Daniel Marivate's music was made available online to the author by the University of KwaZulu Natal.

> some of the guitar playing techniques, to which he replied, 'no, I only copied the voice' (Interview, 2010). His imitation of Mahlathini's voice can be heard in songs such as 'A va dakwanga' ('They are not drunk', 1976) and in a more recent song 'Hamilosa' ('We greet/salute you', 2006). To this day Shirinda continues to use a Mahlathini-sounding voice.

Though Shirinda only gives credit to Marivate and Mahlathini, in addition to having had informal lessons from Mozambican guitarists Alexandra Jafete and Fani Pfumo, I suggest that there is another musician who might have influenced him, John Bhengu. Allingham (1999), Majapelo (2008), and Coplan (1985) have all written about Bhengu. According to Allingham, 'the father of Zulu-Traditional performance and recording is John Bhengu, born in central Zululand in 1930. As a street musician in Durban in the early 1950s, he earned a formidable reputation through his skills in adapting indigenous melodies to the guitar and particularly for his unique finger picking style called *ukupika* (before Bhengu, the guitar was always strummed)' (1999: 646). Coplan adds that Bhengu popularised the 'short introduction of virtuoso plucking' (1985: 187). This is one of the defining features of Tsonga traditional music, and Shirinda is credited as the one who 'started' it (Shikwambana, Interview, 2009). Mojapelo compares Tsonga neo-traditional music with *maskanda* noting John Bhengu as the father of this music. He concludes, 'Like *maskanda* music, Xitsonga traditional music is dominated by the lead guitar' (Mojapelo, 2008: 296).

My reference to Bhengu's music as a possible influence on Shirinda's music is instigated by the fact that, as mentioned earlier, Marivate's music does not employ a guitar introduction and he strums rather than picks the guitar. In Mahlathini's music, although the guitar is present, aesthetically, Shirinda's introduction is much more similar to that of Bhengu's *maskanda* rather that Mahlathini's *mbaqanga* music. Furthermore, Shirinda's picking and multiple strings playing technique could be justified by his exposure to Mozambican guitar playing. Though sound recordings of Pfumo's and Jafete's music could not be located, from listening to Hugh Tracey's recordings of about ten Mozambican guitarists during the 1950s, *Forgotten Guitars from Mozambique* (2003), it may be argued that these artists represent a typical style of guitar performance, the compositions of which again do not contain a guitar introduction. The several aknowledged influences on Shirinda then do not adequately explain the prominence of the introduction in his music.

Coplan (2008: 238) and Muller (2004: 118-119) both show how *maskanda* musicians transferred indigenous bow playing principles to the guitar. Along the same lines, Shirinda seems to have transferred his timbila (thumb piano) and Chopi timbila (xylophone) playing techniques to the guitar. This is evident in songs such as 'A va dakwanga' in which he employs multiple-string polyrhythmic lines which can be found in both the timbila and Chopi timbila music and other Tsonga indigenous music as well (see Johnston, 1975). This multiple-string playing still does not explain the guitar introduction.

By the time Shirinda made his way into the music industry, Bhengu was already a successful artist and had developed a guitar introduction in his *maskanda* music. Importantly, Coplan speaks of the power that record producers possessed over musicians, describing them as 'coaches', suggesting the control they had in shaping a musician's sound and style (2008: 235-236). It is significant that Shirinda and Bhengu had the same producer, Hamilton Nzimande. While Shirinda is justified for repudiating Bhengu's influence over his music because he may indeed not have had direct contact with Bhengu, the latter's influence via a shared producer is suggestive. Another telling point is that when I asked Shirinda what he calls the introduction and what its purpose was within the music, he replied simply 'It's an intro', and could not elaborate on its purpose. For a traditionalist who is particular about language usage and heritage, I found it peculiar that Shirinda offered no Tsonga word for describing this part of the music. The guitar introduction became one of the underlying features of Tsonga traditional music, and though Bhengu may have pioneered its use in *maskanda*, Shirinda was the first to use it in Tsonga music, possibly through the influence of Bhengu.

In addition to the guitar introduction other elements were added to Shirinda's music which gave him the title of 'father of Tsonga music' or *mabula ndlela*, the pathfinder. Lulu Masilela said:

> To my musical experience, I found that by then there were no guys that were playing, or recording Tsonga music, Mkhonto was the first one, [and] then came MD Shirinda on record. Well, thereafter then came this others, Makhubele and some of the others, but first was Mkhonto. To my thinking and observation is that Mr. Mkhonto was playing very traditional music and even the rhythm was far different to Mr. MD Shirinda's. So MD is the one who came with a little bit of modern Xitsonga music or rhythms and so forth (Interview, 2010).

Shirinda explained that from the beginning his music was labelled Tsonga music, a label which would later be replaced by Tsonga neo-traditional, due to the use of Western

instruments or influences. The term Tsonga music, as it stands presently, refers to a parent genre under which subgenres, such as Tsonga traditional are subsumed. I discuss this in more detail in the following chapter. For now, the focus will be shifted to offer possible reasons as to why Shirinda spoke so highly of, and felt an affinity for, Mahlathini. This is also telling of the way he perceives the labelling of Tsonga traditional music.

Shirinda currently resides in kaMalamulele in the Limpopo province of South Africa, with his family. The last five of his six wives were recruited by the first wife into the family. Shirinda explained how when he had backing female singers performing with him, men in the audience would see these women performing on stage and later 'take' the singers as their wives. Once they were married, their husbands refused to allow them to continue singing with Shirinda because they thought musicians are promiscuous. It was then that his first wife suggested to Shirinda that he marry his backing singers so that they would remain in the family (Interview, 2010). This has become popular in the Tsonga traditional music scene; and it is commonly known that Thomas Chauke, the best selling Tsonga traditional artist to date, also sings with his five wives. Polygamy, for Shirinda, is part of his strongly felt sense of heritage and of conducting his life according to the Tsonga cultural way, which includes a belief in the preservation of the Tsonga language. Several events in his life illustrate this. Speaking of the way he brought up his children, Shirinda said:

> Here we live according to (our) culture. They don't wear pants. They (my daughters) wear dresses because they may find themselves uncomfortable. They wore dresses as children. Some here wear xibelani (a traditional Tsonga skirt worn by women). A child can go and wear pants at her matrimonial home, but when she comes with her husband, she must comes dressed culturally here. She mustn't come here wearing pants. When I go visit her and take her by surprise, she quickly runs and changes and come back and say greetings daddy (Interview, 2010).

Another anecdote was of one of his son's wedding:

> Yes, I had a wedding celebration here. They did things there when we took (things over) here because they wanted this white thing, when things got here, they changed. He wore *tinjovo* (Tsonga traditional gear), my child, he changed and wore our Ngoni gear. He held this thing called a child to show her that when she comes in this family, we want a child. You get it? Even in the marquee, it was decorated with traditional decors, to show her that you will cook here, wooden spoons, fire wood that you will break and use to cook. There were grass mats there, that when a visitor comes, you must put down the *xiteve* for them. Did you see the grass mats on the veranda? Those who able to sit on the grass mat they sit, those who able to sit on chairs, they sit (Interview 2010).

Shirinda's discourse on the purity of the Shangaan language was made clear to me during our interview.

> We need to *hlayisa* (preserve/take) careeof the Shangaan language. In the olden days when you spoke Shangaan and mixed it with English, you went for an interview and you mixed with English, they didn't want that. If you ever spoke and mixed with English, while on air, it meant you are killing the Shangaan language. It will slowly die, bit by bit. You say, 'ja bra mani' [ja brother so], '*kunjani'* [how are you], 'hoezet' [how is it], on air. You are killing your language; it will die, bit by bit until it disappears. So for me, I am wish that for as long as I live, that our language, I'm not saying the other languages are not right, they must be there, all 11 languages here in South Africa. They must all live. Shangaan (language) must live, hey. You get it? Shangaan must live child of Madalane (Interview2010).

Shirinda's passion for Tsonga culture and language influences his view on the labelling of Tsonga music which will be discussed in the next chapter. From the above remarks it is apparent why he would be attracted to music that is neo-traditional. He relates to such music because it is rooted in tradition, especially in its performance practices. Mahlathini seems to exemplify this for Shirinda. Ballantine noted of the *mbaqanga* star, 'one of the new order's first commercial products', that Mahlathini 'appeared in animal skins and sang of the virtues of tribal life' (1993: 8). Similarly, Coplan pointed out that 'Mahlathini … performed in traditional animal skins...' (2007: 228), elaborating that '*mbaqanga* audiences enjoy[ed] traditional performance styles, but their urban circumstances also require[ed] some psychic distance from its "primitive" associations' (Coplan, 1985: 187). Though urban audiences of the 1960s received *mbaqanga* with caution (with others completely rejecting it seeing it as the equivalent of Bantu Education), for a rural-based and tradition-enthusiastic audience which Shirinda represented, it seems to have been the ideal music to which to aspire. It was modern yet traditional. Shirinda's admiration for the traditional aspects of Mahlathini's music became apparent when I mentioned Mahlathini's name in the interview, Shirinda exclaiming: 'I copied bodlomani (the groaner). *Ya bodla k'qala'* (The one who groaned first) (Interview, 2010).

In general, Shirinda's music, during the 1960s, was more consistent with *simanje-manje*, which Coplan describes as, 'a style of mbaqanga usually featuring a male lead singer and a four-member female chorus, performing blends of urban neo-traditional and marabi vocal music backed by Western instruments at the stage shows and on records. It is directed specifically at urban workers, migrants, and rural Africans' (2008: 443). The primary difference with Shirinda's music was that he sang in the Tsonga language and his melodies were influenced by indigenous Tsonga music rather than the popular Zulu music.

The style of music developed by Shirinda would later be 'copied' by other Tsonga-speaking musicians, such as Samson Mthombeni and Elias Baloyi. The genealogy for Shikwambana was as follows: 'Samson Mthombeni (came) in the early 70s. Then in the mid-70s General MD Shirinda was a hit, he overtook Samson Mthombeni because by then Samson Mthombeni was like dominating the airwaves' (Interview, 2009). Though there are many artists who imitated Shirinda's style, the two best known are Mthombeni and Elias Baloyi. In the 1980s an artist emerged who surpassed all others in terms of commercial success, and that is Thomas Shinyori Chauke and the Shinyori Sisters (Allingham, 1999; Majapelo, 2008). By this time Tsonga traditional music had become what we hear today, beginning with the introductory guitar, accompanied by the synthesized keyboard and drums, with a female backing line, and a thumping, groovy bass line. This music will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Facing the music industry

Shirinda, like most South African musicians of his time, faced challenges within the music industry. In *Music in the Mix* (1981), Muff Anderson captures some of the challenges faced by musicians within the South African recording industry. Some of the issues Anderson points to include exploitation, and copyright and royalties concerns (see also Coplan, 1985 and 2007; and Muller, 2008). I discuss a few examples of some of these issues. Pennywhistler turned *mbaqanga* saxophonist, Spokes Mashiyane, one of the 'first African musicians to become widely known among whites', received a flat fee of about 'seven to fifty dollars' for recordings that had made 'the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of dollars for Trutone' (Coplan, 2007). It is commonly known that *mbaqanga* star, Mahlathini, died poor. Hugh Masekela trumpeted his grievance concerning Mahlathini's situation: 'do you know where Mahlathini lives? Do you know that he doesn't even have a bicycle [?] So much of the music around South Africa is because of Mahlathini, and he walks to the bus stop, he walks to the train' (cited in Anderson, 1981: 37).

Another example worth citing is that of Solomon Linda's 'Mbube'. According to Carol Muller, Linda recorded the song in 1939 in Johannesburg and sold more than 100 000 copies (2008: 5). The song was then shipped to the United States where it was rearranged and re-recorded by the folk group The Weavers in 1952 as 'Wemoweh' and became a hit. In a

nutshell, 'over the next five decades, the song 'Mbube'/'Wemoweh'/'The lion sleeps tonight' went through hundreds of covers, copies and arrangements and (was) used in the film scores of numerous movies including … Disney's *The Lion King*' (6). Though 'Mbube' was a commercial success, Linda did not see a cent of his royalties, though his family later won a case against Abeline Music Company in 2006 (ibid.). These are but a few examples of the many cases of copyright and royalties thievery experienced especially by black South African musicians during and before the apartheid period. Shirinda related a similar story.

Anger and disgust accompanied Shirinda's voice when he recited the story of how he was 'robbed' of his share of the proceeds for the hit song 'Mdjaji', released in 1976.

> I did it in 1976. 76, 77, 78, that's when the battle was going on. 77, there was a battle for it. It did not take long because it was popular throughout the world. So the battle (legal) was fought and ended and I was told that I could get more than half a million. Back then that was a lot of money. When we went and won with that album, I didn't get the money. *Buyangwani* (poor me), if you are not educated in this world, you will gather bread crumbs like a bird and eat that ... It came to a point where, when I went to fetch the money, after they said we won, they gave me R250. That was 100 pounds. So they said sign here, I signed a blank paper; nothing was written on it, that I received the money. And then they went and typed whatever they typed, that they gave me R200 000, R250 000. Then I kept going back, when I went back, I went to look for my money. They gave me R2.50!!! Everything I was made to sign. When I went back again, they told me I don't have money anymore. So I tried knowing that I was promised half a million. I tried a lawyer, when he wrote they told him that they gave me cash because he said he doesn't know how to go to the bank. He wanted his money cash and we gave him the money, R250 000. Here are the papers that he signed. And indeed I had signed, but they wrote what they wrote after I left (Interview, 2010).

The resentment Shirinda still feels from this is the reason he insists that his children go to school. He feels that it was because of his illiterateness that people took advantage of him: 'being illiterate creates an opportunity to be treated like a fool by the educated. It made me refuse for my children not to be educated. [I send] all my children to school!' (Interview, 2010). Billy Forest, a singer who later became an independent producer, acknowledged that illiteracy is one of the reasons why musicians in South Africa have been robbed of their royalties. He admitted to having signed 'blank contracts' while working as a producer, though he claims to have never exploitated anyone (cited in Anderson, 1981: 56).

Anderson (1981), Coplan (2007) and Muller (2008) speak about how black South African musicians had no structures to protect them against unethical practices by the white recording companies. Forest (cited in Anderon, 1981: 56) and Coplan (2007: 205) mention how it was unheard of to provide an artist with a copy of a recording contract. The Union of South African Artists, formed in the early 1950s with the aid of lawyer Harry Bloom, had success

with some cases such as that of Spokes Mashiyane, however, as Anderson noted, 'generally musicians were at the mercy of the record industry' (1981: 41). Shirinda's narrative of his song 'Mdjaji' therefore places him as one voice among many black South African musicians who experienced disreputable practices within the South African music industry during the apartheid period.

Concluding remarks

In the history of Tsonga music Shirinda's story, thus far untold, is central not only because he brought about a new era in Tsonga music by developing contemporary Tsonga popular music, but also because his story and music function as an example of how apartheid influenced the processes of music-making. With the destruction of Sophiatown and the Sharpville massacre (21 March 1960), it is not surprising that the 1960s is seen as one of the darkest decades for black people in South Africa (Coplan, 2008: 224). In addition to being moved from racially integrated areas to segregated areas, blacks were further segregated according to ethnicity. Radio and music became instrumental in the dissemination of the 'separate development' ideology, through the encouragement of an ethnic group to 'develop along its own lines' (Muller, 2008: 29). Musically, as Coplan points out, cosmopolitan styles were considered as rebellious to the system, thus the promotion of ethnic languages and rural music-based styles such as that of Shirinda.

Shirinda came from a rural area, was non-literate, and rooted in Tsonga tradition. He speaks proudly of how he performs in traditional clothes, and how he was the first to allow the *xibelana* (traditional skirt) to be seen in public, because it was taboo to see another man's *xibelana*. He speaks with joy as he describes how people stared in awe from their flats at his female backing singers wearing their colourful *swibelana* (pl.) as they walked the streets of Johannesburg when returning from performances. From one perspective Shirinda's character, lifestyle, thought, performance style and his music could be seen to complement 'the system'.This does not mean, however, that he was an agent– in any active way– of apartheid.

Control over the music-making process during the early stages of Shiranda's career is evident in the authority given to record producers who were very aware of what was allowable and who thus found ways to work around the system. Making indigenous music more

contemporary – popularising it – seems to have been one of the strategies used for the black urban music market while also allowing for commercial success within the apartheid system, whereas musicians who participated in cosmopolitan styles such as jazz were, according to Coplan, faced with two choices, 'fight or flight' (2008: 229). This influence over the music process is evident in Shirinda's music. While listening through Shirinda's music, I came across two songs which take radio as their subject: 'Xiya na moya muyeni' ('Radio is a good guest', 1977) and 'Xiya na moya muongori' ('Radio is a healer', 1977). The lyrics of the former are as follows:

> *A hi tsakeni Vatsonga ntlangu lo'wukulu*
> *He Vatsonga ntlangu lo'wukulu*
> *Radio muyeni lonene*
> *Ta mitisela vulombe byo tsonkombela*
> *Tsalela ti posikarata to tala ngopfu*
> *Radio muyeni lonenene*
>
> Let us be happy Tsongas, this is a big event/celebration
> Hey, Tsongas, this is a big event
> Radio is a good guest
> He will bring you sweet honey
> Write many postcards
> Radio is a good guest

When I asked Shirinda how these songs came about, he explained that he was asked by the SABC to record them. He elaborated: 'they used to go from place to place looking for people to record, and then they asked me to write these songs and record them' (Interview, 2010). The apartheid system's power and authority, penetrated through institutions such as the SABC and Radio Bantu, and which filtered down to many record companies and their black producers, made its way into the recording studios, thus influencing the music-making process and the process of the formation of Tsonga popular music as a genre itself.

Chapter 2

The meaning of Tsonga music and Tsonga traditional music to its practitioners

In the previous chapter I discussed Shirinda's role in the emergence and development of contemporary Tsonga popular music, and that the subgenre label by which his music is described by music commentators is 'Tsonga traditional'. This chapter gives attention to this particular subgenre, discussing the meanings of the label for its practitioners and why it is labelled as such. Certain of the defining features of the subgenre are outlined as well. This chapter commences by pointing to some of the complexities in studying genre in popular music. A discussion continues in detail on the Tsonga traditional subgenre in terms of what the labels mean to its practitioners. This is followed by a discussion of some of this subgenre's fundamental features. The chapter is concluded with an analysis of Tsonga traditional music in a live performance setting.

Complexities in the study of genre in popular music

According to Keith Negus 'from the days of trying to form a band, the initial and recurring question [is] always "what type of music do you play?", followed by "What are your influences?" and "what do you listen to?"' (1999: 4). These questions indicate society's fixation with categorising (Holt, 2007). The classifications of music aid society and artists to produce, receive and analyse cultural works, reinforcing the significance of the concept of genre even in the twenty-first century when the type of, and therefore typologies of, music have pluralised to an unprecedented extent (2007: 2). According to William Hanks, genre offers 'a framework that a listener may use to orient themselves; producers to interpret the music; and a set of expectations' (cited in Gloag and Beard, 2005: 72).

Discourse on popular music depicts genre as a complex phenomenon (Holt, 2007; Borthwick and Moy, 2004; Negus, 1999; Shaw, 2007). There does not seem to be any one dominant approach to studying genre in popular music, as a result scholars select a specific aspect on which to focus. For example, in *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures,* Negus focuses on the relationship between music business structures and the 'culture' which includes 'the practices, interpretations and ways of life of musicians, fans and industry workers' (1999: 3). He also explores 'how genre categories inform the organization of music companies, the

creative practices of musicians and perceptions of audiences'. In *Genre in Popular Music* by contrast Fabian Holt aims to interrogate 'music genres in totality'; he later confesses that the book is about 'understanding rather than defining genres' (2007: 8). This is in line with Louise Meintjes' position on the matter in *Sound of Africa* in which she argues against 'defining' genre and focuses rather on 'the process of defining genre' (2003: 19), emphasising the complexity in the study of genre in popular music. The construction of *mbaqanga* through studio recordings and performances is the focus of Meintjes' ethnography.

Evidently the above studies explore the concept of genre from different points of view. It is apparent from certain scholars' remarks that studying genre in popular music in 'totality' is a difficult task; hence each chose a particular area on which to focus. There are many factors which contribute to the complexity of genre in popular music. One is that genre in popular music is 'elastic'. As Robert Walser says, 'nowhere are genre boundaries more flexible or more fluid than in popular music' (Walser cited in Holt, 2007: 4). Other factors which 'make' genre complex, is that they are socially constructed (Holt, 2007) and they 'evolve' over time (Beard and Gloag, 2005: 73). For this reason, in this chapter the writer does not attempt to define Tsonga music, but rather presents an understanding of this genre label through the meanings expressed by the musicians who create the music.

Tsonga Music: A 'Parent' Genre

Beard and Gloag suggest that genres are 'hierarchical' and often imply 'a parent genre' under which subgenres can be found (2005: 73). The label 'Tsonga music' is one such example, and is used as a parent genre under which subgenres are subsumed. Radio manager Shikwambana thus explained that 'under Xitsonga music we … have subgenres' (Interview, 2009). Some of the subgenres mentioned by Shikwambana include Tsonga traditional, Xitsonga disco, Xitsonga gospel and Xitsonga R&B. I should mention here that 'Xitsonga', 'Tsonga' and 'Shangaan' may refer to both the language and the heritage or culture of the Tsonga people and all my informants used these words interchangeably. Though it is clear from Shikwambana's remark that Tsonga music refers to the parent genre, in conversations with my informants it was –to confuse the matter further– used to refer to any of the subgenres.

Tsonga music's position as a parent genre is evident in the categories for Munghana Lonene FM's annual music awards. Conceived in 2002 by the radio station, the awards aim to cater

for all Xitsonga music categories, especially those not catered for in the national South African Music Awards. Shikwambana explained that the Xitsonga Music Awards has

> Eleven categories: best Xitsonga traditional, traditional music with no instruments, your best male artists or best female artists, that's where people play instruments. We also have R&B [Rhythm and Blues]. R&B sang in Xitsonga, just like HHP [Hip Hop Pantsula] where they will sing in Setswana. So we also have R&B sung in Xitsonga. We also have gospel in those awards but strictly Xitsonga music (Interview, 2009).

In 2004 an album was released called *Munghana Lonene FM Xitsonga Music Awards*, consisting of songs by Xitsonga musicians who won the awards that year. On the sleeve, the station manager at the time, Mandla Soko, proclaimed: 'this album is yet another milestone in confirming the station's intimate support and promotion of local, particularly Xitsonga music genre' (2004). Here, 'Tsonga music' clearly represents a parent genre as it includes work by musicians who participate in different subgenres, such as Thomas Chauke and George Maluleke, who have been placed in the Xitsonga traditional category; and Penny and Joe Shirimani, who are associated with Tsonga disco. In short, 'Tsonga music' categorically refers to a parent genre which consists of subgenres such as Tsonga traditional, Tsonga disco, Tsonga gospel, and Tsonga R&B. For the purposes of this study only Tsonga traditional and Tsonga disco will be discussed in detail.

Using 'Tsonga' to Label Tsonga Music

Tsonga musicians have differing views on the use of the labels 'Tsonga' and 'Shangaan' to categorise Tsonga music. A few informants raised objections to the use of the word Tsonga in defining Tsonga music, arguing that using Tsonga as a prefix for all Tsonga music genres 'closes doors for them' as Jeff Maluleke explained (Interview, 2010). The use of Xitsonga language in songs, according to Shirinda, should not be a criterion for labelling the music as Tsonga or Shangaan. Shirinda argued further:

> This music is music of Africa; it is not Shangaan because it is [in] Shangaan when we sing ... but the rhythm that I play works throughout the world. That is why it was taken by Malcolm McLaren, and taken by Paul Simon ... They are outside [the country], you understand? So it means my singing or music is not Shangaan, it's not South African, it is just the language that I sing in, I sing in Shangaan (Interview, 2010).

Shirinda was particularly forceful on this point:

> It is simply African music. That is what is supposed to be written, African music, music that goes throughout the world or simply music, period, and leave that 'traditional', that, no, no,

> no. Okay, I released that *Modjaji*[10] album, when I released it, did only Shangaans dance to it? Everyone danced to it, to show that singing is not a Zulu, it's not a Shangaan, it's not Venda, it's not Pedi, it's not Tswana, it depends on the rhythm, that's how, you can sing it in Shangaan, Venda or Zulu, but when you have done it nicely and put it nicely, it will be everyone. Yes (Interview, 2010).

Similar sentiments were articulated by Jeff Maluleke, whose work will be discussed later. Maluleke contested that, 'if you are Shangaan and you sing Shangaan, they will take you and lock you up and say you play Tsonga music, which means your music must be played mainly in MLFM [Munghana Lonene FM, the Xitsonga radio station] you see ... we have tribalism in this country' (Interview, 2010). Both Shirinda and Maluleke are explicitly against the use of Tsonga or Shangaan in labeling Tsonga music, though for different reasons. Shirinda's argument is centred on that his music is able to cross ethnic boundaries. He makes it clear that when he 'improved' his music, it was so that it could be 'enjoyed by everyone' (Interview, 2010). Singing in Tsonga did not mean that his music was exclusively meant for Tsonga people. Language as a criterion for genre labelling and formation seems to be prevalent in categorising Tsonga music; witness also the label of Tsonga disco which is discussed in the following chapter. In his thesis 'Maskanda: The Zulu Strolling Musicians' (1998), Phindile Nhlapo touches on the role played by language in labelling music. He gives an example from the work of Reyes Schramm who 'observed that if a songs' lyrics are all in Vietnamese, even if the music sounds western and can be identified by western names such as "bebop" and "twist", etc., by virtue of the Vietnamese text … [the] music [would] be identified as Vietnamese' (1998: 46). Nhlapo, however, is also of the opinion that language is not a convincing basis for labelling music.

On the other hand, though Maluleke shares similar thoughts to Shirinda on this matter, the reasons for his argument differ. Maluleke sees the use of language to label music genres as a hindrance for Tsonga musicians, saying that 'if your music is labelled Tsonga or Shangaan, why should the other radio stations play your music because clearly it is meant for Tsonga people' (Interview, 2010). If the music is labelled Tsonga or Shangaan, Maluleke claims, it is an indication for non-Tsonga listeners to steer clear of the music as they would not be interested in music labelled Tsonga. Does this assumption however stand up to scrutiny? The programming strategy of Tsonga radio suggests a more ambiguous reality. Although MLFM radio originally focussed on only Tsonga music, Maluleke and Masilela both acknowledge

[10]'Modjaji' was later adapted by Sello 'Chicco' Twala in the 1980s who recently did another adaptation which is used as the theme track for the South African TshiVenda popular soapie *Muvhango*.

that the station also 'play[ed] *mbaqanga* ... the Boyoyo Boys, Lulu Masilela's music, Thomas Phale, the late David Thekwane, even the Movers and some other groups and so forth', artists who participate in other music genres.[11] The station continues to do this to date (Masilela, Interview: 2009).

Maluleke praises MLFM for its non-discriminatory programming, which includes music associated with other ethnic groups such as *mbaqanga* and *maskanda*, both associated with Zuluness. His commending of the station is based on his belief that it sets a good example of how things should be in the music industry. That is, every radio station should be playing-listing music from all the ethnic groups in South Africa. He reprimands other radio stations for their discrimination against Tsonga music arguing that 'this is tribalism' and a perpetuation of the legacy left by apartheid: 'In MLFM, they play siSwati, Ndebele, whatever, and us Tsongas we are welcoming people ... but you go to other stations, I'm sorry, like Ukhozi [the isiZulu radio station], there's still these kind of things whereby you won't hear Thomas Chauke, but in Xitsonga radio station you will hear Phuzukhemisi', a well-known *maskanda* musician (Interview, 2010). Maluleke's positive perception of MLFM's welcoming nature is shared by bass guitarist and saxophonist Lulu Masilela who confesses that 'the radio station used to play everything ... Those guys made us what we are today, definitely. Because they didn't have this thing of what, they played everything, until today those guys are great' (Interview, 2010).

Although Maluleke and Masilela perceive the Xitsonga radio station's generosity in terms of playing other ethnic groups' music as commendable, while reproaching other ethnic stations for their discriminations, disco artists Joe Shirimani and Penny view this from a different angle. Shirimani and Penny lament the station's generosity towards non-Tsonga music as depriving Tsonga musicians of airtime. Their argument stems from the point raised by Maluleke earlier that other stations do not play Tsonga music. Therefore, they argue, if Tsonga music is not played on other radio stations, why does the station waste airtime on non-Tsonga artists? Shirimani emphasised the point suggesting that 'if you turn on the radio, you wouldn't know that it is Shangaan radio station, you would think it is Zulu, or Sotho, or anything, until you hear someone talking. If no one were to talk, you wouldn't know it is a Shangaan radio station' (Interview, 2009). Shirimani and Penny concur with Maluleke and

[11] See David Coplan *In Township Tonight* (1985) for discussion of some of these musicians

Masilela on another point, on the subject of the Tsonga prefix in labelling Tsonga music. They too raised objections to this practice claiming that it limits their chances of being play-listed on other ethnic radio stations.

For Tsonga musicians it is evident that labelling Tsonga music is an unfortunate practice inherited from the apartheid era. It has already been discussed how the emergence of Tsonga popular music coincided with the inception of Radio Bantu Tsonga. Ethnically labelling the music was an attempt to ensure that the music was exclusively directed to Tsonga speakers. The music's entrapment by the bondage of ethnicity was facilitated by its incorporation of indigenous ethnic music (see Allingham, 1999 and Mojapelo, 2008). Shikwambana, former MLFM marketing manager, explained that, 'when you say ... Xitsonga album, they are referring to that type of, you know, traditional influenced by some western type of music. Western I mean once you sing a traditional song but have guitars, and then there is that influence' (Interview, 2009).

The 'traditional-ness' in the music gave leeway to those in the music industry to label the music ethnically, whereas music in which indigenous music was not explicitly audible, such as township jazz of the 1960s and bubblegum of the 1980s, made it challenging to 'ethnicise' because it could not be easily linked to any ethnic group. In *Genre and Corporate Cultures*, Keith Negus explores how bodies such as 'record companies, their corporate owners along with numerous other people' in the industry 'shape' what he refers to as 'genre cultures' (1999: 3).[12] One of the ways in which these corporate institutions influence the identity of genres is in the labelling thereof. This inevitably leads to the popular naming of the music which according to Holt 'recognize[s] [the music]'s existence and distinguishes it from other music. The name becomes a point of reference and enables certain forms of communication, control, and specialisation into markets, canons, and discourses'. Holt points out that 'this process also involves exclusionary mechanisms, and it is often met with resistance. Alternatives to dominant names and definitions are proposed, and some people are sceptical of categories and refuse to deal with them' (2007: 3).

[12] By 'genre cultures' Negus refers not only to the genre category but also to 'the practices, interpretations and ways of life of musician, fans and industry workers' (1999: 3).

These processes also manifest in the Tsonga music industry. Thus Shirinda can claim that it is 'those companies', i.e. his record companies, that would 'write Shangaan music', meaning that the power to label the music Shangaan rested with the record companies and not necessarily the musician. The corporate industry's authority over labelling music is still experienced by artists. Joe Shirimani and Penny expressed how they would prefer their music to be labelled Afro-pop rather than Tsonga disco. Despite such desires their music and that of other Tsonga musicians continues to be labelled and marketed as Tsonga music.

Identifying Tsonga traditional music: Shirinda and the emergence of Tsonga traditional music

Shirinda's shift from performing Tsonga indigenous music to what is today known as Tsonga traditional music was first marked by the writing of his own songs. He still firmly believes that one cannot call oneself a songwriter or a musician if one sings other people's songs. Shirinda explained that he cannot call the songs he writes indigenous because indigenous songs are known by everyone and can be sung or played by everyone. From the 1960s, Shirinda has been credited as the composer of songs such as 'Mbilu Ya Xihlangi' (Heart of a Child, 1964), 'Nhlomulo' (Suffering, 1965) and 'Xihatimani' (the name of a person, 1969). Both Shirinda and Shikwambana explained that if an artist did not compose a song then, on the LP record sleeve, the word 'traditional' would be written instead of the artist's name. This is a telling practice, an indication of the development from indigenous Tsonga music to a new popular Tsonga music which over time became identified as Tsonga traditional music, that subgenre of popular Tsonga music in which musicians such as Thomas Chauke and George Maluleke participate. Author identified songwriting was one step in the development of a popular music that according to Shirinda would appeal to a broader audience. Other innovations included using non-indigenous instruments such as the bass, pennywhistle, drumkit and electric guitar, and drawing on other mediated genres of black popular music as discussed in the previous chapter.

It is important to note that although Shirinda began writing new musical material and using western instruments to create what seemed to be a new genre, his music, to this day, still maintains explicit elements of and references to indigenous Tsonga music. An example from Shirinda's early music period is that while he wrote his songs, he often used indigenous instruments such as the '*swingomana* drums [Xitsonga traditional drum], rattles and the kudu

horn' (Interview, 2010). In conclusion, contemporary Tsonga popular music as it is presently known, emerged in the early 1960s when Shirinda and others moved away from performing indigenous music and began writing and recording their own songs – drawing on developments in other black popular music.

'Traditional' in Tsonga traditional music: A debate

Tsonga traditional music has often been referred to as neo-traditional music by both popular print media and academia (Allingham, 2003; Mojapelo, 2008), implying a certain 'new-ness' about it. This new-ness suggests that the music is sufficiently different from its predecessor, in this case indigenous Tsonga music, while still having a clear relationship to it. It proposes the idea of a break in time where the older traditional music was replaced by a newly created one.

Nhlapo, however, argues against this idea and use of the label neo-traditional to describe *maskanda* music; an argument which Coplan, one of the scholars to have used the label neo-traditional, also acknowledges in the new edition of *In Township Tonight* (2008: 312). Coplan acknowledges that Nhlapo's argument is convincing. Nhlapo points out that though *maskanda* may be played on western instruments, this is no justification for labeling it neo-traditional because the music is not sufficiently different from its traditional models but is rather a development of them. To underpin the point, he states that the 'instruments were incorporated into traditional music; they did not replace traditional music' (1998: 42). The idea of the neo-tradition is therefore a misnomer. This conception of tradition and the traditional, is viewed in accordance with Hans-Georg Gadamer's conception thereof, a version that 'embraces fluidity, the past as process, to which we contribute and determine' (cited in Beard and Gloag, 2005: 187). Therefore, the inclusion of western instruments or new compositions is seen as developing an already existing tradition and not creating a new one. There are Tsonga musicians whose ideas about their music fit in with this, such as Dongwe Shirinda, General MD Shirinda's son whom I shall refer to as Dongwe. Dongwe maintains that Tsonga traditional music is '*ndavuko*' (culture/heritage), implying that the music has not changed fundamentally from what it was (Interview, 2010). This however, has not gone uncontested.

According to Beard and Gloag, the Gadamer conception of tradition was preceded by what is referred to as the 'conventional' view on tradition. According to Kathryn Olsen the 'conventional' view on tradition 'implies that traditional practices resist change, that it is static, prescribed, and accepted as the way things are done' (2000: 9-10) . Theodor W. Adorno is cited stating that 'tradition comes from *tradere*: to hand down'. It recalls the continuity of generations, what is handed down from one member to another … its medium is not the conscious but the pregiven, unreflected and binding existence of social forms – the actuality of the past (cited in Olsen, 2000: 9-10). Dongwe's position on labelling Tsonga music as 'traditional' is clearly aligned with the more recent conception of tradition, but his father is of a different opinion. Dongwe disregards the use of western instruments and modern technology that is used to produce Tsonga traditional music and chooses to interpret the music as *ndavuko* (tradition), implying that besides the changes and development in the music production, because of its reliance on Tsonga indigenous musical influences, to him it will remain 'tradition'. He reaffirmed: 'Tsonga [traditional] is *ndavuko,* it is where we show who we are as Tsonga people' (Interview, 2010).

Shirinda on the other hand however, expressed serious objections towards the use of the term 'traditional' for labelling his music: 'that thing of, when I do a song and they call it traditional, no, no, no, it's a mistake. With traditional they are talking about cultural songs. I can't compose a song and then they call it traditional song, it doesn't make sense' (Interview, 2010). Aaron Mogoro, a Librarian at the SABC Record Library, shares Shirinda's outlook on tradition. On the question of the 'traditional' label on Tsonga music, Mogoro replied, 'no, no, no, you see, if it was traditional, they would use those traditional instruments like *meropa* (this is a Sotho name for a traditional drum) and the kudu horn. But they use these modern instruments' (Interview, 2010).

Shirinda's and Mogoro's notion of tradition is one which is static and immune to change. Shirinda sees tradition as something that is passed down from generation to generation, something that cannot and should not be changed. As discussed in the previous chapter, he also practices his idea of tradition in his life. Though he lives in a modern society, there are parts of his life which he attempts to keep 'pure', free from modern intrusions. When I interviewed him, he changed his clothes and put on traditional gear because he did not want to appear on camera wearing 'white people's' clothes; though I read this act as a performance for the interview, as a performance of tradition (Interview, 2010). By contrast, the fact that

Shirinda composes new songs means, for him, that his music cannot be labelled traditional; regardless of the other traditional elements and practices embedded in his music and that when he performs he puts on his traditional gear. He asserted that '*loko nincina, ni amabala xichangana, haikhona ani ambali swatisudu'* (When I dance, I put on my Shangaan gear, I do not wear these suits). Shirinda therefore uses new compositions as the only criterion for excluding his music from being labelled 'traditional', while for Magoro it is the inclusion of western instruments that determines whether the music is traditional or not.

In response to Shirinda's and Magoro's positions I concur with Nhlapo who maintains that, 'the adoption of a new instrument in a society is neither a measure of the "neo-ness" of the tradition nor the new context of performance; it is only indicative of the continuation and innovation of the tradition. Urban conditions are also not a criterion of measuring the "newness" of a tradition but are indicative of changing social and cultural contexts' (1998: 42). This author suggests too that authored new songs, ones now labelled Tsonga traditional music and first introduced by Shirinda, is not a sufficient reason in itself for such music not to be considered traditional. Later in this chapter, I show how newly composed Tsonga traditional music contains residual indigenous music or practices. Scholars have long argued that tradition is a phenomenon that is not static and constantly changes. Nhlapo describes it as processual (1998: 41), and Boonzaier and Spiegel call it a 'constituent part of more general processes of adaptation and survival in the modern world where contestation and competition are central and widely fêted' (2008: 205). Olsen reminds us that 'the essentialist view of "traditional music" is no longer relevant in contemporary academic discourse' (2003: 12). 'According to an essentialist view both tradition and identity are understood as being set in the time and unaffected by change' (14).

A lineage of Tsonga traditional musicians: The accepted story

Of the different Tsonga music subgenres, Tsonga traditional music emerged the earliest and is the most popular among Tsonga speakers; a musician such as Thomas Chauke, who has sold over a million albums globally, continues to reach platinum status for record sales and has won nine South African Music Awards. The lineage of musicians associated with the emergence of this subgenre has assumed a settled form, told by music industry commentators and written in Mojapelo's *Beyond Memory* (2008) and Allingham's article on Tsonga traditional music in *World Music: The Rough Guide* (1999). It is a story populated by artists

who dominate the subgenre in terms of airplay, popularity and CD sales in any one particular period.

In this lineage Shirinda is the 'father' of Tsonga traditional music. Though there were other groups that were recorded and played on radio, according to Shikwambana, Shirinda 'dominated… the airwaves since the beginning of Radio Bantu Tsonga' in 1965 (Interview, 2009). This lasted until the 1970s when Samson Mthombeni, whose music was inspired by Shirinda, rose to fame. Shikwambana emphasised how Mthombeni 'overtook' Shirinda in popularity.

The 1980s saw the rise of an artist who would claim the title of 'king' of Tsonga traditional music, Thomas Chauke. Chauke released his first album *Shimatsatsa Shamina* (My darling) in 1982 and remains the most popular Tsonga musician. 'Shimatsatsa' became Chauke's signature title for most of his future recordings; Chauke's latest release is Volume 31 in the Shimatsatsa series. Although other musicians such as Shirinda, George Maluleke, Themba Chauke, Elias Baloyi, Samson Mthombeni, and many others lesser known Tsonga musicians continue to participate in this subgenre, Chauke's name has become synonymous with the subgenre of Tsonga traditional music (see Mojapelo, 2008 and Allingham, 1999). Mojapelo captures Chauke's predominant status by mentioning how each of Chauke's albums sell 'beyond gold status even before its official media launch', (297) and Allingham described Chauke as 'probably the best-selling group in any neo-traditional genre' (1999: 647).

In family lineage people carry their ancestors' blood in their veins and their surnames in their identity books. In Tsonga traditional music, although contemporary Tsonga musicians have succeeded the 'father', Shirinda's musical 'blood' continues to flow within their music. Despite each individual artist's idiolect, the defining feature of this subgenre is the guitar sound and style found in all Tsonga traditional music and which contains Shirinda's musical influence as discussed below.

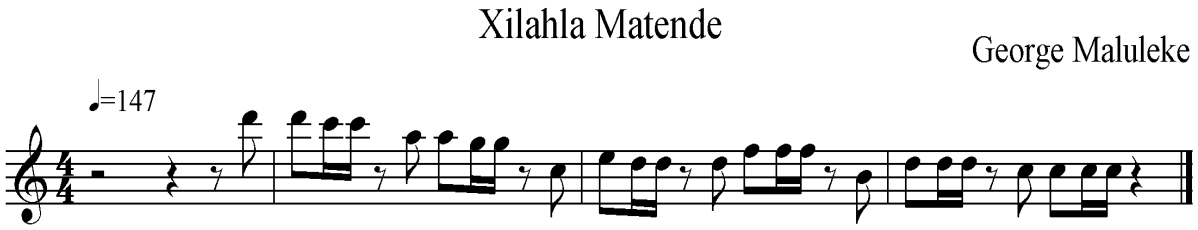
Features of Tsonga traditional music

Holt touches on the issue of semiotics in *Genre in Popular Music* (2007). An example used to explain how popular semiotics works in music, is how certain music chords are associated with blues, and certain guitar sounds or techniques are associated with rock. The chords and

the guitar sounds become a sign, which people use to identify, interpret and classify the music as belonging to a particular genre. However, this should not be read as the general practice as certain musical signs or techniques may appear in different genres (Shaw, 2007: 267; Holt, 2007: 22). Shirinda conceived a distinctive guitar sound that became the fundamental characteristic of what came to be identified as Tsonga traditional music.

Characteristically, the guitar begins piercingly with an unmetered virtuosic introduction that ushers in the rest of the music in. Though the introduction is often unmetered, in the majority of the songs considered for this study, the introduction maintained the same beat as the rest of the song, as shown in examples that follow. In other cases the introduction contains melodic material that appears elsewhere in the song. For example, in the song 'Xilahla Matende' (Convertible, track 1) by George Maluleke (2004), the track kicks in with the melodic motif shown below.[13]

Example 1a.

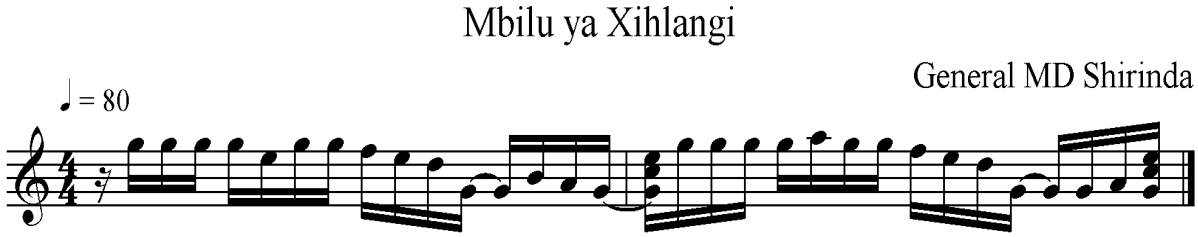


This motif continues throughout the entire song but with alterations. Maluleke carries the last two bars of the motif throughout the entire song. He occasionally goes back to the first part of the motif while altering it. For example, from 0:32 to 0:34 he returns to the first bar but takes the first notes a few semi-tones higher. Using melodic material from the solo guitar introduction is a common technique in most Tsonga traditional music. Although an introduction with this format came to be considered a defining feature of Tsonga traditional music, the introduction itself arrived through a process of development over several decades.

[13] Though transcriptions of snippets from some songs are provided, it is important to mention that these are not accurate representations of the recording or live performance of the tracks because there are nuances within the recording or performances which cannot easily be reproduced on paper. I should also mention that I do not employ in-depth analysis of the transcriptions, by which I mean discussing the internal structures of the songs, melodic contour, intervallic relations, rhythmic and harmonic patterns, and chord progressions. The transcriptions are provided as emphasis of certain features when discussing a particular subgenre and its characteristics.

In the song ‘Mithavine’ (person’s name, 1964), Shirinda’s guitar playing consists mainly of multiple strings played simultaneously and chordal strumming; there is no specific Tsonga word for this technique. This was prevalent in most of his music during the early 1960s, such as in ‘Mbilu Ya Xihlangi’ (‘Heart of a Child’), which Shirinda remembers as being recorded in 1965. The guitar introduction bursts in with a call-and-response riff, Shirinda playing the call on a single string using the picking technique then replying with a GCE triad as shown below.[14]

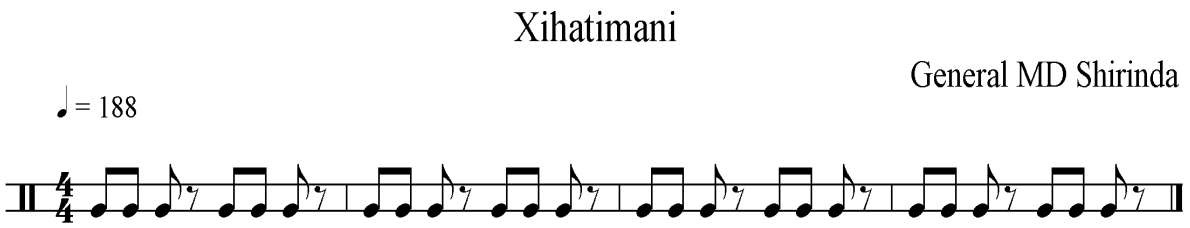
Example 1b.



Shirinda plays this entire motif twice before proceeding into the body of the music. The motif carries on throughout the entire piece with some improvisation. It is clear from the piece that the guitar introduction had not developed at this stage because the motif does not stand out from the rest of the piece. It is too short and there is no evidence of mastery of the guitar playing at this stage. In both pieces the introduction is not explicit. The melodic material in the introduction continues throughout the piece with very few changes and it is neither unmetered nor virtuosic. An important feature to note from this period of Shirinda’s music is that it still highly resembled Tsonga indigenous music, though with the guitar added. In the song ‘Xihatimani’ (the name of a person,1969) Shirinda still uses traditional drums and rattles and the rhythm played on the drums and rattles shown below is common in Shangaan *xidzimba* (possession) music, another example of how being a traditional healer influences his music making (see Kutu, 1989 and Johnston, 1971).

[14] I should mention here that there are some songs which are discussed here but are not in the compact disc provided. This is because some of the material, mainly those recorded between the 1960s and 1980s, could only be accessed from long playing records provided by the SABC Media Libraries, therefore I could not copy them. There is also uncertainty about the recording dates of some of the material used due to the fact that on the LP sleeves no dates were provided. Other songs with no dates were acquired from friends’ personal collections

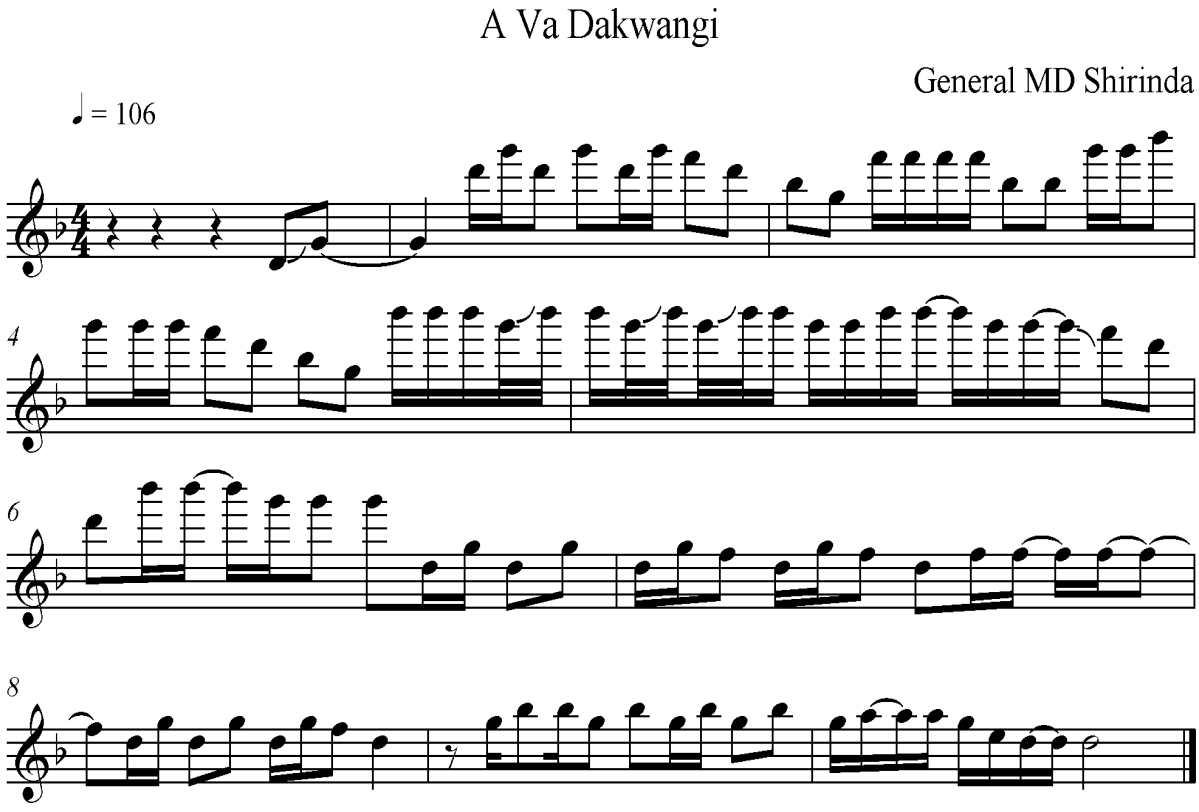
Example 1c.



Important to note in this song is that Shirinda uses what I call his 'Mahlathini voice', that is the groaning voice. By this time, as discssed earlier, Shirinda would have been exposed to Mahlathini's sound. In terms of the overall structure of the song, Shirinda employs the call-and-response technique which is present in the vocals and the song is cyclical; these are both underlying features of Tsonga indigenous music (Johnston, 1971).

In the 1970s the guitar introduction becomes more explicit, and Shirinda's 'A Va Dakwangi' ('They are not drunk', 1976) provides an example of this.

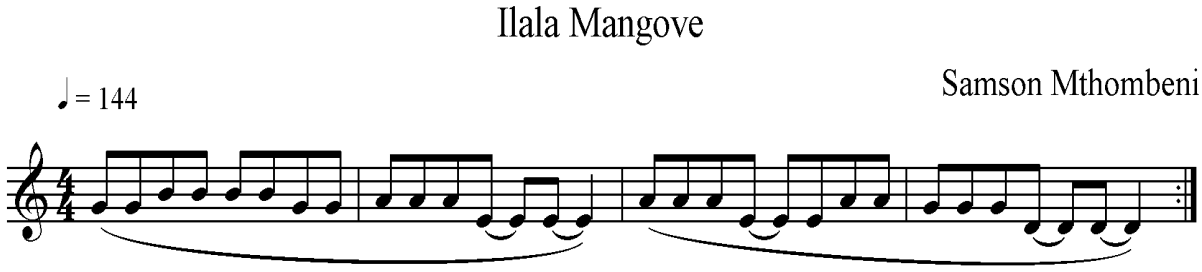
Example 1d.



In this song, the intro is firstly much longer than in Shirinda's earlier songs and it is technically more challenging to perform. Furthermore, the majority of the melodic material in the introduction does not reappear in the rest of the song, which distinguishes it from the material used in the body of the song. Here Shirinda sings in unison with the guitar and when the vocals pause, he plays the same material on the guitar that he had sung. Shikwambana said that it was during this time that Shirinda introduced the electric guitar to Tsonga traditional music, and this too can be heard in this song from the mid-1970s. As previously mentioned, this decade saw the rise of another Tsonga traditional artist who became Shirinda's main competitor: Samson Mthombeni.[15]

Mthombeni also makes use of the guitar introduction in his music, attesting to Shikwambana's observation that most Tsonga traditional musicians were inspired by Shirinda (Interview, 2009). The following is an extract from the introduction of Mthombeni's song 'Ilala Mangove' ('He sleeps in the wild', n.d.). Though the introduction is explicit, it is in the same beat as the rest of the song (unlike Shirinda's 'A Va Dakwangi'); it was noted earlier in this paper that not all the guitar introductions are unmetered.

Example 1e.



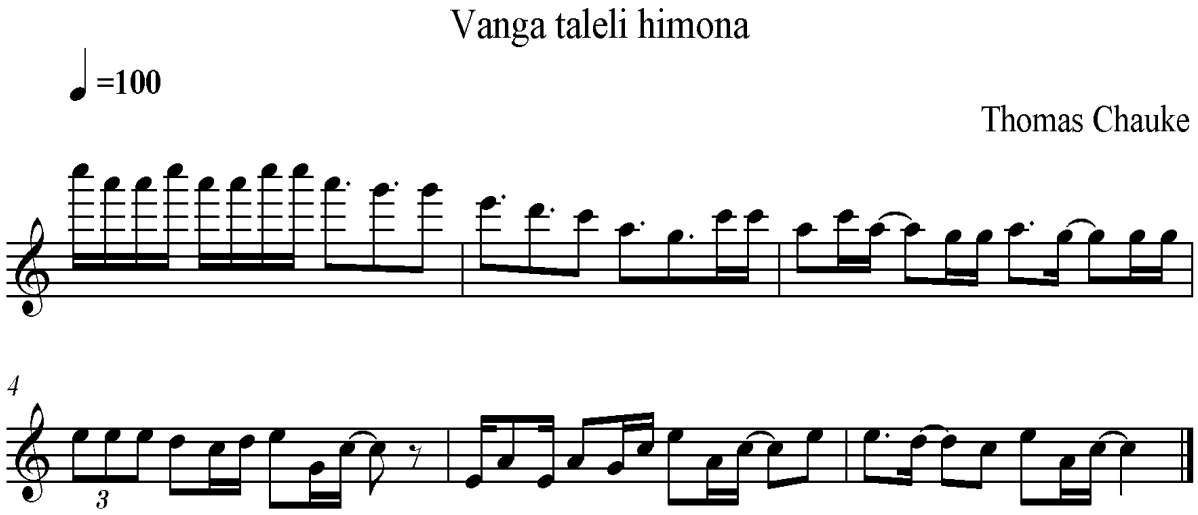
Shirinda's influence is evident in Mthombeni's guitar playing, but that the latter's general sound and style is different from Shirinda is indisputable. Mthombeni's music is marked by a more defined and crisp bass line, which Shirinda's music had lacked thus far. In Shirinda's music the bass line sounds as if it is played on the lead guitar whereas in Mthombeni's music the bass is the second most dominant sound after his voice. Mthombeni makes use of the keyboard which thus far had been absent in Shirinda's music. Rhythmically, Shirinda seems to prefer moderate tempi, while Mthombeni's music is dominated by faster tempi. In this

[15] There is very little that is known about Samson Mthombeni. Attempts to locate him and to identify the dates of his early recordings with David Gresham Records proved futile.

period therefore the guitar introduction starts assuming a generic form while a musician's idiolect is maintained.

The guitar introduction as a generic marker of Tsonga traditional music is further solidified when also adapted by Thomas Chauke in the early 1980s. The following is an extract from the Chauke's 'Vanga taleli himona' ('They must not be filled with hatred', c 1980s).

Example 1f.



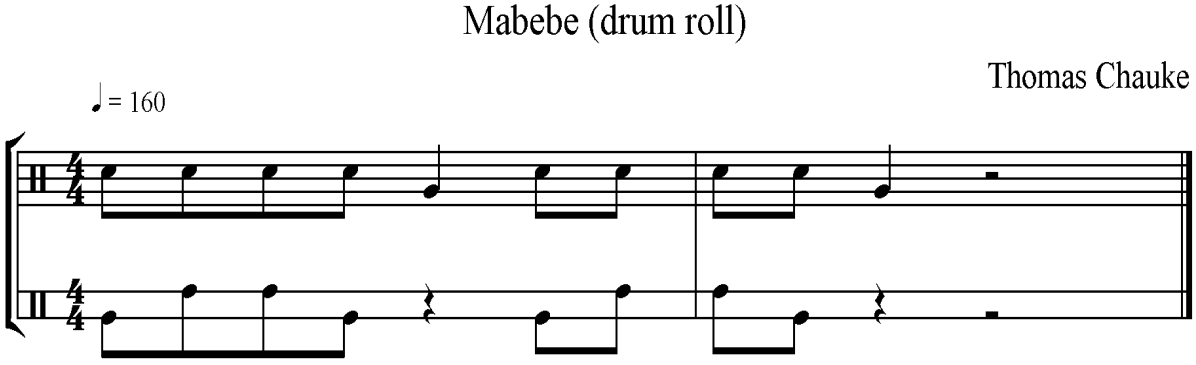
The introduction appears in most of Chauke's music and continues to do so to date. Through developments in technology during the time of Chauke's professional career the guitar sound could easily be distorted, and Chauke does so.

The introduction is a feature that this music shares with *maskanda* music. In *maskanda* it is referred to as *iihlab*o or *izihlabo* (see Coplan, 1985; Collins, 2006/7) – there is no Tsonga term for this introduction – which is said to 'display the technical brilliance of the performer, introduces and even foreshadows some of the ensuing material' (Collins, 2006/7: 4). The absence of a Tsonga term for this introduction seems to lend credence to my earlier argument that the introduction could have been a suggestion from Hamilton Nzimande to Shirinda when the latter 'went commercial'. When I questioned Shirinda about the introduction he simply called it an 'intro' (Interview, 2010). I found this peculiar as Shirinda himself pointed out that he is uneducated, and therefore had he created the intro himself he would have given it a Tsonga name. His failure to articulate the intro's function further validates my point; this in contrast to *maskanda* musicians who clearly define what the intro is and state its functions (see Collins, 2006/7).

One can explain the practices of virtuosity and technical brilliance, subjective and relative practices, by drawing on the words of Shirinda who explained that 'really playing the guitar' means 'making the strings argue' (Interview, 2010). Shirinda demonstrated this 'arguing' of the strings by playing multiple melodies simultaneously on different strings. Though this technique appears in some of the music, Tsonga guitarists rely mostly on the single-string picking technique in most of the songs discussed. The guitar introduction is therefore the most fundamental feature of Tsonga traditional music and most of the participants in this research agreed that without the guitar introduction, the music would not be called Tsonga traditional music.

At this point the focus will be shifted to the drum roll. The introductory drum roll that parachutes in the middle of a guitar introduction has become another important sonic marker of Tsonga traditional music. The following is an example of the drum roll from Chauke's 'Mabebe' ('Crumbs', track 2) from *Shimatsatsa No. 28* (2008).

Example 1g.



In earlier recordings such as in the song 'Ndzi Chava Swicele' ('I am scared of complaints', 1982) by Thomas Chauke, the drum roll sounds as though it was recorded live. But in the majority of the recordings listened to for this research, the drum is programmed, using a drum machine or synthesiser, and as a result it is fast and the resultant sound similar to that of a laser weapon from a science fiction movie. The change from using live drums to synthesisers could be attributed to the introduction of synthesisers when disco made its way into South Africa (see Meintjes, 2005, for a discussion of recording technology in South African studios in this period). The roll recurs throughout the song. In a performance that took place in Thembisa, a township east of Johannesburg, on 3 October 2009, one of the groups made use of two drummers, one playing the kit while the additional drummer held the pulse on the hi-

hat in an attempt to replicate the machine-produced sound from the CD recording. Without the second drummer it would be impossible in a live performance setting for one drummer to keep the pulse while doing the drum rolls in the middle of a song.

The drumroll first appeared in Chauke's first album *Shimatsatsa No. 1* (1982). There is no evidence of this feature in Shirinda's or Mthombeni's music prior to Chauke's recording. It has since been adopted by musicians participating in the Tsonga traditional subgenre, including Shirinda and Georgle Malukele. Chauke was unfortutanately not available to comment on the inspiration behind the drumroll. Nevertheless, this feature has become one of the identifying markers of Tsonga traditional music.

Another important feature of Tsonga traditional music is the use of female backing vocalists. Most Tsonga traditional musicians give their female backing singers a name, which is then added to the lead, male singer's own name. Shirinda became known as General MD Shirinda and the Gaza Sisters; Samson Mthombeni calls himself Samson Mthombeni and Gazankulu Sisters; Elias Baloyi and The Mamba Queens; and Thomas Chauke Na Shinyori Sisters. Though this is common practice among Tsonga traditional musicians it is not always the case as there are artists who, though they also have a female backing line, only use their own names; George Maluleke, Themba Chauke and Siya Chauke are cases in point.

The female singers play an important role as we shall see later in this chapter. In most of the music considered for this research the singers respond to the lead singer's call in four-part harmony. An interesting aspect about the women backing the male lead singers is that some of them are the singers' wives. As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, Shirinda's backing singers are all his wives. He tells the story of how his first wife recruited the rest:

> When she was now able to bathe and be clean because now an artist, a group has to dress up and be beautiful, so the guys took these women and we were going backwards. And when we sing with someone's wife it's difficult, it gave us problems. Even if they were not married, when they were now 'clean' (as artists), they would find marriage so the work would go backwards so my wife said, wouldn't it be better to take another wife. So I said, aren't you going to argue, should a take a third wife, she said yes. I took another daughter of Chauke (Interview, 2010).

As an important part of Tsonga culture, polygamy is often referred to in some of the song texts in Tsonga traditional music. For example, in Thomas Chauke's 'Ha Twanana' ('We get along well', 2006), he– together with his wives– tells of how well they get along as a family. This point takes me to a discussion of lyrics in Tsonga traditional music.

The lyrics of Tsonga traditional music

In talking to Shikwambana about the lyrical content of Tsonga songs he suggested that the most common subjects in Tsonga traditional music include issues about 'their families… they would sing about their *swifuwo*, livestock, they would sing about those things' (Interview, 2009). Shirinda added that singing is 'teaching' and 'communicating' (Interview, 2010). He therefore comments on everything that is happening around him whether it is domestic, local or national. For example, in the song 'Ku Basisa Ndzhawu' (SABC Transcriptions, c 1970s) Shirinda and the Gaza Sisters sing about keeping a house clean.

Kubasisa ndzawu laha munhu a tshamaka kona
Munhu u fanele ku tshama laku baseke
Loko ulanguta u kuma swibye swi tshame hinfanelo

Hi kokwalaho ka yini hinga rholeli maphepha
Hi kokwalaho kayini hanga rholeli maphepha hi hisa
Hi kokwalaho ka yini hi nga rholeli mabodlhela
Hi kokwalaho ka yini hi nga rholeli mabodlhela, hi chukumeta

Cleaning up where a persons stays (is essential)
A person may live in a clean place
When you look, you must find that the dishes are clean

How come we don't pick up papers?
How come we don't pick up papers and burn them?
How come we don't pick up bottles?
How come we don't pick up bottles and throw them (away)?

Samson Mthombeni's 'Vo Matsatsela' ('Opportunists') broaches the perhaps more serious issue of nosey people and the consequences of their involvement in domestic matters. The song starts by announcing their arrival:

Va fikile va matsatsela nsati wa mina
Ahi khulumeleni hansi phela nsati wa mina
Hambi rithandzu riyo mila timitsu
Vatsuvula vaya chukumeta

Xihundla xamuti, avabyeli munhu
Vahahlula
Hambi ha holova, ahi khulumeli hansi nsati wa mina
Timhaka ta mindjangu ti lava xihundla lexi kulu

Aswi byeriwi munhu

Ho tshama hi vulavula
Loko hi nga vulavuli dali
Va yimi maganga vahleka
Mhe ni karhele ku tenga dali

They are here my wife, the nosey people
Let us whisper my wife
Even if love grows roots
They uproot and throw it away

You do not tell people about your family's secret
Even if we argue, let us keep things to ourselves
Family issues need big secrecy

You do not tell anyone
We sit down and talk
If we don't talk my darling
They stand by the side and laugh
I am tired of quarrelling my darling

Here Mthombeni warns couples to be careful of gossipmongers and troublemakers who take pleasure in breaking up families. He advises that when couples argue, they should keep their fights private. He sings that 'back in the day', when a man returned from drinking and beat his wife, the wife used to go to her in-laws to report the matter. These days, however, wives go to 'fake' in-laws, the nosey troublemakers, and tell exaggerated stories. The tale of domestic woes speaks also of spousal abuse and traditional (male) ideas of gender relationships, of domestic difficulties and social ills. It is in keeping with the tradition of speaking about domestic issues through song that Thomas Chauke's 'Rosa' (the name of a person, 2006), takes as its subject a man whose wife has been taken away from him by other men, his only comfort and strength being the 'tree that is in his yard' (*Asinya wule kaya kamina / Asinya wule tlhelo ramina*). Some of the lyrics are quoted here.

Vayisa lava vo lava mina
Vani tekeli Paulina wa mina, ni miyela
Se namunthla mho teka na Rosa
Yo, Rosa wa mina
Eka Rosa kuta nuha ncinde
Yo, Rosa wa mina
Loko u lava Rosa wa mina
Yo, Rosa wa mina
Loko no visingala mita hangalaka
Yo, Rosa wa mina

These guys want me (provoking me)

They took my Paulina, I kept quiet
Today you take my Rosa
Yo, my Rosa
With Rosa, fists will smell
Yo, my Rosa
If you want my Rosa
If I get angry you will all scatter
Yo, My Rosa

It is evident from these examples, from three musicians whose work spans several decades, that domestic matters are often the focus of Tsonga traditional music. This was emphasised by my informants that the message of the song is often what makes people love the music. Songs often deal with matters the listeners of Tsonga traditional music can relate to. Thus one often hears songs about warning men against beating their wives, or conversely, cautioning wives against beating their husbands; about a lazy wife or husband; disrespectful children; promiscuous women (though not, conversely, promiscuous men). However, such topics are also to the subject of Tsonga disco lyrics, which will be discussed in a later chapter. Disco artist Joe Shirimani commented that, 'there is a message there… They (people) must immediately relate to the message. That is what makes people like this music' (Interview, 2009). This was further emphasised by Jack Matlhanyana, a young dancer who has been working for Joe Shirimani for over a decade. Matlhanyana expressed his adoration for Tsonga music pointing out that, 'Tsonga music has a message. And a lot of people take Xitsonga for granted. But Tsonga musicians, most of their songs, there is a message. And the message builds, it builds families, it builds us, youth. I am actually Tswana, but I love Shangaan music" (Interview, 2009).

Dongwe Shirinda spoke in greater detail about the didactic nature of the songs' messages mentioned by his father:

> Shangaan music it's something, it's a music that gives people a knowledge on how to live and everybody who listens to this music, gets something in it, understand? That can make them to be able to differentiate between bad things and good things in life. And then, what need to be applied, what not [to be applied] in life, understand? And then sometimes, Shangaan music is able to give a person a way of how to live life. For example, how can I live with my parents; how can I live with my siblings; with friends, something like that. If I have a wife at home, how can I make sure that she is always a happy person everyday? And then, also, how can I say this, family, how we can live together, peaceful as a family.

Dongwe further suggested that Tsonga traditional music songs take on a certain structure, which he described thus:

> In Shangaan (music)… there are three parts that a person sings. There's the first, second one and the last one when the song is about to end. The first part, is like when a person is reading

> a story, when I read a story, if I want to read about a person who is not living a righteous life and then in the end the person is affected because of not living the right life, when I start, I will explain how this person lives their lives, ne, which is not right. And then in the middle, I will show him that the way in which you are living your life is not right. And then in the end I will say the effects that he encountered because of not living right and then I will also have guidance.

A song that seems to take on such a structure is Thomas Chauke's 'A ha ha Pfuxelani' ('We don't greet each other anymore'):

> *Leswi mi ngo ni swondolota ka buti n'wana manana*
> *Milo twa yini xana hi mina?*
> *Leswi mi ngo ni furhalela ka buti namunthla*
> *Va mi byele yini sesi sikhwiza?*
>
> *A ha ha pfuxelane la kaya*
> *Kulo ngena yini ke*
> *Mi ngo ni hlundzukele ka buti namunthla*
> *Va mi byele yini ke hi mina*
> *Kasi sikhwiza lava makwerhu ke*
> *Va mi byele yini ke hi mina?*
>
> *Se kulo ngena yini la kaya lexo hi hambanisa (sesi sikhwiza von go tsaka)*
> *Se kulo ngena yini xo lwisa (hlayiselani minga chavi)*
> *Mingo ni miyelela*
>
> *Tsena mho nirivalele buti n'wana manana*
> *Na mbilu ya mina yi ta hola*
> *Kambe loko minga xiyaxiyi buti n'wana manana*
> *Phela mhani lava vo hi holovisa*
>
> Why do you keep staring at me, brother, child of my mother?
> What did you hear about me?
> You have turned your back on me today
> What did sister-in-law tell you [about me]?
>
> We do not greet each other in this house
> What has come over us?
> You are angry with me my brother
> What did sister-in-law tell you about me?
>
> What has come over us in this house (sister-in-law is happy)
> What has come over this house (explain, do not be afraid)
> You are suddently quiet ([and] sister-in-law is laughing)
>
> Please forgive me my brother, child of my mother
> So that my heart can have peace
> But if you are not careful my brother, child of my mother
> This woman is going to have us quarrelling.

In the first verse, Chauke establishes that there is a problem between two brothers with one not talking to the other. In the second verse, he points out to the possible cause of the problem, the brother's wife who seems to be happy about the fact that the two are not speaking with each other. In the last verse, through the one brother, Chauke presents a solution by which the two can move forward, that is, by forgiving each other. Though the structure mentioned by Dongwe may be present in this song, it is important to note that not all Tsonga songs employ such as structure. An example of one that doesn't is Shirinda's 'Ximememe' (the name of a mountain snake, 1986).

Ximememe nyoka ya ntsava
Muhlayisi watumbuluko, eti ntshaveni
Laha yi nga kona, a ku kandziyi munhu Ximememe nyoka ya ntshava
Mahlo yayona, onge itinyeleti ta dzonga (Its eyes are
like stars of the south)

Nivisiku, laha yi famba kona, i vutsayi tsayi
Onge imavone ya xihahapfhuka
Ximeme nyoka ya ntshava

Ximememe mountain snake
Keeper/watcher over nature, by the mountains
Wherever it is, no man can lay foot
Ximememe mountain snake

At night, when it crawls, it sparkles
It is like lights of an aeroplane
Ximememe, mountain snake

The song simply tells of Ximememe, a snake that is the guardian of nature.

As a subgenre that is influenced by Tsonga indigenous musical practices, Tsonga traditional has maintained some of the characteristics of Tsonga indigenous music with regards to song texts. Junod describes how in Tsonga song texts, the Tsonga 'chant their joys and sorrows' (1962: 188). The abovementioned 'Ha Twanana' ('We get along well') is exemplary of the expression of joy, while 'A ha ha Pfuxelani' ('We do not greet each other anymore') is an example of the expression of regret. Junod also describes Tsonga folklore, including song texts, as being didactic (176). This is reflected in songs such as 'Watiyisela' ('Hold on') by Thomas Chauke, in which he encourages a person going through a difficult time to be patient, assuring them that good things will come. Another example is Samson Mthombeni's 'Va matsatsela' ('Opportunists'), in which he warns against people who thrive on breaking up families.

Thomas F. Johnston states that Tsonga song texts also 'contain ... cultural references' (1975: 311). I have already pointed out to one aspect of Tsonga culture, polygamy, which often appears in Tsonga traditional lyrics. Another aspect of Tsonga culture often referred to in Tsonga traditional lyrics is witchcraft (see Junod, 1962: 504- 534). Witchcraft remains a part of the Tsonga belief system, hence its constant occurrence in Tsonga traditional lyrics. In the song 'Makhelwana' ('Neighbour'), Shirinda speaks of a neighbour who accuses him of witchcraft, while in 'Ha Twanana' ('We get along well'), Chauke makes brief references to witchcraft, saying that his wives do not practice it. These are a few examples of the characteristics of Tsonga traditional music song texts that draw influence from Tsonga folklore and indigenous music.

It is important to consider the circumstances surrounding the development of Tsonga traditional music. Johnston explained that Tsonga music also 'reflects social, religious, economic, and political roles' (1975: 321). Though the social and religious aspects can be easily identified in some of the songs observed for this research, the same cannot be said about the economic and political, and I propose that this is mainly due to the circumstances surrounding the emergence of this subgenre during the apartheid era. Muff Anderson captured the situation well when she wrote: 'because of what it costs the record companies to re-record should a record be rejected, the utmost care is taken with lyrics. Black groups too make a conscious effort to write for the SABC' (1981: 87). Anderson lists a number of artists who had to 'trim' their lyrics accordingly (ibid.), thus explaining the lack of political reference in Tsonga traditional music. She lamented:

> the most frightening thing is that most of these groups don't realise that they've absorbed the attitudes the state wants of them. They will continue to sing tribal songs and spend all their money on property in Claremont, claiming to be singing 'of the true thing'. None of these bands has stopped to question whether tribal issues, religion, and cattle are issues worth singing about (128).

Shirinda, for example, was well aware of what was expected of his songs' lyrics by the record companies and the SABC. He mentioned how 'they' (music commentators of the time) did not want insulting words and expected the songs to be in 'pure' Shangaan (Interview, 2010). His awareness of apartheid censorship is evident in that, whereas there are no political references in his music prior to democracy, some appear in his music now. An example is the song 'Xidemokrasy' ('Democracy', 2006), in which he complains about how democracy is spoiling children. The same can be said about Thomas Chauke. There does not seem to be

any political reference in his song lyrics until more recently. In the song 'Ti Rights' ('Rights', 2008) he sings about a wife who is lazy and is a drunkard. When he confronts her about her misconduct, he claims that she has rights, i.e. rights that came with democracy. The lack of political reference in Tsonga traditional music prior to democracy, I argue, is due to the musicians' awareness of the censorship laws within which they produced their music (see Drewett and Cloonan, 2006). I read their compliance with the censorship laws as a way of sustaining their careers rather than perpetuating the apartheid government policies. Tsonga traditional music can therefore also be placed alongside other black urban popular music which was scrutinised due to censorship laws.

A hi chineni (Let us dance): Tsonga traditional music on stage

In live performance Tsonga traditional music is presented in two ways: the lead singer lip-synchs or sings live with a band. Due to the recent global economic crisis some artists, to reduce costs, lip-synch to a recording while others prefer to perform live with a band. Though I did not see Thomas Chauke or General MD Shirinda perform live, but witnessed performances by other Tsonga musicians such as George Maluleke and Siya Chauke who participate in the Tsonga traditional music subgenre. The following discussion is based on observation of these performances.

On 3 October 2009 I attended the Mbafi Empire Lodge Music Festival, which took place in Thembisa, a township east of Johannesburg. The line-up consisted of Tsonga musicians only; some from Mozambique, such as Xigilingwana, and included Penny, General Muzka– another Tsonga disco artist– in addition to Maluleke and Chauke. On early arrival I requested security to grant me permission to record the event. I had met one of the organisers while interviewing Penny earlier so had no difficulty doing so. Crowds of both young and old were already gathered outside the stadium, some waiting in queues to purchase their tickets while others stood by to get a glimpse of the artists as they drove into the stadium. Taxis carrying musicians parked at the stadium entrance and the public watched excitedly as the female musicians stepped out in their colourful *swibelana*, the Xitsonga traditional skirt, with their faces cemented with make-up and hair neatly braided. Others stood by enjoying the happenings while others blasted the music of Thomas Chauke from their car sound systems while enjoying cold beer. After a few exchanges with the security and grabbing their luggage from the taxi the musicians proceeded to the VIP area.

The event started at about seven in the evening with a few remarks from the MC. The star attractions were General Muzka and Penny. The line-up commenced with up-and-coming artists which included more than ten Tsonga traditional artists and a few Tsonga disco musicians. Most of the singers lip-synched, including Themba Chauke, another young Tsonga traditional artist who sang along to a CD. Chauke and his male dancers wore western-style clothing such as trousers and cotton shirts and All Stars *takkies* (sneakers), while his female dancers wore *swibelana* (traditional skirt) with bright T-shirts accessorised with earrings and beads around the neck and waist. This style of dress was the same for the other Tsonga traditional musicians with the exception of Siya Chauke who added *tinjovo*, the traditional skin 'skirt' worn by males, on top of his trousers and spotted traditional head gear. The significance of the traditional dress will be discussed later.

Themba Chauke pranced around on stage holding a cordless microphone while waiting for the backing track to begin. As it began he started dancing while the singer-dancers followed suit. He was accompanied by three female singer-dancers and two male dancers. As in the recorded song, the music began with the familiar guitar introduction interrupted by the drum roll, before the full recorded band entered. Chauke then joined in with a sung verse which was followed by a call-and-response chorus. At a point during the performance the vocals stopped while the instruments (from the backing track) continued sounding and it was here that the music intensified. Shirinda had explained that this is an intentional 'break' to allow the dancing, unemcumbered by singing, to intensify. In the recorded music, the guitar becomes more prominent and the drum rolling intensifies. Other musicians use this break for improvisation by other instruments such as a saxophone. The break is a feature that has always been present since the inception of this subgenre. It can be heard in some of Shirinda's early recordings. For example, in the song 'Wena u ndi zondaku' ('you who hate me', c 1960s), there is an instrumental break after the first verse in which the pennywhistle takes a solo.

As the females stopped singing they immediately adjusted from the slow dance they were doing to a more intense dance routine performed in unison. After the unison dance routine they took turns in solo improvised moves showing off their individual skills, as did the male dancers later. This practice seemed to be common to all the performances that evening.

For the women, the dancing involved shaking their buttocks in fast, small semi-circle movements while keeping both hands next to and parallel to the hips so that their *xibelana* swiveled. There are many ways in which the dancers improvise on this basic movement, some include jumping while swiveling the skirt, turning around while swiveling, or lifting one foot up. On the other hand, the men perform a traditional dance which is embellished with popular dance styles such as the *pantsula* dance, a South African township dance. Shirinda and bass guitarist Kenny Baloyi described these dances as the Xigaza dance, the dance of the Gaza. According to Baloyi, they are traditionally performed at celebration ceremonies such as weddings or beer drinking occasions.[16] Both the male and female dance can be referred to by the name of the traditional dress, *xibelani* and *tinjovo*. The men's dance is an intense and energetic one typically performed by young men and involves stamping the ground with both feet, alternating in fast rhythms. The body is predominantly slightly curved with the head facing the ground. The hands move in unison, sometimes with the alternate foot in a way that looks as if the dancer is pulling something in and out of the ground. The movements for both male and female dancers were similar in all the musicians' performances, including those who performed live – such as Siya Chauke. The dance routines witnessed at this performance were given different names by difference informants. Such names included XiGaza, Xigubu, Tinjovo, or Makwaya, though they were very similar. These traditional dances are similar in description and name to those described by Tracey and Johnston in the 1950s and 1970s. Reference to indigenous dances, dance movements and dance names, is therefore part of what defines contemporary Tsonga traditional music.

After a few disappointing sound checks and some rude comments from the audience who were irritated for waiting for what seemed to be forever, Chauke finally got the sound he wanted. While the sound engineers were working, Chauke used the opportunity to advertise his CD being launched the following week. Before he started performing, he felt the need to explain that he chose to perform live so that people could see that it was he who was playing the guitar on the CD. Eventually this speech led to his guitar introduction. Backed by a bass guitarist, drummers (a main drummer and an additional drummer to play the hi-hat), a keyboardist and four female singer-dancers, Chauke spiced up the line-up by including three male dancers who performed some theatrics and acrobatics. In addition to doing the abovementioned male *xigaza* dance, the dancers climbed on top of each others' shoulders,

[16] See Thomas F. Johnston (1971) and Hugh Tracey (1952) for discussions of Xitsonga dances.

and the dancer at the bottom humorously wore the female *xibelani*. Chauke himself participated in the dancing, when not singing. Even though Chauke's performance was live, the song structure and dance routine took the same format as that of the musicians who lip-synched.

In a live performance where a singer is accompanied by a band and backing vocalists, due to the influence of American pop music one has come to accept the following set-up as a convention for popular music performances: the lead singer takes centre stage in front of the band with the backing singers staged left or right behind the lead. In addition, in the American pop tradition, backing singers are often dressed in black, further downplaying their importance. In Tsonga traditional music the opposite is true. Backing singers in Tsonga traditional music take centre stage and are as much an attraction as the lead singer. Their *swibelana* (pl.) are usually in bright colours such as orange, yellow, green and red and these are worn with brightly coloured T-shirts, thereby visually highlighting their presence on stage. Although Tsonga lead singers 'dance' it is more of the order of moving to the music than choreographed dancing, while it is the women in their *swibelana* and the male dancers (though male dancers are not always present) who work on serious dancing, and the music intensifies during the dancing to emphasise the importance thereof.

Dongwe Shirinda remarked that:

> [Tsonga] traditional is *ndavuko* (heritage/culture) in Shangaan. In other words we are showing that we are not abandoning our culture, our humanity. Disco has diverted from tradition, it's just disco. It's no longer in traditional music, understand. Traditional music, everything that we do, we do the Tsonga way; we don't put any western practices in between. For example, when we dance, we put on *tindjovo* (traditional male outfit) in traditional music to show that we are Shangaan, understand. So, if you look at the Zulus, they have their own attires that they wear when they dance and doing what they are doing, so we as Shangaan also have our culture and our way of doing things. And we don't put any white practices in between when we sing this music, no! When we sing this music and we put white practices, we are ruining things because we say its traditional music (Interview, 2010).

Shirinda clarified that, in his view, the only western aspect of Tsonga traditional music is the instruments because 'even in meat you have to put spices' (Interview, 2010). While this is contestable, it is important to stress that it the musicians of Tsonga traditional music who attempt thus to identify their music. From the above discussion of Tsonga music on stage, it is in live performance that aspects of the traditional – dress, dance – reinforce the naming and defining of the subgenre.

Concluding remarks

The above discussion brings to mind Jonathan Shaw's observation on the evolution of genre categories in which he argues that a genre's 'evolutionary change' is marked by certain characteristics, one of which is accumulation (2007: 270). With accumulation, Shaw asserts that a 'sub-genre acquires elements that are not part of the original genre'. Shaw's second characteristic is 'conservatism', which for Shaw refers to the manner in which 'sub-genres keep core content consistent with the original genre'. Lastly, Shaw describes the characteristic of 'differentiation', which is when the 'sub-genres become defined in their own right alongside the original genre' (270). These processes seem to be true for Tsonga traditional music. Tsonga indigenous music 'accumulated' new elements through, for example, the addition of new compositions and western instruments. As it acquired these new features, it maintained elements of the original musics such as the dress, the dance and the themes the lyrics covered. This music then differentiated itself through, importantly, the new name of the music: 'Tsonga traditional music'.

Chapter 3:
Three Decades of Tsonga Disco

In the 1980s, Paul Ndlovu's 'Khombora mina' ('My misfortune', track 3), and 'Mukon'wana' ('Son in Law', track 4) became popular hits. In the late 1980s to early 90s, Peta Teanet's 'Maxaka' ('Relatives', track 5) and 'Matswele' ('Breasts', track 6) climbed the charts. In the 1990s Penny's 'Shichangana ixilungu' ('Shangaan is English') and Joe Shirimani's 'Nosi' ('Bee') become household hits. These are all Tsonga disco hits by artists who have contributed to the development of this subgenre of Tsonga music. What follows in this chapter is an account of these artists and their specific contributions to the subgenre. Though it may appear that the development of this subgenre follows a periodic development, it should not be interpreted as such. It happens that two of the major players in this subgenre, Paul Ndlovu and Peta Teanet, both suffered premature deaths leaving a huge impact on the subgenre. Therefore I should clarify that the subgenre should not be seen as being pigeonholed under each period. Each of the mentioned artists, besides Ndlovu who is considered to be the father of
Tsonga disco, develop the genre from where the previous artist left off.

In this chapter it is proposed that radio had an influence in giving Tsonga disco its label. I make suggestions as to how this transpired, taking into consideration the socio-political circumstances surrounding the emergence of this style. Close attention is therefore paid to how an external element, such as radio, could impact the labelling of a particular subgenre. I then present brief accounts of the artists' lives – Paul Ndlovu, Peta Teanet, Joe Shirimani and Penny – and some of the contributions they made to the subgenre. I end the chapter with a discussion on how Tsonga disco is performed live.

South Africa in the 1980s and the role of radio

Teargas, police vans, riots, school children running and throwing stones at police, Sam Nzima's iconic picture of a dying Hector Pieterson: These are some of the images that represent black South Africa during the 1970s and 80s. During this period the apartheid system intensified with the Bantu Homeland Citizen Act of 1970 making 'all black South Africans citizens of tribal homeland, regardless of their place of birth' (Muller, 2008: 28); this was follow-up legislation to the earlier Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952 which

governed urban ‘influx control’ of blacks through the requirement of all ‘non Europeans [to] carry a *dompas* (stupid pass) on their person at all times, detailing work and residence’ (27). Accordingly, ‘each National State was encouraged to develop its own language and distinctive way of life, according to its own cultural heritage’ (Hamm, 1991: 152). To ensure that this ‘natural’ order was kept intact and that black people were persuaded that this was the way that things were meant to be, certain measures were taken to underpin this ideology, one of which was radio.

Carol Muller notes Benedict Anderson’s observations on how the media plays a role in building a sense of belonging to a ‘nation’ and how this became advantageous for the apartheid national broadcaster. Anderson is of the opinion that being part of a nation is something that people imagine rather that experience, for example, through participating in similar experiences such as reading the same newspaper on the same day. Muller goes on to say that:

> In the twentieth century, Anderson’s theory worked selectively for the apartheid government’s idea of the ‘nation’ insofar as ‘nationalism’ was an idea promulgated by the media. But instead of newspaper ... radio was the medium that apartheid government used to engineer a new kind of social order. Rather than articulating national unity, however, radio was used to separate out on bases of difference between groups of people, largely determined by language use (2008: 33).

Music played a major role in allowing radio to capture a sizeable audience. The apartheid national broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) said, ‘music constitutes, and will always constitute, the most comprehensive component of any radio service’ (Annual Report 1964, cited in Hamm, 1991: 159). This chapter starts by investigating the emergence of the Tsonga disco subgenre in the midst of South Africa’s most politically turbulent circumstances and how this may have influenced the labelling of the music.

The role of Radio Bantu in the emergence of Tsonga disco

In the article ‘The constant companion of man’, Charles Hamm describes how ‘radio broadcasts to “natives” were initiated by the Native Affairs Department in 1940, as an emergency war measure to dispel disruptive rumours concerning the progress of World War II and South Africa’s role in the conflict’ (1991: 148). With the growing need to disseminate information to blacks, because it was ’becoming more urgently necessary every day for

Europeans and non-Europeans to understand each other and remove difficulties in the way of co-operation' (AR 1945, cited in Hamm (1991: 148), eventually, with the proposition from the SABC, Radio Bantu was established in 1960. By 1969 it was broadcasting in seven African languages on full day schedule (Muller, 2008, and Hamm, 1991:158).[17]

As one of the essential components for the success of Radio Bantu, the SABC had to ensure it played the appropriate music; therefore music that was played on air went through careful scrutiny. Hamm has already been cited in detail in the previous chapter on some of the criteria that music had to comply with in order to be playlisted. However, the following points need to be reiterated: 'There should be something Zulu about a piece to be played on Radio Zulu, something Xhosa about the music broadcast on Radio Xhosa', and importantly, 'performers should be of the proper ethnicity, members of a proper tribe'. The broadcaster required the music to 'be accessible and attractive to the listeners, since the imperative of Radio Bantu was to sell ideology and commodities to the largest possible black audience, not to educate its listeners or to 'elevate' their music taste'. Traditional music became important for this purpose and therefore was given a 'great deal of airtime' (Hamm, 1991: 160-161). However, it soon became clear that if Radio Bantu was to attract and hold a majority of black listeners, traditional music was of limited and decreasing effectiveness and resultantly other forms of music were introduced which included choral music and popular music (Hamm, 1991: 160-161 and Muller, 2008: 34-37). Themba Mtshali, a librarian at the SABC Media Libraries, remembered how Radio Bantu stations mixed the music they played because 'it would be boring if they only played, for example, *maskanda* only on Radio Zulu' (Interview, 2011).

Hamm continues to say that:

> By the mid-1980s, the grand media strategy theorized in the 1960s was finally in full operation. All of South Africa, and Namibia as well, was blanketed by a complex radio network ensuring that each person would have easy access to state-controlled radio service in his/her own language, dedicated to mould[ing] his intellect and his was of life by stressing the distinctiveness and separateness of 'his' cultural/ethnic heritage ... The majority of programme time was given over to music, selected for its appeal to the largest possible number of listeners within that particular group, functioning to attract an audience to radio service whose most important business was selling ideology (1991: 169).

The national broadcaster's monopoly over the airwaves meant that it had sole control over the music that was played on air. However it soon became clear that the monopoly would not be

[17] The languages were isiZulu, isiXhosa, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, TshiVenda, Xitsonga and SeTswana.

permanent. Hamm argues that the SABC's loss of its monopoly was partly due to the government granting the national (black) states 'independence'. As a symbol of their autonomy, the national states were granted permission to establish their own radio services which eventually led to the stations compiling programmes that were in opposition to 'Radio Bantu's mission of ethnic and linguistic separateness'. Though these radio stations were still under the watchful eye of the SABC, they started to play European, American and Caribbean popular music (1991: 170).

In response to the gradual growth in competition, Radio Bantu, through 'gradual reversal of policy ... began programming more black American and European pop music; Caribbean music, even reggae, was offered selectively after careful screening of texts; pieces by black South African pop stars of one ethnicity were played on services of Radio Bantu aimed at other 'tribal' groups' (171). Therefore it comes as no surprise that when American disco made its way to South Africa in the 1970s, 'South African record companies released [the] records and the SABC put them on the air' (Hamm, 1985: 34).

American disco emerged from clubs in New York City in the mid 1960s and was popular among socially marginalized groups such as African Americas, Latinos and gays (Starr and Waterman, 2006). Important to the disco parties was the DJ, who became the superstar of the event, introducing new sounds to the dance-floor by mixing their favourite tracks – in such a way that the music never stopped – in an attempt to keep the clubbers on the dance-floor. Shapiro gives a detailed discussion of the DJs that were instrumental in creating disco as a genre (2005). Disco however remained a largely subcultural practice until the release of the film *Saturday Night Fever* in 1977 (Shapiro, 2005; Starr, 2006; and Bidder, 2001).

It was after the release of the film *Saturday Night Fever* starring John Travolta, which popularised the Australian group, the Bee Gees, that American disco made its way to South Africa. It is important to note that though disco was played on Radio Bantu, it was not played on the Afrikaans radio station. Principal technician at the SABC, Rob Lens, and senior archivist for Sound Restoration at the SABC, Marius Oosthuisen, both told me how disco was not played on the white radio stations because it was considered 'evil'. Oosthuisen pointed out that they never heard disco on air but bought the records from an Indian shop out of town. You could not find disco in the outlets in town such as OK' (Interview, 2010). Oosthuisen and Lens elaborated that because there was a lot of falsetto (for example in the Bee Gees

sound) in disco, it was considered unmanly 'to sing like that', and was thus associated with gay culture; at the time homosexuality was illegal in South Africa (Interview, 2010). While the national broadcaster could not feed its own people 'demonic' music, it felt the music was appropriate for the 'natives'. First, because it was dance music it was believed that 'natives will respond to rhythm [rather] than harmonic or melodic elements' (Hamm, 1991: 150). Second, disco's texts were apolitical and therefore met the Publications Board requirements for music to be played on air for black South Africans. South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela referred to disco as a 'social tranquilizer': 'I love you, baby, we'll boogie all night. Shake your money-maker. Do it to me tonight. Do it to me three times. Now we are trapped, man. Disco is a social tranquilizer; you don't recognise other things. We can't boogie for the whole year' (cited in Ansell, 2005: 198).

By 'other things, Masekela was referring to the political situation in the country in the 1980s. By this time 'the struggle [had] intensified, censorship had been stepped up, even from the severe restrictions of the 1970s and woven more tightly into the structures of the police state' (Ansell, 2005: 197). Musicians whose music was political went into exile and those who remained in the country had to comply with state policies or their music would be banned. Michael Drewett and Johnny Clegg give an overview of censorship in South Africa in *Popular Music Censorship in Africa* (2006). In the article 'Packaging desires' (2008) Drewett focuses on the censorship of album covers of South African musicians. Cecile Pracher who worked as a librarian at the SABC remembered this time:

> The lyrics of each pop item had to be checked on grounds stemming from Publications Board ... Our rules were more defined than those of government. Things like, for example, swear words were unacceptable. Unacceptable sexual references ... bad taste... occult elements ... the usage of drugs, blasphemy, glorification of the Devil, unfair promotion of political party ... between 1980 and 1990s it was time of PW Botha and apartheid was in full swing and the state of emergency was declared and everything tighter and tighter (cited in Ansell, 2005: 198).

Disco's non-political nature gave it a free pass with the state broadcaster thus becoming an instant hit and before long, black South African musicians were appropriating disco into their own music practices (Hamm 1988: 33). Allingham affirms that 'when US disco music became popular, local soul was easily transformed into local disco. Recording techniques, and in some instances the level of musicianship had improved and more sophisticated keyboards came in' (1994: 386). One of the successful bands of this new local sound was The

Movers, of which Tsonga disco founder, Paul Ndlovu (?-1986), was a part.[18] Bass guitarist and member of The Movers, Lulu Masilela, confirmed that the band performed 'African jazz, with a little bit of *mbaqanga* and of course disco as well and ballads' (Interview, 2010).

Paul Ndlovu and the rise of Tsonga disco

Masilela, who was not only an instrumentalist but a manager and recruiter for The Movers, claims to have recruited Paul Ndlovu to the band in the early 1980s. I quote Masilela's story at length:

> We in fact met him when we were on tour. We were touring Eastern Transvaal then, that's Limpopo. So I booked a tour then our first show, I loved this boy who was dancing so beautifully. That was the first show that was on Friday. Saturday he was there again on the other place that was in Nkowankowa. Then we went to Tzaneen. He was still there, then I had to call him to the backstage and I said, hey *mona* (man) I am spotting a talent or potential here ... Then I said to him, I'm surprised the way you dance I think you can also sing because I know that most guys that dance can sing as well. He says yes I can. So I said are you not interested to join the group? He said, are you serious? I said yes. Then I gave him money to follow us up. That was our last show on Sunday. We were performing in Nkowankowa on Sunday, ja. No, no, we were in a place called Namakgale. Then he said okay you'll find me in Jo'burg tomorrow. So we left the same evening after performance. Believe you me on Tuesday when we arrived Paul arrived on Monday. We found him at the Dorkay House cause that was our main kraal.[19] We found him there. So straight away, day after we took him to the studio and the first song that was recorded that was produced by me, Paul and The Movers that was called eeeh, 'Mhlola'. That became a monster hit (Interview, 2010).

Former Munghana Lonene FM marketing manager, James Shikwambana who did research for the radio station, also commented on Ndlovu's breakthrough into the industry.

> Paul Ndlovu started, he was in Mpharanyana's band and then he teamed up with Ray Phiri to form Stimela, he is one of the founding members of Stimela. Then in 1984 he left Stimela to start a band called Street Kids with a guy called Oupa Poho. That was in 1984. Then in 1985 he went solo, that is when he released the hit 'Hita Famba Moyeni', ja now that's when he created what we call Xitsonga disco today which influenced Peta Teanet, Forster Teanet, Joe Shirimani, there are a lot today (Interview, 2009).

Yet another account of Ndlovu's journey is given by Mojapelo based on his memories and personal encounters with some of the musicians in his story.

> In the seventies in Lulekani Township, Phalaborwa there was a group called The Big Cats. Among its members was one Paul Ndlovu. His talent caught the eye of Ray Phiri. Inspired by the male duo trend of the 1980s, the Street Kids was born. It was made up of Paul Ndlovu and Oupa Pop ... Paul Ndlovu later embarked on a solo career with the help of Peter 'Hitman' Moticoe (2008: 43).

Peter Moticoe, a bassist turned producer who worked with various artists across different

[18] Efforts to find out Paul Ndlovu's date of birth proved futile. Gallo Record could not provide his artist profile.
[19] Dorkay House was the home of the first all-black African Music and Dance Association, AMDA, and it was the place where the Union of South African Artists was founded in the 1950s (Anderson, 1981: 21-31)

genres, spoke fondly of Ndlovu, remembering how he met the young Ndlovu while working with The Movers. Moticoe recalls that it was common for musicians to join and leave bands and then come back again (see Mojapelo, 2008). Ndlovu was recruited into The Movers while Moticoe had left the band. Upon his return to The Movers, Ndlovu was already a member of the band. Resultantly, Moticoe does not know how Ndlovu was recruited. Nevertheless, Moticoe spoke of Ndlovu's relationship with Ray Phiri, maintaining that he was one of the founding members of Stimela.

Although there are inconsistencies in these accounts of Ndlovu's early career in the music business, there are some common threads: he came from Phalaborwa; he was part of the Street Kids, worked with Ray Phiri and eventually embarked on a solo career. It is possible that Masilela's account differs from that of Shikwambana and Mojapelo because he had more personal interaction with Ndlovu, while the latters' accounts are from third-party knowledge. Masilela therefore supplies details of which Shikwambana and Mojapelo may not have been aware and he also privileges his own position, and importance, in Ndlovu's story.

Ndlovu's breakthrough as a solo artist came at the peak of South Africa's political upheaval during the 1980s. According to Mojapelo, Ndlovu released two hits, 'Khombora mina' ('My misfortune') and 'Mukon'wana' ('Son-in-law') in 1985, while in Shikwambana's account it was in 1985 that Ndlovu went solo, 'that's when he released the hit 'Hita Famba Moyeni' ('We will walk on air', track 7)' (Mojapelo, 2008: 143, Shikwambana Interview, 2009). As Ndlovu's producer, Moticoe clarified that Ndlovu had asked if he could work with him, after hearing Moticoe's work with another Tsonga artist, Obed Ngobeni, on the latter's song 'Ku Hluvukile Kazet' ('There is progress in Kazet', 1983); a song which was later adapted by Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens and had become a hit. Moticoe was working for RPM as a public relations officer at the time and although the company was content with his work, he was happier in the studio. When Ndlovu proposed a working relationship, Moticoe took him into the studio. He could not remember the name of the first song they recorded, but after being given feedback by the company decision-makers on the song, they chose to record another song altogether, and this was 'Khombora Mina' ('My misfortune'), from which followed 'Tsakane' (the name of a person, and meaning 'rejoice', track 8).

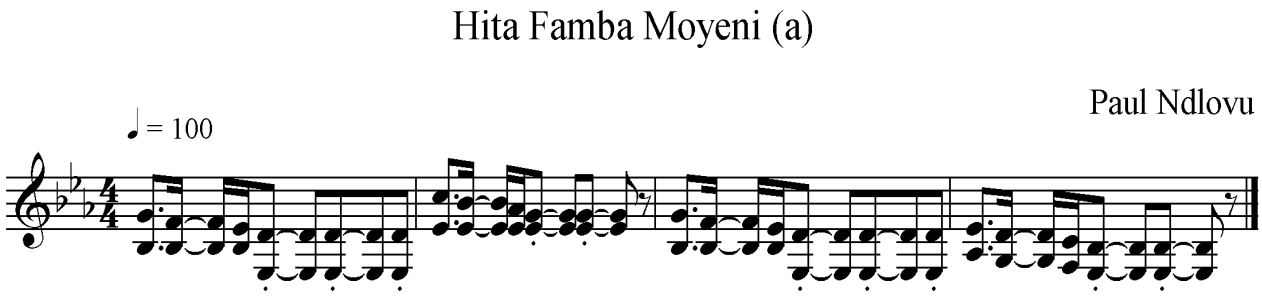
Which one was the first hit is not as important as the year in which the songs were released: 1985 was the year in which a state of emergency was declared in South Africa (Muller, 2008:

28). The socio-political circumstances in the country impacted on the labelling of Ndlovu's music. As mentioned earlier, during this period the government had not abandoned its separate development mission but rather it intensified its policies of separateness. According to Drewett 'the apartheid government strategy of separating ethnic groups impacted heavily on the way record companies recorded and marketed musicians' (2008:128). When Ndlovu emerged as a solo artist, his ethnicity provided the music industry, and later music commentators, with a ready-made label for his music: a Tsonga musician produced Tsonga music. The impact of ethnicity in the labelling of Tsonga music will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

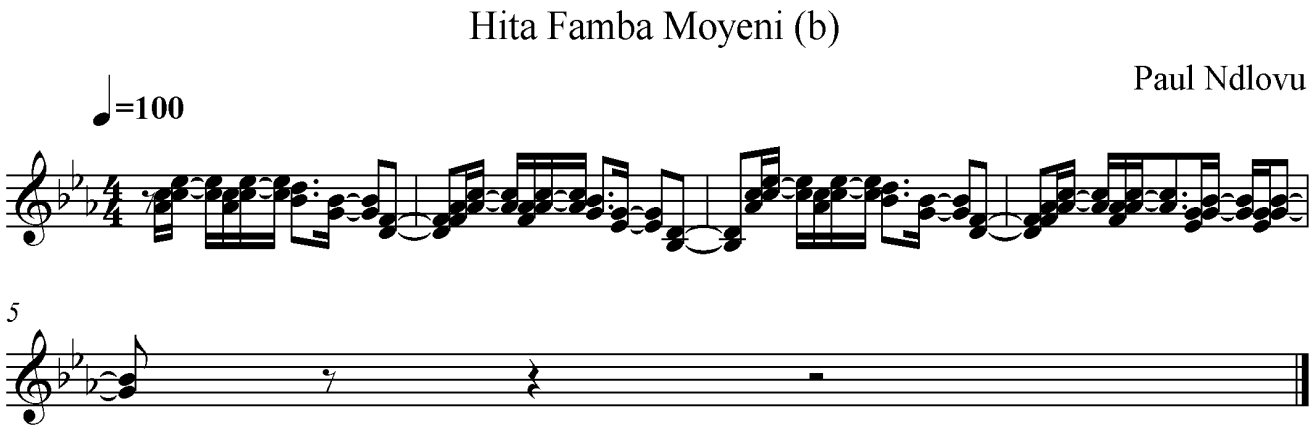
Despite the political situation, Ndlovu became a success and was 'loved' by the crowds. His success was partly due to the type of music he recorded and its suitability to radio: Mojapelo confesses that Ndlovu was 'one musician who opened [his] eyes to the overwhelming power of radio' (2008: 143). Hamm has said that disco 'was seen ... certainly in South Africa, as a mindless, apolitical entertainment, as such it was appropriate music for the government and its agencies to encourage among blacks, in such troubled times' (1984: 35). Ndlovu's music therefore suited the times since it was disco. In my informants' accounts, Ndlovu was presented as the progenitor of Tsonga disco. Shikwambana told me that 'Paul Ndlovu [was] the guy who created the sound that today is called Xitsonga disco ... where you have your world drums there. You know for that kind of music you need to sit in studio and, sometimes there are no guitars in disco, keyboards dominate, and somehow drums are created from keyboards' (Interview, 2009). Similarly, Joe Shirimani stated: 'Shangaan disco, if you check, it started with Paul Ndlovu' (Interview, 2009).

Characteristically, Ndlovu's music maintained most of the American disco elements which include the thumping bass, synthesizers, drum machines and keyboards (Clarke, 1989; Hamm, 1988; and Starr, 2006). The song 'Hita Famba Moyeni' ('We will walk on air') starts with the synthesized keyboard riffs in Examples 2a and 2b.

Example 2a.

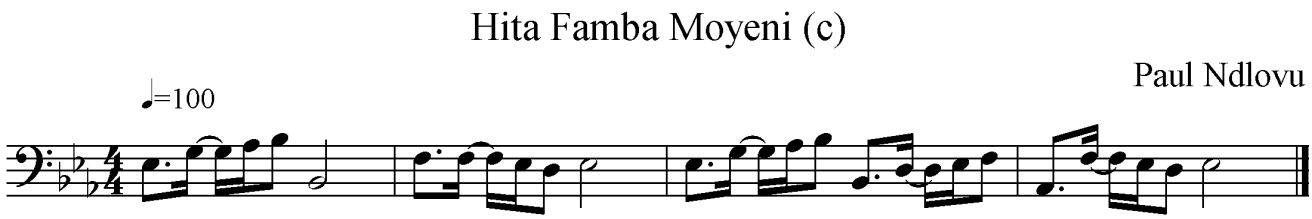


Example 2b.



Then an electric bass interjects playing the following motif:

Example 2c.



In most of Ndlovu's songs, the music is built upon an ostinato bass line. In addition, it is mainly constructed of synthesizer and keyboard riffs that are repeated throughout the song with occasional variation. The use of synthesizer and keyboard riffs was also a defining feature of American disco. Though both American and Tsonga disco share these features, they do have very distinctive overall sounds. While the synthesized sounds in Tsonga disco attempt to replicate the sounds of acoustic western instruments, in some American disco the synthesized sounds are audibly synthetic with no reference to acoustic instruments. Donna Summer's 'I Feel Love' (track 9) is a good example of this. Barker and Taylor describe this piece as 'alien, robotic, repetitive groove, [and] made completely without acoustic instruments' (2007: 253). This difference may be due to the fact that in America big name producers would have had more sophisticated studio equipment than what was available to

black South African musicians during apartheid.[20]

In certain songs, Ndlovu uses live instruments such as the trumpet in 'Cool Me Down' (track 10), and saxophone in 'Mina Ndzi Rhandza Wena' ('I only love you', track 11)) and 'Dyambu Ri Xile' ('The sun has risen', track 12).[21] In 'Mina Ndzi Rhandza Wena' the sax is given a short phrase which is repeated throughout the piece with minor variations, while in 'Dyambu Ri Xile' the sax plays an improvisatory role as a solo instrument. Moticoe expressed his love for live instruments saying that to this day, though he makes use of electronic synthesizers, he always incorporates live instruments in his music. The use of brass in disco was a feature of American disco, though mainly used in groups rather than as solo instruments; for example in 'Stayin Alive' (track 13) there are numerous brass stabs (2:00-4:35). Ndlovu makes use of speech in the middle of a song: in 'Tsakane' he speaks over the music, asking a girl out (2:26-2:46). This is another feature which was not foreign in American disco, as it can be heard in Summer's 'Unconditional Love' (0:14-0:39, track 14). In 'Tsakane' Ndlovu asks a girl out – "let's go to the disco" – suggesting that disco in South Africa not only referred to the music but to a larger culture (Mojapelo, 2008: 11).

Senior Ndebele archivist at the SABC, Peter Raseroka, and SABC Librarian, Themba Mtshali, both described how, in the early to mid-eighties, they went to discos in Johannesburg and its townships, where they danced, 'boozed' and womanised. They described disco venues as being mainly dark with colourful lights, with a dance floor and someone playing records in a booth away from the crowd. Raseroka and Mtshali pointed out that some of the international artists whose music was played included Donna Summer, Petty Labelle, the Bee Gees, George Benson, and local musicians included Brenda Fassie, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Harare, Chicco, Mercy Pakela, Chaklas, and Vusi Shange. While for the public disco nightclubs were places for having fun, for those like Moticoe they provided an opportunity to market their music. Moticoe noted that he used such places to promote his artists, including Paul Ndlovu. He would give records to the club owners asking that they be played. In addition, he owned a promotional mini-bus which he drove around playing the music. From these endeavours he received feedback from the public which he would then use to improve the tracks.

[20] See Louise Meintjes's article 'Reaching "Overseas"' in *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Culture* (2005), for a discussion about technology if the South African music industry.
[21] These songs are from a compilation disc, therefore orgianl dates of release are unknown to the author

Raseroka's and Mtshali's descriptions of the disco scene in Johannesburg are similar to that of the American disco scene (see Starr and Waterman, 2006; and Shapiro, 2005). One difference between the local and American scenes was that the American disco scene was dominated by DJ culture – and the cult of the DJ; to a significant extent the DJ replaced the singer and musicians.Whereas in South Africa black clubbers did not even know who the DJs were. At the time, the term DJ, according to Mtshali, did not exist in local usage. While in American disco scenes, dancers raved about the skills of a particular DJ rather than the musicians and/or producers the DJ played, in South Africa it was the disco musicians who became popular; hence Ndlovu became one of the country's favourites. According to Moticoe, Ndlovu's fame even crossed the borders and reached Botswana.

In addition, while American disco grew from the innovations of DJs and producers in underground facilities frequented by socially-marginalised groups and was initially detested by mainstream society for its association with minority groups, Ndlovu's Tsonga disco, on the contrary, became an instant hit in such a way that after he passed on, one of South Africa's finest artists and producer Sello 'Chicco' Twala wrote a song in remembrance of the star.[22] While the minorities in America were frequenting disco clubs to 'escape' from prejudice and build communities in 'safe' spaces (Barker and Taylor, 2007: 236-237), in South Africa disco as a music genre was propagated to blacks and was well received.

In addition to disco primarily functioning as dance music and being branded by social commentators as musically simple, it was also described as having 'straightforward subject matter and lyrics' (Starr and Watermann, 2006: 227), a feature also found in Ndlovu's Tsonga disco. Ndlovu's song lyrics and subject matter fall into two categories: those songs that deal with love and those that consider domestic issues. An example of the former is the song 'Tsakane' (a person's name, meaning rejoice). The lyrics are in English and Tsonga.

Come to me Tsakane
I wanna kiss you nice nice
Don't be afraid my darling
I wanna take you out tonight
I wanna make you happy
I wanna make you feel so good, so good Tsakane

You are the girl of my dreams
There is no other woman in my heart

[22] Chicco's 'Tribute to our Heroes' (track 14) from the album *We Don't Need War* (Mojapelo, 2008:11)

It's only you Tsakane

Uxiluva xa mino (You are my flower)
Uxi yangulelo xamino (You are my one and only)
Uxi heyi heyi xamino (You are the one for me)

'Tsakane' is one of several disco songs in which Ndlovu declares or proposes love to a woman. The other songs are 'I Wanna Know Your Name' (track 15) in which Ndlovu's narrator asks a woman for her name because he is 'a lonely man' and he 'just wants to know her'; 'Mina Ndzi Rhandza Wena' ('I love only you'); 'Hita Famba Moyeni' ('We will walk on air'); and 'Cool Me Down'.[23]

The second category of song texts in Ndlovu's music centres on domestic issues. In 'Zantinti' (track 16) Ndlovu sings about his grandmother who wakes up every morning asking who took her snuff.[24] Ndlovu laments his misfortune for being given a drunkard for a wife in 'Khombo Ra Mina' ('My misfortune'), while in 'Mukon'wana' (Son-in-law) he welcomes his in-laws, assuring them that they will be well-treated.

While American pop musicians may have had more freedom to choose the subject matter of their songs, Ndlovu's topics and choice of lyrics was the result of deliberate consideration. Ndlovu's producer, Peter Moticoe explained, 'I had friends in the radio, mostly they were ex-teachers, you could only get into radio if you were an ex-teacher, so I would take lyrics to them first and ask, is this right? Is this not vulgar or anything?' (Interview, 2011). Moticoe's remarks are a reminder of the power of the censorship of the petty in popular music in South Africa during the 1980s. Clegg and Drewett discuss how censorship laws required record companies to provide written lyrics to the Publicans Board for approval before a song was broadcast (2006: 128). This points to the challenges producers and musicians in apartheid South Africa faced. However, although some artists and producers, like the Tsonga disco artists I discussed, eschewed political references in their music, others like Sello 'Chicco' Twala, Mzwakhe Mbuli, and Blondie Makhene, were less compliant and risked the consequences of their music being banned. Some artists' music was explicit in its political references, for example Blondie Makhene's Amaqabane band (Mojapelo, 2008:34), and others were subtle in their message, such as in Stimela's 'Whispers in the Deep' (138; Ansell, 2005: 199).

[23] 'We will walk on air' is a direct translation but in the song it refers to flying in an airplane.
[24] Snuff in this context refers to a black powder made from crushed tobacco leaves which is inhaled through the nose, mainly by old women, in this case.

I suggest, however, that some kind of resistance can also be found in Ndlovu's music practice. For example, although his music was labelled Tsonga disco, Ndlovu avoided making direct reference to Tsonganess or Gazas in his music, thus indirectly refusing to perpetuate the system's separate development ideals. Ndlovu may have not explicitly sang liberation songs, but his success in the midst of political turmoil and the lack of direct reference to Tsonganess in his music, can both be interpreted as a resistance to some of the tenets of apartheid ideology.

The heyday of American disco was shortlived. Its legacy however, lives on in other popular music such as house, hip hop, rap and techno (Bidder, 2001; Brewster and Broughton, 1999; and Snoman, 2004). Ndlovu's music career seems to epitomise the fortunes of disco itself. He emerged into the music industry, quickly became a national icon and tragically died in the second year of his solo career. Like the impact of disco, his influence lives on in the music of today's Tsonga disco artists.

From Paul to Penny: Three decades of Tsonga disco

Paul Ndlovu's premature death in 1986 left a vacuum in Tsonga popular music which was soon filled by Peta Teanet (1966-1996), another Tsonga disco artist whose life would be prematurely cut short. Very little is known about Teanet and efforts to find anyone close to him have proved frustrating.[25] The little that is known is reproduced from CD sleeve notes by Mojapelo:

> He was born Ntahleng Teanet Peta on 16 June 1966 in Letsitele. His mother Emma sang many traditional songs to the child and that laid the foundation from which Ntahleng's future music inspiration would benefit. His family later moved to the village of Thapane outside Tzaneen where he grew up. Teanet started singing publicly at the age of 18 in church at Relela village, where he also helped pray for the troubled souls. Later he played keyboard and sang for a group called Relela. The band caught attention of Radio Tsonga's music producer, Roy Ngobeni. He exposed them to the broader public. After the passing away of his hero [Paul Ndlovu], Teanet went down to Johannesburg with the aim of sustaining Paul's legacy. After knocking on many doors, he eventually met the leader of Mordillo [Ndlovu's band], Lefty Rhikhoto, who was prepared to produce him. Using the name Peta Teanet, his debut album *Maxaka* (1998, Challenger) hit the streets (2008:144-145, cited from CD sleeve of the album *The Best of Peta Teanet*, 2004).

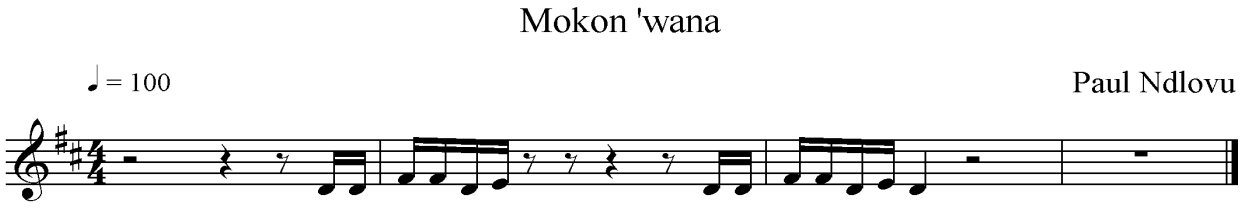
[25] Peter Moticoe said that he worked with Teanet only on one project, and does not know anything else about him. Gallo Records also failed to provide me with Teanet's artist profile after several requests.

Since his solo album *Maxaka* (We are relatives), Teanet went on to release other albums such as *Divorce Case* (1989), *Peta Teanet* and *The Special Servants* (1991), *Saka Naye Jive* (Jive with him jive, 1992), and *Utakutsakisa* (He will make you happy, 1993). He was shot dead in 1996 while 'promoting his forthcoming album' (ibid.).

Ndlovu's influence is clearly evident in Teanet's music. The song 'Maxaka' (We are relatives) from his debut album of the same name begins with two keyboard riffs and a synthesized percussive rhythm. The first riff enters with the percussive rhythm; the second riff half way through the first one as if responding to it. Once the riffs are in play, the bass drops in just before Teanet gruffly whispers the word 'Maxaka'. The two keyboard riffs and the bass line form the instrumental foundation of this song. They are maintained throughout the piece and do not change, though the riffs are occasionally omitted while the bass and the percussion parts remain and vice versa. The use of synthesizer and keyboard riffs and a consistent bass motive was also a feature of Ndlovu's music.

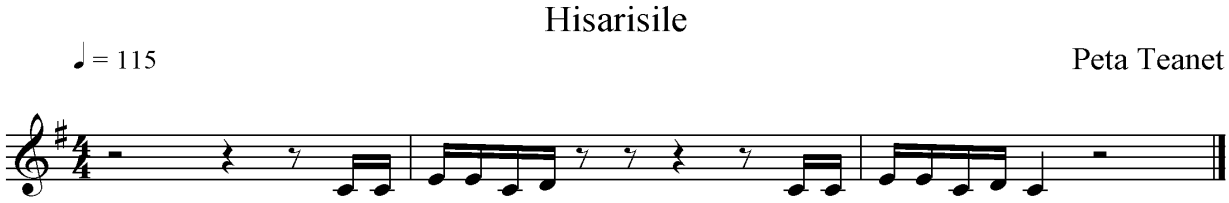
Teanet's admiration for Ndlovu is depicted in the song 'Hisarisile' ('We said our goodbyes', or 'goodbye') in which he replicates in imitation one of the sounds found in at least three of Ndlovu's songs, 'Hita Famba Moyeni' ('We will walk on air'), 'Cool Me Down' and 'Khombo Ra Mina' ('My misfortune').[26] This sound clip, probably a pitch bend, resembles a synthesized sustained muffled descending 'u' sound. In the same song Teanet also reproduces a melodic motif, the fundamental sound of which is that of an African marimba, found in Ndlovu's 'Mokon'wana' (Son-in-law). In Ndlovu's song the motif appears as in Example 2d while Teanet's version is shown in Example 2e.

Example 2d.



[26] In 'Hita Famba Moyeni' the sound can be heard at 00:03, in 'Cool Me Down at 00:57, and in 'Khombo Ra Mina' at 00:04. In all songs the sound keeps recurring throughout the track.

Example 2e.



The motif is the same except that they appear in different keys, and the tempo is much faster in Teanet's, set to, in disco terms, 115 bpm' 'Mokon'wana' is 100 bpm. In the latter the motif appears very early in the piece at 0:07 when it enters with another keyboard riff. Initially it comes and goes, until its return just before the chorus whereafter its distinctive marimba sound dominates the piece. One is drawn more to it than any of the other riffs. Both the motifs have a synthesised marimba sound.

In 'Hisarisile' (track 17) the marimba melodic motif only appears after all the instrumentation, including the voice, has been laid down. Though there are a number of other melodic motifs within this song, the marimba motif dominates. Its busyness thickens, creating a distinctive sound. The use of the pitch bend sound and referencing the marimba motif can be thought of as Teanet's acknowledgment of Ndlovu's influence on him and as a tribute to the Tsonga star. His admiration of Ndlovu has been spoken about by Moticoe (Interview, 2011) and Mojapelo (2008: 144).

Though Ndlovu's influence is explicit in Teanet's music, Teanet has his own idiolect, 'the style trait associated with [a] particular performer' (Brackett, 2000: 10). A notable feature of Teanet's music that differentiates his music from that of Ndlovu is the tendency to use children's voices in the backing vocals. This practice was a common trait of South African township pop during this time as artists like Chicco (In 'We Can Dance' and 'Teacher We Love'), and Brenda Fassie ('Ag, Shame Lovie') employed the same technique. In Teanet's music use of this feature seems to rely on the fact that the subject of the song is related to children. A song such as 'Matswele' (Breasts) uses children's voices in this way as the chorus sings: '*Tsotsi skatshwara matswele'* (Tsotsi don't touch my breasts). The song tells of a man who comes from 'nowhere' and touches a girl's breasts. The go on to say, '*kgasi oakgago'* (the breasts are not yours). The use of children's voices in this way relates to Shirinda's comments on the use of female lead voices in Tsonga traditional music. He explained that the lead on a song is depended on what the song is saying, for example, if a song is about an old

lady complaining about a lazy daughter-in-law, a female would take the lead because 'it would not make sense if a man said it because it won't correspond' (Interview, 2010).

Teanet's music is generally fast in comparison with that of Ndlovu. Teanet surfaced in the late 1980s, at a time when American house and hip-hop had made its way into the country (Mojapelo, 2008; Haupt, 2008; and Watkins, 2004). The influence of these varieties of music on Teanet is explicit, and may account for the speed of Teanet's music. A song which clearly shows these influences is 'I'm a Dancer' (track 18). Structured on a 127 bpm beat and built on a synthesized thumping bass line, Teanet raps the words in 'I'm A Dancer', that is, he rhymes the lyrics rhythmically as opposed to singing them melodically.[27] 'I'm a Dancer', however, more typically draws on elements of house music. For example, 127 bpm is, according to Rick Snoman, a typical tempo in house music (2004: 271). The track is in 4/4, the kick is laid firmly on all the beats, a clap is added in addition to the kick and the hit-hat, the synthesized bass is kept relatively simple and remains consistent throughout the piece while the electronic piano solos above the bass and the kick. These are all typical features, though not always the case, of house music (271-278).

The early 1990s saw the emergence of a township music style called *kwaito*.[28] One of *kwaito*'s defining features at the time was that the lyrics 'consisted of a few of the latest catch phrases repeated and played against each other, rather than lengthy poetry', and draws influences from hip-hop, American and European dance music, including house, techno, and pop (Allen, 2004: 85). Though Teanet raps in the song 'I'm a Dancer', the manner in which he does this is more consistent with how *kwaito* lyrics work rather than the poetic, complex and lengthy lyrics of American rap music. In addition to the repetition of short phrases, 'let's dance" and 'I'm a rapper', the subject matter also suggests *kwaito*'s influence on Teanet's song. It is about having fun, a dominant theme of *kwaito* during this period (2004: 87). The subject of 'Saka Naye Jive' ('Jive with him/her', track 19) is also typical of *kwaito*. It is about the township dance style *uku saka*, meaning to dance (in a specific way), a dance which as a teenager I used to do during the early 1990s, and which involves putting one's hand on the head and the other on the buttocks while bending all the way down.[29] This situates a

[27] See *Popular Music Genres* (Borthwick and Moy, 2004) for description of the different types of rap.
[28] See David Coplan's 'God Rock Africa' (2005), Gavin Steingo's 'South African Music After Apartheid' (2005), Thokozani Mhlambi's 'Kwaitofabulous' (2004), and Lara Allen's 'Kwaito versus Cross-over" (2004) for further discussions on kwaito.
[29] The complete phrase of this dance is '*penti yiwele, saka uyidobe'*, meaning the panty has fallen, go down and get it; hence the bending in the dance movement.

specifically South African dance music in the context of other global dance music genres, the lyrics of which since disco have often functioned self-referentially.[30]

Teanet's music is eclectic, which is another important feature of his song-writing. While Ndlovu's music could almost be described as 'predictable' in the sense that one song is similar to another, Teanet's music is filled with diverse sounds and influences that, in the words of Brenda Fassie, *'Ngeke uncomfeme'* ('You cannot confirm a person').[31] Note the difference between 'I'm a Dancer', 'Maxaka' ('We are relatives', track 5), 'Nwayingwana' ('Daughter of Yingwana', track 20) and 'I Love You Africa' (Remix, track 21). The songs draw on such diverse styles that without Teanet's identifiable voice, it would be difficult to attribute them to the same artist. As discussed, 'I'm a Dancer' mainly draws influence from house music, in 'Maxaka' Ndlovu's influence can be detected. In 'N'wayingwana' the lead guitar gives the song a Zimbabwean aesthetic, while in 'I Love you Africa' an electro sound can be heard. Whereas Ndlovu's music was mainly influenced by American disco and some Tsonga traditional elements which will be discussed in the following chapter, Teanet's music draws on several other genres. Also, while Ndlovu primarily sang in Xitsonga and English, Teanet was multi-lingual in his singing. In addition to Xitsonga and English, he also sang in Tshivenda, isiXhosa and Shona.

Although Ndlovu's music was intended for the dance floor, as Moticoe noted, Ndlovu did not explicitly refer to dancing in his songs. Conversely Teanet's songs often include lyrics about dancing. 'Saka Naye Jive', 'China Ndoda' ('Dance Man') and 'Double Phashash', all make clear reference to dancing. In 'China Ndoda' he commands the men to dance:

> *Khale ka hina haha kula*
> *A hi china xigubu*
> *Khale ka hina haha kula*
> *A hi china muchingolo*
> *Van'wana a va switivi leswaku tolo a hi ti phino*
>
> *Van'wana a va switivi leswaku tolo a hi chino*
>
> *China ndoda, china ja*
> *VaGezani va hi hlulo*
>
> Long ago when we were growing up
> We used to dance xigubu

[30] Arthur Mafokate is the most famous *kwaito* artist to predominantly use lyrics that refer to a dance. See for example the tracks 'Mnike', 'Kwasa', and 'Twalatsa'.
[31] These are words from the song 'Umuntu Uyatshitsha' ('A person changes') from the album of the same name, released in 1996.

Long ago when we were growing up
We used to dance muchongolo)
Some [people] don't know that we used to
have fun
Some [people] don't know that we used to
dance

Dance man, dance man
Gezani [and his crew] are beating us

Here, Teanet challenges the young men to dance because they are being defeated by another group of dancers, and suggesting that in the old days they knew how to dance and have a good time.[32]

While Ndlovu, in the love songs, always presents himself as seeking and longing for love, Teanet presents a different point of view in these types of songs. For instance, in 'Hlamalani' (a person's name, meaning surprise) the narrator laments being betrayed by his friend who stole his woman but in the end boasts about having found a new love:

Chuvuka seku ni famamba na mani
Vona seku ni jola na mani

Heh mnghana wa mina
Whe Hlamalane
Uni tekerile nhwana wa mina
uWa mina ni tshembhele ka yena ntsena

Uni hlamarisile Hlamalani mpela
Uthlela utendla munghlana wamina wolulama
Heh Hlamani
Sweswi niti kumele ntombi yamina yolulama

Look who I am going with now
Look who I am dating now

Hey my friend
Hey Hlamani
You took my girlfriend
She was the only one I had

You surprised me Surprise
You pretended to be my good friend
Hey Hlamalani

[32] Competitive male dancing among the Tsonga is a custom that still takes place in rural areas. The competitions usually take place during *muchongolo* and *xigubu* dances which Teanet is referring to (Maluleke, Interview, 2009). Though Teanet references these traditional dances in his disco music, the dances are associated with the rural areas and mines (see Hugh Tracey,1939). See Niehaus (2004) for study of *muchongolo* dance contests in Bushbuckridge.

Now I found myself a very nice girlfriend

In ‘Maxaka’ Teanet complains to his grandparents for not having warned him about the girl he married, as it later became known that they were related. In Tsonga tradition, it is taboo for relatives to marry each other. Teanet thus continues the tradition of Tsonga musicians tackling domestic matters. As such, polygamy is themetised in his songs; it is commonly known that Teanet’s backing singers were his wives (Mojapelo, 2008: 145). ‘Nwayingwana’ (Daughter of Yingwana) makes reference to polygamy as the song’s narrator sings about his one wife (from Johannesburg) making life difficult for his first wife.

Nsati loyi undzi karhata ngopfu
Nsati loyi wandzi hlupho
Hiyena anga ndzi thlava sapoti
Hiyena andzi lawulaki
Vana vamina va hlupheka ngopfu mani
Hi mhaka ya nsati wale Joni

Swiloyini ingonixanisa nuna wango?
Swiloyini ingoni yingayingisa nuna wango?
Swilo yini ingo ni kayakayisa nuna wango?
Pfhuka u famba na swimalana awaha rhumeli

Xikwemba tatana ndzi pfuni ni huma kama xangu lawo
Xikwemba Jehovha ndzi pfuni ni huma kama xangu lawo
Hi kuva nsati wamina u dlawa hindlala
Hi mhaka ya nsati wale Jone
Nsati wamina wa xaniseka

This woman is bothering me a lot
This woman is bothering me
She is the one who demanded support/maintenance
She is the one controlling me
My children are suffering
Because of this woman from Johannesburg

Why are you making me suffer my husband?
Why are you diving me crazy my husband?
Why are you making my life difficult my husband?
Since you left you haven’t even sent a little money

Father God help me get out of this misery
God Jehovah help me get out of this misery
Because my wife is suffering
Because of this woman from Johannesburg
My wife is suffering

In his treatment of the subject Henri Junod long ago addressed the consequences of wife rivalry in Tsonga polygamy (see the seminal *The Life of a South African Tribe* [1961: 282-289]). Teanet’s song not only speaks of the continuous existence of polygamy among the

Tsonga but also speaks to the challenges of the practice that are still very much part of today's polygamous marriages.

Teanet's fusion of different genres, styles and traditions in his music, his versatile voice, and his ability to be unpredictable in his songwriting, not only distinguished his music from that of his predecessor, Ndlovu, but also created a unique musical language within the Tsonga music world that has not since been heard. While Ndlovu started Tsonga disco, Teanet built on and developed the subgenre, doing so in a way that Ndlovu the founder could not.

Joe and Penny

Born in KaN'wamitwa, a village in Tzaneen, Limpopo Province, Joe Shirimani came from a musical family. His father played the guitar and it was not long before young Joe picked up the instrument. This humble and soft-spoken musician, songwriter, arranger and producer leisurely related his story as we sat in his studio in Soshanguve, a township outside Pretoria.

> I can put it like this, if I remember properly, my father liked tradition a lot, this Shangaan tradition, with the mixture of *swikwembu*, so he was a person who loved Shangaan music.[33] He entertained us. I think that was the language that we were able to understand a lot, his music. He was a person who loved the guitar a lot. As things went on, what did it do, it made me take interest of wanting to play this thing that my father was playing … I used to steal the guitar … [eventually, through persistence] my father started taking me seriously and started saying it looks like you have thoughts and so my father started taking interest in me and said no I should not banish you from playing this thing, let me support you. So father started encouraging me. He started buying me equipment, amps that used batteries. We didn't have drums; we used tins (Interview, 2009).

During our conversation, Shirimani emphasised that he had grown up in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society.

> You see this place where we stayed, my mother is from Mabopane, it was under Bophuthatswana at the time and so the place where we stayed at Makawanyane, it was under Bophuthatswana. So you find that it is just a small boundary, just between Bophuthatswana and Soshanguve. Soshanguve accommodates all ethnicities that is why they named it Soshanguve. It means that Soshanguve has **SO**tho, **SHA**ngaan, **NGU**ni and **Ve**nda. So that's where I grew up, and that's where I went to school and I studied Tswana. We spoke Shangaan at home. Another reason why I found myself studying Tswana was that at the time, the nearest schools around that area only had Tswana, there was no Shangaan, Shangaan was in Soshanguve and where we were staying it was a long distance to go to Soshanguve. You had to take a transport. But it was just the school only but everything else, the language and

[33] *Swikwembu* is a term used in Tsonga to refer to the possession of a person by ancestral spirits (see Junod, 1962; and Chabalala, 2003).

> everything (Tsonga) else is ours. We spoke our language when we were home (Interview, 2009).

Growing up in a multi-cultural environment was to influence Shirimani's later work. While in high school, in 1987 he started a 7-piece band called Kimayos (Kind Masters of Youth Sound). It was with this band that Shirimani recorded his first demo. Their debut album, after a few hindrances, was released in 1989. The music recorded by the band was, according to Shirimani, disco or bubblegum.

> I think I can call it disco but we used many languages because when I look properly, look at the way Pretoria is, it has many languages, Sesotho, Tswana, Sepedi, Ndebele, there is everything. It was not Shangaan disco, it was disco, it was like, you know Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Chicco, you know, it was that type of music. Some called it bubblegum at the time that was the kind of music we played. We were still young and so we were interested in music that would make people dance (Interview, 2009).

After Kimayos, Shirimani worked with various groups such as Malumle Pikipiki, Angola, The Crooners, and Chibuku before releasing his debut solo album *Black is Beautiful* in 1993 (Ncube, 2000: 21). Since this album, Shirimani has released a number of hits including, 'Gabaza' (a person's name, track 22), 'Nosi' (Bee) and 'Limpopo' (the name of the province, track 23). It was only when Shirimani went solo in 1993 that his music began to be labelled Shangaan or Tsonga disco, about which he commented: 'the definition for this Shangaan disco is that, disco meaning dance, pop music, Shangaan is put in there because of the lyrics and the way we sing is leaning on the side of Tsonga tradition' (Interview, 2009).

Shirimani was content with his music being labeled Shangaan disco at the beginning of his career, a point made in Japhet Ncube's article 'Golden Touch of the Disco Man' (2000). Shirimani took pride in his work and what he considered the achievement of taking over from his predecessors Ndlovu and Teanet. He proudly said to Ncube, 'Kwaito and rap can wait; I'll stick to what I know' (2000: 21). When I asked him whether he considers himself a Shangaan disco artist, he replied, 'yes, I think so, because really through the language, I am able to express myself better, you see. And I think it helps me because I am able to be special in my line, you see' (Interview, 2009).

In *The South African Music Business*, Jonathan Shaw notes that 'many record labels do not like artists to expand or grow into different genres because they're making money in the genre the artist started in' (2010: 396). Shirimani relates to this. Though he was initially satisfied with his music being labeled and marketed as Tsonga disco, he later wanted to

change musical direction. However, because he started out as a Tsonga disco artist he experiences ongoing difficulty ridding himself and his music of this genre association. Shirimani commented: 'at the moment, you see, if you check, we don't have disco music anymore. That music has now been changed to *kwaito* and then house, you see, there is no disco anymore. So even with our music, to call it disco, it doesn't work anymore, because I remember, at the time that passed, I called it Shangaan pop' (Interview, 2009). These objections are shared by one of Shirimani's 'children', Penny, who though partly happy with the 'king of Tsonga disco' title he holds, aggressively protested: "I don't know where they get this Tsonga this Tsonga that thing, you don't hear people speaking of Zulu disco or Xhosa disco (Interview, 2010). The problem of music genre labeling is not particular to Tsonga artists. For example, during the hype of *kwaito*, according to Thokazani Mhlambi, artists such as Bongo Muffin and TKZee would have chosen to call their music *d'gong* and *guz*, but it continued to be branded *kwaito* by corporate cultures (2004: 118).

Shirimani expressed an interest in exploring other genres using a process described by Shaw, which involves the fusion of the artist's original genre with elements of another genre, to create a new subgenre (2010: 401). Shirimani voiced his concerns, saying:

> I think that this music, the only time it will stop from my side is when I'm dead, because I know how to do it better and I think I can change it, I can grow it into African, because if you look at this album, *Miyela*, there are songs which I'm…I'm trying to switch into this eeeem…African music ne…let's say Jazz African not really jazz but a combination of Afro, let me say African, but in Shangaan. If you look at Jeff Maluleke, he does that kind of music, so I also think that I need to grow in this music. So that's what I'm trying to … the direction I'm trying to move towards but in a clever way in a way when someone is listening to that music, they say, this is Joe … I won't move straight and say now I'm going to jazz, you see. I'm trying to support this music, in terms of where it comes from and where it changed, somebody must be able to travel with it; you see and say it came up until here. So what is it going to be called, I don't know, it will depend, at that time. So that's what I'm trying to do but then at the moment I still keep the kind of style … because you know people still like it (Interview, 2009).

Shirimani's remarks highlight certain points: he acknowledges that he belongs to a particular subgenre, and he is aware that his fusion of his old style and another genre will create a new subgenre whose name he does not yet know. This awareness and cautiousness about 'genrefication' underpins Shaw's and Holt's point about the importance of categorization, including the marketing of music (Holt, 2007 and Shaw, 2010). Shirimani's comprehension of this is a clear indication of his experience within the music industry, and that being associated with a genre or subgenre makes marketing and selling the music commodity much

easier (Shaw, 2010: 396). Penny, whom I discuss shortly, also relates to the challenge of changing or exploring new styles. In 2007 he released the album *Xibebebe* (a dance name), the music of which is a Tsonga traditional, a new area for Penny which he explored in an attempt to expand his listenership. This did not succeed because, as he explained, 'people don't know me with that type of music, they wanted me to go back to disco' (Interview, 2009).

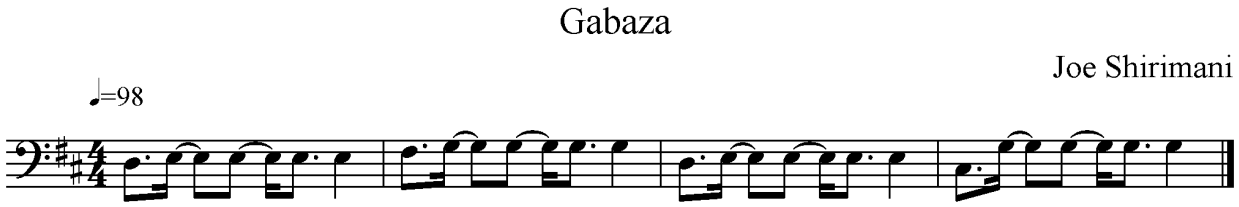
The idea that genre is a flexible category is evident from Shirimani's experiences. His attempt to blend features from his current style – so that people can still identify his idiolect – and another style, is further example of Shaw's contestation that 'categories and labels do not remain stationary for us to examine. They evolve through a life cycle and behave like a biological entity' (2010: 397). Though he has not yet developed a new sound or subgenre that has been labeled, Shirimani has begun moving away from the Tsonga disco style he is known for. For example, in the songs 'Miyela' ('Be Still', track 24) from the album of the same name, and 'Bangilimazile' ('They hurt me', track 25), his signature bass sound, which will be discussed later, is not evident. The songs are much slower than his previous tracks; he employs live instruments, such as the guitar in 'Miyela', a rare feature in his songs from previous albums.

Though Shirimani enjoys commercial successful as a performing artist, it is through the work he does as a producer that he has made his mark on Tsonga disco. Two of Shirimani's successful artists are Esta M of 'Nawu' ('Law or Tradition') fame and the current holder of the 'king' of Tsonga disco crown, Giyani Kulani Nkovane, known by his stage name, Penny Penny (ealier refered to as Penny). Besides writing songs and producing for these artists, Shirimani's most important contribution is a peculiar bass sound that has become the defining feature of Tsonga disco.

The bass sound created by Shirimani is identified by its richness, deepness and sharpness. While keeping the consistency of the bass beat, he manipulates it so that it is the most dominant and most powerful sound in the song, being texturally thick and acoustically deep. Shirimani said he 'creates' this bass sound through the application of various effects; he was reluctant to speak more about this trademark sound. However, he proudly pointed out that '*kwaito* singers want that sound and they have asked me for it but they won't get it. They tried but they can't get it right' (Interview, 2009). This bass sound is present in most of

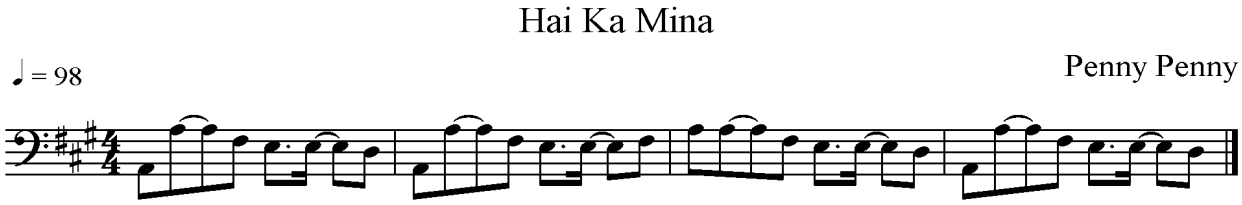
Shirimani's and Penny's music and it has come to symbolise Tsonga disco more than any other sound or feature of the music. In 'Gabaza' the bass line is as follows:

Example 2f.



In Penny's 'Hai Kamina' ('Not in my house'), the bass line is as follows:

Example 2g.



Shirimani's bass motifs differ from those of Ndlovu and Teanet not only in terms of the texture and tone but also in that, while the latter often alter the bass line in minor ways when it appears later in their songs, Shirimani's bass lines remain the same throughout: in other words, the above bass lines remain as they are for the entire song. This however does not mean that the bass appears non-stop as he makes use of instrumental breaks, during which the bass line falls out of the mix. Elsewhere, the bass line remains while the other instruments drop out. These are all typical production techniques of global dance musics.

Before further discussing Shirimani's music, it seems appropriate to introduce Penny as Shirimani produces most of his music.[34] Penny was born Giyani Kulani Nkovane in a village called Ximbupfe in Giyani, the capital of Limpopo. He was given the name Eric by the apartheid 'government' (Penny's words) when he applied for his pass in 1977. His father was a traditional healer who had twenty-two wives (though Mojapelo says there were sixteen). He never went to school but was proud to say that he can read and write. Due to his father's practice as a traditional healer, Nkovane grew up dancing Tsonga traditional dances such as *muchongolo*, *xichayichayi*, and *xigubu.*[35] After the death of his father his family lived in poverty which at the age of ten led him to seek work on nearby farms. He later worked in the

[34] Penny insisted on speaking in broken English, and due to language errors, I have paraphrased his story rather than presenting it in his own words.
[35] These dances are discussed in Johnston's articles.

mines at West Driefontein, Carletonville. It was here that he developed a serious interest in music, beginning with dancing. He later moved to Johannesburg where he used to dance in night clubs while selling vegetables on the streets for a living. While struggling to make a living, Nkovane began making demos and sending them to people with the hope of getting a foot in the music industry door.

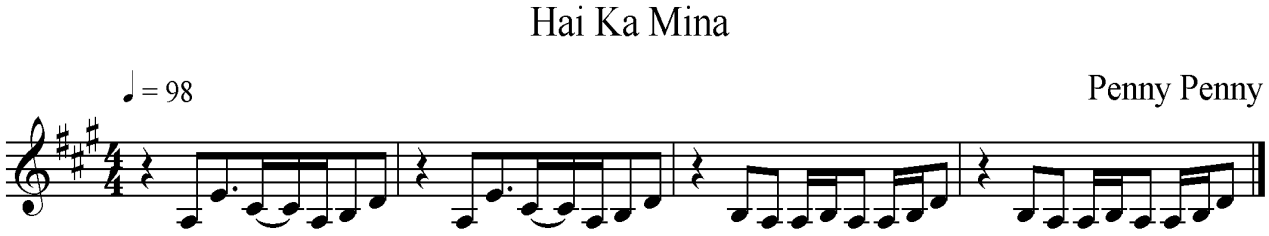
After many rejections and disappointments, Nkovane was finally discovered by Shirimani, while working as a cleaner at Shandel Music. It was Shirimani who transformed Nkovane into Penny, the 'king' of Tsonga disco. Majapelo writes that 'Shirimani … taught him the tricks of the trade [and] before long [Penny] … was writing songs. His debut album *Shaka Bundu* achieved platinum status and the second one achieved triple platinum' (2008: 147).[36] Penny's latest release was a collaborative album, *The King vs the General* (2009), with another successful Tsonga disco artist Chris Mkhonto, known as General Muzka, which was produced by Shirimani and the late Rhengu Mkhari.

In addition to his signature bass sound, Shirimani introduced other features to Tsonga disco that sets him apart from his precursors: 'let's say you look at Paul Ndlovu's disco and Peta Teanet and look at Joe's disco and look at Joe's style, mine is different', and different it is. Like his predecessors he makes use of keyboard riffs, but Shirimani's music is dominated by a sustained synthesized string sound. Sustained strings are a common feature of American and Tsonga disco, and in Shirimani's music they seem to appear more constantly than in any of his predecessors' music. For example in 'Marabastad', 'Yandee' (the name of a person), 'Khethile Khethile' ('Once you have chosen, you have chosen, i.e there is no going back), 'Mapule' (the name of a person), 'Cheap Line', and 'Biya' ('Beer'), the sustained synthesized strings appear almost throughout the pieces with few breaks.

Another synthesized sound that Shirimani has a fondness for is the steel drums. He admitted to liking the sound and therefore often uses it. A steel drum motif can be heard in 'Marabastad' (from 1:18) which keeps recurring in the piece. Penny's 'Hai Kamina' ('Not in my house, track 26) begins with the following synthesized steel drum motif:

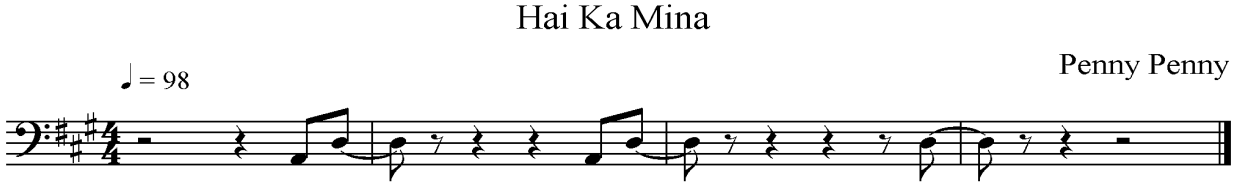
Example 2h.

[36] Penny is also known as Shaka Bundu, but in the song of that name it refers to a pretentious relative.



The motif appears again later in the song and it is exemplary how Shirimani uses the synthesized steel drums in his music, as a short melodic line which keeps recurring at different intervals in the songs. In the same song, there appears another of Shirimani's much loved synthesized sounds. The song begins with the steel drum motif supported by the hi-hat before the kick enters with a short synthesized conga rhythmic pattern. Penny's powerful voice penetrates with the words 'Do you?' This functions as a question, which is then answered by the following riff:

Example 2i.



These stabs are played on electric bass saxophone, another of Shirimani's favourite sounds. The same sax sound can be heard in 'Marabastad', Yandee', 'Sathana', 'Mapule', 'Dom Dom' and 'Biya'.

While the signature bass sound, the electronic saxophone and steel drums distinguishes Shirimani's music from that of Ndlovu and Teanet, the lyrical subject matter is similar to that of his predecessors. In both his and Penny's songs, domestic, love, and social matters are common themes. 'Dom Dom' (Stupid head') challenges the domestic servitude stereotype:

A loko ni kukula muti wa mina va ni vita dom kopo
A loko ni wisisa nsati wamina va ni vita dom kopo
Vari u ni dyisile
Vari a ni ti endle

Vani vula dom dom

When I sweep my house they call me stupid
When I let my wife rest they call me stupid

They say she "fed" me[37]
They say it's not my own doing [she is controlling me]

They call me stupid

It is unusual practice among the Tsonga for a man to be involved in domestic chores. In this song Shirimani challenges this stereotype. He sings of people who call him stupid for helping his wife but when she slaves away for him no one says anything: "*Ilodlaya mani?*" (Who has she killed [to deserve such ill treatment and accusations of witchcraft])? Shirimani not only challenges men to help their wives at home but also defends women who are often victims of witchcraft accusations when their husbands show them too much affection.[38]

Written by Penny and Shirimani, 'Hai Kamina' addresses the issue of educated and empowered women who become disrespectful towards their husbands.

Ho ni nese mina
A ka mani
Hayi kamina
Ho ni dyondile mina

Ntiyiso wa tsandza ho lovie
Wu tsanda na ti loyo lovie
U nese a ntirweni
Hayi kamina

(I am a nurse)
(In whose house?)
(Not in my house)
(I am educated)

(The truth is painful lovie)
(It's hard even for lawyers lovie)
(You're a nurse at work)
(Not in my house)

Here women are reminded of their 'place' in the home, pointing out that even if they are educated; their authority is limited to the workplace. It is interesting to note how in 'Dom Dom' Shirimani suggests equality in relationships, while 'Hai Kamina' suggests a more submissive position for women. Such are the contradictions of the different worlds and audiences Tsonga musicians live in and address.

[37] To be 'fed' in Tsonga means to be given *muti* or traditional medicine such as love potion. It is a common belief and practice among the Tsonga. The love potion is commonly known as *korobela*.
[38] Junod's *The Life of a South African Tribe* addresses witchcraft practice among the Tsonga in detail (1961).

Some of the social issues addressed in Shirimani's and Penny's songs include the AIDS problem which South Africa faces. In 'Ibola AIDS' ('Bola and AIDS') Penny cautions people to fear the disease saying that even bishops and leaders are scared of it. In'Hayi Kashi Nditshane' (Small dish) Penny complains about false religious leaders who demand exorbitant amounts of money as offerings from their congregations. In 'Education', Penny encourages young people to put education first in their lives. Domestic or social issues, like in Tsonga traditional music, are thus an important subject in Tsonga disco song texts. This is in contract to American disco which disregarded such issues and was more about 'self', 'celebration, ecstacy and escapism' (Hamm, 1988: 35; Barker and Taylor, 2007: 236).

Bomba Mchangana (Be Proud Shangaan): Tsonga disco live

In 'Michael Jackson: Motown 25', Jaap Kooijman investigates Jackson's performance in the Pasadena Auditorium on 25 March 1983. This performance, according to Kooijman, had a significant impact on popular music. Kooijman argues that it 'marked the shift of emphasis from musical performance to visual presentation' (2006: 122). In Kooijman's account, Jackson was 'dressed in black pants with silver-glittering socks, a silver glittering shirt, and a black sequined jacket', lip-synched to a pre-recorded soundtrack, danced a combination of African-American dance movements which including the legendary moonwalk. Kooijman contends that the clothing and dance moves, Jackson's 'white sequined glove grasping his crotch', made an integral part of the live performance.

In a performance that took place at Phomolong, a village in Limpopo, on 20 March 2010, Tsonga disco artist Penny majestically emerged from behind the audience, ascended the stage and struck up a pose between the two young dancers while facing backstage. As soon as the introduction of the song 'Bum Bum' began, Penny swiveled around and landed with one knee on the floor ready to pounce. Unfortunately, and somewhat comically, the backing track unexpectedly stopped and the desired effect was not achieved. However, as a professional Penny made a good 'come back'. The audience had already started screaming his name while Joe Shirimani was still on stage. Shirimani and Penny were the evening's star attractions. The young up-and-coming artists such as Matop 7, Whisky, and DJ Cellular had warmed up the stage.

Shirimani manoeuvered through the expectant crowd towards the stage to the sound of his intro on the albums *Miyela* (Be Still) and *Tambilu Yanga* (Matters of my heart) while the MC encouraged the crowd to welcome him. The intro track was then replaced by a dance track to which his dancers responded. After grabbing the microphone from the MC, Shirimani proceeded to the front of the stage where he began waving his hand up and down as if asking the audience to respond. This they did. With an unplugged microphone in hand, Shirimani began singing along to the backing track. The first song, 'Hlamala' (a person's name), was different from the style for which he is known. Its tempo is faster than most of his other material. Also, the song employs a *kwaito* technique of rhyming a few words over and over again. For the remainder of this track's performance, Shirimani positioned himself further back from the front of the stage, giving the dancers the centre stage, a clear expression that this piece was a dance track and therefore that the dancing is the fundamental part of the performance.

In addition to the stunts, acrobatics and various township dance styles performed by the three dancers, Shirimani's sister, wearing a T-shirt which she had folded up to reveal her naked stomach and a cloth wrapped around her waist, occasionally took centre stage, executing a few hip and bottom moves. The next song, 'Tshelete' ('Money') did not sound like Shirimani's usual work either; it too was faster and did not contain his signature bass sound. The audience seemed to be as confused as was I. There was very little screaming, shouting and clapping when he performed these two songs. In the second one, he took his place at the front of the stage while singing the verses of the song. The dancers continued to hover while dancing individually, occasionally getting together to execute some unison moves. It was after the second song that Shirimani officially introduced himself proudly proclaiming: 'Penny *i n'wananga* (Penny is my child), Esta M is my daughter'. While waiting for his next track to begin playing, the audience started shouting, 'Penny, Penny, Penny'.

After formally introducing himself, the song 'Nosi' ('Bee') was played. The audience's reaction proved the popularity of the song: screams were heard as the thumping, signature bass blasted out of the inadequate speakers. This song's reception, compared to that of the first two songs, seems to underpin a point made by Holt that 'genre is not only in the music but also in the minds and bodies of particular groups of people who share certain conventions' (2007: 2). The style of Shirimani's first two songs may have not been foreign to

the audience because it was related to *kwaito*. Though *kwaito* is a well-known genre in South Africa, to Shirimi's audiences it seemed as though they were not willing to accept his participation in this particular genre. Such lukewarm audience reaction suggests one of the reasons why record companies are reluctant to allow artists to change genres. Once an artist's following has been established, and the style and the conventions of the style embedded in the minds of those who participate in a particular genre, changing genre or breaking its style boundaries can be problematic. After 'Nosi', Shirimani performed only his hit songs, 'Gabaza', Limpopo', 'Khethile Khethile', and he descended the stage with 'Nosi' again while shouting 'Ahee Papa Penny' (Salute Papa Penny).

Besides the technical difficulties he experienced during his 'royal' entrance, Penny pleased his crowd. He wore loose shiny black pants with a pink patch on the buttocks, a gold glittering top that only covered his shoulders, black and gold glittering wrist bands, and sported his famous hairdo. He was accompanied by two young dancing girls. They both wore shorts and *takkies* (sneakers), one of them in a standard cotton T-shirt while the other one wore a gold glittering top similar to Penny's. The boys who danced for Shirimani danced for Penny too. They danced in jeans and were bare-chested.

Penny performed only his well-known songs, such as the already mentioned 'Bum Bum', 'Hai Ka Mina' (Not in my house), 'Remote', 'Shaka Bundu' ('pretentious relative'), and 'La phindi iShangane' ('The Shangaan is doing it again'). The crowd seemed to enjoy the spectacle shouting out the song they wanted him perform. Between his song performances Penny danced his two famous moves, but because of 'old age' he did not dance for the entire performance.[39] Occasionally he walked around the edges of the stage while stretching his hand out to the audience, encouraging them to sing along.

Important to note about this live performance event is that both Shirimani and Penny lip-synched their songs, a fact the audience was well aware of. Though the backing track mistakenly cut off when Penny began his performance, the audience screamed without interruption. The audience's lack of concern on this matter attests to Kooijman's point: 'the knowledge that many (if not all) of vocals have been pre-recorded is largely uncontested suggesting that contemporary audience prefer to see their superstars present a visual

[39] The dance moves can be seen at 1:00 on the Shaka Bundu Dance move1 video clip and at 00:07 on the Milandu Bhe Dance move2 video clip. These moves can also be seen in *The Best Of Penny* video recording released in 1997.

spectacle' (2006: 127). Jeff Maluleke, though not a big fan of lip-synching, admitted that occasionally he will agree to do a 'gig' alone because 'sometimes his fans just want to see him' (Interview, 2009).

Concluding remarks

In this chapter the origins of Tsonga disco have been traced and the researcher has discussed the key musicians who work in this subgenre, exploring similarities and differences in their music. Paul Ndlovu emerged as a solo during a turbulent period in South Africa and it has been suggested that the socio-political situation through the use of radio, may have influenced the labelling of his music. Ndlovu's music was similar to that of artists such as Sello 'Chicco' Twala, Splash, Brenda Fassie, and Yvonne Chaka Chaka. But while these artists' music was either labelled disco (Shirimani, Interview, 2009), bubblegum (Coplan, 2008; Mhlambi, 2004) or township pop, Ndlovu's music was labelled Tsonga disco and possible explanations for this genre label will be discussed in the next chapter. The labelling of Ndlovu's music as Tsonga disco created a subgenre not only within the Tsonga music world and the discourse on its music, but also within the broader world of black urban South African popular music. Peter Teanet succeeded Ndlovu as 'the king of Tsonga disco', and although Teanet's music was later loaded with elements of *kwaito* and was vastly different from that of Ndlovu, his music remained within the Tsonga disco subgenre. While Ndlovu, Teanet, Shirimani and Penny may have similar features in their music, their musical identities, as has been explored, differ vastly. The consistency of the genre label of Tsonga disco applied to these differing musical identities thus points to several features of genrification, of the way in which music is named.

Shaw claims that it is easy for a genre to 'morph into another tomorrow' (2010: 397). The morphing seems to be musically 'easy'. We can hear, for example, how in the album *Miyela* Shirimani starts to combine elements of his earlier style with new sounds. Creating or labelling this 'new' sound, however, seems to be more challenging.[40] The Tsonga disco artists discussed in this chapter each have their own idiolect, but have all remained Tsonga disco

[40] This is also evident in *kwaito* which has evolved through the years, but to this day, there is no name to describe the new sound that is influenced by the old *kwaito* and current music trends. The only available way of differentiating between the two styles is by referring to the earlier *kwaito* as 'old' school *kwaito* and 'new' school *kwaito* (Mhlambi, 2004: 117).

artists, which affirms Holt's assertion that 'a person can have his or her own style, but not genre' (2007: 3). It suggests the lack of power and authority that musicians suffer in labelling their own music, a decision which according to Holt lies with music 'corporate cultures'. Shaw also notes that 'as society changes over time, so do cultural meanings associated with music change' (2010: 404). What Tsonga disco meant at the time of its emergence, during Ndlovu's and Teanet's reign, is not necessarily the same as what it currently means to its producers and listeners.

In the article 'In Defense of Disco', Richard Dyer characterises disco as being what he calls 'romantic', refering to the music's ability to give its participants an out of body experience which he calls 'ecstasy' (1979: 106). Though the romanticism of disco Dyer talks about, refers in part to an emotional escape experience, Barker and Taylor describe a more physical or social aspect of disco as escape; arguing minorities, including gays, lesbians, blacks, hippies and Latinos, used disco as an escape mechanism from the injustices and prejudice of societies in the 1970s (2007: 236). In Johannesburg, the early 1980s to mid-80s possibly saw disco function in similar ways. Ndlovo's producer, Peter Moticoe told how, although the 80s was a time of protest song because of the socio-political state of the country, people also needed to dance and have a good time, and disco provided the platform for this. SABC Media Librarian, Themba Mtshali pointed out how he and friends went to discos to dance, booze and womanise. Discos in Johannesburg, according to Mtshali and Moticoe, not only functioned as a place of escape for the ordinary man, but occasionally provided sanctuary for comrades. Moticoe shared a tear as he remembered how they sometimes hid struggle comrades with their instruments and often helped them cross the border to neighbouring countries when they went on tour. 'Today these guys are big in the government, they hold big positions, yet they don't remember us, to them we are just entertainers' (Interview, 2011).

Chapter 4

Constructing Tsonga-ness in Tsonga music: Negotiating ethnic identity in 'glocal' music practices

Introduction

The aim of this study has been to interrogate the meaning of labelling Tsonga music to its practitioners, one of the few South African music genres to be so strongly ethnically labelled. This paper commenced by exploring the origins of Tsonga popular music. The lack of literature in this regard proved challenging, hence my findings to this enquiry are not authoritative as they are based on personal reflections of a few practitioners within this music circuit. The first chapter of this study therefore is an account of the artist considered to be the father of Tsonga music, General MD Shirinda. A brief account of his life is given; how he entered into the music industry and attention was paid to some of the influences within his music that lead to what is known today as Tsonga music. The latter is presented in a way that gives priority to how Shirinda speaks about the people who have influenced his music. Other possible influences were suggested, based on evidence derived from his music and the socio-political circumstances surrounding his emergence in the South African music scene during the 1960s. Important to note is that, although Shirinda is attributed as the father of Tsonga music, the term 'Tsonga music' is defined by its practitioners as a parent genre under which subgenres such as 'Tsonga traditional' and 'Tsonga disco' are subsumed.

Throughout the thesis the meaning of Tsonga music for its practitioners has been questioned, why the music is labelled the way it is, and how these genre labels, which participate in global genre histories and local ethnic histories, interact with the Tsonga music category. As a result, chapter two firstly addresses the meaning of Tsonga music for its practitioners. Attention is given to the Tsonga traditional subcategory, its meaning and some of its fundamental features are interrogated. In chapter three the focus shifts to Tsonga disco in which the roots of this subgenre are traced to Paul Ndlovu. Following Ndlovu's account is a discussion of other artists who are major players in the development of this subgenre, including Peta Teanet, Joe Shirimani and Penny Penny. Attention is given to these artists' individual contributions to the development of the subgenre.

Present throughout these chapters is an exploration of what Tsonga music means to its practitioners. The question of why the music is ethnically labelled is also addressed briefly in the above chapters. However, it forms the explicit focus of this final chapter. Possible explanations are explored in this chapter as to why the music is ethnically labeled, paying close attention to certain factors that contributed to the music being labeled as such. In addition, throughout the course of the research, Tsonga artists expressed discontent about their music being ethnically labeled, while simultaneously continuing to affirm and assert their ethnicity in their music. This chapter, drawing on ideas from Louise Meintjes' *Sound of Africa* (2003), also interrogates how Tsonga-ness is constructed in Tsonga music. Meintjes investigates how Zuluness is constructed in the process of making *mbaqanga* music. The writer examines how the use of features such as language, folklore, and dress are used to negotiate a Tsonga ethnic identity in contemporary Tsonga popular music.

Lastly, although Tsonga music is ethnically labeled and its practitioners continue to assert their ethnic identity in the music, the music not only employs global and other local music trends in its production, it also participates in global and local music markets. The final section of this chapter therefore addresses the relationships between Tsonga and other music markets.

Ethnicity: Informing the labeling of Tsonga music

According to David Coplan 'stylistic developments are strongly influenced by participants' attempts to use performances to articulate their identities' (1985: 27). Lara Allen makes a similar argument in 'Kwaito versus Crossed-over' in which she states that one of the ways in which the 'identity restructuring' took place after South Africa's first democratic election was through popular music, for example the genre *kwaito*. This urban genre became an embodiment of the urban youth culture; a genre through which the youth expressed their identity as the youth of the new 'rainbow nation' (2004: 82). The music became a way in which the youth could express their patriotism with the new democratic country. In a similar way Shirinda's ethnic patriotism was expressed through his music.

Patrick Harries affirms that 'ethnic assertiveness' for the Tsonga was reinforced during the early twentieth century due to the 'politicization' of ethnicity. He elaborates:

> This may be traced to the actions of men like John Dube and Pixley Seme, who sought to mobilize rural support on an ethnic basis after having been ousted in 1917 from the leadership of the South African Native National Congress by the Rand-dominated Transvaalers. The ethnic assertiveness expressed by numerically larger and politically more centralized and confident ethnic groups such as the Swazi and Zulu surged forward in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Encouraged by the white segregationists, this ethnic assertiveness found expression at all levels of African society (1989: 100).

Harries' remarks evidently indicate that by the time the apartheid government implemented the independent homeland project and the fostering of ethnic divisions among black South Africans, it underpinned an already existing phenomenon and music was one of the ways in which these identities could be articulated.[41] Coplan notes that 'rivalries for land use and other resources between rural communities and clans were transferred to the urban setting, and teams of Nyembanes, Chopis and Shangaans … expressed [this] in performance competition' (1985: 63).

One of the consequences of the ethnic divisions forged in this period was that some of the urban black South African popular music that emerged was associated with particular ethnic groups, such as *maskanda* and *mbaqanga*, which are both associated with the AmaZulu. Meintjes' *Sound of Africa* (2003) focuses on how Zulu identity is constructed during studio recording sessions and during live performances of *mbaqanga*. On the other hand, Mojapelo asserts how *maskanda 'was* dominated by isiZulu musicians' (2008: 293) and Kathryn Olsen describes *maskanda* as a 'dynamic body of Zulu popular music' (2000: 1), demonstrating how ethnicity came to inform discourses on urban black South African music. Along the same lines, as a Tsonga artist who has been performing Tsonga indigenous music during a time when the state was preoccupied with ethnic identification and separation, labeling Shirinda's music 'Tsonga' seemed inevitable. A similar argument can be made with regard to Paul Ndlovu.

Though Ndlovu's career began two decades after that of Shirinda, the broad sweep of the social-political situation was similar to that of the 1960s. By this time however, ethnic language-based styles were no longer popular, as soul and disco had influenced local music traditions thus creating genres, such as township pop. Artists who participated in this genre include Sello 'Chicco' Twala, Brenda Fassie, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, and Splash, just to

[41] See Grant Olwage (2008) for discussion on how ethnicity had already been used in music before apartheid.

mention a few.[42]Aesthetically, Ndlovu's music is similar to that of these artists, however, his music was subsequently named Tsonga disco, a title that would later be inherited by any Tsonga artists who produced dance music and sang in Tsonga. When questioning Peter Moticoe, Paul Ndlovu's producer, as to why Ndlovu's music was labeled Tsonga disco instead of disco, township pop or bubblegum, while his music is fundamentally similar to that of the abovementioned artists, Moticoe replied,'It is because he was Tsonga' (Interview, 2011). However, these artists also have ethnic identities. Why is it then that only Ndlovu's music is 'ethnicised'?

One thing that differs about Ndlovu was that he came from a place associated with specific ethnic groups: Phalaborwa was predominantly a Tsonga and Northern Sotho area. Ndlovu's music peers by contrast were born in Soweto with some coming from multi-ethnic families. Though some of these artists did indeed sing in their vernacular languages, their bi-ethnicity and originating from the cosmopolitan urban Johannesburg rather than from the ethnically pure homelands, possibly presented a challenge to ethically labeling their music. Ndlovu's ethnic 'purity' thus gave way for music commentators of the time to 'ethnicise' his music. Shirinda's and Ndlovu's ethnic identities, together with the socio-political circumstances of the apartheid era, presented the condition for making Tsonga' the music produced by Tsonga-speaking artists with roots from 'homelands' associated with Tsonga people. The music of other musicians performing in a similar style to that of Shirinda was subsequently labeled Tsonga traditional, and musicians who produced dance or pop music were subsequently labeled Tsonga disco, despite the major stylistic developments that have occurred since Ndlovu's time. One of the reasons for this consistency in the genre labeling can be attributed to the artists' use of Xitsonga in their song lyrics.

Negotiating Tsonga-ness through language

As one of the fundamental markers of ethnic identity, language plays an important role in the performance of Tsonga-ness in Tsonga music. All the musicians interviewed for this research predominantly use Xitsonga in their lyrics. The use of the language is a matter of preserving the language and ethnic pride for some, while for others it is a matter of choice.

[42] See Coplan (2008) and Mojapelo (2008) for brief accounts of some of these artists.

From the commencement of his music career, Shirinda used Xitsonga in his songs. Shirinda's sole use of the Tsonga language in his music is mainly due to his belief in keeping the language pure. This became apparent when he raised concern about young musicians today recording songs that 'do not make sense' proclaiming that if 'you went and sang Zulu and it was not "well cooked", the song would not work with the Zulus. You had to sing clean Zulu. Even Shangaan, you were supposed to it sing it purely'. He elaborated:

> We need to preserve or take care of the Shangaan language. In the olden days when you spoke Shangaan and mixed it with English, you went for an interview and you mixed with English, they didn't want that. If you ever spoke and mixed with English, while on air, it meant you are killing the Shangaan language. It will slowly die, bit by bit ... So for me, I am determined that for as long as I live, that our language, I'm not saying the other languages are not right; they must be there, all 11 languages here in South Africa. They must all live. Shangaan must live. You get it? Shangaan must live child of Madalane (Interview, 2010).

Shirinda's love for his mother tongue is indisputable, but as noted in an earlier chapter the circumstances surrounding his emergence in the music industry cannot be left unexplored.

It is evident in the above statement that it was not only Shirinda's preference to preserve the purity of the language but 'they' (that is, various corporate culture bureaucrats) also did not want mixing of languages. His music career began during the 1960s which witnessed, among other things, the attempted repression of cosmopolitan musical styles such as township jazz (Coplan, 2008). The repression of the cosmopolitan styles came with the promotion of ethnic language-based styles such as the Tsonga traditional or Tsonga neo-traditional, as it was later labeled, which Shirinda participates in. Therefore, though Shirinda expressed pride in singing in Xitsonga, it is important to consider that his career coincided with a period in South African history in which he had limited choice in terms of the language in which to sing; it is commonly known that Johnny Clegg's song with Sipho Mnchunu, 'Woza Friday', was banned because it was seen as an 'insult to the Zulu people' for polluting their language by mixing it with English (Clegg and Drewett, 2006: 128).

Jeff Maluleke's use of Xitsonga, on the other hand, is a different matter. Maluleke was born in Mambhumbu, a village in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga, but grew up in the urban Daveyton, a township in Ekurhuleni, Gauteng. A self-taught guitarist, Maluleke found his place in the South African music industry by first collaborating with artists such as Dr Victor and *kwaito* legend, Arthur Mafokate. It was only in 1998 that Maluleke made his mark as a solo artist with the release of his album Dzovo in which the song 'Byala bya xintu'

(traditional beer, track 27) turned him into a household name. Since then, Maluleke has won numerous awards including three South African Music Awards and two Kora awards. Maluleke is often described by the media and music commentators as a Tsonga musician; however he describes his music as world music.

While Shirinda's music, for example, can easily be identified as Tsonga when heard at first encounter due to its heavy reliance on Tsonga indigenous melodies, Maluleke's music on the other hand, without the Tsonga lyrics, cannot be easily identified as Tsonga. Maluleke explained that his music is world music because, 'I fuse different elements':

> I am not blocked for any idea. My mind is open for anything. Anything that I listen and I love, I take a piece of it and then I make music. Ja [yes], I don't say I draw inspiration from these things. I love all instruments. There is no instrument that I don't love and so far, in all my albums I have almost all, most of the instruments you can hear in the world, violin, *mbira* [Zimbabwean 'thumb piano'], harp, *kora* [West African 'harp'], different types of percussion, piano, strings, all of these instruments you find them in my albums (Interview, 2009).

Maluleke's steadfastness on labelling his music as world music depicts the liberty since democracy for South African artists to actively engage with the global music market, part of which is the world music market. When questioned about other connotations attached to the term 'world music', for example, the label being viewed by some scholars as a western imposition upon music that is non-western, i.e. 'othering' (see Frith, 2007), Maluleke said he is aware of these other meanings. However, he chooses to believe in the meaning which best describes his music. Maluleke's meaning of the world music label is more aligned to that given by Laurent Aubert in *The Music of the Other* (2007). Though Aubert embraces the vagueness of the term, she describes it as meaning, 'musics of the world', i.e. music that combines elements from different musical traditions and that uses 'exotic' instruments together with 'western musical production', an 'intercultural experience' (2007: 53).

Though Xitsonga is dominant in Malukele's music, he uses English often and occasionally makes use of IsiZulu, Sesotho, Portuguese and Kiswahili. Maluleke exploits mixing languages in his lyrics such as in the songs 'Let's Save The World' (track 28), 'Luleka M'nwanati' ('Advice M'nwanati', track 29) and 'Woman of Africa' (track 30) from his album *Kilimanjaro* (2001) in which he sings the verses in Xitsonga, and the choruses in English and vice versa.

As a young artist who first made his mark on the South African music industry during the post-apartheid era, it is not surprising that Maluleke sees no obligation in singing in Xitsonga regardless of the fact that he is Tsonga. When I asked him why he sings in languages other than Xitsonga, his answer was 'why don't you ask me why I sing in Tsonga?' He made it clear that he sings in Tsonga because he chooses to – not because he is Tsonga. Although this stance may seem as though Maluleke is distancing himself from his ethnic language, the contrary is true. Maluleke released *Ximatsatsa* in 2007, an album which he dedicated to the Tsonga people. He described it to me as 'the coming back to my roots' album, saying:

> the *Ximatsatsa* album, though it was not marketed very well, it is more closer to my roots, more closer to who I am as a Shangaan boy or Shangaan young man you know, having grew up in Jozi, but my roots are in Bushbuckridge and you know when I did it, I had just come back from a trip from Bushbuckridge, I had come and stayed for a week, and seven days I mean back in my days it was an honour. So I was in touch with my roots when I did *Ximatsatsa* and I said I want so sing Shangaan, all the songs, and I dedicate all these songs you know to people from home, because people from home are happy people, they celebrate you know (Interview, 2009).

The use of the term *Ximatsatsa* for the album title draws attention to Tsonga-ness in the songs. The word is a common affectionate word in the Xitsonga language, meaning my love, sweetheart, or darling. The popularisation of this term was further accentuated by Thomas Chauke, the bestselling Tsonga traditional artist to date. Chauke uses the terms as a title for his album series; hence the word has become almost synonymous with Xitsonga. Maluleke may have emerged at a time when he had the freedom to choose in which language he wanted to sing, but his use of Xitsonga functions to underpin his– and his listeners'– ethnic identity in a similar way it does for Shirinda. Joe Shirimani and Penny Penny also use Xitsonga in their song lyrics for ethnic pride and mobilisation.

Shirimani uses Xitsonga, and occasionally features Zulu and Sotho in his song lyrics. He said, 'whenever you hear Joe Shirimani there will be Shangaan language used. Well I visit sometimes; I sometimes visit a little bit of Sotho, but just a little bit. I just do the featuring thing ... My music is Shangaan, it is Shangaan all over, another language can be featured just a little bit' (Interview, 2009). These remarks contained strong ethnic mobilisation sentiments as Shirimani pointed out: 'Shangaans, we used to undermine ourselves. I am the one who helped to uplift us. It is me, with Penny, who helped Shangaans take pride in who they are' (Interview, 2009).

In the introductory chapter the marginalization of Tsonga people in South Africa and the possible reasons for this socio-cultural marginalisation was discussed. There is a common belief that partly because of this marginalization; Shangaans often hide their ethnic identity. Many resorted to speaking broken Zulu or Sotho to avoid being isolated. This is what Shirimani is referring to when he speaks of being responsible for 'uplifting' Shangaans, for helping them to accept and be proud of their ethnic identity.

Penny also commented on this matter: 'Shangaans were hiding themselves, that's when I got happy because I uplifted the Shangaans where they were. Others were making themselves Zulu; some were making themselves other things. But because I said Shangaan is English, Shangaans became proud, they came out. I was proud with that song' (Interview, 2009). Here, Penny is referring to his song 'Shichangani' (Shangaan [in this case the language]) from his album *Shaka Bundu* (1994), the song that made him a Tsonga household name. The song speaks of words in Xitsonga that sound similar to certain English words; thereby concluding that Shangaan is equivalent to English in status. For example, he says, 'they say sugar, they say *chukele'*; *chukele* means 'sugar' in Tsonga and sounds similar to the English 'sugar'.

Shirimani's and Penny's busiest moments in their careers coincided with South Africa's transition period from apartheid to democracy. Shirimani explained that 'we were hectically busy; I mean it's obvious our music was very busy. '94, '95,'96 up until like 2000 it was very busy and then things changed and house and *kwaito* came in' (Interview, 2009). Allen has captured this moment in her article 'Kwaito versus Crossed-Over' in which she speaks of how urban youths used *kwaito* to express their new identity as free South Africans. While Allen says that '*kwaito* claimed: we are young, hip, tough, streetwise, internationally connected, and proudly South Africa' (2004: 90), the South African aesthetic implied here is, according to Thembela Vokwana, not the only identity constructed by *kwaito* artists. In his essay, '*Iph'indlela*? Where is the way?' (2007), Vokwana argues that recent black South African popular music such as *kwaito* also expresses ethnic identity through the use of vernacular in the lyrics. By combining languages in their music, *kwaito* artists, according to Vokwana, reclaimed their culture and heritage. This can also be seen in the work of Shirimani and Penny. In Shirimani's and Penny's music, the attempt to claim and reclaim status for their Tsonga-ness is expressed through the use of the Tsonga language and in direct reference to aspects of Tsonga culture.

Negotiating ethnic identity through reference to Tsonga-ness

As mentioned above, Penny released the album *Shaka Bundu* in 1994, which included the song 'Shichangani' ('Shangaan'). The song became a hit and the album sold millions of copies. In 1995 Penny released *La phinda i shangaana* (The Shangaan has done it again) and again the song of the same name became a national hit. The song's lyrics are as follows:

La phinda i Shangane (The Shangaan has done it again, track 31)

Vakgegulu vari
Vakhalabya vari
Machangana vari
Vasotho vari
La phinda, la phina, la phinda i Shanaane

I shangaane
La phinda, la phinda

Van'wana vaku mShangaane
Van'wana vaku mChangane
Van'wana vaku mZulo
Van'wan vaku vaNgoni
Ha fana hee

Van'wana vaku maXhosa
Van'wana vaku maPedi
Van'wana vaku maSwaze
Van'wana vaku vaTswana
Van'wana vaku maMpondo
Van'wana vaku maBaqa
Ha fana hee
Hi ma Afrika

Hivamakwerho
Ha fano
Hi ma Afrika

The elderly women say
The elderly men say
The Shangaans say
The Sothos say
The Shangaan has done it again

The Shangaan
Has done it again

Some say they are Shangaans
Some say they are Changaans
Some say they are Zulu
Some say they are Ngoni
We are all the same

Some they say they are Xhosa
Some say they are Pedi
Some say they are Swazi
Some say they are Tswana
Some say they are Mpondo
Some say they are Baqa
We are all the same
We are all Africans

We are siblings
We are all the same
We are all Africans

Important to note is that the chorus is in IsiZulu. The use of Zulu here forms a satirical response to the insulting word '*iShangaani*', not only addressed to Zulus but to anyone who has mistreated or undermined Shangaans. The word *iShangaani* is considered derogatory to Shangaans. For a long time, due to reasons mentioned in the introductory chapter, Shangaans were called by this pejorative term. Penny takes this negative word and gives it a new meaning. In Penny's song the term contains a subtext clarified in the line following it in the chorus (and in the song's title): *La phinda iShangaana*: I have made it, even though you called me *iShangaan* and thought less of me. This is further emphasised by Penny saying later on that we are all Africans, we are all the same. A song that communicates a similar sentiment is Shirimani's 'Bomba' ('Take pride', track 32):

Vabombile vaTsonga
Va bombile masiku lawa
Va bombile
Ahee va bombile

A niri bomba mZulu wa bomba na kuvona
Bombisa xiZulu wa bomba na ku vona
Bomba mXhosa wa bomba na ku vona
Bombisa xiXhosa wa bomba na ku vona
Bomba mSwazi wa bomba na ku vona
Bombisa xiSwazi wa bomba na ku vona
Bomba mNdebele wa bomba na ku vona
Bombisa xiNdebele bomba

Hi ngo vona xicathulo hiku xay'na xay'na
Hi ngo vona maburuku himitshetsho
Ndziri lo bombo
Vabombile, maChangana maTsongoo
Mingachavee
Ndziri i bombo
Nale Jonee
I ku xay'na xay'na
Nale pitori

Se hi vona mihlolo
Se va xayinoo
Hayi a vachavi

They Tsonga have taken pride
They have taken pride these days
They have taken pride
Ahee they have taken pride

Take pride Zulu I see you
Take pride the Zulu way
Take pride Xhosa
Take pride the Xhosa way
Take pride Swazi
Take pride the Swazi way
Take pride Ndebele
Take pride the Ndebele way

We see shoes are shining
We see pants have pleats
I say it's pride
They Shangaans, Tsongas, have taken pride
Don't be afraid
It's just pride
Even in Johannesburg
They are shining
Also in Pretoria
We are seeing things
They are shining
They are not scared

This song from the *Gabaza* album of 1999, affirms Shirimani's position on ethnic mobilisation. In the early 1990s through Penny's music, which Shirimani produced, Shirimani claims to have been uplifting Tsonga ethnic pride. In 'Bomba' he takes pride in having achieved that, as according to the song, Tsongas have now reclaimed their identity; they are no longer hiding and therefore encourage other ethnic groups to maintain their ethnic pride. In a similar manner, in 'N'wana Wa muTsonga' ('Tsonga Child'), Maluleke declares love to a lady who is Tsonga, saying that he wants to build a family with this Tsonga women, thus promoting the beauty of Tsonga-ness. In addition to making direct reference to Tsonga-ness in their song lyrics, Tsonga musicians also perform their ethnic identity through the use of Tsonga traditional folklore.

A name appears in some of these musicians' music, that has long appeared in Tsonga folklore – including folk music– Mithavine, which is also a common name among the Tsonga. In Shirinda's music it appears three times. He uses it in his song lyrics and sometimes gives the song this name as a title. In a similar way, Maluleke uses the name in the song

‘Mbombomela’ (‘Drowning’ [in alcohol], track 33) from his *A Twist of Jeff* album (2008). While Shirinda and Maluleke use this name in their own compositions, Shirimani and Samson Mthombeni, both made arrangements of a Tsonga indigenous song called Mithavine. Shirimani called the song ‘Khethile Khethile’ (‘Once you have chosen, you have chosen’), while Mthombeni called his ‘Miyela’ (‘Be still’). Maluleke also made an arrangement of another Tsonga indigenous song called ‘Ximamane’ (‘Mother’) from the hit album *Juliana* (2000). By referencing both the name Mithavine and the songs themselves, these artists make direct reference to their Tsonga heritage.

The use of folklore to maintain and affirm ethnic identity among the Tsonga is a subject covered by Thomas Johnston in his article, ‘Folklore emphasis among the Tsonga: A unifying mechanism’ (1975). Johnston states that although the Tsonga borrowed cultural practices from their neighbours, the Vendas and Pedis, in order to assimilate into South African society and to avoid ‘intertribal fiction’, folklore was used to maintain their ethnic identity (142). Stuart Hall contends that formerly marginalised communities found ways to ‘speak for themselves’ (1997: 37). With the advent of a democratic South Africa, and as the ideal of unity in diversity was encouraged (Allen, 2004: 83), Tsonga musicians like Shirimani saw the need to assert their ethnic identity on a broader national context. Song texts such as the ones discussed here function as a mechanism to claim, not only their ethnic identity, but also their national identities as South Africans. In this section focus has been placed on how Tsonga-ness is negotiated in songs. What follows is a discussion of how Tsonga-ness is performed in a live setting.

Performing Tsonga-ness

In *Ethnicity and Politics in South Africa*, Gerhard Mare points out that dress and ornamentation are important distinctive markers of ethnicity (1993: 8). In Tsonga traditional music, the *xibelana* (the Tsonga traditional skirt worn by women) plays an important role in the construction of Tsonga-ness in performances. Shirinda takes pride in being the one responsible for the publicising of *xibelana*. He explained to me how it was taboo for one man to see another man’s wife’s *xibelana*, but also that when he started singing, he instructed his backing singers, who are also his wives, to take off their *minceka* (traditional clothes) and show off their *swibelani*, after realising that people were fascinated by the garments. Though

I never had an opportunity to observe Shirinda perform live, he explained that the women always perform in their *swibelana*.

The importance of the *xibelana* was evident in the concert as described in chapter 2, at which numerous Tsonga traditional artists performed, and where the female backing singers in all the groups dressed in colourful *swibelana*. Another observation from these performances was that the men, who were predominantly the lead singers of the groups, wore western clothes, such as cotton shirts and trousers, or suits. Only one artist, Siya Chauke, wore traditional attire. This arrangement is evident on album covers, in which the women are always in their *swibelana*. In Thomas Chauke's *Best Of* DVD (2006) the women appear with their *swibelana* while he is dressed in ordinary clothes, though later in the DVD he changes to traditional Tsonga dress. One possible explanation for the men not adorning themselves in traditional dress with the frequency that the women do, is found in David Webster's account of the Tsonga (cited in Mare, 1993: 19).

Webster noted 'males, having to fend within a world of migrant labour, adopted a "Zulu" ethnic identity in order to benefit from the positive perception that white employers frequently had of the Zulu ethnic group (stereotypical characteristics such as masculinity, strength, militarism and reliability). Women, on the other hand, had a more favourable status within T[s]onga society and hence adhered to this ethnic identity'. Women thus became, according to Webster, 'the bearers of the T[s]onga ethnic identity' (Mare, 1993: 19; Kivnick, 1990: 96). As a symbol of ethnicity, the *xibelana* therefore plays an important role in the construction of Tsonga-ness in Tsonga traditional music. Moreover, this dress is always accompanied by the XiGaza dance.

Shirinda explained that when he and his group perform, they dance the XiGaza dance, a Tsonga traditional dance in which the women swivel their skirts and the men execute stamping dance routines. The second chapter described in detail how the dance marks the climax of a song's live performance: the singing ceases while the instrumental music continues and at this point the ladies commence with the XiGaza dance routines, often executing unison movements and occasionally individually taking centre stage for solo dancing. The men engage in their stamping dance routines. There are similarities between the dance routines which were recorded on my field trip to the urban township of Thembisa and routines found in Hugh Tracey's video recording of *Dances of Southern Africa* recorded

around the 1950s. The similarities are between the recorded group and the Muchongoyo dances of the Ndau dance, recorded near Johannesburg and in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).[43] In both instances the men share similarities in dress: Mostly they wear ordinary clothes, such as sweat pants and cotton T-shirts, though some wear what could be described as the male version of the *xibalani*, and others, in both cases, have feathers strapped over their shoulders. The dances in both videos involve stamping and tumbling, with intervals in which one man takes a solo dance routine while the others clap and sing. The major difference between the dances in the two recordings is that in the Tracey recording the dances are accompanied by traditional drums while in the recording of the Thembisa festival the dancers are moving to recorded music. This attests to how tradition is not static but rather to how it changes. Though the dance routine itself has remained largely unchanged over the years, the music has been appropriated into new technologies to create a new sound that functions effectively in contemporary society.

Another important point stemming from the dance discussed above is the relationship between South African Tsongas and Mozambique. In the chapter on General MD Shirinda, it was pointed out how Shirinda migrated to South Africa with his family. Historians record that the migration from Mozambique to South African began as early as the nineteenth century and that it took place for various reasons including trade, better settlement, war, and labour (Harries, 1989; Newitt, 1995). This connection between Mozambique and South Africa manifested itself in Tsonga music.

Shirinda acknowledges his Mozambican family history and the writer explored how the *timbila* and Chopi *timbila* playing seems to have been transferred to his guitar playing. While Shirinda does not frequent Mozambique any longer, Penny and Jeff Maluleke travel to Mozambique requlary, not only to perform but to visit friends and family. Both are proud of their popularity in Mozambique and that they are treated like pop stars there. In the concert which I attended in Thembisa, Mozambican artists were featured on the programme, one of whom was the singer and guitarist Xigilingwana. The connection between South African Tsonga musicians and Mozambique is not only manifesting in their discourse on their lives, histories and careers, but also in some of their music. It was observed from the concert in

[43] Hugh Tracey worked as a broadcaster for the SABC and was an African music enthusiast who dedicated his life to recording indigenous African music. He is the founder of the International Library of African Music (Coplan 2007 and Thram, unknown date).

Thembisa that the Mozambican language in which they sang was similar to Tsonga; this suggests that Mozambicans understand South African Tsonga musicians' lyrics. Maluleke mentioned that people in Mozambique love his music because they can relate to some of the rhythms, which they recognise (Interview, 2011). The historical connection between Mozambique and South Africa is thus sustained through Tsonga music practices.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter the impact of specific moments in a country's history on music making, marketing and how musicians identify their music, was considered. Shirinda's and Ndlovu's experiences of their music being labeled Tsonga are indicative of the impact of socio-political circumstance on music labeling and the lack of authority over music experienced by musicians. Shirinda, Maluleke, Shirimani and Penny, all expressed dissatisfaction with the ethnic prefix to their music. Shirinda lamented:

> This music is music of Africa, it is not Shangaan because it's Shangaan when we sing, the language, but the rhythm that I play works throughout the world. That is why it was taken by Malcolm McLaren, and taken by Paul Simon, do you see where they are. They are outside [the country], you understand? They are outside. So it means my music is not Shangaan, it's not South African, it is just the language that I sing in, I sing in Shangaan. But those companies would write Shangaan music (Interview, 2010).

Note how Shirinda positions his music as 'African' rather than Tsonga or South African. During apartheid black South Africans were allocated 'homelands' according to ethnic groups and Gazankulu was the one reserved for Tsonga speakers, hence Shirinda's use of the word maGaza (Gaza's or people of Gaza) whenever he refers to Tsonga people. For rural based musicians, like Shirinda, the ideology of ethnicity in the homeland made the national (South African) identity less important. The nation was the ethnic identity rather than the country. Therefore, Shirinda's belief that his music transcends ethnic boundaries led to the idea that it is not only Tsonga music, but also 'African', bypassing the possibility if it being South African. While Shirinda calls his music 'African', Shirimani and Penny position their music as Afro-pop. The detail of their views on this has been discussed in the second chapter. Attention will now be shifted to Maluleke, who prefers that his music be labeled 'world music'.

Shirinda's music, for example, can easily be identified as Tsonga when heard at first encounter, due to its heavy reliance on Tsonga indigenous melodies. Maluleke's music on the other hand, without the Tsonga lyrics, cannot be as easily identified. Besides being constantly described as a Tsonga musician, to his annoyance, his music has been marked, and marketed, as everything from *mbaqanga*, Afro-pop, contemporary, Afro-jazz, folk music, and, surprisingly, West African. This multiple labeling affirms that although Maluleke is Tsonga and often uses Xitsonga in his lyrics, thus constructing a Tsonga ethnic identity, his exploration of various elements from other cultures– whether instruments or other musical features– creates a platform for the performance of multiple identities. His use of Swahili, Portuguese, *kwasa kwasa*, and directly referring to Kinshasa in the song 'Kabila' (track 34) creates a pan-African aesthetic in his music, with the African market being part of the global market for South African musicians. It should be mentioned here that Maluleke is well aware of the negative connotations embedded in the 'world music' label, but chooses to ignore these, focusing on what the label means for him personally. His explicit reference of 'world musics' conveys his active participation in the global market while for Shirinda the idea of 'Africa' seems to be and idea that he could only explicitly articulate presently. My thesis for this point is raised by various reasons.

Shirinda stated that British impresario Malcolm McLaren 'took' his song 'Mdjaji', which he said was recorded in 1976:

> Mdjadji (the name of a person) became a hit all over the world. It was even taken by a white guy called Malcolm McLaren from Britain without any agreement with me. It was written Double Dutch; that Soweto album. Artists from all over the country we put in that album, and he took mine as well. And with Mdjaji, the single, January and February, it was second in the whole world. I, the owner, when the white people realized that I couldn't fight for it, they called me and said, what about this song, is it yours, did you compose it yourself? I said yes, I composed it. Then they brought some forms for me to fill in and they said they are fighting the battle for the song with the people who took it (Interview, 2010).

McLaren's album title was *Duck Rock* (1983) and the remake of Shirinda's 'Mdjaji' occurs in the song 'Soweto'. Important to note is that prior to the McLaren encounter, Shirinda does not mention any pan-African intentions for or international exposure of his music. This researcher is suggesting that his experience with McLaren could have been the genesis for the idea that his music is not only Tsonga but African, which could have been accentuated by Paul Simon's interest in Shirinda's music, which in turn led to his participation in *Graceland*. On the other hand, it cannot be discounted that the idea of his music being African could have been prompted by the fact that Shirinida is originally from Mozambique. As mentioned in the

first chapter, Shirinda's music interest began at an early age while he was living in Mozambique. He mentioned having taken informal guitar lessons from Mozambican guitarists Fani Pfumo and Alexander Jafete and having played indigenous instruments. His assertion of being influenced by *mbaqanga* and Daniel Marivate, together with skills acquired at an early age while in Mozambique, raises the possibility that the pan-African ideals he later articulated for his music, germinated from his awareness of the varying influences on his art. Therefore, although socio-political circumstances may not have allowed inter-music exchange or sharing with the rest of Africa for rural based musicians like Shirinda (conversation with David Coplan, 2011), Shirinda's personal history of straddling countries seems to have played a role in the way he defines his music. He carried his musical heritage with him to Gazankulu, the former Tsonga homeland (Magubane, 1998: 93), and though during apartheid he could only identify himself as Tsonga, now he can explicitly call himself an African –this is evident in the song 'Hamilosa' ('We salute/greet you', track 35) from the album *Gama Ra Nsele* (2006). Most of Shirinda's songs studied for this research that were recorded during the apartheid period often refer to Gaza's (people of Gaza, i.e. Gazankulu) rather than Africans. In the song 'Hamilosa', Shirinda refers to himself as an African. The chorus to the song is as follows:

Hina hi vana va Afrika
Va byeleni
Hina hi vana va Afrika
Vulavulani
Hi tisi la, hi tisa nhluvuko lo
Hamilosa

We are children of Africa
Tell them
We are children of Africa
Speak
We have brought here
We salute/greet you

In the same song, though he proclaims his African identity, he continues to affirm his ethnic identity. At the song's bridge, Shirinda groans, 'Gaaaaaza'. This recalls a point made by Allen with reference to *kwaito* in which she speaks of identity restructuring. Allen argues that the transition from apartheid 'required a series of negotiations between residual and emergent identities', and popular music was one way in which these new identities were articulated. The new South African would harness 'the potentially divisive power of racial and ethnic

identity under a larger umbrella of an all-encompassing nationalism that celebrated diversity as a form of wealth' (2004: 83).

As a musician whose career began during the height of apartheid, with censorship laws among other things, creating boundaries and record company producers who 'coached' unschooled musicians, it comes as no surprise that Shirinda is only using the word 'African' in his song lyrics now while still promoting his Tsonga identity. In Tsonga disco, Ndlovu and Teanet seem to have eschewed explicit ethnic references in their music. For Ndlovu, even though his music was labeled Tsonga disco, except for the lyrics being in Xitsonga, there is no direct reference to Tsonga-ness in his music. For example, he does not mention Tsongas, Shangaans, or Gazas, except in the song 'Hita famba Moyeni' in which he makes reference to Giyani, the capital of Gazankulu. This could be the result of Ndlovu working with musicians from different ethnic groups. As mentioned earlier, he worked with Stimela and The Movers, bands that consisted of members from different ethnic groups. For Teanet, the lack of explicit reference to Tsongas, Shangaans, or Gazas, can perhaps be attributed to the diversity in his music. In the previous chapter it was alluded to how Teanet's music is eclectic. Considering his use of different styles in his music, it is not difficult to imagine that he composed music with a diverse audience in mind.

In *Music, Space and Place* (2004), Tony Mitchell speaks of 'resistance vernaculars', when minorities use their ethnic language in music as a form of resistance against hegemony. One of the examples Mitchell gives is that of a Zimbabwean- and American-based hip-hop crew at the time, Zimbabwe Legit, who used Ndebele and Shona in their song lyrics. Mitchell argues that the use of their ethnic languages functions as a 'cultural project of self-assertion and self-preservation which links itself with a global diaspora of expressions of indigenous ethnic minorities' social struggles through music' (117). Penny and Joe emerged during the transition period from apartheid and with the new government emphasising 'unity in diversity', they began to use their music as a tool to assert and affirm their ethnic identity. Songs such as 'IShangana', 'La Phind'iShangane' ('The Shangaan does it again'), and 'Bomba' ('Take pride') are evidence of this. Through these songs, these artists not only affirm their ethnic identity but also create a platform for Tsonga speakers to mobilise themselves to form a recognised and proud collective identity. The use of Xitsonga lyrics, wearing traditional attire, dancing traditional dance routines, and making reference to Xitsonga folklore, seem to work together to maintain a Tsonga ethnic identity in

contemporary Tsonga popular music, one that is nevertheless practiced in a globalised context.

Afterthoughts: Tsonga music in a global world

Debates on music and globalisation have in the past revolved around two main arguments. On the one hand, some scholars argue that due to globalisation, so called third-world countries' cultural legacy is partially destroyed and they suffer loss of cultural identity, tradition, knowledge, skills and values (Kong, 1997 and Guilbault, 2006) and therefore the world becomes a 'global consumer mono culture' ('wow essays', 1999: 2). It is argued that globalisation eliminates differences, homogenises culture, so that the world becomes dominated by one culture, 'in music specifically, western music culture' (Bartel, 2002: 1). On the other hand, it is argued that globalisation should not be perceived as a negative phenomenon. Globalisation could be seen as a process which enables cultures to learn about other cultures, thereby both changing and reaffirming them ('wow essays', 1999: 1). Gerard Béhague states that globalisation 'must not be conceived solely as a homogenising process, for numerous popular music subcultures cannibalized by it' because the world is still characterised by individual practices and ideologies (2003: 79). In fact, Ulrich Aldelt argues that globalisation has given rise to the increased celebration of locality due to fear of losing local identity (2005: 280). In the same line of thought, Kong argues that music is one of the ways used to reaffirm local identities: there are 'local sounds that are the result of, inter alia, the distinctive interplay of language, lyrics, melody and instrumentation' (1997: 23). The proliferation of studies on local popular musics within a globalised world attest to this (Taylor 1997, Whiteley, 2005, Erlmann 1999 and Meintjes, 2003).

Similar to Mitchell's argument in *Music, Space and Place* (2005), in *Global Pop* (1997) Timothy Taylor investigates how South African *isicathamiya* group, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, utilises global sounds and techniques while making them their own in order to celebrate their culture. My discussion on the construction of Tsonga-ness in Tsonga music is exemplary of this. Shirimani, Penny and Maluleke, whose music is highly influenced by global music trends and which, without Xitsonga lyrics, cannot be easily identified as Tsonga, continue to employ elements such as language and other musical features that express Tsonga-ness despite the consequences of such musical decisions. They noted that singing in Xitsonga often leads to their music not being play-listed on other ethnic radio stations. Regardless of this, and because of the need to reaffirm and maintain their ethnic identity, they continue to express it in music. This persistence of constructing Tsonga-ness in their music could also be attributed to that, though locally, ethically labeling their music may

be creating limits in terms of airplay, in the global market some of these artists have had considerable success. Penny's music for example, sold well in the African market and he claims to maintain a following in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Mali and Sierra Leone.

Recently, a friend and colleague, Joe Makhanza, wrote on his Facebook wall, 'hi friends if you happen to know Penny Penny the musician please let him know that his music is loved by the people of Mali' (Makhanza, 2011). From Makhanza's observations, Malians do not know that Penny is Tsonga. Makhanza explained that the Malians were under the impression that Penny sings in isiZulu. He had to explain to them that Penny is Tsonga and sings in Tsonga. Makhanza's post rose curiousity about how Tsonga disco is marketed outside the country. Due to mysterious circumstances, locating Penny was not an option at this point. Resultantly, a friend and former colleague of his, Jimmy Makhuvele, who accompanied him to a performance that took place in Zimbabwe in May 2010, was consulted. I asked Makhuvele what Penny's music is called in Zimbabwe and he said, di-gong, 'they call him king of di-gong' (Makhuvele, 2011).

This incident brought to mind another episode relating to the ongoing labelling of contemporary Tsonga music. While working for the SABC Music Library in 2010, this researcher noticed that music by Thomas Chauke, General MD Shirinda and Samson Mthombeni was labelled Tsonga disco even though, as discussed earlier, their music is typically labelled and marketed as Tsonga traditional music. Aaron Magoro, responsible for cataloguing the music, was questioned why this was so. He explained that he cannot label the music Tsonga traditional because it does not employ indigenous instruments, as discussed in chapter two (Magoro, 2010). At the SABC Media Library also it was noted that Jeff Maluleke's music is labelled African jazz rather than world music.

These inconsistencies in contemporary classifying practices bring to mind Holt's point about musical meaning being 'contingent' (2007: 5). Tsonga music's multiple labeling creates an opportunity for multiple meanings and connotations depending on the context in which the music is consumed. This opens up questions about the power relations and corporate structures in the music industry. Keith Negus asked: 'Should judgments about the characteristics of a genre be made according to those sounds heard coming from the music industry and the media, or do we listen more carefully in the (other) right places?' (1999: 26). Following Negus's example, I ask: As contemporary Tsonga popular music is labeled

differently by difference structures within the music industry, whose voice(s) do we listen to? Do we consider the labels given by the various constituents of the music industry and media, or do we take as more valuable, more meaningful, or more 'truthful', what the musicians tell us, which as has been revealed, is often in contradiction with what one hears on the radio or finds on the cover of the CD in a record shop. This study has given Tsonga musicians a platform to express what meanings they attribute to their music and how they wish it to be labeled. Nonetheless, given the realities within which they produce and practice their art, and with the numerous structures involved in the production and marketing of their music, one wonders if their voices will ever be heard in the ways in which they would want.

Charles Hamm points out that 'more recent musicological literature agrees that genre should not be defined by description or analysis of stylistic features alone' (1995: 372). He notes that 'context' needs to be considered when exploring genre in music. Tsonga popular music emerged during the height of 'separate development' ideology and practices, hence its ethnic labeling. According to Robert Walser, musical meanings are always grounded socially and historically, and they operate on an ideological field of conflicting interest, institutions and memories (cited in Hamm, 1995: 373). These 'conflicting interests' Walser speaks of are manifest in the Tsonga music world. My discussions with Tsonga musicians reveal that they are discontent with the ethnic labeling of their music. However, this was not always the case. During the transition period to post-apartheid democracy, at the height of their careers, Shirimani and Penny used the label to their advantage. Song texts such as the ones discussed above function as a mechanism, not only to claim and assert their ethnic and national identity, but also to mobilise, as they argued, the Tsonga people towards ethnic pride. Now that such 'upliftment' is no longer deemed necessary, the Tsonga music label is considered problematic as it hinders them from receiving airplay on other ethnic radio stations.

Hamm also speaks of a 'generic contract between a composer and a listener' (1994: 144), by which he means that once conventions of a particular genre are established, the composer and/or performer needs to produce their work in accordance to these conventions in order for the listener to consume and interpret their music 'correctly'. For the musicians who participated in this study, changing the genre label would mean risking losing their followers, although there is always an opportunity to establish a new market. As long as they continue to work with the various structures within the music industry, the 'Tsonga music' label, it appears, will remain.

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