

https://dspace.org/

Between the church and the marketplace: how professional gospel musicians negotiate the tension between sacred and market contexts, with reference to the case of No Limits, a vocal music group from Soweto

Moshugi, Kgomotso Samuel

2016-01-28
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/19387

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Between the church and the marketplace: How professional gospel musicians negotiate the tension between sacred and market contexts, with reference to the case of No Limits, a vocal music group from Soweto.

By

Kgomotso Samuel Moshugi

(774022)

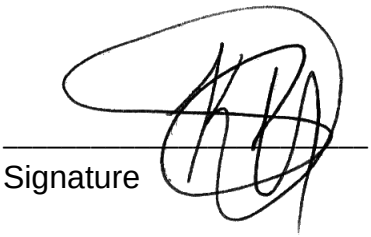
A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters in Arts, Culture and Heritage Management

Supervisor: Dr Brett Pyper

(Associate Professor- Wits School of Arts)

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it at any university for a degree.



Signature

15 October 2015

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

First, foremost and above all, I honour and glorify Jehovah, who makes all things possible, who designed for our paths to intersect, who has given enough life and strength to me and all the people who have made this research possible.

This study is informed by the life of No Limits and all the members of the group since the onset. Their life has inspired this study and I would like to express my appreciation for them sharing it with me. I am constantly humbled by their contributions to the work that we have jointly attempted to do. I wish to also thank all the individuals who participated in the interviews and contributed their insights; they have further made this study realisable. There are invaluable contributions that we have received as a group from important individuals over the years, most of whom are mentioned later in this report. They have been central to the journey and I thank them together with everyone who is connected to the contexts referred to in this research.

Special thanks to my supervisor Dr Brett Pyper for his wise and insightful guidance and constant support. 'I could do this all over again.' Also, thanks to Gwen Ansell for her feedback on the proposal. I wish to thank Avril Joffe for her invaluable wealth of knowledge, Noluthando Xate, Lerato Saohatse and Fikile Mboleka for the lengthy reflections and insights. To Asher Ncgobo, Setumo Seroka, Mokale Koapeng and everyone who has encouraged me, thanks. Also thanks to friends and supporters of No Limits for being part of mine and our life as a group.

Most special thanks to 'Selabe le batsalani mmogo' my entire family for being the wind under my wings, for raising me to be the human being I am who wants to do better at all that makes me human, thanks for everything, I love you all. Love to Motsamai Koapeng and his family for the years of friendship and brotherhood. To my wife, Mpumi, for being everything I am not, for being the other brain, pair of eyes, ears, hands and feet that are not mine but are for me, for your constructive criticism and constant encouragement, for the sacrifices you have made during this research and your selfless contributions to No Limits since the beginning, for your awesome work with Kgosi and Ore, thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 1

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY 7

1.1 INTRODUCTION 7

1.2 THE FORMATIVE CONTEXT OF NO LIMITS 8

1.2.1 The Seventh-Day Adventist Church 8

1.2.2The Formative Influences of the Researcher 11

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT 13

1.4 RATIONALE 14

1.5 AIM OF THE RESEARCH 15

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS 16

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 16

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 18

2.1 INTRODUCTION 18

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 18

2.3 MUSIC IN THE SACRED CONTEXT 22

2.4 THE COMMODITISATION OF MUSIC IN THE CULTURAL ECONOMY 23

2.4.1The Commercialisation of Choral Music 25

2.5 MUSIC AS A PROFESSION 26

2.6 INTERSECTION OF THE SECULAR AND THE SACRED IN GOSPEL AND CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC 28

3. CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 31

3.1 INTRODUCTION 31

3.2 SAMPLING 32

3.3 DATA COLLECTION 33

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS 34

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 34

4. CHAPTER 4: THE NARRATIVE OF NO LIMITS 35

4.1 INTRODUCTION 36

4.2 FORMATION 37

5. CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS 59

5.1 INTRODUCTION 59

5.2 ASSESSING NO LIMITS USING THE LANDRY MODEL 59

5.2.1 Beginnings 59

5.2.1.1 The church as an enabler of the development of music 60

5.2.1.2 Professionalisation in the market and the church 64

5.2.2 Production 70

5.2.2.1 The music of No Limits 70

5.2.2.2 Recordings of No Limits 72

5.2.2.3 Performances of No Limits 76

5.2.3 Circulation 79

5.2.3.1 Interactions with record companies 80

5.2.3.2 Distribution 86

5.2.4 Delivery Mechanisms 90

5.2.4.1 Retail outlets 90

5.2.4.2 Live performances 92

5.2.4.3 Broadcasts 93

5.2.5 Audience Reception and Feedback 94

5.2.5.1 Seventh-Day Adventist audience 95

5.2.5.2 Non-Seventh-Day Adventist audience 98

5.3 CONCLUSION 99

6. CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS 100

6.1 INTRODUCTION 100

6.2 THE CHURCH 100

6.3 THE MARKET 104

6.4 TENSIONS OBSERVED BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND MARKET CONTEXTS 105

6.5 THE RESPONSE OF NO LIMITS TO THE TENSIONS BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND MARKET CONTEXTS 107

6.5.1 Circulation and Delivery Mechanisms in the No Limits Value Chain 108
6.6 GENERALISATION OF FINDINGS 111

7. CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 112
7.1 INTRODUCTION 112
7.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 113
7.3 ALTRUISTIC YET PROFITABLE 113
7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS 114
7.5 CONSIDERATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY 115
7.6 CONCLUSION 116

8. REFERENCES 118
8.1 INTERVIEWS 118
8.2 INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS 119
8.3 DISCUSSIONS 120
8.4 PUBLICATIONS 120

APPENDIX (Discography and Semi-Structured Interviews) 124

CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This research study came out of the experience of the researcher as a member of the South African Soweto based group, No Limits. No Limits is a mixed gender a cappella group comprised of members who grew up in the Seventh-Day Adventist church which is where they met and formed the group in 1995. I, the researcher, have been an integral part of No Limits ever since.

Although our content has remained devotionally relevant, our creative expressions have presented themselves in a manner seeking to be innovative.[1] The growing impact of the music of No Limits, our commitment to the music and an unwavering belief that this was a spiritual calling, led the group to pursue music as a fulltime career.[2] No Limits has subsequently released six audio recordings, travelled nationally and abroad, and made numerous television and radio appearances. As the footprint of No Limits widened, the challenges of functioning in both the church (sacred context) and the music industry (marketplace) became apparent. As such, this study explores how professional gospel musicians negotiate the tension between the sacred context and the marketplace.

This study focuses on a relational triad between the group No Limits, the church and the music industry. Thinking about this as a relational triad helps to outline parameters for the context within which No Limits has existed or perhaps struggled to exist. It is upon such a premise that this research study has been undertaken.

[1] Interview with Mlungwana and Kaunda, January and February 2015.
[2] Interview with Mambo, February 2015

1.2 THE FORMATIVE CONTEXT OF NO LIMITS

This section provides an overview of the context within which No Limits was formed and continues to operate.

1.2.1 The Seventh-Day Adventist Church

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the musical careers of numerous musicians have historically been incubated in the church.[3] For No Limits that church is the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church. The SDA church was formally registered in North America in 1863 (Cunningham-Flemming 2013). The first SDA missionaries arrived in South Africa in 1887 and the South African conference of the Seventh-Day Adventists was formalised in 1892. The SDA church utilises a centralised organisational structure with the General Conference (GC) at the top. The GC is composed of Divisions which are a formation of Unions. The Unions in different regions around the world are comprised of local Conferences which are made up of districts of local churches.[4] This organisational structure enables the SDA church to apply the same set of policies and practices across all its territories.[5]

According to Cunningham-Flemming (2013) the SDA Church in America was able to maintain consistency between what was sung and how it was sung among segregated black and white communities within its congregations. The same consistency was extended to their South African missions with the view of infusing aspects of the western culture with 'native' culture (Spalding 1962). The hymns that were used by the world church were translated into local languages by and for non-English speaking members of the congregation. It seems that the SDA church in South Africa was divided along racial lines even long before the formalisation of apartheid in 1948. This racial divide has been a general challenge for the church over the years (Crocombe 2007).

[3]The researcher as a musician, his engagement with other musicians, other musicians on http://saintheron.com/music/black-churches-schooled-secular-musicians/

[4]Details are accessible on www.adventist.org

[5] Through the use of the church manual that guides practices across the local churches in all regions.

Nonetheless, the organisational structure and adherence to the church manual further ensured general and standard practices in all SDA churches irrespective of 'race' and locality. An exception in the black churches was that in the afternoon services, the congregation adopted the use of choruses which were usually shorter and contained African musical influences. In addition to congregational singing, there are American groups that recorded and circulated their music worldwide. As such, the musical groups that were formed in local churches drew inspiration and influence from these American SDA groups[6] and often sought to imitate them.[7]

In 2003 the GC Committee (GCC), which is located in America, published a set of guidelines and standards on the philosophy of the church regarding music (GCC 2003). The GCC guidelines on music reveal how important the aesthetic and devotional attributes of music are to the church. The guidelines appear to be a way for the church to ensure high standards of musical practice. Furthermore, the guidelines encourage church members to be concerned with the quality of music that the church produces. Additionally, the youth is encouraged to appreciate church music and to participate in the church through music. However, since there is no provision for the resources required to attain the high standards of music production advocated by the GCC, there is an assumption that the music is brought into the church purely as an offering towards enriching the devotional experience of the congregation. Through its values, the church offers inspiration to musicians for creative content. Moreover, the church offers musicians a network and community of likeminded people who are comprised of local and international audiences.

Offering their services freely is often not a problem for musicians who have other employment to provide for their livelihood. Nonetheless, those musicians whose sole profession is music have to constantly negotiate for some kind of support from the church, for their contribution.[8] Some musicians end up leaving the church completely while others feel that the church is doing them an injustice, particularly when they

[6] The King's Heralds Quartet, Faith for Today, Heritage Singers, Breath of Life Quartet.
[7] Interview with Nkomo
[8] Interview with Bacela, January 2015

consider the support that other churches such as the Anglican, Methodist and Grace Bible churches often provide to professional musicians in their denominations.[9] The SDA church lacks a clear position on how it understands professional musicians except in limited cases where music teachers employed in church schools are concerned, generally in America (Stearman 1992). Even so, the role of the SDA church in developing and nurturing the careers of musicians cannot be overlooked.

The SDA church is renowned for the quality of its vocal and close harmony style of singing. Take 6, the most nominated and ten-time Grammy award winning vocal group, was formed in the 1980s by African American students at Oakwood University, an SDA institution in Alabama, United States of America (USA). Although they were part of the SDA church, they signed a record deal with Time Warner and decided to operate professionally within the mainstream music industry. If at any point the church required their services, the regular booking procedure through their booking agent applied, with no exceptions. As a result, once they became professional, Take 6 rarely had performances in the SDA church. Furthermore, they were criticised by church members for incorporating jazz elements in their music and for being involved in the music industry, which was seen as secular (Chea 2006). In contrast, one of the most popular SDA music groups, the Heritage Singers, have been operating mainly within the SDA church and occasionally in other churches since the early 1970s. They generate their revenue from church donations, record sales and at times from insisting on receiving some form of payment from the church (Schultz 2010).

In South Africa, in the early 1950s, the King's Messengers quartet was formed at Bethel College, a SDA mission boarding school in the Eastern Cape, Butterworth.[10] The King's Messengers were signed under EMI Records. Despite being a church group, their reach extended beyond the church audience into the broader market and other parts of Africa. Through the distribution and marketing support of EMI Records, the King's Messengers locally popularised the close harmony vocal singing for which the SDA church is now

[9] Discussion with Mboleka and Madondo (keyboard player for the Grace Bible church in Soweto)
[10] Interview with Sixholo W.

renowned. The King's Messengers and other SDA music groups of the time, which never recorded albums, were partly influenced by the Royal Ambassadors quartet from America. Seemingly, the missionaries who came to teach at Bethel College brought records and songbooks from America and students sought to imitate the music contained therein.[11] This could explain the origin of the practice of emulating American music groups within the SDA church and the longstanding American influence on local SDA music. In a local context dominated by ethnic and some indigenous styles, the SDA style of singing, though predominantly western, specifically North American, seemed appealing and unique to South Africans. This western influence would later distinguish the SDA music groups that would be formed.

1.2.2 The Formative Influences of the Researcher

When I was growing up, the radio was a major medium of entertainment and communication. The vibrancy of the music was reflected in the music that was played on air and from struggle anthems in the streets as well as wedding, traditional and church songs. Nevertheless, it was in my home that I experienced the foremost impact and influence. The influence of my elder brother, David Moshugi, set the tone for my earlier musical tastes and preferences.

I grew up in a strict religious environment at home. We had daily devotions in the morning and evening, without default. These devotions were characterised by much singing and reading. It is this setting that created the foundation for my assimilation of hymns and devotional content. In addition to hymns, which were mostly western songs sung in both vernacular languages and English, classical music of Bach, Handel, Mozart and Beethoven was regularly played in the house by David. Also, two African compositions captured my young mind, "Lefatshe la kanana" by Francis Marema Raseleso and "U eakae" by Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa. Raseleso and Mohapeloa, whose works have been popularised in the South African choral circles, came from Lesotho and their compositions were in the Sesotho language, I was therefore able to

[11] Interview with Nkomo S.

relate to their work. Even though I did not become a follower of these composers, these songs were still a vivid part of my childhood memories.

I was also influenced by other music, such as that of the theatre cast of King Kong and Iphi intombiyam' as well as a then popular male group called the Rustenburg Boys. The Rustenburg Boys were from the Rustenburg area and sung traditional compositions in Sesotho and Setswana.

South African radio airplay, in those days, included local and international music. Growing up in the SDA church, I listened to American music groups, specifically the King's Heralds and the Breath of Life quartets, and a mixed voices ensemble called the Heritage Singers. Thus, I was exposed to an array of musical influences that later filtered into the music that I was to write, even for No Limits.

In 1989 I attended a church concert of a local mixed group, the *New Creation Family Singers*. They were professional in performance and vocally outstanding. As well, they were a Bethel College group comprising seasoned and carefully selected singers from all over the country. Although they performed with a band that evening, they sang the music of another American group, *Continental Singers.*[12] In those days, college groups were more seasoned than local church groups.[13] Not long after that, I heard a tape of the American sextet Take 6. Coming from the SDA tradition, Take 6 brought extended harmonies with a jazz element to what we were used to. They showed us that it was possible to incorporate other musical styles besides some aspects of country music as was by the Heritage Singers and a form of barbershop singing as in some of the repertoire of the King's Heralds quartet, into our church music. Take 6 built on the chromatic harmony we knew from the Breath of Life quartet.

Later in the same year I went to another concert at the Johannesburg City Hall which is where I met and heard a male group, the Seventh-Day Adventist Student Association

[12] Interview with Bongani Mlonyeni
[13] Interview with Simon Nkomo

(SDASA) Chorale. Although they came from the local SDA tradition of imitating the American groups, they introduced their original compositions and put new arrangements to well-known hymns. They created a national stir in the church with their originality. In my view, they were central to a musical revolution within the church. For the first time, the idea of locally composed music was not only possible but also practical. These were people we knew, people we were able to see and relate to. The SDASA Chorale had resident composers in the person of Mokale Koapeng, Gabriel Mojapelo, Boyce Seoketsa and Bheka Dlamini. Nevertheless, their initiative was met with some resistance from some church members, particularly when they infused indigenous influences to their music. Even so, they had exceptional singers who were enthusiastic about executing their musical ideas. They became a force for change whose impact still continues.

The SDASA Chorale used the annual national SDASA conference which drew numbers from around the country as their platform. In 1991, the SDASA Chorale released and circulated an audio cassette of their music. Church members were able to listen to a local recording in their homes, which was a rare occurrence. Although there were other recording groups, the SDASA Chorale had enormous impact and as a result the music in the church started to change. Consequently, more male choruses were formed and I was able to join one of them, the Heavenly Stars, which later became New Young Voices.

The trajectory of No Limits has evolved over the years and does not exactly replicate that of Take 6, the Heritage Singers, the King's Messengers, the SDASA Chorale or the majority of SDA singing groups. No Limits seems to have informally drawn on and potentially integrated various aspects of all these groups.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The operating systems of the church and the music industry are fundamentally dissimilar and often place conflicting demands on musicians. Often, the sacred context

is based on sacred imperatives. On the other hand, the market context is driven by market forces with the primary aim of generating a profit. A professional gospel musician who operates in both contexts utilises devotional content with the intention of making his or her music occupation economically viable, in the same way occupations are generally expected to be.

1.4 RATIONALE

Scholars tend to address issues relating to music in the church separately from the music market (Weinandt 1974, Routley 1978, Warren 2000, Anderson 2009). The majority of these studies appear to overlook the gospel musician as an active participant who has had to contend with the conditions that both the church and the market often impose. Although some literature has considered the musician, the experiences and voices of the musicians, more so in the South African context, are not thoroughly represented. Allgood (1990), Weekes (2005) and Horton (2007) have considered the issues that concern gospel musicians in the marketplace in the American context. These issues include the complexity of fusing sacred content with secular means in the marketplace, intending for the sacred to influence the secular. The challenge seems to be the fact that the marketplace operates on market principles and dynamics that are primary and regard sacred content and its aims to be less essential. I argue that a discussion of music in the church or marketplace is incomplete without exploring the role, experiences and perspectives, professional and otherwise, of musicians. Hence, this study was conducted.

The church exists in a society, society interacts with the church and an exchange of influences occurs. These include, not exclusively, such practices as commodification, where members of society learn to pay for services including those for cultural productions in the marketplace. Often the church provides sacred content and its members form a primary market in the society, for gospel music. Traditionally secular practices and influences, such as commodification of culture, find their way into sacred spaces, with the musicians treating congregations as a market and in the same way the

sacred content enters the secular spheres through the engagements of church musicians (Weekes 2005). Often, in the case of professional musicians, economic value accrues or has to be sought, with no guarantees, in both contexts. Where the secular and the sacred intersect, tensions are possible in terms of expectations of the musicians in these settings and the actual demands of these contexts (Horton 2007).

The SDA church encourages musical education and participation of a high standard. Furthermore, it provides an environment to discover, refine and showcase musical abilities (GCC 2003). Some of the church members are enthused to pursue the music profession.[14] Often these musicians do not have a clearly defined path to follow and are often pressured to deal with the incompatibilities between the sacred and secular environments on their own.[15] In seeking to identify moments of tension between the sacred and secular environments, this study aims to understand how musicians negotiate this relationship between the sacred and secular environments. This research is important in potentially providing information for gospel musicians to consider in their decision making and to encourage role players in the church and the industry to take decisions that are informed by a greater understanding of the position of such musicians.

1.5 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this study is to explore how musicians negotiate the relationship between the church and the market place.[16] The study was prompted by the case of No Limits, a church incubated group that has sought to operate in the music industry. The study investigates moments of tension and how they were handled in the course of the existence of No Limits. This is done so as to determine the professional challenges that numerous other similarly positioned artists probably share. Essentially, the case of No Limits presents a platform to observe church and marketplace tensions with reference

[14] Informal conversation with Mojapelo, Yaze, Mapela
[15] Discussion with Alexandra, September 2014
[16] Using a structural approach to negotiation which focuses on means, position and power, *Negotiation theory and Practice*, (FAO 2008)

to their location in Charles Landry's value chain. Landry is a leading figure in the concept of Creative Cities and has developed a toolkit for evaluating cultural life in cities, and this is where his idea of a value chain was derived for this study. Thus, the viability and success, or lack of it in the profession of No Limits is hereby explored in how the group negotiates the tensions in and between the sacred and market contexts. Also, this study helps to understand the developments of a single case within a wider music industry context. While artists who are formerly signed to record companies have access to media and other resources, this particular case represents the movements of musicians in informal settings that are often unrecorded or traced.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question:

How do professional gospel musicians handle the tensions between the church and the marketplace?

Secondary research questions:

What were the experiences and expectations of the role players within the No Limits value chain concerning musicians in the church and market practices?
What are the potential lessons for musicians seeking to operate in dual contexts?

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research was formally conducted in 2014 and early 2015, in the Gauteng Province, South Africa. The setting of the interviews was private enough for the interviewees to provide information easily but not too private to make the interviewee uncomfortable. The interviews were held in convenient and quiet settings such as studios and office spaces where possible. Permission was sought for the use of the relevant spaces and the possible recording of the interviews. The study is limited by the scope of the

research report. Due to the newness of this field of study, the study focuses on yielding descriptive data. In avoiding potential limitations to the level of objectivity in some areas, evidence will be provided to support conclusions as recommended by Brikci & Green (2007). The development of No Limits occurred in a public space shared by the members of No Limits and others. I considered the information from the members of the group who as a collective have common knowledge of the group and of the value chain. Information that is known only to the researcher and cannot be verified by others or supported with evidence is made explicit in the report.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the theoretical framework of this research study, the historical position of the church on music and musicians, the concept of cultural industries and the music industry, the intersection of the secular and the sacred as well as views on professionalism and the musician. This chapter will also discuss the relational elements that underlie this study.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In an analysis of cities and their cultural life, Landry (2000) observed five interlinked areas of activity that encompass the production and consumption of cultural products and services. These are beginnings, production, circulation, delivery mechanisms and audience reception (including feedback), (Landry 2000). Landry evaluated each cultural industries sector on the basis of its positioning regarding these areas of cultural activity and thus located the strengths and weaknesses of cultural activity in a given city.

In 1997, the then South African Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology commissioned a consortium of institutions known as the Cultural Strategy Group (CSG) to conduct a research study on the local cultural industries. The overall aims of the research were to highlight the economic and social contributions of four aspects of the cultural sector, to identify challenges and recommend the appropriate growth strategies. In part, the idea was to make a compelling case within government regarding the significance of cultural industries (CSG 1998).

The CSG (1998) used the Landry model and aligned it with general value chain models. This adaptation presented these activities in such a way that each activity was essential to success in the cultural industries. Although Landry used his model in the context of

cities and urban planning, the CSG employed it to analyse the state of cultural industries in the entire country. The outcomes of this approach provided a clearer understanding of the weaknesses and strengths of each sub-sector in the national context.

In understanding the navigation of No Limits between the sacred and market contexts, I have drawn parallels between the aims of my study and the aims of the CSG. The CSG sought to establish the position and dynamics of the music industry for strategy formulation purposes. I, on the other hand, have sought to establish the position of one particular music group and how it has existed given the dynamics of the sector. Although the CSG conducted its study on a broader scale, the focus of this study is not the details of the CSG report, considering that the context of the music sector and other cultural industries has changed since the initial study was conducted. However, in the same way that the CSG used the Landry model as a conceptual framework for their analysis, I have used their adaptation for the music sector as my theoretical framework in analysing the case of No Limits. My theoretical approach, having established these parallels, is to use the CSG approach in exploring the usefulness of the Landry model. I have borrowed it from its original use in analysing a broader urban cultural milieu and applied it to a single case within a (sub)cultural context, where I have found it helpful for directing my attention to different parts of the value chain within which No Limits has tried to operate.

As adapted by the CSG in 1998, the model suggests numerous considerations in analysing each step in the value chain. No Limits had to juggle these elements throughout its career. In the same way, the CSG suggests that the activities of the value chain may not follow a linear progression. This means that one activity can affect another activity elsewhere in the value chain. The model is discussed below.

Step 1: Beginnings

Landry deems this step as the starting point for generating ideas. The CSG considers socio-political-economic processes and structures as well as the soft infrastructure and creativity development in analysing beginnings as the first phase in the value chain. For this study, my deliberations in this section exclude elaborate exploration of the socio-political and economic aspects surrounding the beginnings. Aspects of these resonate generally in the analysis as a whole. I have specifically focused on the church as an enabler for the development of music, that is; as a provider of “soft infrastructure,” providing much of the market for a cappella music, the underlying motivation for navigating the relationship between the church and the market place and the music profession in the church.

Step 2: Production

In this step, Landry (2000) looks at the potential, within the city, to turn ideas into productivity in terms of the availability of the necessary resources. In this step, the CSG indicates the production aspects that lead to a music product or service such as a master copy of a studio production or a manufacturing plant. In this study, I address the production of the music, both recorded albums and live performances of No Limits, as a process of producing a product or service. I consider the development of our technical approach in the studio as we acquired production equipment and skills as well as benchmarks in the church and the broader music industry.

Step 3: Circulation

According to Landry (2000) the sustainability of a creative city basically requires business interventions that lead to a retail ready product. The CSG suggests looking at variables between the production and delivery mechanisms that facilitate or sway the distribution of cultural products and services. As a group, No Limits has carried the responsibility of facilitating all business activities necessary once our products were

completed but not in the hands of consumers. I have looked at our progression operating in more or less similar ways to an independent record company, trying to create relationships with other record companies and potential distributors in order to bring our music to both monetised and non-monetised markets.

Step 4: Delivery Mechanisms

In this step, Landry (2000) suggests that a creative city needs to enable spaces where products and services can be accessible to the market. The CSG acknowledges the existence of numerous delivery mechanisms with the primary aim of bringing products and services to audiences. Their analysis focuses on retail, broadcast and live music. Following the adaptation of CSG of the Landry model, in the analysis I address the retail encounters of No Limits in the church and the marketplace. I also explore the aspect of our live performances and music publishing as a result of the broadcasting of our music and how these were managed.

Step 5: Audience Reception and Feedback

In this last step, Landry (2000) proposes investigating the level of awareness that the public has and their engagement concerning creative activity in a city. The CSG recommends that the producers of creative content examine audience reception and feedback as a means of getting useful information that can improve engagement within the value chain. In this study I observed the manner and type of feedback that the audiences of No Limits have provided. We have not received any feedback through the use of the press except when an article about us was published on the local magazine, Move and when a journalist reported on our performance after we had sang in Brecon, United Kingdom (UK).

Generally, my application and that of the GCS of the Landry model offers a simple approach to the structure of the industry but encourages the consideration of all the steps that need to be aligned in order for a cultural product or service to be advanced in

a sustainable manner. Given my own proximity to the group, there may have been a tendency to focus on the production aspect of music making, but using the Landry model has invited me to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the work of No Limits and to reflect on the environments in which we have worked holistically. A holistic approach offers a basis for making certain recommendations for the group and its allies going forward. This particular approach is useful for No Limits because, it has been used in the past to analyse a whole music industry with a range of players involved, and in this instance it is narrowed down to a specific case. Although there are other possible approaches, this value chain approach when applied to a case study, helps to measure the points of weakness and strength in the engagements with the music industry in a manner that clearly highlights areas of failure and success.

2.3 MUSIC IN THE SACRED CONTEXT

The debate around music in sacred spaces is not new and dates back to at least the beginning of Protestantism (Weinandt 1974; Routley 1978; Warren 2000; Anderson 2009). There seems to be a longstanding lack of consensus in the church about what music is acceptable and the status of the musician. Additionally, the evolution of hymn writing into an industry by the end of the nineteenth century introduced an economic component to the life of the church and the musician (Anderson 2009). Churches that formerly used only scriptural passages in congregational singing hereby showed willingness to afford monetary value to the acquisition and use of hymns. This economic component exemplifies in one way a negotiated response to the tension on which I place focus. However, different local denominations have held different views on the issue of attaching monetary value to music. In my recounting of the case of No Limits, I investigate the issue of, which forms of music accrue monetary value. I consider the assumptions entailed in such instances and illustrate the types of negotiations in which the group has been involved regarding the issue of money.

2.4 THE COMMODITISATION OF MUSIC IN THE CULTURAL ECONOMY

Cultural industries and the concept of commoditisation in the cultural economy provide a broader context for the business practice of a professional musician. [17] The establishment of gospel music as a genre in the music industry illustrates the use of sacred content as a commodity in the marketplace. Groups like Take 6 used sacred content and jazz influences in creating a gospel oriented musical commodity for jazz and secular audiences while at the same time retaining part of the church audience. In South Africa, gospel music has become the highest selling music genre (Mail and Guardian 17 September 2012).

As already mentioned, the Cultural Industry Growth Strategy (CIGS) of 1998 of the then Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) adapted the Landry value chain model and used it as a conceptual framework to analyse the South African music industry.[18] Although Landry formulated this model for cultural industries broadly, the CSG found it helpful in analysing and establishing the strengths and weaknesses of the local music industry. In this study, this model is used to contextualise different activities that enable professional viability and success for gospel musicians in the industry.

In addressing some of the main sources of revenue in the music industry, major international record labels have dominated the South African music industry for many years (CSG 1998, p 28). They have power over marketing and distribution channels to a point where the entry and success of musicians in the industry depends on their affiliation with these labels. In recent years, a decline in physical distribution (previously a major source of revenue for record companies) and an increase in digital distribution

[17] According to the UNCTAD (2010) the cultural industries are generally accepted as industries that produce cultural goods and services -includes music industries.
Cultural Economy: economic analysis to cultural industries (UNESCO's definition combines the economic and cultural dimensions), UNCTAD 2010 Creative economy report.

[18] As discussed in the previous chapter, the value chain entails beginnings, production, circulation, delivery mechanisms, audience reception and feedback.The Cultural Strategy Group (CGS) elaborates on the intricacy of the music industry based on the interplay between various industry participants (originators, publishers, record companies, manufacturers, broadcasters, retailers and entertainers).

and live performances[19] suggests a possible shift in potential sources of revenue for musicians and how musicians need to position themselves in order to succeed in the industry value chain both locally and globally (CAJ 2008; Price Waterhouse Coopers 2010, 2014).

Digital distribution promises access to local and global markets regardless of whether an artist is affiliated to a record label or not. This indicates that the industry context in which the group No Limits has to negotiate the market and sacred contexts has continued to change since the inception of the group. Gospel musicians like No Limits, who had minimal access to the broader music market in the past due to failure of securing agreements with record labels or being regarded as unmarketable, have a new platform in the digital space for negotiating their way around a changing marketplace. Such changes in the music industry have accelerated since the early 2000s.

Chislett (2013) provides a step by step guide to the South African music industry and identifies various key elements, such as the 'headspace' of the musician, influences, music writing and the actual formation of a band. Furthermore, he outlines the processes (playing live, networking, recording, etc.), activities (management, imaging, the internet etcetera) and organisations (SAMRO, NORM, BASA etcetera) in the local industry that are critical to the success of musicians. Although Chislett (2013) refers to the industry at large, these also apply to the gospel musician. Also, his suggestions are useful in observing how specific areas of the music industry apply to gospel music and the sacred contexts. Ansell and Barnard (2013) look at how some independent jazz musicians carved their place in the South African music industry through independent business efforts and networks, which is a position in which most musicians, including No Limits, find themselves. This refers to musicians forming their own businesses or performing tasks for themselves that would usually be done by management or record companies.

[19] Although digital distribution presents opportunities, it also present new challenges in the regulation and management of intellectual property (UNTAD 2010).

Scott (2000) affirms that the intersection of the modern economy with cultural practices and their resultant commodification exemplifies the contemporary capitalist society.[20] Taylor (2012) indicates that advertising corporations have utilised the power of music in creating a society of consumers. Moreover, while advertising is acknowledged for the growth and success of consumer markets, music is not adequately recognised as an element that has contributed to this growth and success. The contribution of music to the growth and success of consumer markets suggests that music could also play a role in the growth of church membership. Some modern churches seem to recognise that music helps to enhance the church experience and therefore treat it as a vital part of enhancing their church offering. Consequently, such churches often derive loyalty from their members in the same way that consumers become loyal to a product.[21] Music, by virtue of its role in creating a consumer society, is hereby extended for use in other spheres that employ music, such as sacred contexts.

2.4.1 The Commercialisation of Choral Music

Colonisation has changed cultures of music in South Africa. Historically, indigenous peoples had to adapt to the musical styles of their colonisers. The emulation of western musical influences has altered indigenous musical practice in most cultural communities. Although some have tried to infuse African influences in their music in terms of rhythm, melodic patterns and languages, most music in South African churches is inclined towards western musical patterns (Haecker 2012). In the SDA church, members have shown intolerance to music that has influences that they do not associate with traditional SDA music as presented mostly by the popular American SDA groups (Koapeng 2014).[22]

[20] Commodification: turning a work of art into a commodity (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/commodify)
[21] Churches establishing a record companies (Potters House in Dallas), Rhema Bible church in South Africa establishing a music distribution company. Churches creating partnerships with popular gospel musicians and hiring professional musicians for church services.
[22] In his Masters research report.

Orpheus McAdoo and the Jubilee Singers came to South Africa in the late 1800s when the first SDA church missionaries also arrived. Through McAdoo's Jubilee Singers' tours, we trace some of the early occurrences of concerts of African American spirituals in South Africa. According to Erlmann (1991), although their impact is seen mostly from the 1920s onwards, the local choral tradition traces some of its developments to those former influences. The South African choir made their first trip to England in 1891, having been influenced by the Jubilee Singers from America. In England, the choir performed for a fee under the management of several individuals. This became the first recorded export of our music to the west (McCord 1995). Although the music industry has evolved since then, the idea of performing spiritual music in concerts, the exportation of vocal musical performances and the working of such artists within a management space has been a feature of South African musical life and aspiration for more than a century.

Over the years, the business of music in South Africa has been controlled by record companies.[23] The role of record companies includes linking specific music types and artists with particular market segments, creating audio and visual content for a wide range of consumers, promoting and selling South African music locally and internationally (CSG 1998, p. 20). For a long time, being affiliated with a record company has been the only way for a musician to succeed in the music industry. The Cultural Industry Growth Strategy report states that success in the music industry requires an integration of numerous supporting industries (CSG 1998, p. 18-23).

2.5 MUSIC AS A PROFESSION

When musicians become professional or begin to offer their cultural product in exchange for a fee, their expectations of themselves and others tends to change. The review of scholarly views on the idea of professionalism is included here in order to help understand conflicting perspectives on the musician as a professional.

[23] Currently Waner (Licensed to Gallo records), EMI records, SONY records, BMG records and Polygram

Frederickson & Rooney (1990) state that there is disagreement among sociologists regarding the status of music as a profession due to the failure of music to follow the requirements that other occupations satisfy in becoming professions. Watson (2003) argues that the term professionalism is on occasion used as a means to either dignify or protect the interests of an occupation. This is an existing perception that professional musicians encounter in the process of negotiating the relationship between the church and the marketplace. It appears that musicians constantly need to demonstrate their credentials and to justify their professional status.

This study considers the definition of a professional musician as one who gives their craft monetary value or earns a living from it. Webster's dictionary (2014) defines professionalisation as "the giving of professional character" to a profession. The Macmillan dictionary (2014) adds the payment of a professional as an attribute of professionalisation. In further establishing an understanding of the professional musician, this study considers a sense of a calling and an entrenched belief in public good as critical attributes of professionalism (Snizek 1972). Despite an apparently limited understanding of the music profession, Beaton (2010) asserts that the co-existence of altruism and a desire for profit is not only probable but also acceptable in a profession.[24] This is applicable to gospel musicians such as No Limits who pursue a profitable profession but are motivated and expected to practice their craft for other non-economic reasons. These views are particularly useful in the case of No Limits where artists are committed to the music and believe that theirs is a calling and a service for the greater good of others. Also, these views suggest a possible definition of a professional musician in the gospel arena as one that has economic, social and spiritual elements. Following the logic of the co-existence of altruism and profit, I argue that extreme altruism without profit is possible, especially in environments that are constantly inviting, encouraging and welcoming voluntary and self-sacrificing contributions like the sacred context in which No Limits operates. Therefore, an emphasis of all aspects of a professional gospel musician is critical.

[24] Beaton (2010) refers to altruism as a value that informs personal and public expectations of a professional. However, given that profit provides for the resources that sustain the profession, altruism without reasonable profit presumably limits the growth of a profession from a resource point of view.

2.6 INTERSECTION OF THE SECULAR AND THE SACRED IN GOSPEL AND CHRISTIAN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

Contemporary Gospel Music (CGM) is a music genre that offers a Christian option to conventional secular music audiences. Allgood (1990) traces the beginnings of CGM to the 1920s in New York. The integration of the gospel music genre into the mainstream music industry followed the patterns and models of other non-gospel music artists and practitioners. I maintain that gospel music as a genre created revenue streams and opportunities for music industry professionals and gospel musicians, a possibility that the church context alone was perhaps unable to guarantee. According to Weekes (2005) the social setting in America has always shaped and influenced gospel music in both the secular and sacred contexts.[25] Gospel music has always combined numerous secular musical forms with sacred texts. Some denominations are more accepting of such fusions in gospel music while others are more cautious about these secular influences intermingling with the sacred contexts, including the SDA church.[26] However, it is possible that an audience needs to also relate to the music socially in order to respond favourably. For that reason, allowing a level of influence from social factors essentially helps the musician to be relevant in engaging with both the secular and sacred contexts.

In South Africa, the gospel music styles of numerous artists are representative of specific denominations. Consumers who identify with a given style, often due to their denominational affiliation, become the initial supporters of the musician whose music is

[25] Using secular means to position gospel musicians in the music industry.
[26] The SDA church produced guidelines based on its philosophy of music to safeguard itself against secular musical forms and practices.

in that style. Considering this, the question of whether denominational support from the SDA church is enough to create sufficient demand in the market and draw the attention of music industry corporations, is as yet unanswered. The music of No Limits, stylistically shaped and influenced by the social context of the group, cautiously infuses seemingly secular elements with the intention to enrich the musical exposition of the sacred content.[27] It includes, among others, elements of jazz and classical music and yet remains decidedly South African. As such, the music of No Limits could arguably be classified within the broad category of CGM. The fact that the music of No Limits is a cappella has often been confused with a genre.[28] The local Zion Christian Church (ZCC), among others, is also known for a cappella music but their style is traditional and ethnic unlike that of No Limits, which has predominantly western influences. The recent rise of a popular and contemporary South African music vocal group, The Soil, has positioned their brand of a cappela in the mainstream and popular scene in the music industry. Although the non-accompanied vocal music that a cappela is has been commonly associated with religious forms of music and content, The Soil represents non-gospel a cappella. Essentially, the gospel provides the lyrical content while the music takes any form or style that musicians choose to perform without the use of musical instruments. Contemporary Gospel Music is therefore, a product of the use of gospel inclined lyrics and any form or fusion of any preferred music.

Regarding Contemporary Christian Music (CCM), which is referred to as Christian popular music, a genre of modern popular music that is primarily differentiated by lyrical content more than the style of music, Horton (2007) argues that the challenge in modern evangelism is the desire to be set apart from secular culture while concurrently desiring to exert an influence on the same culture. Some musicians perceive gospel music as a means to apply their craft, proclaim spiritual content and still make a living. Tension arises between the profit driven objectives of music corporations and those of a musician who is influenced by the sacred space. No Limits has often found itself in such a dilemma. While appealing broadly to listeners, it never seemed to readily attract the

[27] The musical elements seemed secular because they were not commonly employed in the SDA context.
[28] A cappella is vocal music without instrumental accompaniment; it can be in popular, jazz, classical or African music styles.

commitment of music industry corporations. On the other hand, South African CGM groups like *Joyous Celebration* have managed to position themselves in the secular space seamlessly. They had the advantage of the influence of their founders, some of whom were directors and decision makers at Sony Music South Africa. Thus, through consistent corporate support, record deals and sponsorships, Joyous Celebration received resources to produce records and populate the gospel market beyond their immediate denominational support.[29] No Limits is classified as a CGM group by Primarily A Cappella, an American based music distribution company, which indicates that the African influences of No Limits are not deemed to define our style but rather distinguish the group from other CCM groups.[30]

The intersection of the sacred and the secular is projected in these examples of gospel groups as they fuse sacred content with secular means such as their affiliation with corporates.

[29] Joyous Celebration: signed to Sony Records SA, has been sponsored by MTN mobile telephone company and Old Mutual financial services company.

[30] Accessible on www.singers.com/gospel/contemporary-christian-cds/?page=3

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

For this research, the case study method was applied as a qualitative research tool, based on one of the commonly known definitions of case study methods provided by Yin (1994). Qualitative research methods appear useful for focusing in-depth on the subject of the research and the broader context of a phenomenon, while yielding different perspectives at the same time. In this descriptive inquiry, the case study method was employed to help observe and attain, from these perspectives, the aims of this study. This qualitative approach was preferable for its interpretive historical attributes in helping illuminate the area of interest for this research (Johansson 2003). According to Johansson (2003), these qualitative research methods are often useful for their complete focus on the subject of research while yielding different perspectives. While focusing on one case, a historical account, in particular, was able to capture the context and the unfolding of the case in its natural phenomenon (Johansson 2003).Therefore, empirical and historical data was deemed critical towards helping understand the challenges that professional musicians, No Limits, were confronted with in the church in the course of their working lives. Gerring (2004) raises the importance of the observation of a case study as a single unit in order to generalise findings across a range of several other units. Nonetheless, Fidel (1984) argues that case study methods are unable to claim, in a manner in which is conventional, to meet the qualification of being reliable, in scientific research methods. This is particularly because the conditions of a case study may not recur in the same way to produce the exact same result. The case of No Limits was observed by revisiting its historic development in the last twenty years, and the findings are generalisable to other possible cases.

Fidel (1984) also adds the measure of validity as a critical factor in case study methods. I, the researcher, have been an integral part of No Limits from the onset. I have provided and continue to provide administrative and creative direction for the group. As

such, I acknowledge observer and selection biases associated with this type of qualitative study. My attempt to minimise these was through critically contextualised interpretation based on evidence and the verification of this evidence as outlined in the narrative provided, with the aim to satisfy the necessity for validity of the study. Also, by keeping remarks and sentiments distinct from findings, using information from other sources and asking questions in interviews that allow participants to respond in a way that is not meant to support the views of the researcher.

3.2 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Considering that this is a qualitative study, I have aimed to offer an appropriately holistic sense of No Limits by making sure that the case study has systematically been recounted from the perspective of role-players across all phases of the value chain as described by Landry. Respondents were, therefore, identified according to the position they occupy in the No Limits value chain according to the Landry model as adapted in the CIGS report (1998). The participants who were chosen are relevant to the various steps of the value chain and are categorised as such below.

Step 1: Beginnings

Church leaders are often responsible for decision making and have a greater understanding of the operations of the church. They were consulted on the basis of this understanding of the church context or their interactions with No Limits.

Step 2: Production

Since the focus of this study is No Limits the individual and collective experiences of current and past members of No Limits were consulted for the study.

Step 3 and 4: Circulation and Delivery Mechanisms

Music industry practitioners, broadcasters, presenters of performances and retailers were chosen for their knowledge of the marketplace context, the music industry and their interactions with No Limits.

Step 5: Audience Reception and Feedback

Members of the SDA church and non-SDA audience members who represented the marketplace were consulted as recipients of the aesthetic expressions of No Limits. These groups represented the overall audiences and consumers of No Limits, in both monetized and non-monetized contexts.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

A qualitative approach offers flexibility in the collection of data. As a result, and in particular, the case study approach employs a range of methods for collecting data, including a review of historical occurrences or life histories, as utilised in this study. This method provides a platform for collecting qualitative data on natural occurrences in their usual settings, and substantially articulate observations (Johansson 2003; Gerring 2004).

Semi-structured interviews, using a topic guide and pre-determined open-ended questions, were conducted in addition. This method was chosen, over structured (similar to surveys or questionnaires) and unstructured (conducted with no pre-determined questions and questions a formed in the process of the interview) interviews, for its moderate approach in being both flexible yet guided (Zhang & Wildermuth 2009). This technique was aimed to produce systematic, reproducible, credible, and transparent findings in ensuring reliability and validity (Brikci & Green

2007). They comprised members of No Limits and numerous other individuals who encountered the group, over the years. This was meant to serve two purposes. Firstly, to provide, review, verify, expand and correct where necessary, the narrative of the group as presented in my recollection and account as a researcher. As such, feedback interviews on early drafts of this report (to verify the narrative) afforded a more rounded perspective in projecting the experiences and views of others. Secondly, the interviews were used to collect responses to open ended and semi-structured questions pertaining to the study. Although substantial data was collected through these interviews, some individuals in the value chain whose contribution had potential to contribute valuable insights were not accessible.

Additional sources included archival research (audio, visuals, and biographies) and where possible, oral data and a recollection of relevant discussions and conversations.[31]

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Narrative analysis method helps to understand human experiences and their chronological positions (Fritz 2008). No Limits, at the point of the study, had existed for twenty years. Thus, a narrative analysis approach was used to highlight the moments of tension across the span of its existence and describe how No Limits handled those moments as a group. A narrative analysis helped to identify recurring themes within the time period of the existence of No Limits. Although capturing specific themes was helpful, identifying moments of tension in the narrative and how they were negotiated was paramount.

Considering that I was involved in the case and the qualitative nature of this study, there were unavoidable moments of bias in the analysis. These were particularly relevant in the critical engagements with the content.

[31] The interview questions used for this research are included in the appendices.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A formal process of acquiring ethics clearance was followed in the proposal stage of this study. All the requirements were satisfied and approval was granted by the ethics committee of the university. These requirements included a participant information sheet and a detailed application form with all ethical standards. As a condition stated in the application for the clearance, participants in the study were supplied with the university approved participation information sheets. These entailed the details of the research study and the relevant information concerning their participation. Informed consent was thus provided by all participants.

This research focuses on the group No Limits. The members of the group have explicitly offered consent for the research. However, the context of No Limits includes the SDA church. All the information used regarding No Limits, the church and organisations or individuals in the music industry is information that is either publicly accessible or information to which participants have consented. Members of No Limits were encouraged to speak freely and different points of view were noted and highlighted in the report. Any misrepresentation of the truth would defeat the purpose of this research and it is in the interest of the researcher not to interfere with the process and findings. The individuals identified for interviews were presented with a participation information sheet that informed them of the purposes of the study and their right to participate wilfully. Individuals were offered anonymity and protection through the use of pseudonyms but none required it. This research has explicitly attempted to avoid harmful practices and deception, as advocated by Burnham (2004).

CHAPTER 4

THE NARRATIVE OF NO LIMITS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the narrative of No Limits spanning the period from 1995 to 2015. The narrative and description is elaborate and provided in this chapter to precede, and establish a premise, for the analysis that follows in chapter five.

4.2 FORMATION

In 1994, I reconnected with Thembela Mvelase (Thembela hereafter), formerly from the group Heavenly Stars. He shared with me the idea of starting a singing group. Growing up in the SDA church, he travelled with his parents to see the performances of a quartet in which his father sang, the New City Heralds. This well-travelled quartet was among the first from South Africa to attend the General Conference session of the SDA Church and tour North America. Although Thembela was not part of the American tours, he was inspired by his father and was a member of numerous church groups. Mostly, he sang in trios with his mother and sister Mpumelelo Mvelase (Mpumelelo).[32]

I have observed that, for any musically inclined youth, the idea of being in a singing group was and is an important part of the social and musical life in the church. The idea of starting a mixed voices group came to Thembela at a time when he was not involved with any group. He recalls a church youth camp in 1994 in which he sang in a trio with Mpumi and Sibongile Mambo, who later became longstanding members of No Limits. Subsequently, he identified others and shared the idea of starting a group with them to expand on that trio. I decided to join them in forming the new group and we came to a total of ten members by the end of first year.[33] When we formed the group in March

[32] Interview with ThembelaMvelase, January 2015

[33] In the same way, the other members, SimphiweMaseko and NomvulaMashobeng, grew up in the church and were surrounded by similar church musical influences.In particular, WandileNkosi who was to sing bass, recruited

1995, we were all students, some completing high school and others were starting their tertiary education. All of us shared the SDA church values and singing tradition.

In coming up with a name for the group, we were looked for one to constantly inspire us to strive for growth, hence we chose No Limits out of a list of other names we had brainstormed. The name has served the purpose we intended for it, most of the time.[34] Since we knew of a group called No Compromise, the possibility of No Limits as a group name did not seem too unusual. Although it was unintentional, it seemed as if the group was to look to me for direction from early on. The implicit confidence the group placed on me put a great responsibility for me to give proper and impartial guidance. I embraced the role and became committed to giving my all in matters pertaining to the group. Our vision stated, "to serve God and bless humanity" and with the mission being "writing, arranging, producing and performing uplifting music to all classes of people and organisations" (No Limits, 1999). Throughout the course of the group, availability for and commitment to the mission of the group became our primary and defining values. As such, members remained in the group for as long as their personal circumstances permitted. Over the years, our values have given us a sense of purpose and motivation, even in the face of opposition and difficulty, at times.[35]

It became apparent that we had no identity or musical style in mind except perhaps to do what had always been done, which was to find a group to imitate. However, the group seemed open to ideas and suggestions that in themselves began to shape a culture of trying out new things. Over the weeks and months that followed, I began to direct the music. It was clear to me that in order to succeed as an a cappella group we needed to have unique, devotionally appealing and creative music. We also needed a

---

his old singing mates, Ronnie Seemela and ZoyisileMagidiwane (Makhekhe) to join the group. They had sung together while attending a boarding school of the SDA church atCancele, which is also in the Eastern Cape.

[34]Sibongile Mambo remembered that I suggested the name, although in the end we chose it as a collective.It was inspired by several quotes from Ellen White, whose writings are widely circulated and used in the church. I had engaged with her writings and on numerous occasions 'no limit' came up at different places where I was reading, to emphasise dependence on God.

[35]MpumeleloMvelase and Sibongile Mambo concur that this was, to individuals and the collective, a ministry and a way of serving God.For that reason, we all considered our involvement with the group as a serious matter.

set of values and a specific mind-set to enable the shape, sustenance and delivery of that unique, creative and devotionally appealing music that we sought to pursue.[36]

I started listening widely to all types of music, even those I did not particularly like. I became my own teacher and needed to be open to learning broadly. I started coming up with compositions and arrangements. These I adapted, teaching them to the group by rote, often in a way that seemed improvisational. Initially, I worked out the theme, structure and form of the music. However, I kept an open mind when teaching the songs and in the process adjusted to the abilities and skills of the singers. This meant that the music was best customised for the singers without changing the essence of its broad musical aim. It also meant that there was openness to new creative ideas in the process of teaching the music. In my mind, the song became a destination that I designed in a general sense. I considered the details of the song, in terms of harmonic structures and rhythmic patterns, as adaptable items and merely options of how to reach the destination. I learnt to view my music as a means of expression, a tool that enables me to express a single thought in different ways as is best suited for any given circumstance. Accordingly, our final creative outputs were organic. This set the premise for much of the creative work that No Limits was to do moving forward.

Even though I did focus on the process of teaching compositions and arrangements to the group, over the years I have written music in many different ways. Some songs came out of my dreams and others from the circumstances and experiences of life. Some did not emerge all at once while others came to me as full compositions in a matter of minutes, with the melody, lyrics and entire arrangement. As such, writing a song or a vocal arrangement became second nature to me, which was also enabled and shaped by the role that I assumed in the group. Consequently, the group became the largest user of and platform for showcasing my creative work.

We spent our first year trying to settle into a specific sound while experimenting with different concepts. This gave us a platform to generate a variety of musical ideas. We

[36]SibongiseniTunzelanaindicated that the music and message of No Limits has inspired and encouraged her.

increased our repertoire and continued to explore with compositions and arrangements of hymns and familiar songs. It took some time for the audience to warm up to the new sound. On our part, it required boldness to do our kind of music and we kept believing we were on the right path, to freely express ourselves creatively.[37]

In 1996, we started taking more invitations to participate in church programmes, such as funerals and weddings around Gauteng, Swaziland and parts of Mpumalanga. At the end of the year we attended the SDASA year-end conference which was held in Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape. On the night of our performance, there were power cuts in the area. We had to sing in a large auditorium without a sound system. Even with those constraints, it became a memorable performance for us and those who were there.[38] That conference was attended by American guest speakers who initiated talks of us going over to the USA to perform. At that time, we had no recording or form of representation for them to use in furthering this idea with their counterparts back in the USA.

Early in 1997, we made a 'demo' recording to send to America. Although it did not yield the ideal sound, it served the interim purpose. We sent it over and forgot about it. Throughout that year we continued to expand our repertoire and performed all over within church circles. At this time the main activities of the group were rehearsing and performing. At the same time, No Compromise, a group we revered, invited us to feature in their concerts. This is where we learnt about presenting and organising a good show. They were professional at numerous levels. In a way, they became our mentors, as we frequently consulted with them over the years that followed. No Compromise was directed by Aubrey Peacock, who was already working in the music industry. Later, he played a significant role in the development of No Limits.

[37]In our January 2015 interview, Kaunda recalls hearing No Limits for the first time and how discomforting it was to hear a sound so unlike what the church was used to. However, he mentioned that the group caught his attention and as he followed our development he noticed that his attitude towards the music began to change. His reflection is similar to several comments we have received since we started singing.

[38] Informal conversation with PankiSilinga

In 1998, the SDA church in our region hosted an evangelical campaign.[39] No Limits, together with other local SDA artists, including the SDASA Chorale, embarked on a recording project to support this campaign.[40] On the 28th of May 1998, we went to Durban for a concert on which we had a significant slot.[41] In the second semester of the same year, we received a call from the USA. They suggested that we do a concert locally to raise funds for a proper studio recording. They supported this idea saying that it would improve our chances of being able to travel there. We held a fundraising concert on the 19th of September in 1998 at the Johannesburg City Hall. For this event, we had to ask a few individuals from church for donations to cover basic expenses. We were able to raise enough money from the concert, to cover expenses for the recording.[42]

We prepared for the recording and worked with a sound engineer and a fellow church member who was familiar with our music.[43] In December of the same year, we launched our self-funded independent debut album, *The Finest Way*, at the SDASA year-end conference. Our cassette was sold and circulated widely; reaching places we had never been to. This particular conference, similarly to the previous ones, had guests from America who bought a few copies. We later learnt that one of them was a choir director who went to teach her choir songs from our album. Importantly, this marked the beginning of the commercial side in the undertakings of group. Since we operated independently without affiliation to a record company, this added complexities for which we were not fully prepared.

At the beginning of 1999, we lost four of our ten members.[44] This loss meant that a shift in musical arrangements had to be made. We had fewer voices and this presented an

[39]Pentecost 98' which was to be beamed globally via satellite.

[40]The project was initiated by Pastor Pule Magethi who introduced us to SizweZako. Zako sponsored the recording and the manufacturing of retail ready cassettes through the EMI manufacturing plant.Also, at that time he was a prominent figure in the local gospel music industry, having produced several leading gospel artists, such as Rebecca Malope.

[41]It was a joint concert with a church group, *Faith Shares*. The concert was held at the *Sultan Technikon(University of Kwa-Zulu Natal)*.

[42]We organised a road trip during regional SDA church gatherings in Pretoria, West-Rand and East-Rand, including some non-SDA churches, to promote the concert.

[43]GcinaNhlapo, at Studio 12 in Highlands North

[44]These meberes included the big robust bass that had helped define, to a great extent, our sound at that time.

opportunity for more intricate harmonies. We continued to work hard and the payoff was a refined sound and increased repertoire. At the same time, we had to deal with audiences that had begun to form expectations of our sound based on the album we were already circulating. While this was taking place, I heard of the Phakamani Music Industry Institute (Phakamani) which was headed by Mokale Koapeng of the SDASA Chorale and Gail Masondo, the former manager of our American musical models, Take 6, who had relocated to South Africa. The main aim of Phakamani was to provide music industry education to musicians through workshops with experts from different areas of the industry. I was in the first group of students they recruited for their programme. Coming into this forum, I had many questions and little knowledge of the industry. Driven by my commitment to No Limits and what we stood for, it appeared to be a necessary decision for me to acquire knowledge for the potential benefit of the group and its possible future.

At Phakamani, music industry practitioners from a variety of areas in the business were invited for sessions at different times. They helped resolve some of my key questions as a newcomer. Administrative questions were answered through sessions with industry administrators, and the artistic questions with other artistic practitioners. Gail and Victor Masondo were also instrumental in steering me to focus the music I was doing with No Limits towards our African identity and culture. Victor is a prominent SDA-affiliated musician, and Gail as a former music industry practitioner, were examples of those who straddled the space between the church and the marketplace. Mainly, I was encouraged to change my compositional ideas and stylistic influences and incline them towards African-based musical expressions and influences. This platform also brought home the experiences and knowledge concerning a group we had revered for its talent and position in the market, Take 6. As a group incubated in the SDA context, they represented a professional model and an unusual reference point for other SDA groups, including ourselves. Access to information was rare those days, this was an extraordinary opportunity.

In the same year, No Limits decided to work on another studio recording. Due to my newly found insights at Phakamani, my approach to arranging was somewhat varied from the previous album. It reflected a refined presentation of ideas, carefully and thoughtfully positioned throughout the songs.

Later that year, I started an internship at Primedia Publishing, courtesy of Phakamani, under the direction of Jay Savage, who was among the leading local publishers. At Primedia Publishing, I learnt about the general undertakings of the record company and the business of professional song writing. This illuminated the fact that music publishing requires works with potential to be commercialized or involves the mere commercialisation of musical works. My duties included the processing of notifications of musical works by the artists who were then under the administration of Primedia Publishing. Having been a composer member since 1996, by the end of 1999 I saw an opportunity to sign up with SAMRO, now as a music publisher aiming to assign the musical works that were already being utilised by No Limits, SAMTSO Music.

In August of the same year, No Limits was invited to do a concert and a series of performances in Cape Town. This invitation was initiated by students at the University of Cape Town (UCT) who had become supporters and friends of the group. They took up this project using their own funds and resources.[45] We stayed there for a week and a half and those in the group who were employed, took leave of absence from work. Although the trip did not bring us monetary fulfilment, we were motivated by the 'good' of bringing messages of encouragement and hope to our audiences through our music.

Still in 1999, the Rhema Bible Church hosted a series of workshops on different aspects of Christian music. Alvin Slaughter, an African American singer, delivered one on worship music in a church setting. Don Moen, who is a songwriter, arranger, music director and for many years a managing director at Integrity Music, delivered workshops on these areas of his expertise, including music publishing. The invaluable lessons I

[45] Informal conversations with Dr Baba and Dr Madela (while they were still students at UCT), were the main contact persons organising our performances and stay in Cape Town.

learnt from those interactions have gone a long way in shaping my thinking around these topics. I found them particularly relevant and resonant with what I thought I needed to know for the benefit of my work within No Limits.

Still working independently, we co-produced an album with Motsamai Koapeng, an SDA member who had been involved with No Limits in his personal capacity and through the group No Compromise. A singer himself, including with the SDASA Chorale, he had enormous skill and extensive experience. He brought these and his leadership into this project and No Limits at large. Essentially, through his involvement, the quality of the recording, cover design and performance of No Limits was improved to a standard higher than the one we were able to reach on our own. Aubrey Peackock, through his friendship with Motsamai and No Limits, also provided guidance on the project. He had just established an independent gospel record and distribution firm called Spirit Music. His knowledge and guidance were crucial regarding the project. Also, it appeared later that Motsamai had it in mind to propose a distribution deal with Spirit Music for No Limits. Working with Peackock gave a chance for him to influence the quality of the entire project to the standards he deemed suitable for his product portfolio.

A few months before the launch concert of our second album (which took place on the 27th of May 2000 at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) Great Hall), we took our master recording and artwork to the local gospel music unit at BMG records. The intention was to negotiate a marketing and distribution deal with them. No Limits had no access to legal expertise at that time and although BMG was keen on signing an agreement with us, the contract they gave us was lengthy and seemed confusing. It was clear that we were not ready to sign the deal in the short term. We therefore decided to halt the negotiation. We never went back to BMG.

In the month that followed, we signed a distribution agreement with Spirit Music. This agreement was an opportunity for our music to be accessible to the general public. Those days, music distributors like Music for Pleasure (MFP) gave a product access to a range of retail stores. Spirit Music worked with businesses such as MFP. As a result

of our relationship with Spirit Music, our album, *Whispers of Love,* was widely exposed and distributed. Orders came in from as far as Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Our performances now included non-SDA denominations such as Rhema Bible Church. Our music started playing on Radio Pulpit and Classic FM. This meant that our music was reaching a wider audience.[46] Members of the SDA church also shared, from time to time, their recollections of people who have encountered the music of No Limits in non-sacred settings.[47]

In February 2001, I received a call to join the SDASA Chorale to perform at the annual Bermuda Festival. Our first stop was in London, where the SDASA Chorale had scheduled rehearsals with the renaissance vocal ensemble I Fagiolini in preparation for their joint performance at the festival.[48] This environment further exposed me to a set of music and musicians who enriched my musical and cultural experience, something I was able to bring back to No Limits.

In Bermuda, the SDASA Chorale was welcomed by a local pastor of the SDA church, Kevin Santucci. Through his influence, we were also able to perform at the local SDA church and school.[49] I had carried with me a few copies of the No Limits album. Surprisingly, Pastor Santucci had travelled to Cape Town (South Africa) a few months earlier and had picked up the No Limits album while there. When we arrived in Bermuda, he had already been playing it on his radio show. This entire project was sponsored by British Airways and other companies and we were accommodated in hotels.

In April 2001, I travelled to London as a vocal coach for South African and British youth for the 'Celebrate South Africa' concert which was held at Trafalgar Square, in honour of

[46]A fan of the group, *SibongiseniTunzelana*, remembered encountering No Limits for the first time through the *Whispers of Love* CD she borrowed from one of her students. She explained that in her view, the music of No Limits was a breath of freshness and cut across denominational boundaries.

[47] Random conversations with SDA church members, hearing No Limits at jazz societies and hair salons.

[48]The SDASA Chorale had been involved in a concept-based cultural exchange project with I Fagiolini since 1995, which was recorded by Erato and distributed internationally by Warner Classics on the CD *Simunye: Music for a Harmonious World.*

[49] Discussion with Koapeng

our then former president, Nelson Mandela. This project was sponsored by South African Airways and other companies and we were again accommodated in hotels.[50] During this time, I had been talking to an SDA friend who had relocated to the UK. He proposed to bring No Limits to the UK for a series of concerts. However, he was not in a position to fund the trip or secure the required resources to make this possible. All he had were contacts to secure performances, mainly in SDA churches.[51] We knew that the only way to generate any funds as a church group was to sell copies of our music and tickets to our concerts. We had a number of fund raising concerts for No Limits and managed to raise some money for return flight tickets. In addition to concerts, we received a donation which covered two out of seven tickets.[52]

Within hours of landing in the UK, we were on stage performing at a SDA church gathering. We were well received and stayed in Birmingham for most of the trip. Whenever we travelled to sing in other parts of the UK, we returned to Birmingham. We had numerous performances, sold copies of our two albums an also received free will offerings. These helped us with the expenses related to our local trips and our two months stay in the UK. The possibility of a musical career for the group seemed more visible in the UK than back home in SA. We had discussions about moving there for a longer period. Some members were reluctant but we all agreed that it was worth considering.[53] On this trip, we exposed our music to several thousands of people, travelled to different parts of the UK, made contacts with pastors, musicians, managers and promoters, mainly within the SDA community. Unlike the other trips I had made earlier that year to the UK, this trip was not sponsored by corporations and we stayed in the homes of people. All this was arranged and organised through friendships and church contacts.

Upon coming back home, we planned to return to the UK and pursue the opportunities presented to us there. The idea was for all of us to apply for visas, move to the UK

[50] Interview with Bacela V, January 2015
[51] Dave O'brian 'Dee' Tshuma
[52] We received a donation from a member of the church, Walter Sithole
[53] Interview with Mambo, February 2015

eligible to work and build our music career there. Some members of No Limits were employed and this move required them to leave their jobs.[54] Towards the end of 2001, we heard a vocal recording of a Ladysmith Black Mambazo song, “Nomathemba”. The harmonies, recording and vocal treatment were captivating. We knew immediately that we needed to meet the producer of that recording. It turned out the artist, singer and producer was Themba Mkhize. We made contact with him and met the following week in his studio, spoke briefly and he played the album ‘Whispers of Love’. I saw in him the reaction that I saw in myself when I heard his album. That weekend he came to church just to hear No Limits sing live. Since then, he has been to several other church performances and concerts of the group. In the process, Mkhize booked Downtown Studios to explore production approaches for No Limits. We made the recording, and on the morning of finalising the mastering, a gentleman walked in and enquired about the group he heard singing. The mastering engineer informed him that it was the group that Mkhize was doing a project with, No Limits. The gentleman asked if he had ever brought it to Gallo Records. He asked for a copy and said that he was on the board and knows for a fact that it was the kind of project to spark their interest. We gave him a copy but nothing came of it, as we lost contact with him. Together with Mkhize, we also had been to Gallo and were unsuccessful. He knew a few people who were working there and arranged for us to visit them with the aim of exploring possibilities for No Limits to get a deal of some sort. What they had told us was that they were not considering any new artists.[55]

In July of 2002, the rest of the members of No Limits who were employed resigned. We had a promise of funds enough to get us to the UK and leave some for our families here at home. Members were out of work, everyone was available to do music full-time. When the funds finally came, they were barely what we expected. Nevertheless, we were convinced that the local market in and outside of church circles was not ready to support us as full-time musicians. We also thought that our music was slightly sophisticated for the local market, because it was different from the type of vocal gospel

[54] Interview with Mambo, February 2015
[55] Interview with Mkhize, February 2015

that was popular on the radio at that time. Nonetheless, we were not finding a solution to the dilemma of funds. We decided to initiate local projects instead of retracting from the decision we had made. We did this with the hope to raise additional funds to afford flight tickets back to the UK.

We planned a trip to Zimbabwe for a concert in Bulawayo. We went there a week before the scheduled concert date. This was to cover an SDA church event, a camp meeting. We spent time there and connected with the people. We also managed to promote our upcoming concert in the region. We were accommodated at the homes of church members and through the support of individuals we had several radio interviews. We came back from Zimbabwe and travelled to the Eastern Cape.[56] In all these places, we used our church contacts for concerts. In November 2002, the bass and one alto voice left the group. We quickly found a bass singer and decided not to replace the alto. This made us a six-member mixed voice ensemble. We went back into the studio to finish a recording we had initiated in 2001. We did this with the aim of releasing an album at the SDASA year-end conference. We completed the recording and included the song Kunjani.[57] This song was to be in the regular playlist of the Soweto based Jozi FM for years to come. We attended the conference and managed to sell a number of copies there. However, during the second week of December, prior to the conference, we were bidden to do a Christmas special for a popular SABC show, CCM 1. This show had a top ten slot of artists as voted by viewers. No Limits was voted number one for several weeks in a row. This gave us mileage in the media.

During this time, we lived out of the proceeds of concert and album sales. Although it was not enough, it kept us going. In February 2003, one of the sopranos decided to go back to regular employment. We asked a friend to join the group and she agreed. At that time, our focus was on redefining our stage performance presence in general. In March, we took what was the first of our revamped concert performances to East London, South Africa. A local SDA church pastor in that region had offered to promote

[56]We had our first stop in Umtata where we had a concert. We continued to Butterworth and East London. We continued to Port Elizabeth.
[57]The album entitled, Keep Your Head up High.

our concert. Although he secured radio interviews in the local Christian stations, it turned out that the majority of the SDA members were not aware of the concert. Nonetheless, we performed at the City Hall for about fifteen people. We employed our new approach to performance. One of the major differences was that our presentation was more interactive with elaborate movement on stage. In May, we embarked on a lengthier tour.[58] We included the type of repertoire we had never performed on stage as No Limits. It included a song, 'Long as we Stand Together'.[59] This aligned us with a specific course outside of the traditional community of gospel music. It made us relevant to an issue affecting the broader society, a song HIV. We stayed at the houses of church members and sung mainly in churches and higher learning institutions.

In July, No Limits received a call to participate in a music documentary that was meant to be circulated around two hundred schools and SABC television stations for broadcast during what was then called the South Africa Music Week. This project was commissioned to Zola 7 and Getto Ruff, an independent record label under the management of Lance Sterh. On liking our performance during the shoot, Lance sought to establish a relationship with us, particularly when he learnt that we were unsigned artists.[60] At some point, he offered for us to assign someone who would use his office to focus specifically on the affairs of No Limits. We tasked VuyoBacela, who had always assisted us on our tours and events.[61]Sterh took us to Reliable Warehouse to pick out music for inspiration in order to get us to think about the market outside of the church context. Since we were a church group, he was exploring how we could compete in the market. Sterh introduced us to the secular market with numerous collaborations. He used a more pragmatic approach in trying to get us into the music industry. Our resistance to detach from our sacred values and embrace the demands of the secular market was a challenge for people like Lance. The marketplace seemed to create a discomfort for our traditional practices as a church group.[62]

[58]On this self-sponsored tour, we travelled to Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Grahams Town and King Williams Town.
[59]We wrote it originally for the South African Airways' internal campaign on HIV-AIDS.
[60]Interview with Bacela A, March 2015. This was a project by the Music Industry Development Initiative, in collaboration with the Department of Arts and Culture.
[61]Vuyo had also been to *Phakamani*. He had an understanding of the music business.
[62]Interview with Bacela A, March 2015.

On the 19th of October in 2003, we organised a No Limits concert at the Wits University Linder Auditorium. A group of our supporters and friends, who were project managers and professionals in their own right, offered to organise and manage this event for us. We were able to focus on the presentation without worrying about anything else related to organising the concert.[63] In the audience, we had a rare occurrence of having Themba Mkhize, Lance Sterh, Aubrey Peackock, JB Arthur (one of the leading local producers we had come to know through Phakamani, he actually recorded that concert performance), Victor and Gail Masondo under one roof. In numerous ways, the path we had taken in our musical life was reflected in this variety of industry practitioners.

Between 1999 and 2003, we had been also talking to Victor Masondo and JB Arthur about doing a live DVD project. There seemed not to be enough of a gap in their schedule to do the project. However, we managed to secure the recording of our concert at the Linder Auditorium in Johannesburg with them. This project was never released; however, they produced a studio project for Beth Nielsen Chapman, an American secular songwriter and singer, who heard us singing at a Sandton SDA church. She insisted on having us on one of the songs on her recording. Also, Gail Masondo introduced us to Mike Johnson of Number Seven Promotions in the UK. Nonetheless, the remoteness of our locations somewhat prevented us from doing the amount of work we desired.

On the 13th of December in 2003 we had another show at the Wits University Great Hall, which we recorded. This time, Motsamai Koapeng brought the recording equipment that he had collected in the preceding months. These performances were marked with a lot of dedication and hard work on our part. The sacrifices that everyone made as a commitment to the mission of No Limits paid off with artistic confidence and personal fulfilment. Our unique selling proposition for our creative product was clearly carved through months of musical composing, rehearsals and performances. Although

[63]We were able to secure collaborations with MbusoMadondo, a key board player, Moses Khumalo, a saxophonist andJethroGambu, a percussionist as well asPutcoMafani who was then a public relations officer of Kaiser Chiefsthe soccer team who agreed to be our Master of Ceremonies.

that year was eventful, we still did not achieve the clear break that we had hoped for. Even though we had done well, we had no sense of real accomplishment. Looking at the calibre of some of the connections we had made, we hoped for a type of deal to enable our efforts in further professionalising our music endeavours. We wanted to break through into the market but the majority of our members wanted to retain our identity as a gospel SDA group.

At this point we had made the most of what was artistically possible, considering that we were living a deferred vision in South Africa. We had hoped to take up singing as a full-time profession within the more developed music industry in the UK. Continuing with this vision, we were breaking new ground and were hoping for a miracle. We also believed that if we worked hard enough on the quality of our music, we would attract the favour of someone who would be able to support what we were doing and provide financial support or attract an established artist manager or record company to sign us and get us going. Essentially, the music was getting better but the business was struggling.

Up to this point, we had lived from concert takings and album sales. We calculated minimum amounts that everyone needed in order to cover basic living expenses each month. We agreed on a monthly allowance for each member. However, priority was given to the members who had needs that were more pressing than others. As such, some members went for some of those months without any stipend. We were united in purpose and saw this as a worthy sacrifice. Even though we assumed different roles and responsibilities, we shared the benefits equally, disregarding the varying levels of inputs from individuals. Instead, all our efforts were geared towards the mission of the group which we deemed was superior to ourselves.[64]

At the start of 2004, some realities sunk in among members of the group. Nonetheless, we commenced with the recording of another album in February. Motsamai had set up a recording facility in his home and he made arrangements for us to make the recording

[64] Interview with Mvelase, February 2015

there. Also, for the first time, I not only arranged and directed the music, I served as an engineer. This gave us the comfort of capturing our musical ideas in the best possible way, without worrying about studio time and costs. The previous year had been the pinnacle of No Limits pursuing a full time professional music career. Considering that we had close interactions with influential figures in the industry and yet did not significantly improve our enterprise, we struggled to regroup and reconcile that with the practicality of our musical pursuit and mission. When some of the intended goals were not realised, in 2004 two members left the group and went back to regular employment. They did so because the conditions of the group were financially straining and unpredictable, almost impractical. The challenging conditions in the group have generally remained unchanged and have seemed to cause similar frustrations for the members that have remained through the years that followed. Ayanda Bacela, Mpumelelo Mvelase, Thembela Mvelase and I, Kgomotso Moshugi, became core members of the group for several years still. We reconsidered the idea of moving to the UK but it did not materialise.

In the same period, Themba Mkhize was recording his album ‘Hands On’. He invited us to feature on several tracks on the album, which he released later that year. Subsequently, the album won several Metro and SAMA Awards. Motsamai continued to work on the post production of the recording we had left in the studio. There was excitement around this album because of the comparative quality of the recording and the creative space it was exploring.

Still in 2004, we received a call to do our first ever concert in Harare. It was to be held at the end of January 2005. We accepted the invitation and recruited two new members to complete our six-part vocal structure. The concert was a success and we managed to establish new connections. It appeared that church members there had known of No Limits for a long time and our presence was highly appreciated.

We then started on another recording. My role was to make the recording and leave the rest of the post production to Motsamai to complete in the months that followed. In

March, we travelled to East London where we met a musician pastor, Glenn Robertson, of a Cape Town based church, Kaleidoscope. We became good friends with him and promised to visit his church. In June, our church had its GC Session in Saint Louis Missouri in the USA. We had sent an application, as part of the requirements, to sing at this session but we lacked the funds to cover the trip. The condition of the approval to sing at the GC Session was that artists cover their own travelling and lodging expenses. Furthermore, we had to accept to sing without expecting any form of contribution from the church. All that the church was providing was a platform to perform. The church at that level appeared to approach the issue of musicians the same way as most local churches we had encountered. Moreover, we had to surrender our copyright and any possible income to be generated from the use our intellectual work by the church. The organisers of the session provided all these details as part of the application. We accepted all the conditions so as to be able to sing at the highest structures and event of our world church.

In the end, we failed to raise the required funds and did not make the trip. In September of the same year, the famous King's Heralds quartet came to South Africa. We featured in their concerts. These came and passed, still there was no significant change in our life except that one of the members of the King's Heralds took a few copies of our album Dare to Dream with the hope of passing them on to some promoters and artist managers on his return to the USA. Towards the end of 2005, post production on our studio recording was complete. Again it was time for the SDASA year-end conference. We travelled to Cape Town for the conference to launch the album Beyond Measure.
While in Cape Town, we visited the church, Kaleidoscope, and sung numerous songs during their church service. Their feedback and response to our music was overwhelming. This marked the beginning of our friendship with them. Subsequently, Pastor Glenn Robertson of Kaleidoscope, a jazz musician, invited us to do an outdoor concert with his band in February 2006. The audience was wholly non-SDA and we found acceptance outside of our regular comfort zone.

The rest of the year included regular church invitations around the country. However, in the second semester, we visited Middleburg in Mpumalanga and there we met Dr. Jonathan Mthombeni who was visiting from the USA. He played us video clips of a group in California singing one of our songs. He further pledged to help take us over there for some concerts. He made the first donation of one thousand dollars towards our trip there. It seemed the idea of No Limits going to America kept surfacing from time to time.

Also in 2006, we entered into a distribution agreement with Primarily A Cappella (an on-line, American distribution company).[65] They made our albums (Dare to dream and Beyond Measure) available on their international platform. As a travelling group, we managed to make our albums accessible everywhere we went but this platform was availing our music without us needing to be there in person.

In 2007, a group of students at Helderberg College in Cape Town, an SDA learning institution, organised a concert for No Limits. We met Malebo Selepe, a graphic designer, who offered to design a website for No Limits at no cost. We had also previously received similar offers from others with the same skill. At around the same time, we created our Facebook, Hi5 and Myspace accounts.[66] Through these online platforms, we had direct access to our fans and supporters all over the world. A lot of Africans had migrated abroad and most of those who had been exposed to No Limits before had a chance to communicate with us on social media. On our tours, we were able to add to our schedule additional concert performances through engagements with individuals whose access to us only through these platforms.

By the end of the year, members were beginning to pursue personal interests. We allowed ourselves to find alternative means of support while trying to keep the group alive. I pursued business studies at the UCT Graduate Business School. This gave me

[65] Information on this is accessible through www.singers.com, which is their online platform for extensive a cappella music.

[66] This was through the help of AsandaSizani and VezubuhleSigidi who were church members and No Limits supporters.

another opportunity to critically review the business of No Limits and conceptualise possible solutions. I saw this as an opportunity to revive the group. In November, the group was invited to the UK by Dr. Molapo Selepe, who was one of the medical students on our 1999 trip to UCT. He had become a friend to the group and empathised with our vision. Dr.Selepe organised a tour of the UK for us while employed at the Brecon Hospital in Wales. On this two-month tour, we sang at hospitals, schools, churches, care homes, weddings and funerals. The performances that stood out were those at Christ's College in Brecon, which is a historic site. The staff and students of Christ's College made our stay comfortable. We also performed at the Salvation Army in Birmingham for their Christmas service and continued to circulate our albums. Despite the best efforts of No Limits and the promoter, the expenses of the entire tour exceeded the revenue generated.

Upon our return home, we were motivated to transform our operations but our efforts availed little. We did not fully agree on the direction the group should take and the manner in which to conduct our enterprise. The very nature of our business was problematic, including our entanglement with the church environment. Later in the year we received an invitation from a leading gospel act, Joyous Celebration, to feature in the gospel series they were recording for the television station, One Gospel. This was a wonderful opportunity to get us on the airwaves once again. We made a live recording of four songs. These were subsequently played repeatedly on One Gospel over a period of months. The popularity of Joyous Celebration and the One Gospel channel gave us mileage on air. On the other hand, the group had become passive and reactive. Seemingly, we were getting tired of our administrative failure and our inability to turn the group around. Despite our creative success, we were struggling to make No Limits a business. This led group members to further withdraw from the group in pursuit of personal endeavours. In 2009, the division of the GC responsible for our region had just moved its offices from Harare to Pretoria. We started doing most of our performances at their offices during their different programmes. These performances were not done for a fee and the church still struggled to give us an allowance for fuel but we accepted their

invitations nonetheless. Their view was that we are a church group that sings for the Lord.

In August of 2009, we were invited to take part in a live DVD recording which was to be done in Cape Town at the Artscape. This was a project of the SID Media, under the direction of Andre Brink for the Festival of Hope. This project was massive in scope and comprehensively funded. For the first time, at a church related event, we were accommodated at a five star hotel as Sun Hotels was one of the sponsors for the event. Also, more noteworthy, was the involvement of, and collaboration with, the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra. In the history of the church in our region, we had never seen a project of that magnitude. We were paid for our performance. This project was aired on Hope Channel, the worldwide television network of the SDA church.

At this time we had sent in our application to sing at the 2010 GC Session in Atlanta. In March 2010 we finalised our plans to travel to the USA. We were able to get a loan from a member of the group to pay for our travelling. We had intended to travel as a six voices ensemble but one of our members was denied a visa. We reconnected with Noma Fuzane who became instrumental in arranging our performances in California. She arranged performances, with the help of Truth Ncube, to cover the five weeks that we spent in that region. We sang extensively while there, some people started following us to all other places where we performed. We received the hospitality of pastors and church members, and were invited for lunches and dinners to different homes. While in California, we met a lady singer who invited us to collaborate with her on a studio recording of one of the songs on her project. Our performances there also included Non-SDA churches where we were treated with much hospitality. We were also in touch with a friend, Modisa Merafhe who arranged a few performances in Texas and Arkansas. We managed to sing in Atlanta at the GC Session. We were scheduled to sing on only one afternoon, we ended up singing the whole week. Our music was well received and we made several contacts with leaders of different SDA affiliated institutions, universities and institutions.

We had the longest stay of our trip in California. We managed to do an exclusive concert performance that was recorded and streamed live in over two hundred countries through the Loma Linda University Church. We also recorded content for the Loma Linda Broad Casting Network (LLBN). The contacts we managed to create in the short space of time and the experiences we had were unlike anywhere else we had been before. We received calls, through referrals, from different churches inviting us to do concerts for which they had a budget. However, our stay there was limited and all our days were booked. As a result, additional requests that came while we were there, were not accommodated.

The LLBN, after broadcasting our performances numerous times, uploaded the videos of the same, onto YouTube. Recently, a local SDA initiated satellite channel, Isambulo TV, was established. At some point, the viewers, predominantly SDA, requested No Limits content. Soon we learnt that they, Isambulo TV, had downloaded some of our YouTube videos and were airing them on their channel. The advent of Isambulo TV also meant that information on events and products was able to reach the SDA community viewing this channel.

In 2010, we recorded and launched a new album, New Heights. In 2011 we had a national tour to promote New Heights which was mostly self-initiated with the help of a young promoter from the church. We also started working with a Zimbabwean organisation called PORA. Its main work has been in helping re-integrate ex-prisoners back into society. In 2012 we worked closely with a Cape Town based manager, Sheryl Dean, who organised a few corporate gigs for us in Johannesburg. She also organised a concert for us at the Endler Hall in Stellenbosch.

Having released all our albums independently, once the recordings were complete, we engaged with graphic designers, photographers, printers and the manufacturers, Compact Disc Technologies (CDT)[67]. As a result of the regulations at CDT for

[67] We have worked with them since 2000, CDT is the largest CD replicating company in Southern Africa.

manufacturing CDs, we had to get clearances from music licensing authorities, SAMRO and NORM, to ensure that we had the legal right to replicate and to sell the CDs.

No Limits has from the onset been driven by its aim to minister through music. We have continued to support this mission because it has presented to us an opportunity to be part of something greater than ourselves, for the good of others.[68] Over the years we have presented live performances and recordings through which audiences were able to engage with our music. We have received consistent feedback concerning the impact of our music. At times, some of the feedback gave us reason to continue with the mission against economic difficulty. We believed that we had given our lives to the service of God. For that reason, we committed to the cause and held on to the belief that God will provide for the mission. A culture of doing it for the group and the mission manifested itself in the spirit of self-sacrifice, which was at times problematic. Members, for fear of appearing as though they were opposed to the mission, consented to projects they were not fully agreeable to.[69] However, being part of No Limits has given us a chance to do what we love while impacting others in a positive way.[70]

The following chapter provides the analysis of the narrative of No Limits.

[68] Interview with Mvelase M, February 2015
[69] Interview with Bacela A, March2015
[70] Interview with Mambo, February 2015

CHAPTER 5
ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The narrative provided in the previous chapter covered a twenty-year period. The Landry model, adopted as a theoretical framework for this study, aids the observation of specific issues that occurred or failed to occur in the No Limits value chain. The musical development of No Limits did not follow the value chain in a linear fashion. Therefore, using the cultural industries value chain retrospectively merely helps to contextualise the challenges and accomplishments of No Limits over the past years.

This chapter highlights particular aspects of the career of No Limits as it has been presented in the previous chapter. Using an adaptation of the Landry model of the various components of the cultural industries value chain, as put forth by the GCSG (1998), certain aspects of the trajectory of No Limits are considered in order to establish some of the obstacles and achievements that the group has experienced, in relation to the structure and functioning of the creative industry.

5.2 ASSESSING NO LIMITS USING THE LANDRY MODEL

This section analyses the trajectory of No Limits using the Landry value chain model according to its components, namely; beginnings, production, circulation, delivery mechanisms and audience reception which includes feedback (Landry 2000).

5.2.1 Beginnings

This is the first step in the value chain and the following subsections will deal with the church as an enabler of the development of music and the professionalisation of the group.

5.2.1.1 The church as an enabler of the development of music

The church as a religious institution provides a platform for individuals to assemble and potentially form relationships. A culture is developed and values are shared. No Limits was formed in such a setting, following a long standing tradition of young people in church habitually getting together to sing. Young people, in music, have always had role models from those who came before them, some of whom they grew up listening to. Often when young people form musical groups, it comes from being inspired by and aiming to imitate groups they look up to in church. The culture of music, in many ways, has appeared as a major aspect of life in the church.[71]

The weekly church services have provided an opportunity for musical groups to participate in the church through performances. Musicians have had a reason to practice often, refine their skills and prepare themselves to take part in the church services. Although the GC formally compiled guidelines on the SDA philosophy of music, as previously stated, these have been reflective of traditional practices that have always been associated with the culture of music in the church. The influence of SDA American music groups largely informed the approach, style and mindset of SDA musical groups in South Africa.[72] As such, from the times of the King's Messengers quartet, the SDA church became known locally for its close harmony a cappella sound, a tradition that still continues today.

Growing up in this setting, No Limits developed its initial technical ability to sing harmonies.[73] No Limits sang in different vocal parts meant being able to distinguish the different musical notes in a song. We assimilated this ability through active practice and participation in the church and congregational singing even before the group was formed.[74] We listened to tapes of musical groups and imitated them, listened to local groups in church singing in the same way and became part of musical groups where

[71] Interview with Kaunda, February 2015
[72] Interview with Kaunda, February 2015
[73] For example, soprano, alto, tenor, bass or first tenor, second tenor, baritone and bass.
[74] Interview with Mvelase and Mambo, February 2015 (Mpumi and Sibongile sang with their respective families while growing up).

someone knowledgeable would teach the parts. Most of the time we learnt to sing by ear. Some groups sung from written music. The reason we were able to start the group was primarily because of our common musical ability, familiarity and interest. The social setting, resulting from church attendance or affiliation, was the reason we knew each other in the first place. We were all based in Soweto but came from different locations and congregations within the neighbouring SDA churches.

The church has always been actively disseminating biblical teachings. It is from these that we have drawn much inspiration for our name, No Limits, and for the devotional lyrical content of our music as a group. The content contribution of the church also includes the hymns that we grew up singing and have since been able to re-arrange and include in our live and studio repertoire over the years. These Western hymns have been compiled by the world church into an Adventist Hymnal. The majority of them were drawn from the general Christian music public domain because they were mostly written around the nineteenth century and available for use without need for copyright. The SDA church selected them on the basis of their alignment to the doctrines of the church. Some of these hymns have been translated into South African vernacular languages in local hymnals.

The values we have learnt have been essential in helping to define the vision of the group, in how we handle interpersonal relationships and develop the general practices of the group. We believed early on that our musical talents were meant to serve a greater good. More than the group being a vehicle for transmitting the gospel through music, it became a valued part of our lives. We loved the music, the mission and life of the group. Hence, we committed to the group and its mission. We decided that the mission was greater than any one of us as it was a mission inspired by our religious convictions.[75] Although No Limits started as an ordinary church group like many others, it entrenched itself in its mission in a manner that has demonstrated unusual commitment and subsequent accomplishments as reflected in the journey it has taken.

[7575] Interview with MpumeleloMvelase and SibingileMambo, February 2015 (MpumeleloMvelase and Sibongile Mambo sang with their respective families while growing up).

The primary audience for the group has been predominantly drawn from the church. This audience we have accessed in different regions and countries through the network of the SDA church. From the day we started singing together we have never had to look for an audience, the church has readily and frequently opened its doors to allow us to present our music. This has served the purpose of affirming us and positively reinforcing our work from congregations and individuals alike. Although we initially had no plans or aspirations to hold formal concerts and to make recordings, it is through church members and church initiatives that we participated in concerts and eventually held our first formal concert and made our first recording.

Given the above, the church has created a social platform for the formation of the group, a cultural environment for the informal musical development of members, inspiration for devotional lyrics in musical compositions, a spiritual basis for the paradigm of the group and the motivation to optimally employ their talents. It has also provided a worldwide audience, a network of skilled individuals who have influenced and contributed to the group and a general forum for musical engagement and development.

While some groups are formed in local communities, schools or in the professional music industry space, the advantage of No Limits being formed in a setting where individuals generally share similar beliefs, moral values, aspirations and musical influences.[76] These simplified the process of achieving coherence in the group, one that is necessary when developing as a collective. However, the disposition of No Limits, considering its beginning and its fundamental sacred influences, raises a question of the extent to which it is able or willing to allow itself to embrace a non-sacred context, such as the marketplace.

[76] The Duduza Serenade and the Soweto Gospel choirs. (They take their name from their local communities and locations).

From the point of view of the formal music industry, No Limits is primarily classified as primarily belonging to the gospel market because of its lyrical content and perhaps its association with the SDA church. Based on informal observations as well as those of some of the respondents, it seems possible that gospel music styles in South Africa are reflective of music of specific churches.[77] There are numerous denominations that are also known for music without instrumental accompaniment. For example, the Zion Christian Church (ZCC or Amazayoni), the Methodist church (Amadodana aseWesile) and some Apostolic churches. Their music is mainly grounded in African languages and rhythms and their respective sounds are distinct from one another. We, on the other hand, have infused a harmonically sophisticated, predominantly Western harmonic influence in our music owing to our church culture and musical influences. A non-SDA consumer of our music has expressed that in her view, our music cuts across Christian denominations. She explains this as the reason why she was able to connect with it.[78] There have been occasions where our music was not particularly associated with the SDA church until after the performances and the listeners ask which church we come from. I suppose this question has stemmed from the general connection that people often make between certain types of gospel music with specific churches. However, it looks as if there have been inadequacies in penetrating or developing market support in popularising our kind of music outside of the church audience in a way that some artists in the gospel industry seem to have done.

The SDA church has been responsible for inspiring great talent over the years, as have other denominations. But there have been fewer, if any, musicians who have pursued it professionally.[79] It seemed to be an unspoken assumption that there was no place for professional musicians in the SDA church, especially in South Africa. It was as if the congregants were wondering what these musicians were going to do that was not already done in the church. Thus, there were numerous talented SDA musicians who knew that music was not an option for a profession.[80] Although this case casts greater

[77] For example, interview with V. Bacela, January 2015
[78] Interview with Tunzelana, February 2015
[79] Interview with Kaunda, February 2015
[80] Interview with Yaze, November 2014

light on the SDA context, it seems that the music profession in our culture has always had numerous challenges and stereotypes to contend with. Gospel musicians, despite having a captive church audience, have not been an exception.

In our pursuit, we believed that God required it of us to give our talents for His service. Affirmed by church audiences, inspired by the religious content and context, we considered music as a professional career. We knew of church members who were professional musicians, some of them teachers, nevertheless, it was unheard of for the entire group to pursue a professional career such as we were, in South Africa. The church had enabled much musical development, but it had no mechanisms to deal with professional musicians. There was no template, policy or point of reference used by the church. Any suggested change to established practices seemed objectionable. The practice of the church was to invite music groups to participate in church programmes without any consideration as to how the groups would travel and what they would need. The idea of requiring some form of payment was regarded to be radical and was resisted. It left some musicians feeling helpless, undermined or taken for granted. As such, the church that has enabled musical development seemed at such times to disable its professionalisation. Having travelled abroad and seen opportunities there, this was more problematic in the South and other parts of Africa.

5.2.1.2 Professionalisation in the market and the church

It was when we were in the UK in 2001 where the possibility of the group pursuing a full-time music career seemed viable.[81] For the first time, we received numerous propositions from professional artist managers and music promoters who were also church members. It was vital for us as a church-incubated group to find a promoter or artist manager who shared or at least understood our religious and musical backgrounds and still had the skills to position us in the industry. It was reassuring to imagine that a possible relationship with them would be based on similar religious values.

[81] Interview with Mambo, February 2015

During the time we spent in Birmingham, there was an annual tent gathering of SDA churches in the area. One evening, subsequent to one of our regular performances there, we were approached by an artist manager who was part of the congregation. We scheduled a meeting with him during which we showcased our music and its adaptability for various settings. In response, he gave us a high level plan of what was possible within his resource capacity for us to do professional work in the UK and Europe.[82] As a professional manager, he had a solid grasp of the critical issues and interventions required to advance us in the music profession. Given the knowledge we had of the successes of artists such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo in these regions, we were confident that the African influences in our music would also position us uniquely in that market space. Performing in different church settings, we were widely offered an honorarium. In most cases, they collected moneys from the congregants. Overall, the UK cultural and church environments seemed comparatively more developed, structured and accessible for making a musical career as well as able to provide tangible support. In the UK, it seemed that the enablement of the church network or context was offering an element that was missing in our value chain in South Africa. As a group that was now positioned to potentially go beyond the South African context, we had the prospect of a professional managerial intervention to complement our artistic efforts.

When we finally advanced towards a decision to be professional, our aim was to do it abroad. We considered the opportunities that were presented to us on our UK trip. We understood that the local South African music industry had its problems, having not afforded us such opportunities. Also, the local church setting was not in a position to support or favour our decision either, at least not in the immediate future. In fact, it seemed clear to us that a music profession for an SDA group in South Africa was almost impossible. Although the SDASA Chorale had engaged in professional projects on occasion, the closest model we had of a professional group was the King's Messengers. They had, however, also experienced their share of challenges.

[82] Also, discussion with SDA, UK based music promoter of Number Seven Music promotions, Mike Johnson (June 2004),the idea of taking No Limits to America came up in numerous discussions. Having met Americans in our performance in Cambridge, they proposed to link us with promoters in their country.

Promotional efforts of their record company secured them a reasonable audience in the gospel market. They are known, by reputation, to be the first ever recording gospel group in South Africa, though I have been unable to verify this claim. Their attempts to be active outside of the church context, through performances in secular venues for SDA and non-SDA audiences, were confronted with opposition and resistance from the church. At one time they bought a pulpit for a local church from concert proceeds and the church rejected it with a claim that it came from "dirty money."[83] Although the church has over the years been accepting of concert performances of church groups in secular venues, it has not always been the case.[84] Perhaps it is through the efforts of these pioneers, and others, that such groups as No Limits have not had to deal with as much resistance on this issue in the church.

When we returned from the UK in 2001, we planned that we would return the following year. When we were there initially, we did not anticipate some of the offers that we eventually received. As some of our members had taken leave from work it seemed reasonable for us to return home and plan for our return to the UK. As some of our members were financially supporting their families, it was important that when they left their jobs, and we returned to the UK, we should be able to provide means for their families to survive. We had a plan to raise the necessary funds for us to get working holiday visas that the UK government had made available for young South Africans. These visas would enable us to work while in the UK and we would pursue our vision from that premise. When the time came to resume these plans, the funds we were expecting and received were not enough. We were unable to return to the UK as planned. While considering ways to raise the funds, we resorted to operating in the local setting, which did not work out well. As a group, we had to be of the same mind concerning our decision and had to engage our parents and families on this. Although relatively sceptical, they supported our determination.

[83] Discussion with Sixholo (a member of the King's Messengers), November 2014
[84] These were performances at public and secular venues such as City halls and community halls.

The church and some members who had played such an enabling role found our venture ridiculous. We sought ways of negotiating with the church, while looking for opportunities for our kind of music in the South African marketplace. We assumed that the music profession was better understood in the music industry, although in retrospect, it appears that we did not understand it fully ourselves. The idea was that the economic sustainability of the group through revenue generated in the marketplace would ease the need for economic support from the church. This way, musical services offered to the church would be a free offering.

Traditionally, most musicians had no problem with lack of structural financial support from the church. They had other means of supporting themselves. Perhaps these musicians did not want to take the risk of depending on music for a living, let alone church support. There were market penetration challenges in the music industry, which were expected but perhaps inadequately prepared for. As a result, the group had to devise means to obtain the support of the church, particularly when the church required our performances. In some instances, No Limits required a given congregation to at the very least purchase a set number of copies of its recorded music. However, this aspect of determining what and how the church compensates the group has remained an unresolved challenge for the group.[85] When we started asking for a performance fee for our church appearances, there was resistance from the church at large. In recent years, there seems to be an improvement in the attitude of some SDA churches in South Africa towards remunerating musicians.

One of the dilemmas regarding the payment of musicians the church is that the church has had to deal with professional and non-professional musicians alike. Seemingly, rather than meeting the financial requirements of a given professional musician, the church has had an option to call upon a musician who does not require payment. A major task for us as No Limits has then been to differentiate ourselves through skilful and technical musical performances and professional conduct. In one instance, some church members have expected to dictate terms as they do with all other ordinary

[85] Interview with Mboleka, March 2015

church music groups. They have shown unwillingness to accept why No Limits has special requirements and this made us appear unreasonable. Although this has been a challenging task and often confronted us with a variety of responses, there has been a fair balance in the type of responses we have received in this regard.

In our 2010 trip to America, the SDA churches there appeared to be ahead of the rest of the places we had been to, in terms of their economic support towards musicians. This suggested to me that the intensity of some of the challenges for musicians were likely influenced by the region in which they operate. Therefore, some regions of the church seem somewhat more enabling in areas where others appear disabling. This is particularly evident when one considers our travels to other African states and countries abroad. Nonetheless, the potential of the church and the market to support professional musicians is possibly affected by economic conditions and an understanding of the arts in any given country or region. In one instance, it was suggested that perhaps the church in Africa has not supported musicians due to its limited financial resources in the past. However, when the economic conditions in the church became potentially favourable for musicians, the church held on to its traditional practice.[86] One hopes that this is an issue that will change through the course of time, with greater advocacy and understanding.[87]

In an interview, a church leader suggested that the church needs to offer deliberate support to musicians.[88] Some reasons raised were that the church and its members were reluctant to support music and musicians due to a lack of visionary leadership at all levels of the church, a lack of understanding of the music profession and its potential to work for the imperatives of the church or in some cases, mere jealousy.[89]No Limits recollects that the church has at times provided prime time performances at major and minor events along with reasonable support. Although these views are debatable, they serve as evidence that there is a need for healthy and continuous discussions between

[86] Interview with Mayaba, October 2014
[87] Interview with Kaunda, January 2015
[88] Interview with Kaunda, January 2015
[89] Interview with Kaunda, January 2015

the church and musicians towards a mutually beneficial and growing working relationship.

In the course of time, we received managerial help from individuals in the church who had their professions in other fields, which has exemplified the contribution, in this step of the value chain, of a network we established through the church.[90]Considering that we have never had a formal agreement for artist management, we have constantly admitted that we need help.[91] Moreover, most of our challenges were closely linked to a failure to manage the group and its affairs in a manner that complements our artistic endeavours. Perhaps we needed, locally, the kind of management that was proposed to us in the UK.

I had taken it upon myself to go to Phakamani, to learn how the music business works. Later I went to the UCT Business School to gather further insights on how to improve the condition of the group. Nevertheless, I have not been able to execute most of what I have learnt in recent years.

Although we have attempted to run the group professionally, we registered as a business briefly in 1999 but we de-registered due to a lack of understanding how to position ourselves. One of the issues we struggled with was whether to operate as a Non-profit Organisation or a profit making entity. Our mission had non-profit aspirations but our realities required some profitability in order to remain afloat.

Engaging with the church context and being a profit making initiative is something we have not been able to understand or resolve in our minds. This has particularly been difficult because making money in church is considered taboo.[92] Also, the church itself has no formal acknowledgement of music as a profession. In recent years, we have resorted to taking minimal church invitations and have instead focused on taking concert invitations. This way we have been able to justify a fee for our performances.

[90] Some were Business Analysts, Project Managers, Graphic designers etc.
[91] Interview with Mambo, February 2015
[92] Interview with Mboleka, March 2015

Despite the many challenges, it is apparent that the church has enabled the musical development of No Limits and other musical groups. Furthermore, the socio-cultural environment and the international network of the church inspired No Limits to consider a professional music career over the last twenty years and possibly into the future. The rest of the disparities and challenges do not nullify that the church has enabled musical development. Nonetheless, the understanding of the church in engaging with these musicians once they become professional seems limited and musicians struggle with the professionalisation of their craft. As with No Limits, the church could not accommodate or grow our professional endeavours and we could not entangle ourselves from the church in our professional pursuits. It is possible that there are other ways for the church to grow professional music that have not yet considered.

5.2.2 Production

The church encourages high standards of musical practice,[93] while the market environment requires competitive music practices. The expectation of quality productions in the church which means devotional depth and competitiveness in the marketplace require resources and expertise. As a group, we have always aimed to be effective with our music. As such, we focused on improving the quality of our compositions, singing and technical skills necessary to differentiate ourselves and to reach our listeners in a meaningful way, using recordings and live performances as platforms.

5.2.2.1 The music of No Limits

The music of No Limits has taken its shape from the SDA church music culture which is predominantly a cappella. The lyrical content of the music is influenced and inspired mostly by Christian values appealing to a wider community than just the SDA church. On the other hand, the musical elements range from jazz to classical, yet the music

[93] SDA philosophy on music (GC Committee 2003)

remains decidedly South African. Our international travels and intended positioning have persuaded us to think of our musical product as an international offering. For that reason, we have combined English and Western harmonies with African languages, rhythms and nuances, such as those in the music of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, traditional Sesotho and Zulu songs commonly sung at weddings, social gatherings and funerals and African churches that were not as immersed in the Western and American influences as was the SDA church. We have imitated musical instruments with our voices, mostly the upright bass, percussion and the trumpet. We also approached our vocal arrangements as though we were arranging music for instruments to give a fuller sense of the music than what traditional four-part choral music would do. The fact that we created our own vocal arrangements and compositions helped to create an identity for the group, which today has set a new trend within a cappella music, influencing groups locally and abroad, in and out of the SDA church context.[94] For the same reasons, while some have liked our music, there have been others who have disliked it. Consequently, we have tried to vary our songs to accommodate of a range of musical preferences, which has helped to break some stereotypes over the years.[95] Since inception, our music has taken different forms and this is recognisable in the progression of our recordings and general repertoire.

We have over the years taken time to study audio recordings and later live performance videos on YouTube, of renowned secular international a cappella groups such as the Real Group from Sweden and the Swingle Singers from the UK (both mixed voice groups). These groups are older and have refined the skill of a cappella performance and recording over the years. We decided to differentiate ourselves from them by incorporating African musical elements in our repertoire. As such, we aimed to raise our performance and production standards using these groups as a benchmark. We have always known that the execution of our musical ideas requires a level of technical proficiency and know-how. As such, we have always been engaged in some form of technical vocal workouts and later recording production techniques. Initially, we

[94] Interview with Kaunda, January 2015 and Facebook comments, Seroka and Tsibolane, November 2014.
[95] Interview with Mboleka, March 2015

rehearsed twice a week for two hours each time. In each rehearsal, we dedicated time for vocal exercises.[96] When all members had left full time employment, we could rehearse daily. In 2002, a friend of the group who was working in the UK donated a collection of vocal workout materials to the group.[97] One of these resources included speech level technique which has been used by numerous famous American secular singers. We used these workouts collectively and as individuals. At some point, I developed a set of notes to initiate a programme to get the group to sight-read staff notation. Overall, such groups as Take 6 exemplified a technical standard for both live and studio vocal performance that we continued to strive for. At this point, the production standard we sought was based on leading a cappella groups in the secular and international space. Motsamai Koapeng introduced me to the music of Real Group, in 2000. He was mostly concerned about the standard of our productions. While I spent more time developing the music, he spent time developing the technical skill for production which he transferred to me when we started recording again. On the other hand, I spent lengthy amounts of time with Themba Mkhize observing how he works in the studio. We would also have long conversations where he shared his views about how to improve the standard of local recordings. Occasionally, Victor Masondo and Joe Arthur would invite me during their studio sessions to observe and learn. These were all musicians and individuals that I respected and looked up to, who were renowned and accomplished in their own rights. I had a rare privilege to learn from them most of the skills that I have been able to put into practice in the work of No Limits.

5.2.2.2 Recordings of No Limits

Over the last twenty years, we have recorded many performances and released six albums. We conceptualised these albums and have full ownership of their master copies. This means we have all the rights to use these recordings in any time any manner befitting our needs. This has since afforded us flexibility that musicians who do

[96] Ken Burton, the music director of the London Adventist Chorale, gave us a vocal workout CD, when they came to feature at one of our 2001 concerts at Regents Hall, in London.

[97] Dr FusiMadela, a South African medical doctor, an SDA church member and a supporter of the work of No Limits. He was one of the UCT students who planned our first trip and concerts in Cape Town in 1999.

not own the master copies of their recordings perhaps would not have had. It is apparent that musicians in the SDA church initially held a belief that music industry record producers and engineers generally lacked passion and understanding on how to record or produce a cappella music. This was informed by experiences of those who had recorded before us. Also, it seemed that the quality of local recordings was somewhat inferior to the imported recordings we were listening to. Often we ascribed this to disparities in studio production and technical knowledge and rarely to studio budget. Although SDA music has been relatively appreciated, over the years a shortage of recording engineers to capture and mix studio performances of our music in a satisfactory way also became apparent to singing groups. The SDASA Chorale recorded their first album at BOP studios, which was rated among the best at that time. However, their dealings with the studio were unsatisfactory.[98]

When the time came for us to do our first recording, we opted to work with a studio engineer from church, who was familiar with SDA music.[99] We used a public studio and paid for studio time using proceeds from one of our concerts. Through the help of our engineer, who co-produced the project, the outcome was satisfying and became one of the first progressive quality recordings in the church and subsequently in the market at that time.[100]

Working with Motsamai Koapeng on the production of our second album, we used a different engineer who happened to work in and for a different studio.[101] Concerned with the manner of recording vocals, we booked a studio session where we experimented with several methods until we found one we were willing to settle with. This was an acknowledgement on our part that we had limited studio knowledge and experience. It was also an attempt to understand the technical possibilities to improve the quality of our recordings. Self-driven and independent, we believed that we were the ones to bring the change and improvement we so desired. We were determined to produce

[98] Discussion with Koapeng.
[99] Locally, he was the first ever studio engineer we knew from our church (GcinaNhlapho)
[100] Interview with Mlungwana, January 2015
[101] Solo Studios in Midrand, at that time it was partly owned by Aubrey Peackok

recordings to hopefully compete in the local and international industries. During this time, we had been listening to professional recordings of a cappella groups like Take 6. We knew it was not possible to reach that standard in the short-term, nonetheless their recordings and those of other American groups, presented the ideal quality to use as a benchmark.

One of the reasons we were drawn to Themba Mkhize is the a cappella production we heard on his album in 2001. We saw in him a producer with sensitivity to vocal quality and production skills, which was what we needed. Subsequently, when he heard our music, exploring production approaches on capturing our music was one of the first contributions he made. He used his personal funds to book and pay for expenses at Downtown studios. There we experimented with the production options he was envisioning for our music. We learnt that one of the main reasons we were unable to reach the quality we desired was the fact that we were recording under the pressure of a limited budget, in addition to limited production and recording skills. We had to complete recordings within the amount of studio time that our money could afford to buy. At that time, Motsamai Koapeng, as a co-producer since our second album, was frustrated with this enough to want to change it. Privately, while we were exploring with Mkhize, he conducted research of his own and consulted with studios and engineers on suitable recording gear and processes. By the end of our third album, he had started collecting studio equipment using his own resources. Although the group was now making music full-time, he was employed and basically came in to help out with critical needs of the group. Until this time we had relied on external studios and engineers in making our albums.

On the albums that followed, we used the studio facility that Motsamai Koapeng privately assembled. This relieved us of the kind of pressures we had to endure in the making of our earlier recordings. In the studio, I sat as an engineer and produced the music that I had arranged. Through the recording techniques that Motsamai had learnt and subsequently shared with me, and those I had learnt from Mkhize, we were able to record the group together to a level of quality that exceeded all the work we had

previously done. The first that came from these developments was called *Dare to Dream*, our fourth studio album. We have since gained confidence in presenting our music and recordings on an international platform. The type of a cappella we were singing from church informally developed our technical ability to hear and as best as possible emulate a given quality of vocal music. At this point we had gathered new studio skills and resources that had for a long time limited our productions. We were able to extend our work to the next level on the value chain. We were in control of the record production part of the value chain and, therefore, determined and ensured record production quality, in a way that none of the groups we knew had done. Our recordings became distinct and of a standard that our audiences appreciated and other musicians sought to emulate.[102] This was no longer motivated by what we wished to accomplish as an SDA a group, but as a South African a cappella group. The music was recorded and mixed with an exact understanding of what the voices and the arrangements were aiming to express. The tension was negotiated with success.

In my view, the recording process is one of the primary engagements that a musical group initially has with the music industry.[103] If those who record the music have no passion and understanding for it, how likely are those further down the value chain, such as promoters, to appreciate it?

Although there have been benefits from producing our own records, there have been some disadvantages. Record companies tend to prefer to own and influence the production of the albums they market and distribute. Recording ourselves has meant that we present complete projects to record companies for distribution, thereby restricting their contribution to the production. When Spirit Music rejected the marketing and distribution deal we were almost getting into with them in 2005, they felt that they needed to choose our repertoire and control production in order for them to consider our project. This was because they felt that our production as it was, was not serving the market that they were operating in. I believe that because we have not paid for our

[102] Discussion with Sekhute, 2008
[103] Studios and recording engineers.

recent recordings the way we did the earlier ones we have not been able to quantify and attach actual value to the process of making them. Lack of this information might affect how we view and subsequently make strategic decisions. Also, the resources we have had in the studio such as the type of microphones and our own recording skills create a ceiling for what is technically possible in our productions.

Unless our skills and other resources improve, sooner or later we might become limited in terms of production. Reaching a level of complacency is a concern, and if not careful, working on our own puts us in a vacuum. Working with other producers can be inspiring and may impact productions. Although it has benefited us in the past, being the composer, arranger, director, engineer and producer of the music can restrict input from other possible perspectives that result from working with others. There are other disadvantages associated with having to acquire, house, maintain and then regularly upgrade recording equipment. Acquiring studio equipment is costly and sometimes absorbs resources that could be utilised elsewhere in the affairs of the group. Housing a studio exposes the equipment to damage or theft and takes up space. If the studio is not located in an ideal setting, there might be interruptions with productions. Maintenance requires time and resources that may not always be available. In my view, acquiring a studio has required us to consider the frequency and nature of our studio productions and measure the costs against the potential benefits. In the case of No Limits, it became an issue of gaining control over the production of our music and saving costs and all these disadvantages became secondary.

5.2.2.3 Performances of No Limits

In the initial years, performances and rehearsals were the two main activities of the group. Rehearsals gave us space to experiment and shape our sound. Performances gave us a platform to improve and test ourselves as performers and the strength of our ideas. Our performances included church services, weddings, funerals, visits to orphanages and old age homes as well as parties or functions to which we were invited. Occasionally, we would also appear as a supporting act in church concerts. In

particular, No Compromise, a group from church, invited us to their concerts, which were organised and run professionally as previously mentioned. Aubrey Peacock, who was the leader and music director of the group, was involved in the music industry as an engineer and sales executive. Together with other members of his group, they were exposed to non-SDA and professional Contemporary Christian Music performers and musicians, whose work they included in their repertoire. We learnt much from them about quality musical practices. For example, their concert performances were scripted and pre-rehearsed. They used lighting to enhance their presentation. They gave us a schedule of times for sound checks and the times we needed to report backstage, which indicated a high level of organisation on their part. Most importantly, Peacock had extensive experience working with vocals in live performance settings. He had worked with professional groups in professional settings before. No Compromise had its own sound system and a dedicated sound engineer who was also part of their rehearsals. Although they used instrumental backing tracks in their music, they had an understanding of vocals. In all our formal concerts that followed, we requested the use of their sound system. They supported us in numerous ways and provided contacts in the music industry for different services that we required at different times.

Although our performances were generally dominated by the SDA church setting, since 1998, we have performed at secular venues and non-SDA churches as well.[104] Our audiences have been local and international, multi-racial, young and old, Christian and non-Christian, those who love the devotional part of our music and those who just love the creative elements of the music.

As a recording group, we have always varied our live presentations slightly from the recordings. We added new sections and musical elements to the songs in live performances. Audiences have remarked that although they know the songs from the albums, they appreciate an element of newness and unpredictability in the songs in live

[104] Wits University Great hall, Linder Auditorium, Adler hall (Stellenbosch university), Helderberg College, Kippies, Bassline, The Laboratory, Cape Town City Hall, Johannesburg City Hall, East London City Hall, Pretoria State Theater, Standard Bank Arena, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Hall, Bellville Civic Theater, The Artscape, Kaleidoscope, Grace Bible Church, Rhema Bible Church, New Life, Hope Restoration Centre etcetera

performances. This has been pointed out as one of the distinguishing factors about the performances of No Limits.[105]

Engaging with professional musicians in the industry through the Phakamani music industry initiative, under the directorship of Mokale Koapeng and Gail Masondo and having participated in the No Compromise concerts, we learned to think out of the proverbial box regarding concert performances.

Selecting the repertoire for a specific type of concert and keeping the audience engaged throughout, was important. We also adopted a tradition of including a new song in each of our major performances whenever performing to our regular audience. In our 2007 tour of the UK, we performed in Brecon for different age groups of learners in different schools. We had prepared a special repertoire for each of those audiences. The innumerable concerts we have since held, gave us a platform to exercise performance skills that have been useful in appealing to audiences. We were learning skills and bringing them into all our performances both in the sacred and market contexts.

Except for the use of sacred lyrical content, we thought of our music as the kind with musical elements that were not restricted to church environments. This is why at some point we performed at the jazz venue, Bassline even though most of the time we were not in the popular music space. On numerous occasions, we performed at corporate events of enterprises such as ESKOM, Petro-SA and the Wits Business School. Throughout all these endeavours, it seems to me that we were trying to fit our productions to a variety of settings. Although there was a level of adaptation for each setting, and it appeared to work out mostly, we were not maximising the potential of each setting. Perhaps the reason for this was that some of these settings were not frequent enough for our performances. There was a fundamental dilemma of not having a clearly adapted product for these varied contexts. In the end, traces of conservatism followed us in all the settings because sacred inclinations were predominant. Also these contexts presented a variety of benefits. Some were socially rewarding and others were

[105] Discussion with Modiri, May 2013

economically beneficial. Perhaps we needed to clarify our overall objectives and focus on carving specialised productions for contexts that would be appropriate for meeting the objectives we set. Perhaps while spending time in each of the settings was useful, we should have adjusted our focus in light of our immediate and long-term needs.

In 2003, Lance took us to a music warehouse. He let us choose tens of CDs and cassettes of local and international artists. He paid for those through the account of his record company. He explained to us that he wanted us to listen widely to the music and see how we could carve our sound for a popular non-gospel market.[106] He was thinking of a studio and live performance production that he could sell in the market place. At that time, our loyalty to the sacred content made it seem like that would derail us from our gospel mission. We maintained a gospel oriented production approach. I believe that some of the questions we, as No Limits, and some musicians were failing to answer were; who are we making these productions for? Would they be willing to pay for these productions and at what cost? Basically, we did not seem to connect our need to make a living and the productions we were willing to make with the audience that would pay the right price for us to be sustainable. Although there was an intention in the development of our productions to position ourselves in the local gospel market, our challenges discussed in the following section on circulation kept us from participating in the formal market. Feedback that we have received, which is discussed in the last section of this analysis, indicates that the productions have worked for the non-SDA market even within the given limitations.

5.2.3 Circulation

Production without effective circulation restricts what musicians are able to accomplish in their efforts to maximise market exposure. Having taken control of our productions, we realised that market access and success required breaking into formal marketing and distribution channels.[107] However, in the South African market, in order to achieve

[106] Interview with Bacela A, March 2015
[107] Channels that were used by other musicians or gospel artists affiliated to record labels.

this we needed to align with a recognised record company. We looked for a license deal which would allow a record company to use the recordings we produced to manufacture copies, which is part of the production phase of the value chain, and provide us with the distribution and the marketing we needed. On the other hand, we still wanted to retain ownership of our copyright and the recording.[108] Although other possible deals included production, our interest was to get a deal at the level of circulation. Hence all our efforts in pursuing record companies focused on circulation.

5.2.3.1 Interactions with record companies

The business of record companies, which is to sell records, is profit-driven. For this reason, I assume that the importance of sacred content in the business of music, as in the case of a gospel musician, is inferior to the need of record companies to be profitable. Major record labels dominated the music industry, particularly around the time when we were developing as a group. There was an underlying assumption that a musician who wanted to be active and to grow his or her career in the music industry needed to work with a record company. As such, it was believed that without a record deal, an artist would always struggle. I suppose that the reason for this was because major record labels had influence over formal marketing and distribution channels (CSG 1998). The majority of musicians, therefore, aspired to be signed to record companies because they attached the signing to success, or a proverbial “break.” However, there seemed to be more musicians than opportunities that record companies were able or willing to offer. Industry supply exceeded record company demand for musicians. Generally, independent labels were keen on signing new acts that had new sounds, while major labels were perceived to be concerned with the tried and tested.

When Mkhize heard No Limits for the first time in his studio, he was moved emotionally. He vowed to do his best to present this to the major record company that he was signed to, Sony Music. He secured an appointment and we had a meeting with one of the executives who was a decision maker. His response was that he does not know how to

[108] https://notyourparentsmuscibiz.wordpress.com/2008/12/08/the-six-types-of-record-deals/#more-59

market this kind of music and does not think there is enough of a market for it. It was unclear whether his lack of knowing how to market our music was due to limited marketing skills or lack of experience with our kind of a cappella. On the contrary, when we met Lance Sterh of an independent record label, Ghetto Ruff, he involved us in the projects he was busy with. These included doing background vocals on the debut album of RJ Benjamin, an award winning South African R&B male singer,[109] the recording of a signature tune for SABC 'Yamampela' and a recording and collaboration on a sound track of an SABC television series *Gaz'lam*. However, in the final release of this sound track, Lance excluded the a cappella track we had done. He explained that it was not fitting with the styles of other tracks on the compilation. Later, he mentioned the disappointment of the SABC representative responsible for the project upon discovering that our track was not there. In our discussions with Lance, he was always concerned about how to get No Limits into the market and the gospel inclination of the group was unsettling for him, considering that his specialty was hip-hop and kwaito music. At some point, he expressed concern about a gospel phrase in one of the songs. If it was up to him, we would be required to stop singing gospel lyrical content and even change our name. He also felt that No Limits was not a name that identified us as a gospel group. Nonetheless, in his efforts to position the group, he offered that we assign someone who would use his office to focus specifically on the affairs of No Limits.[110]

One of the issues that surfaced was that young musicians were vulnerable and not in touch with the realities of the music industry. They lived on assumptions that record deals solved the problems of musicians. In part, this was true in that record companies had resources that unsigned musicians struggled to access. When one followed the cases of those musicians who were signed to labels, most of them had to awake to the reality that their ideas about what was possible were unrealistic. The glamour of the industry was in itself illusive. This is the reason people never understood why famous

[109] https://ghettoruffint.wordpress.com/artist/rj-benjamin

[110] Interview with Bacela A, Bacela V and Mvelase T, January 2015 and February 2015

musicians were declared poor when they died,[111] although perhaps issues of business skills for musicians were also in question.

The efforts that Mkhize made to get No Limits a deal with a record company were not fruitful. His idea was to create exposure for No Limits and record companies had marketing and distribution resources to do that. However, when he recorded his third solo album *Hands On*, he featured No Limits on numerous tracks. The album and the song where No Limits featured, Shosholoza, won some Metro and SAMA awards in 2004/2005. This gave the group marketing mileage and established us in the market of jazz where his music is positioned.

Record companies have posed as authorities on what sells and does not sell in the music market. They have supposedly bridged the gap between musicians and the formal music industry. We were turned down based on the question of whether our music was deemed to have potential to sell or not.[112] On the other hand, the pressure for record companies to generate profit has potential to minimise their willingness to take risk with certain artists. Record companies have overheads and running costs that need to be covered by the revenue they generate. As profit-making entities, they are compelled to ensure the economic viability of the projects they sign up.

In some cases, musicians have supposed that major labels have no true interest in the development of local artists. They have assumed that perhaps these labels use the local setting as an outlet for their international artists. In addition, some have suspected that the apartheid legacy still underlies the paradigm of these institutions.[113] Although these are not easy to prove, it seems reasonable to expect that this legacy will not dissipate rapidly. These views indicate some of the existing perceptions in the minds of some musicians. Even if this was true, I wish to argue that perceptions regarding the market viability of any given music is still a major determining factor for record labels

[111] For example, VuyoMokoena, a leading local gospel musician, needed donations from fans to pay for hospital bills.
[112] Sony Records did not know how they would sell our music, Gallo Records and Spirit Music in 2004 rejected our project on the basis that it was too sophisticated for the local market.
[113] Interview with Mkhize, February 2015

that are in themselves profit-driven entities. As an independent label, Spirit Music distributed a popular American group and several contemporary Christian music artists. These artists sent their complete material and visual content. This reduced the costs to market and distribute locally. In addition, South Africa is not a primary market for most of the international artists. By the time they sell their content here, often they have already recouped their costs in their primary markets. This in turn renders it cost-effective for local labels to sell music that has already covered costs and subsequent sales are within the profit margin.[114] Moreover, Spirit Music was able to build its efforts locally on the international popularity of some of these artists. [115] Compared to a local artist who perhaps still needs to spend on marketing materials and to pursue this territory as a primary market, international artists seem to be further ahead. Also, local media supports international artists and some musicians feel that although they are on their home ground, they are in a disadvantageous position to compete with international musicians.[116]

Looking at the industry at large, those with the power to make decisions appeared to support music they were familiar with. Because gospel music is church-based in South Africa, perhaps they support their own.[117] In one way, this might be representative of possible cultural barriers within the gospel music sector. For example, on one occasion we were given airplay on a national radio prime time show because the presenter happened to be a member of the SDA church. She understood the music and she played her own. If this idea is correct, then perhaps there has not been enough of our own who work in the industry to support us. This is understandable considering that our church has not encouraged professional employment in the music and entertainment industries. In this case ‘our own’ implies SDA church members or general supporters of a cappella. The local SDA population is between one hundred and fifty thousand and two hundred thousand.[118] Today, this population includes all races and immigrants. On

[114] Discussion with Pyper, March 2015
[115] Discussion with Peakock (of Spirit Music).
[116] Interview with Mkhize, February 2015
[117] Interview with Kaunda, January 2015
[118] Interview with (communications department of the local division of the SDA church- SID) Mkandawire, March 2015

the other hand the ZCC has in excess of six million members. Compared to other church populations, the SDA church is relatively low. However, it has a growing world population in excess of seventeen million.

Musicians tend to value their work on the basis of aesthetics, while record companies value that work on the basis of its market potential. In 2004, when we had completed the first of our self-recorded and produced album, *Dare to Dream*, Spirit Music expressed an interest in marketing and distributing this project.[119] Possibly, this was due to the fact that its quality exceeded that of our previous albums, and appeared competitive in the market.[120] When we went to finalise the agreement, the executives there reversed their decision because the director who was responsible for marketing and promotions, Oupa Montshiwagae, felt that our music was too sophisticated for the local gospel market. We understood his point of view, having had similar discussions with him before. Prior to joining Spirit Music, he had worked extensively in the gospel music industry as an artist manager and music promoter. He felt that SDA members do not buy the music of their own artists and instead they buy music of other gospel musicians. He suggested that we do a project for a general gospel market with simple vocal harmonies, a project he was willing to market and distribute.[121]

South African gospel groups like Joyous Celebration managed to position themselves in the secular space seamlessly. They had an advantage through the influence of their founders, some of whom were directors and decision makers at Sony Records South Africa. And, through consistent corporate support, record deals and sponsorships, they afforded resources to produce records and populate the gospel market beyond their immediate denominational support.[122] This raises an issue of advocacy within record companies for specific kinds of music and how that informs what gets supported.

[119] As published on the inlays of the physical copies of the album that have been circulated.
[120] Informal discussion with FusiMadela, 2005
[121] Informal discussion with Montshiwagae, 2002, 2014
[122] Joyous Celebration which is signed to Sony Records South Africa, has been sponsored by MTN mobile telephone company and Old Mutual financial services company.

Having been unsuccessful in landing a license deal with any of the record companies, we continued to market and distribute on our own. This is how we responded to the difficulties associated with getting a record deal. We believed in our mission and our music so much that we were not swayed by difficulties. Within the black SDA community in South Africa, we were the first independent artist to release our album in the form of a CD, since cassettes were the dominant technology that had been used in those years.[123] However, two years before, the SDASA Chorale had released a collaboration CD with a record label.[124] We released all of our six albums independently, and carried the responsibility of managing our own business affairs. Basically, that which a musician requires from a record company, we had to provide for ourselves. This gave us a lot of experience in interacting with a variety of firms in the industry.

In the course of time, we received managerial help from individuals in the church who had their professions in other fields, which has exemplified the contribution, in this step of the value chain, of a network we established through the church.[125]Considering that we have never had a formal agreement for artist management, we have constantly admitted that we need help.[126] In fact, most of our challenges beyond those cited already, were closely linked to the failure to manage the group and its affairs in a manner that complements our artistic endeavours. I took it upon myself to go to Phakamani, to learn how the music business works. Later I went to the UCT Business School to gather further insights on how to improve the condition of the group. Nevertheless, I have not been able to execute most of what I have learnt in recent years especially because we have not been able to agree as a group on a workable solution which has led us into a passive existence. Although we have attempted to run the group professionally, we have never been registered as a business, except briefly in 1999, but we de-registered dueto alack of understanding how to position ourselves. One of the matters we with was whether to be a non-profit organisation or a profit-making entity.

[123] Interview with Bacela, January 2015

[124] In a February 1999 article by Brett Pyper, the SDASA Chorale had released a CD in their collaboration project, Simunye with a UK based group, I Fagiolini, in 1997. This project was signed toErato Records in Paris, was internationally distributed by Warner Classics and locally distributed by Gallo records.

[125] Business Analysts, Project Managers, Graphic Designers etcetera.

[126] Interview with Mambo, February 2015

Our mission had non-profit aspirations but our realities required some profitability in order to remain afloat.

Engaging with the church context and becoming a profit-making initiative is something we have not been able to reconcile or resolve. This has particularly been difficult because making money in church is considered as taboo.[127] Also, the church itself has no formal acknowledgement of music as a profession. In recent years, we have resorted to taking minimal church invitations and have focused on taking concert invitations instead. This way we have been able to justify a fee for our performances.

Continuing to work independently from record companies was not our first choice, but it became our life. Of late, most artists have sought to detach from record companies and work independently which is the only space we have ever really known. The internet and technological developments enable us to distribute our music in independent spaces in ways that were not previously possible. At this point it does not seem as though we have allowed ourselves to embrace these possibilities fully.

5.2.3.2 Distribution

When we started recording and releasing albums, we had to deal with the question of the accessibility of our music by the market or audiences. For our first album, we carried boxes to sell at the gatherings of the church. However, it meant that we were only able to sell in places where we were physically present which was limiting since we could only be at one place at a time. People in different areas of the country started requesting to sell for us in their respective regions. We sent them a number of our cassettes to these people. Some returned the money once they had made sales and others never returned the money. This presented the challenge of dealing with individuals rather than institutions and selling on consignment made us wait for unpredictable time periods to receive money from those who finally returned it.

[127] Interview with Mboleka, March 2015

Although our second album, distributed by Spirit Music, was available in stores, we continued to sell from the boot of a car wherever we were performing. We also had volunteers selling for us in different regions which helped in solving the distribution problem in our church setting. However, payment issues were no different than with the previous album. We sought ways to sell in a formalised manner through some established channels in the church. The SDA church has a book publishing wing, the Review and Herald (R&H) which is based in America. Years ago, R&H established Chapel Records, which has recorded most of the prominent SDA musicians. The Chapel records platform has been critical to the establishment of these musicians within the church worldwide. Through their work over the years, the American SDA musicians have received more exposure and popularity in all regions of the world church. The Union of the SDA church (SAU), which is at national level, had a publishing department dealing with members of the church in the business of selling church literature. This department was responsible for distributing merchandise to a nationwide network comprising these members. After the release of our albums, demand for our music grew swiftly.

We then approached the leader of the church publishing network who was appointed by the church and was the final decision maker on matters of distribution. He categorically declined to include our albums in their catalogue. All our subsequent attempts failed to sway him otherwise. We were careful to keep our music doctrinally sound. But, the musical approach was unusual and initially discomforting for some church members who were more comfortable with the traditional musical approach they were familiar with in the church.[128] Our music incorporated secular elements primarily because we were being creative about how we were expressing our musical ideas.[129] Also, we always looked at our target audience as one beyond, but including, the SDA church. We wanted our music to reach a broader audience than church people. We suspect that this was the fundamental reason for the refusal to distribute our music, although we do not overrule the possibility of personal reasons being a factor too. At the same time,

[128] Interview with Kaunda, January 2015
[129] Interview with Kaunda and Mlungwana, January 2015

American artists were being distributed through this local platform that we as the locals were failing to access. This platform offered an institutionalised and centralised distribution network, which for years has been useful in spreading the reach of the content that the church was publishing through R&H and Chapel Records. Through the sales of these materials in our communities, the members in this business and the publishing department of the church have earned commissions on sales,[130] and so have the authors and musicians of the books and music sold. This financial incentive enabled this distribution value chain and the musicians in it, but unfortunately disadvantaged No Limits. There was demand for our music and this church network was supposedly serving our local region. Nevertheless, the decision maker who was known to be a traditionalist, believing that the music of American SDA groups was the correct and primary standard to be followed by other groups, deliberately excluded us. It appeared that as local musicians we had to contest our local space with international musicians who had an advantage over us, in the space that was supposedly ours. Perhaps this was an indication of underlying problems with this space not being ours to benefit from in the first place, although it seemed others could and were benefiting.

The refusal of the SDA Union (SAU) publishing department happened during the critical years of our ministry as a group. We had all given up other employment to focus on our calling, to serve God and support the mission of the church. The road we had chosen turned out to be lonely and less travelled. The decision of the church, through the appointed leader at the time, seemed to us as one that lacked empathy and understanding of the sacred nature of our work. The comment he made that he would not mind for his children to play the music in his home but would not distribute it through the church, seemed to trivialise the seriousness of our request and our mission. Although we did not give up, access to the distribution of the church had potential to economically enable the work were doing. It also had potential to solve a business problem we had been wrestling with unsuccessfully. We continued to work with individuals who we willing to sell our music. The problem with this arrangement was the management of funds since we were dealing with individuals rather than an institution.

[130] Discussion with Mduli, October 2014

We ended up writing off some amounts as bad debt. In the process, we learnt that the established Adventist Book Centres (ABC) had autonomy that allowed them to buy directly from musicians to sell in their stores at a commission. In Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, the local ABC bought our albums and became a centralised point in the region where our music was sold. Also, the ABC in Bedfordview, Johannesburg, stocked our albums over the years. In recent years, some members of the church have opened physical and mobile stores for church merchandise. This has improved access to our albums. However, among these members, one became notorious for pirating the music and selling fake albums. The challenge of piracy within church circles is not one that we have particularly solved. Some have suggested the need for adopting a robust approach to distribution within the church, to eliminate the excuse that our music was inaccessible.

In 2006, we entered into a distribution agreement with a secular on-line American distribution company.[131] They made two of our albums available on their globally accessible platform. When we travelled to America in 2010, we explored the possibility of distributing directly with Chapel Music. It surfaced that a musician needs to have a series of regular performances in America to be considered for distribution, in addition to other criteria. The implication is that this network is restricted and inaccessible to church musicians outside of America.

All these years, we have been frustrated by not getting institutional or formal distribution for our albums in the market or church contexts particularly because the distribution agreement with Spirit Music was only a once-off deal and there has been no other since then. The group has held on to the assumption that physical distribution is a solution to a major business problem. I refer to this as an assumption because the group did not calculate the actual profit margins in the case of involving a middleman. Perhaps what the group wanted were means to make the music widely and easily accessible.

[131] Primarily A Cappella on www.singers.com

The rise of digital media and distribution has transformed the music industry. It appears to constantly eradicate some major obstacles that we have contended within the church and the marketplace through the years. The space that has been dominated by retail outlets and major record companies has contracted. Independent artists like us have direct access to their audiences and markets. Lately, we have been accessible on Facebook and our music has been uploaded onto YouTube.

5.2.4 Delivery Mechanisms

Delivery mechanisms in the form of retail outlets, live performances and broadcasts provide contact points between the product offering of a musician and consumers. Without these mechanisms, the link between the producer and the consumer is significantly hampered. For independent musicians like No Limits it has often seemed that the platforms of delivery have been better accessed by musicians who have the support of resourced labels.

5.2.4.1 Retail outlets

The challenge of securing distribution channels for No Limits led to limited access to our music in retail stores. CUM books and Gospel Direct became the leading chain outlets for gospel content in terms of Christian books and CDs. These stores were independent retail companies that the established labels used. We expected that they would be receptive to us, as stores for Christian content. When we approached them with the aim of getting our music in their stores, they said they only deal with established distributors and not musicians directly. There were other generic music chain stores as well, such as; Musica, Look and Listen, CD Warehouse and Top CD. These chain stores also work exclusively with distributors. We learnt that the retail stores were interested in products that 'moved' on the shelves.[132] This raises the issue of a battle between the producers and distributors for shelf space. Even if the stores wish to stock music, their shelf space in the stores is limited and competed for by all other products. To a store manager, a

[132] Meeting with Music distributer, Gerhard 2008

product has to move from the shelves to be given priority to retain a position on the shelves. I assume that their preference in working with established distributors is that it somewhat guarantees structured business efforts to support the sales of the music in the stores.

In 2012, I released a solo project of my own. In dealing with the issue of retail outlets that we struggled with as No Limits, I made direct contact with store managers of independent secular music stores around the country. I was able to get into an agreement with each store. Apparently, in the price that retail stores charge, there is a breakdown of percentages that go to all stakeholders in the music product.[133] However, the retail outlets seemed to draw the highest percentage, 40% out of the retail price, than any of the stakeholders in the distribution channel.[134] Although this is a route that No Limits had not given attention to, in my case it was different because the product moved directly from me to the stores. I realised that they hold the most influence and power in shaping access to this delivery mechanism. This supports the notion that without that point of exchange that the retailers enable, the movement of money and product between the musician and the consumer is challenged. The margins of high retailers attest that the retailers are aware of their power and they use it. Thus even the relatively powerful big-label distributors are beholden to the individual store managers and their perceptions about what they can sell.[135] Perhaps it is not only an issue of power but steep overheads covering such costs as rentals, electricity and salaries.

The group has always perceived the possibility of having our music available in retail stores as something that would be a major accomplishment, particularly because it would make our music accessible. What the group has seemed to overlook is the level of sales at our performances and the commission we have been able to make in cutting out the middleman and selling directly to the consumers at retail prices (thus yielding a higher margin directly to the group). Although the inaccessibility of our music in retail stores is a disadvantage, selling directly to consumers has its advantages. Perhaps if

[133] Artist, record company, distributor and retail outlet.
[134] CGS 1998, Conversation with Peacock 2001 and Gerhard 2008.
[135] Discussion with Mkhize

we had thought of it strategically, we would have maximized opportunities to sell directly to consumers. Once our attempts to access retail stores were unsuccessful, we adhered to those means of delivering our music that we could access. In light of recent shifts in the music industry, many musicians sell more recordings at their performances than in stores.[136] This has particularly been seen in the church, where artists have an audience in an organised setting. Sipho Makhabane, an independent local gospel artist is one of the many who have been successful in this way.[137] Although there have been challenges, this model has been used by No Limits since its inception and has yielded real sales. The main limitation has been the spread and reach that retailers have that No Limits does not have, which offers the potential to develop new audiences who may not be in our existing networks but may encounter our recordings independently.

5.2.4.2 Live performances

We have organised formal concerts in concert venues. We started out selling tickets informally, but since the early 2000s, we have been using a formalised system through Computicket as much as possible even though there is a fee attached. This has simplified the handling of money and enabled us to trace the ticket sales in the weeks and days preceding the actual events. Although the idea of Computicket was slow to be accepted by our audiences, it has become a platform of choice for selling our live performances. Initially, the audience did not know where and how to access Computicket. Access points were limited as compared to now but with the increased number of retail outlets that offer Computicket services even in the townships it has become simpler. Furthermore, the idea of concerts positioned our offering in the space of monetised audiences. Experience was teaching us that there is an audience that is willing to pay for our live performances. Our weakness has been in the area of not thinking about this in terms of its advantages over our other efforts. We did not consider how the idea could resolve our economic pressures and how its infrequency was limiting to the potential of making sales through live performances. We were unable to

[136] Interview with Mkhize, February 2015
[137] Discussion with Sekhute

fully match our economic demands with the economic possibilities. This is evident in the amount of effort we put towards creating these concerts and the effort we put in the sacred and non-monetised space. At times, it seems as though we were confounded by our unmet and perhaps unclear expectations.

5.2.4.3 Broadcasts

Commercial and national radio stations have been inaccessible on our part. In our conversation with a reputable music promoter, she made it clear that the broadcast space is like the battle field for market influence and market share. If one is to play in that space they must be willing to face competition with other labels. She pointed out that a musician needs to prepare to pay informally, in most cases, in order to get airplay. She implied that the more a musician is able to pay the more airplay is guaranteed. In one of the sessions at Phakamani, an industry expert from a major record company mentioned the payment of payola (the illegal payment or other incentive by record companies for the broadcast of music on commercial radio stations) as a determining factor for airplay. Although we have attempted to access these platforms, we have never been in a position to afford payola; our values would not permit us and have never devised other means of accessing the broadcast space. Still, our music was also constantly played on numerous religious and non-religious community radio stations.[138] This suggests that there is an audience that we have not reached with our CDs or live performances that somehow consumes our music. The repetition of airplay further suggests that this audience makes a connection of sorts with the music. As a result, some listeners have sought us out on the internet and sent requests to purchase our music, which we delivered through the postal services.

No Limits as a brand has been built and presented to the market in two forms, live performances and recordings. On performances royalties, we have never been asked by a venue manager to notify SAMRO, as a royalty collecting society, of our live performances at different venues. This has been a matter of negligence on our part and

[138]Jozi FM, Classic FM, MhloboWenene, CC FM, RadioPulpit,

on the part of the licensed venues from which we have hired venues. As a result, we are unable to quantify the loss of potential earnings through performance royalties from venues and perhaps make informed strategic decisions. Although our music has been played on numerous media and SAMRO has collected some royalties as a result, we have generally neglected the publishing aspect of our music (an outcome of broadcasting). The revenue we have earned through those collections is minimal considering that our music has been aired mostly by community radio stations. Royalties earned from these is usually less than that earned from national and commercial radio stations. We have assumed that our success in all other areas of accessing the market will translate into a rise in airplay of our music. In turn, we thought this would generate significant revenue as a resultant and secondary process. In reality, these expectations have only partially been realised, if at all.

Our music has been uploaded onto YouTube, mostly by fans (and thus for free). It provides publicity but is also a non-monetised form of delivery. The YouTube platform has provided audio visual content for our fans and has also generated new fans for us around the globe. Some of the fans have a habit of going through our videos just for recreational purposes, and perhaps to reconnect with our music from wherever they are and at a time that is convenient for them. In my view, each view on a video as counted by YouTube represents personal and often individual effort that each viewer has given in order to experience their chosen artist. Unlike television where viewers have to watch whatever is played, YouTube reflects personal selection. Even though our music is currently not available for digital download, these platforms seem to open a window of opportunity for us independent musicians. The continuing and general decline in the sale of physical copies of music has created a shift towards the distribution of live and digital performances as a viable source of income for musicians.

5.2.5 Audience Reception and Feedback

The CSG (1998) report identifies audience reception and feedback as a critical process through which the response of the market is exposed and fed back to the industry. In

this study this section has explored the feedback of the market (audience) to the producer of the content, No Limits. In this step of the value chain I wish to emphasise the importance of not just producing content for the audience, but also being in a position to hear how your production impacts them and to take that into account in what and how one produces. In developing a production, I have considered that it helps to know what works, why it works, how it works, who it works for and exactly where it is working. As No Limits, we have been able to constantly adjust, correct and refine our work. I provide evidence of how we have crafted content for varied audiences in the past. As a primary creator and generator of content for No Limits, one of the principles underpinning my work has been drawn from basic principles of communication. I have looked at the production of the content of No Limits as a means of communication. This has enabled me to be considerate of the needs of the listener even when I am alone developing a musical composition.

As a group that performs live, we have had constant opportunities to engage with our audiences on and off stage. We have been able to hear the views and thoughts of all the audiences we have performed for because of the off stage engagements with them, usually after a performance. This has enabled us to constantly adjust and affirm our performances accordingly. We have presented to various audiences and in each case we have valued the importance of being relevant.[139]

5.2.5.1 Seventh-Day Adventist audience

To the SDA audience, devotional relevance and appeal in a somewhat conservative manner has been a primary offering. To the non-SDA church audience, a soulful devotional content has been the primary element and in African churches, African songs have been more suitable. To the concert audience, a vibrant, creative, entertaining, inspirational, audio and visual performance has been critical. To corporate audiences, entertaining and inspirational content has been more relevant. To international

[139]Types of audiences (SDA church, other churches, concert audience, corporate market audiences, international audiences)

audiences, African, creative, inspirational content has been most appropriate. This we learnt through years of interactions and feedback. However, the challenge that I have noted is that operating across numerous and diverse audiences required us to be different each time.

The SDA church is more conservative than most non-SDA churches we have performed in. We have spent most of our efforts in this space. Perhaps this was due to the fact that it was where most of our focus was or demand was coming from. It was also, as I have noted above, the milieu that formed us. This meant that in terms of the music, we needed to remain relevant to the SDA setting by being inclined to a more conservative approach. However, we were already labelled in some places in the church as having disrupted that conservative musical practice. So we varied our performances for we sought effective musical communication with the audience. Our dominant SDA performances required this of us because anything less conservative, particularly with movements on stage, would be considered over the top. Additionally, since they were not a paying audience, it seemed that what they sought the most was devotional appeal more than outstanding or innovative stage presentations. When we organised concert appearances in more secular venues, those were open platforms for such performances that would incorporate entertaining elements. It has not been easy to do justice to each of the varying audience settings. I felt that after performing in concert settings, performing in the SDA church was like underperforming. Moreover, having more performances in the SDA church affected our concert performances sometimes whereby we would perform at a concert as though we were performing in church. Nevertheless, we did all this in order to be relevant to our SDA audience.

We have participated in a variety of programmes that the church holds throughout the year which are usually themed and include the general content that applies in the church setting, like sermons. Church programmes vary throughout the day with different time slots having different atmosphere.[140] We learnt that in order to be effective and connect our offering with the needs of our audiences, we needed to be congruent with

[140] The afternoon sessions of the programs are less formal than the morning sessions.

the atmosphere and themes in our song selection, preparation and audience engagement.

Considering the many groups that sing in the SDA church, it has become rare to hear music that does not carry traces of the influence of No Limits.[141] One of the reasons pointed out by the audience is that No Limits has not only transformed the music in the church, it has introduced a new artistic practice.[142] Apparently, one of the major contributions of No Limits to the musical life in the church has been to open the door to freedom of creative expression. This culture we popularised with our type of compositions, although in some ways we picked these up from our predecessors.[143] In our first recording, we had a song entitled Flat Tyre which was appreciated by many but also irritating to traditionalists. They were irritated by the idea of singing about something as trivial as a flat tyre in a sacred setting. It appeared playful to them. Although, some listeners understood the use of simple and common concepts to illustrate deep devotional experiences and views. Basically, this song suggested thinking outside the usual context, a trend that became synonymous with most of our practices.

In the SDA church setting, which was dominated by American musical influences for years, our music was not accepted by all in the congregation. Some thought that we were spoiling church music with the infusion of our own unusual musical compositions and patterns. Those who were more conservative preferred the music to continue to project the ideas that they were familiar with.[144] When the SDASA Chorale introduced African music into their repertoire, they were confronted with resistance which led some of their members to leave because they felt the music was not acceptable. One of the pastors said that their musical shift was a sign of apostasy on their part.[145] However, Mokale Koapeng, as the music director of the SDASA Chorale, insisted on the musical direction that the group was following. Bheka Dlamini, one of the composers within the

[141] Interview with Kaunda, January 2015
[142] Interview with Mboleka, March 2015
[143] Especially the SDASA Chorale
[144] Interview with Mboleka, March 2015
[145] Interview with Koapeng, March 2015

SDASA Chorale comes from the rural settings of Kwa-Zulu Natal. When he moved to Johannesburg and subsequently joined the chorale, the iSicathamiya music (Zulu traditional male singing as popularised by the Ladysmith Black Mambazo) that he composed expressed his devotional experiences as an African.[146] In the same way that the likes of the King's Heralds were singing devotional expressions in the barbershop quartet music style and the Heritage Singers in country music and other contemporary styles, I interpret the resistance of the congregation essentially being due to a cultural transformation they were not ready for.

5.2.5.2 Non-Seventh-Day Adventist audience

The non-SDA church settings were more liberal and some of our musical patterns that were considered non-conservative in the SDA settings we incorporated into our music because we were thinking about a non-SDA Christian audience as well. In the non-SDA settings, our music was different from what they were used to. Although it was appealing most of the time, it was not as liberal in performance as those settings permitted. One of the leaders of Joyous Celebration, who appreciated our music, criticised us for lack of including choreography in our presentation.[147]

The non-SDA churches have been of interest. We have constantly been told of our national popularity in those church settings by members of those churches, especially from the charismatic churches, including some that we visited. Each time we have heard of this, we have not exactly been able relate to it. This, however, points to the power of broadcast media. The numerous television appearances we had were national and secular. Also, in 2003 when we were in the top ten of a popular contemporary Christian show, we were exposed nationally on a secular broadcasting platform. One of our members while working on several projects in the music industry, met singers who are non-SDA who claimed that they grew up on the music of No Limits.[148] Though informal, the circulation of our music is out there and there is no limit to who it can and

[146]Interview with Dlamini, March 2015
[147] Discussion with Hlomula.
[148] Interview with Bacela A, March 2015

cannot reach. In recent years we have learnt that several community choirs have included some of our music in their repertoire, with one choir appearing on national television performing our song.[149]These choirs, and sometimes groups, include local and international ones. A friend who was recording their live performance invited me to help at their show and as I was sitting at the sound mixer they started performing one of my compositions from the first No Limits album. In 2006 we were shown a video of a group in California performing one of our songs.[150]

In the UK in 2007, we were invited to sing at schools of white children who had a different cultural background to us. We knew that the best way to make an impression on them was to make our performances interactive, combining the familiar with the unfamiliar. In our repertoire we had a song, *Dare to Dream*, which we sang to inspire and motivate them. This particular song seemed to work in numerous settings for its inspirational message. In 2003, we were invited for a corporate function where the focus was HIV/AIDS awareness for employees. We composed and performed a HIV/AIDS related song relevant for the occasion and the audience.

5.3 CONCLUSION

In light of the analysis provided in this chapter, using the Landry value chain model, it emerges that although No Limits has had significant social impact in both the sacred and market contexts, this has not particularly impacted the economic condition of the group in a way that the group finds sustainable and significant. The next chapter discusses the findings of this study.

[149] The Duduza Serenade on SABC, Gospel Gold.
[150] Shown by Dr Jonathan Mthombeni

CHAPTER 6
FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study set out to explore how professional gospel musicians negotiate the tension between the church and the marketplace. The case of No Limits was used as a reference. The data collected illuminates how No Limits engaged with the church and marketplace contexts. In particular, this chapter discusses the findings and their generalisability.

6.2 THE CHURCH

Churches have varying policies on how they engage with professional musicians who offer them services. Although No Limits has been involved with other churches, their work has been dominated by the SDA church setting. For this reason, much of the sacred context data collected in this study was limited to, and related to the SDA church.

The SDA church is generally entrenched in traditional practices of its own. These traditions are shaped by its beliefs, values and practices. As a worldwide institution with its own centralised structure, these practices are universal to all world regions where the church operates. Although there is a general appreciation of music, the support that professional musicians or church musicians receive, has slight variations across these regions. Due to the hierarchical structure of the church, members have regard for authority and are often reluctant to accept practices until they are enforced or encouraged from the top.

Through its culture and network, the church provides an environment for youth and other members to experience and also share music through performances during a variety of church services and settings. As such, the church becomes an enabler of

musical development, musical and lyrical content, musical practice and musical engagement. However, the lack of formal or structural support for musicians who consequently become professionals is a disabler of the professionalisation of the music occupation in the church. The disabling of the professionalisation of music in the church is partly sustained by the underlying assumption that while music is valued in the church for its aesthetic and devotional nature, music as a profession has no place in the church. Nevertheless, music of a professional nature is encouraged and celebrated without regard for the related costs, financial or otherwise, that are necessary for delivering professional music and performances. Perhaps the costs are presumed to be a type of an offering to the church. This has often seemed to suggest that even the most talented musicians have to find other professions because the church broadly finds itself in a tradition where support mechanisms for professional and non-professional musicians are undefined and often fluid, if not non-existent. Individual members are not discouraged from supporting musicians if they so choose. Nonetheless, since the church itself has no clear stand or process on the matter, it remains open ended pending individual discretion. Being a professional musician is costly. Often, the church is not willing to bear the costs that come with the services of professional musicians. There is also a class of talented musicians who have other professions to sustain them and are able to offer themselves freely. Thus, the church is never totally without some form of music. Subsequently, professional musicians in the church have to differentiate themselves in quality and presentation in order to justify and negotiate their costs.

Perhaps the views and reluctance of the SDA church to establish a clear position on professional musicians are explainable through arguments such a as those sociologists make regarding the status of music as a profession. Frederickson & Rooney (1990) and Watson (2003) indicate that there is a general disagreement among sociologists regarding whether or not music is a real profession due to its failure to satisfy all the requirements that other occupations fulfil. Based on the findings already presented, I believe that the music profession continues to require justification in certain settings, namely; the sacred context as represented by the SDA church.

An example of music manifesting itself as a profession, particularly in the gospel setting, is the professional success of the South African gospel ensemble, Joyous Celebration. Another example, according to studies conducted by Allgood (1990) and Horton (2007), is the establishment of the gospel music industry in America. These studies provide a historic development of gospel music and contemporary Christian genres and their integration into the music industry. Furthermore, they illustrate their success in professionalising gospel music as well as how this integration was an approach towards providing active employment for talented church musicians who had no desire to sing secular content. Additionally, these studies show that the professionalisation of music has been fortified in the marketplace as exemplified by the numerous professional careers of gospel musicians. Notwithstanding the unique challenges that the business of music as an art form presents, such examples of success in pursuing music as a business provide a platform for the professionalisation of the music occupation.

The SDA church seems to lack mechanisms for dealing with professional musicians and the professionalisation of musicians. Musicians thrive and have a place that is defined in the church for as long as they function as ordinary church members. When they become professional musicians, the church does not recognise them as such and continues to expect to interact with them the same way as they do with non-professional musicians of the church. In my view, this is partly informed by church tradition. The idea of musicians becoming professionals and seeking to offer their services to the church as professionals is uncommon in the SDA church. This was especially the case at the time No Limits decided to pursue a professional gospel music career. Also, because the professionalisation of gospel music is a growing phenomenon, proper engagement with the church, advocating for professional musicians and highlighting the value of professionalisation for the benefit of the church is necessary, on continuous basis.

The idea of professionalisation introduces a marketplace concept into the sacred environment. Gospel musicians usually become professional musicians because they want to contribute to the sacred environment in a sustainable manner. Arguably, this happens in the same way that individuals become pastors in the church. In response to

their calling, pastors assume a professional role for which they get remunerated. Nevertheless, the position of the church on this matter often suggests that the church as it stands has no place for professional musicians.

Different churches have different means of generating funds. They allocate the funds they generate according to their priorities at a given time and the value that those priorities add to the church. Churches prioritise based on what they deem important or affordable and any other considerations they may have. The SDA church also has ways in which it receives financial support from its members which is mainly through tithes and offerings. Its use of these funds, once generated, is based on church policy and the views of leaders in the church and their departments. I argue that the fact that the SDA church does not have a formal structure through which they provide financial support for their musicians is a matter of choice based on their policy or long-standing practices. There are other churches that have an allocated budget for music and musicians. As other churches choose to consider musicians as a service worth paying for, the policies and practices of the SDA church suggest that the SDA church sees this differently. In several ways, music is considered a ministry in the church. As such, the value placed on it and the resources necessary for its sustainability are crucial in the work and life of the church. Perhaps the church has an opportunity, in this regard, to not only use music as a supplementary activity but to formalise, align, use and sustain it for its ends.

6.3 THE MARKET

The forces of demand and supply largely define and determine the nature of activity in the marketplace. Businesses place value on the need to be profitable in order to be sustainable. Any artist with the potential to appeal to an accessible and reasonable size of the market has improved chances of attracting the interest of relevant enterprises in the music industry. Those artists whose product or music does not readily land itself within an established or potential market have to resort to informal means in their attempt to participate in the music industry. In other instances, connections or some form of relationships with record company executives serve to create opportunities for

musicians to present their work to record labels with the possibility of receiving recording contracts and formulating some form of relationship with them.

Historically, the skills of music production have often been accessed through engagement with sound engineers and record producers in the music industry. The marketing and distribution channels have largely been dominated by major record labels. This has for years limited the extent to which musicians who are not affiliated with these labels are able to engage with the formal music industry. Nonetheless, technological changes in the form of software usage as virtual recording studios have replaced the large and expensive equipment whose acquisition required large investments. Individuals now have access to studio production regardless of their setting. Additionally, the internet, music downloads and social media provide direct access to distribution and marketing between musicians and their audiences regardless of geographic location.

The idea of a value chain in the music industry, as proposed by Landry (2000), highlights every activity in the value chain as well as connectedness in the chain as important to the success of a musician or musical entity. For some artists to not be able to circulate or find delivery mechanisms for their music (given the dominance of major record labels) in the music industry, the full potential of the value chain is unrealisable to them. While the idea of a value chain is useful in conceptualising and carving a strategic path for musicians, it is also useful in identifying areas of weakness in current or future pursuits of musicians. Moreover, it was a useful tool for observing areas of strength and weaknesses in the engagements of No Limits in conducting this research study.

6.4 TENSIONS OBSERVED BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND MARKET CONTEXTS

The church and the marketplace have varying fundamental aims. In general, the church seeks to provide for the social or religious ‘good’ of society while the marketplace is driven by economic forces and seeks to provide for its material needs. The church does not place primary importance on the economics of musical activity while the market

does not place primary significance on the social and religious value of music. Nevertheless, the government of South Africa has articulated the usefulness of music for social and economic endeavours in the Arts and Culture White Paper of 1998, the Creative Industries in South Africa Sector Report of 2008 and the Mzansi Golden Economy initiated by the Department of Arts and Culture since 2011 whose focus is the contribution of the arts, culture and heritage sector.

In general, music seems to have an indistinct dual role that is both social and economic. This dual role of music broadly frames the tensions that a professional musician in the church and market contexts has to contend with. These seem problematic for the musician mainly at the point where they seek to professionalise their music occupation. This is particularly evident when a musician depends on his or her music for a living, as depicted in the SDA church and the case of No Limits. Considering the practices of the church over the years regarding such cases, it does not appear to know how to embrace the musician who seeks to professionalise his or her music. The church has a place for quality and professional devotional music, but the place of the professional musician in terms of receiving the same support as other areas of ministry in the church is not considered. Although the position of the church is understandable, the fact that it has a system of collecting money in the form of tithes and offerings from its members – including musicians - implies that there are financial resources made available to the church. On the other hand, the market seeks products that are trendy and marketable in the secular space. While other forms of music appear appealing at times, there is a trend in the music industry, in the area of circulation and delivery mechanisms, to accept those artists whose musical forms have been tried and tested. Musicians with unique forms of music need to prove the existence of a market for their music or appeal enough to the tastes of the relevant record company executive to be given a chance in the market. Basically, the musician depends on the viability of their offering in the eyes of the decision makers in the industry, both in the recording and performing spaces.

Essentially, the SDA church is not structured to support musicians financially while the market context demands the music to be secularised for marketability. The musician

who seeks to remain rooted in the church tends to be reluctant to appear secular by adapting to secular practices. If the musician serves the mission of the market by adapting to secular demands, the market clearly has a reward for them. On the other hand, the church does not seem to be in a position to reward or appropriately support the musicians who are committed to disseminating the devotional content that is consistent with the beliefs and mission of the church. Musicians find themselves in a position where they want to remain loyal to their church values and mission in the practice of their music or calling while attempting to find a marketplace that is willing to support them in their stance. Others simply opt to find other professions to sustain their livelihood and occasionally offer their musical services to the church. Such musicians have been able to minimise the potential frustration of occupying a place between the church and the marketplace, a challenge that faces other professional musicians in the church.

6.5 THE RESPONSE OF NO LIMITS TO THE TENSIONS BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND MARKET CONTEXTS

The place between the church and the marketplace is not fully of the church but also not completely of the market. No Limits has existed in both the church and the marketplace by attempting to integrate some market practices in the sacred context and to infuse sacred content in the music it has presented in the marketplace. The market and the church have distinct complexities. Therefore, seeking to exist in both these contexts has required No Limits to confront them.

The church provided a setting for No Limits to form and to develop as a musical group. Subsequently, No Limits used the musical influences from the church setting and the inspiration from the sacred context to develop its own musical product. Based on the teachings of the church and the encouragement to live lives of commitment to God, No Limits always saw its work as a calling to the service of God. It proceeded with the notion of being a vehicle for accomplishing the mission of bringing people to a meaningful experience and knowledge of God. Through the church network, No Limits

formed valuable relationships and was invited and able to travel to various local and international regions so as to establish itself and extend its reach. Networks take time and resources to establish. For No Limits, these were accessible by being part of an established and organised global church. Although there were no formal economic mechanisms to support musicians in the church, particularly concerning musical participation in formal church events or programmes, the church network provided an audience that was occasionally willing to purchase independently organised audio products and attend paying concert performances of the group, or offer collections from the congregation as gratuity. Perhaps these are factors that musicians need to consider as a valuable benefit of the sacred context. No Limits did this while attempting to advocate for, and educate on, the aspect of some form of payment for professional musical services rendered to the church. Over time, some churches exhibited an awareness of the importance of economically supporting musicians while others have remained reluctant. This indicates that persistent advocacy, negotiation and education are essential to the transformation of attitudes and long standing traditions regarding the professionalisation of music and the concomitant financial support of musicians in the church context.

In its endeavours to navigate its contexts, No Limits seems to have significant challenges with the circulation and delivery mechanisms, over other aspects of its value chain.

6.5.1 Circulation and Delivery Mechanisms in the No Limits Value Chain

No Limits sought ways to sell its music in a formalised manner through some established channels in the church as a circulation measure in dealing with the challenges of profitability and sustainability. The challenges that No Limits faced suggest that some formalised channels in the church were not willing to contribute towards making the group profitable and sustainable which would result in its demise. This is regardless of the fact that American artists were being distributed through the local platform that we as South Africans were failing to access.

The SDA church and many other churches originate from America or the West. Historically, the establishment of the SDA church and other churches in South Africa and many other regions was an endeavour of the church in America to expand its mission. For that reason, the church culture of the West defined the local church culture (Haecker 2012). Our music as a group tended to reflect the culture of the mother church. Consequently, some people in the church consider American church and gospel music to be definitive of how church music should be locally. The problem with this is that those who believe this influence, where possible, resistance to any change or local adaptations of music for as long as it does not replicate that from abroad. In the case of No Limits, this resistance led to our exclusion from the local distribution network of the church. Subsequently, I wonder if the nature of how the church came to our country suggests that the American initiatives or agenda of the church supersede local demands in the minds of the people. Therefore, the music that comes from America where the church originates is given priority in our local setting, hence, as musicians we found ourselves competing with American musicians for distribution locally. These American musicians gain local distribution deals by virtue of being American. In the same way, major record labels that come to South Africa prioritize their global imperatives over local imperatives. I believe that this partly explains the challenges we experience as local musicians seeking the recognition of these record companies. As such, local musicians are secondary to international musicians in terms of business priority. In effect, as local musicians, we are competing within the space in which local record labels operate. It seems that one of the primary reasons international record labels are in the country is to bring international musicians into the local market. As local musicians, we then have to compete with international musicians in our local market. This has been the case with No Limits and others.

In the SDA church, a musician needs to have a series of regular performances in America and other requirements to be considered for distribution as per the leading American SDA church distributor of sacred content, Chapel Music. This is possibly motivated by a business decision informed by the need for musicians to be visible and

to generate demand for their music in the region. The fact that the activity of musicians in regions outside America is immaterial suggests that the distributors deem the American region or context as a primary and perhaps significant market. Perhaps there is a perception that musicians from the same context are the most viable disseminators of content worthy of distribution. I argue that the question of possible regionalised circulation, delivery partnerships and support for musicians is critical. I maintain that the regional location of musicians or strategic relationships among varying regions has to be considered in determining the sustainability of a music profession, based on the accessibility of all the elements of the value chain.

'Piracy' within the church context is another challenge facing musicians and it is not one that we have particularly resolved. The limitations on distribution and the rise in demand for the music result in people pirating the music because it is not accessible any other way. As musicians, it meant that our productions were in demand but the resultant piracy from a lack of distribution meant we lost the income from the potential sales of our music. Some people also maintain that piracy is a long-standing practice that is potentially permanently set as a tradition among church members.

The internet and other technological developments enabled us as No Limits to distribute our music independently in ways that were not previously possible. Thus, digital technology provided a possible solution for circulation and delivery mechanisms that were traditionally inaccessible to us. Through such platforms that link No Limits directly with audiences and consumers the old barriers to enter the market fall away. This is applicable for all musicians. Accordingly, many musicians are breaking away from record companies. Technological advancements allow South African musicians to have a platform on which to promote their music thus challenging the era of record companies and their dominance.

Commercial and national radio stations were largely inaccessible to No Limits. It was made clear to us early on that the broadcast activity of the value chain is limited when it comes to independent artists. The need for musicians to pay informally in order to get

airplay limits accessibility into the market space. This somehow determines who gets national airplay and who does not.

Importantly, the music in the church is reserved for devotional intents and music in the marketplace is based on market dynamics. In recent years, it has become apparent that churches have market practices related to some aspects of the church such as selling literature and procuring equipment for church events. Subsequently, the church has the option of considering the potential value of professional musicians in the overall mission of the church and its events. An integration of professional musicians in the church has potential to refine the quality and standard of the aesthetic and devotional life of the church. Furthermore, the church could also provide formal and structured support to its musicians. This would mean that musicians would not need to look to the market for any form of support but would be in a position to influence the market with the necessary support from the church. Musicians, through their occupation, are in a position to aid or partner with the church to influence the context outside of itself. In this way, those musicians in the church who have an inclination to practice secular music would be able to do so at their own will, the same way that members of the church choose any other profession according to their preferences.

6.6 GENERALISATION OF FINDINGS

Operating in two dissimilar contexts requires distinct approaches. This is vital for musicians in order to clarify their identity and to differentiate themselves or their offerings to suit the contexts in which they exist. Moreover, this is vital for providing the essential knowledge regarding what to expect from each context. It also helps in the making of decisions concerning what is practical for the musicians based on their needs and those of their given context. The ability of musicians to fulfil the needs of the setting in which they operate is critical. Without clarity and differentiation, musicians are prone to eminent tensions due to the possible uniqueness of varying settings. In each setting, education and negotiation over time contribute to change attitudes and behaviour.

As long as record companies are unable to link musicians with potential buying audiences, they struggle to market musicians or develop the strategies needed to make the musicians a success. The costs of marketing and establishing an artist in a given market and the potential held by that market determine the willingness of a given record company to incur the costs. Commitment and passion have their place in music. Nevertheless, sustainability depends on the availability of critical resources. Musicians have a constant need to align their passion with the required resources so that their expectations are not displaced.

Although financial success is critical, it is not the only determinant of success. It is set goals that determine what constitutes success or failure for an individual or group. In the case of No Limits, we were unable to attain reasonable economic heights in order to sustain the group and we generally ran at a loss. Even so, the social and religious impact of the work of the group has been invaluable.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The music industry as a sector of cultural industries in South Africa provides a forum for musicians to engage with the business of music. Churches, as religious environments, also provide platforms for musical activity and development. While the church provides musical development, the music industry is looked to for sustaining musical careers. As part of my studies in the management of arts and culture, I wanted to understand how professional musicians navigate the varying demands of the music industry and the church. The case of No Limits presented a case study in response to this question. In analysing No Limits as a case study, the research highlighted some of the difficulties and successes that No Limits, as music group, has encountered in pursuing a professional career in the sacred and marketplace contexts. In turn, this revealed some of the management and general administrative issues that independent musicians commonly face in their pursuit of a professional career.

The aim of the study was to explore how professional gospel musicians handle the tension between the sacred and market contexts based on the assumption that these contexts have varying operating systems and thus present a difficulty for professional musicians seeking to operate in both contexts. The church institution has incubated numerous musicians who have proceeded to either sing gospel or secular music professionally. The sacred and market contexts exist irrespective of the possible tensions for the musician. If musicians are to continue to exist, they are often forced to make choices regarding how they are going to survive in these settings, even if they do so unaware of these choices.

7.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

The introductory chapter and the literature review provided the background and context for the study. It broadly highlighted the SDA church context, its position on music and its musical influences both locally and abroad. Moreover, it provided relevant historical information. This set the scene for the disposition of No Limits.

The second chapter provided a theoretical framework and a review of available literature. The third chapter outlined the research methodology for the study. A detailed narrative of the development of No Limits was provided in the fourth chapter in order to contextualise the analysis presented in the fifth chapter which expanded on specific moments and issues discussed in the narrative and framed within the Landry value chain model.

Research findings were discussed in the sixth chapter which highlighted observations from the SDA church setting, the market, some of the actual tensions, the response of No Limits to the tensions and some ideas on generalisability of the findings.

7.3 ALTRUISTIC YET PROFITABLE

Our mission as No Limits had non-profit aspirations but our realities required profitability in order to remain afloat. This position of the group reflects the idea of altruism and profitability referred to in the literature review (Beaton 2010). The group was dominated by the sacred context and its market pursuits were restricted to the dictates of the sacred environment. While non-profit aspirations address a necessary worthy social course, profitability points to the need for economic sustainability. Perhaps more than looking for profitability, we were looking for sustainability. In a way, the inability to position ourselves in clear terms, as either a profit making or non-profit making entity, at times affected how we then prioritised our engagements with monetised and non-monetised audiences. Gospel musicians in the music industry often have a choice to sing non-gospel content. Based on this notion, I assume that some of them choose to

pursue a gospel music career in the marketplace because it affords them an opportunity to achieve non-profit aspirations through the gospel lyrical content of the music as well as profitability through engaging in the commercial space. In my view, the space between the church and the marketplace is the space between non-profit and profit making aspirations or between monetised and non-monetised audiences.

Some of the ways No Limits has progressed in this area is through formal concerts and album sales. This way, non-monetised audiences could engage in monetised activities which worked towards profitability. The question we have not thoroughly resolved is how to make that sustainable. Our efforts regarding circulation and delivery mechanisms were geared towards expanding our economies of scale as an attempt to address the issue of sustainability. Given the fact that we created our productions according to our own values, circulation and delivery channels held the promise of having non-profit aspirations coincide with profit making activities which could enable us to be altruistic yet profitable.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Even though musicians are often driven by passion and commitment to their craft, clarifying and linking their objectives with the required resources in order to accomplish those objectives is essential in avoiding disappointments. Clearly defined objectives inform the necessary activities, strategies and the direction that needs to be taken. To accomplish this, musicians need to adopt proper management principles, namely; planning, organising, leading and putting in control measures so as to ensure that they utilise the resources available to them and move in the intended direction. Landry (2000) suggests that musicians seeking to work professionally need to not only put excellence in their performance or productions, but also need to align with the same level of excellence and necessary skills in all other critical areas of their value chain in order to improve their chances of success. This is attainable through a formalised business or a professional team of individuals or partnerships, such as; arts managers, promoters, businesses and entrepreneurs that share mutual interests with the artist.

This would then enable musicians to connect with audiences that are willing and able to pay for their products and establish sustainable work for their musical profession.

No Limits needs to consider itself as an enterprise that provides productions for the good of others in a sustainable manner. The group should focus on monetised audiences and increase its activity in those spaces, while continuing its work in the sacred context. The group needs to create partnerships with skills that are necessary and missing in view of the Landry value chain model. These partnerships should provide expertise in all areas of the value chain so as to yield the success that the value chain concept seeks to enable.

Lastly, operating as a group requires unity of purpose and intent. This makes the dynamics of a professional group relatively complex over those of an individual musician. When pursuing the music profession as a group, ensuring cohesion through formal or informal agreements is vital in the management of relations and other affairs.

7.5 CONSIDERATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

While the space between the church and the marketplace was explored here from an inquiry of how professional musicians handle the possible tensions, there are other issues and questions that should still be explored, such as; policy considerations in dealing with the changes in the music industry? Are there other regions and cases that could provide case studies for exploring this topic further? Looking at the development of monetised audiences for sacred content, how can informal delivery and circulation mechanisms, be used for the economic development of sub-cultural contexts? How can we further understand the place of cultural products in a market economy? Explore the fundamental attributes of cultural products and the impact of integrating them into the market economy.

7.6 CONCLUSION

As a member of No Limits and having carried the responsibility of leading the group, I gave myself to this role and embraced it as a calling. Every member played their part and no role was greater than another. Over the years, there have been personal sacrifices on my part and on the part of all the individuals who have been part of the group at one point or another, for the sake of a mission that we believed to be greater than any one of us. Everyone gave what was in their strength to give. We believed that our music was meant to enrich devotional life regardless of whether one encounters it in the sacred or non-sacred context. Over the years, I have pursued personal development, built relationships and actively increased my music and business knowledge with the aim of being better equipped to make meaningful contributions to the work of the group. Getting into this research study, I wished to find a platform to capture our experiences and draw possible lessons in dealing with the complexity of seeking to exist in both the sacred and marketplace contexts. I believed that an academic study of our development as No Limits would help us to generate knowledge and appropriate our accomplishments and failures in an objective manner.

Through this research, we have been able to engage in otherwise difficult conversations about our individual reflections concerning our life as a group. However, it has also given us a chance to recollect our commitment and self-sacrifice. This study has opened our eyes to the extent of our personal efforts and the help we have received from others in making the realisation of our mission possible. Even though we have existed in an informal setting, our case has been one of determination, faith and hope. The feedback that we have received on the impact of our music, though we are unable to quantify it at this point, has given us a sense of fulfilment.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the tension between the church and the marketplace is carved between social or devotional impact and the attainment of economic goals that provide the necessary resources for the sustainability of a professional music career. This particularly concerns those musicians who wish to use devotional content in their

creative expressions as opposed to those who wish to pursue completely secular music careers. As such, gospel oriented professional musicians have a constant task to strike a balance and find means to remain devotionally relevant while ensuring the availability of economic resources for their occupation. This task is not impossible. Nevertheless, it presents certain challenges such as how to be altruistic and sustainable at the same time. These challenges, in my view, encourage continued inquiry through a variety of forms including research. This study is hopefully one of numerous that will follow.

REFERENCES

8.1 INTERVIEWS

Bacela, A. (2015) *Interview with Kgomotso Moshugi*, Rockville, 18 March 2015.

Bacela, V. (2015) *Interview with Kgomotso Moshugi*, Rockville, 22 January 2015.

Dlamini, B. (2015) *Interview with Kgomotso Moshugi*, telephone, 19 March 2015.

Kaunda, J. (2015) *Interview with Kgomotso Moshugi,*Jabavu, 26 January 2015.

Mambo, S. (2015) *Interview with Kgomotso Moshugi*, telephone, 26 February 2015.

Mboleka, F. (2015) *Interview with Kgomotso Moshugi*, Roodekrans, 01 March 2015.

Mkhize, T. (2015) *Interview with Kgomotso Moshugi*, Kensington, 11 February.

Mlungwana, P. (2015) *Interview with Kgomotso Moshugi*,Wits University West Campus, 20 January2015.

Mvelase, M. (2015) *Interviews with Kgomotso Moshugi*, telephone, 26 February 2015.

Mvelase, T. (2015) *Interview with Kgomotso Moshugi*, Phomolong, 19 January 2015.

Nkomo, S. (2009) *Interview with Kgomotso Moshugi*,Greenhills, 25 February 2009.

Tunzelana, S. (2015)*Interviews with Kgomotso Moshugi*, Wits University West Campus, 02 February 2015.

8.2 INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS

Baba, V. (2008) *Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi*.

Koapeng, M. (2015) *Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi*, telephone, 22 February 2015.

Koapeng, A. M. (2015) *Conversation with Moshugi Kgomotso*, Wits School of Arts, 19 March 2015.

Madela, F. Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi.

Mapela, M. Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi, Orlando-West, 2014.

Mayaba, D. (2014) Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi, Dube, September 2014.

Mkandawire, O. (2015) Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi, telephone, 22 March 2015

Mojapelo, T. Informal conversation.

Montshiwagae, O. (2002 & 2014) Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi.

Peackock, A. (2002) *Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi*, Midrand, 2002.

Silinga, G. Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi.

Sixholo, W. (2012) Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi, Orlando-West, August 2012.

Sixholo, Z. (2014) Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi, Orlando-West, October 2014.

Tshatsha, M. (2012) Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi, Midrand, Orlando-West, 2012.

Yaze, G. (2014) Conversation with Kgomotso Moshugi, Orlando-West, 2014

8.3 DISCUSSIONS

Alexandra,C. (2014) *Discussion with Kgomotso Moshugi*, Bryanston, 2014.

Hlomula, N. (2012) *Discussion with Kgomotso Moahugi*, Bryanston, 2012

Koapeng, A. M.(2013) *Discussion with Moshugi Kgomotso*, Wits School of Arts, 2012.

8.4 PUBLICATIONS

Allgood, B. D. (1990). Black gospel in New York City and Joe William Bostic, Snr.*The Black Perspective in Music* 18(½): 101-115.

Anderson, B. (2009). *Between a rock and a hard place: interrogating the notion of indigenous worship in the light of the worship debate*. MMus, Faculty of Humanities: University of the Witwatersrand.

Ansell, G. & Barnard, H.(2013). Working small, acting big: sources of, and strategies for business innovation among South African jazz musicians. *South African Music Studies* 33: 11-29.

Beaton, G. (2010). Why professionalism is still relevant. *Professions Australia*

Burnham, P.,Gilland, K., Grant, W. & Layton Henry, Z. (2008). Research methods in politicalscience. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. Cultural Strategy Group, (1998).

Cultural Strategy Group (1998): *The South African Music Industry Report*. The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology

CAJ. (2008). *The Creative industries in South Africa*. HSRC.

Chea, A.(2006). Basslines: music lessons, love lessons, life lessons.USA: Basslines Publishing.

Chislett, D.(2013).*One two one two: a step by step guide to the South African music industry.*

Crocombe, J. (2007). *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southern Africa: race relations and apartheid.*A paper presented at the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Historians meeting at Oakwood University, Alabama, April 19-22.

Cunningham-Fleming, J. L.(2013).*"We sang alleluia, praise the lord!" African-American identity and the use and reception of music within a Seventh-day Adventist church in New York City, 1970 – 2010*. Thesis and Dissertation. Kentucky:University of Kentucky.

Erlmann, V. (1991). African Stars: Studies in black South African performance. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Department of Arts, Culture Science and Technology. (1998). *The South African music industry*: *cultural industries growth strategy*prepared by LMA/SQW for the Cultural Industry Growth Strategy.

FAO. (2008).EasyPol module 179, negotiation theory and practice: a review of literature, FAO policy learning programme, January 2008. Available at:www.fao.org/easypol.

Fidel, R. (1984). *Case study method: A case study*, Graduate School of Library and Information Science University of Washington, Seattle.

Frederickson, J. & Rooney, J. F. (1990). How the music occupation failed to be a profession.*International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 21(2): 189-206.

Fritz, K. (2008). *Case Study & Narrative Analysis*. Johns Hopkins University.

General Conference Committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (2003). A Seventh- day Adventist philosophy of music.Available at: http://archives.adventistreview.org/2003-1541/Music.pdf [Accessed 15 June 2014].

Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 341-354.

Gibson, C. & Kong, L.(2005). Cultural economy: a critical view.*Progress in Human Geography* 29(5): 541–561.

Haecker, A. A. (2012). *Post-Apartheid South African choral music: an analysis of integral musical styles with specific examples by contemporary South African composers*. Doctor of Musical Arts Thesis. Iowa: University of Iowa

Horton, S. D. (2007). Redemptive media: the professionalization of the Contemporary Christian Music industry.Florida:Florida State University.

Johansson, R. (2003). *Case study methodology*. Paper presented at the international conference, “Methodology in housing Research”, Stockholm, 22-24 September.

Koapeng, M, A. (2014). *I compose what I like*. MMus, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand.

Landry, C. (2000).*The creative city: a toolkit for urban innovators.* London: Earthscan Publications Ltd.

Mail & Guardian. (2012). Mail & Guardian. Available at: http://mg.co.za/article/2012-09-06-songs-sales-and-sin-the-truth-about-gospel [Accessed March 2015].

McMillan Dictionary.(2014). McMillan Dictionary. Availableat: www.mcmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/professionalize[Accessed June 2014].

McCord, M. (1995).The calling of Kate Makanya: A memoire of South Africa. Cape Town: David Phillip Publishers (Pty) Ltd.

Merriam Webster Dictionary.(2014). Merriam Webster Dictionary. Available at: www.merriam.webster.com/dictionary/professinalize[Accessed 15 June 2014]

No Limits, (1999). Biography. No Limits, Archives.

No Limits, (2008). Report on UK Tour. No Limits, Archives.

Nouria, B. & Green, J. (2007). *A guide to using qualitative research methodology.*MedecinsSans Frontiers.

PricewaterhouseCoopers. (2010). Entertainment and media outlook: 2014-2018 South Africa – Nigeria – Kenya.(1st South African edition). Available: www.pwc.co.za/outlook[Accessed 05 December 2014].

PricewaterhouseCoopers. (2014). 'Entertainment and media outlook: 2014-2018 South Africa – Nigeria – Kenya. (5thannual edition).Available: www.pwc.co.za/outlook[Accessed 05 December 2014].

Routley, E. (1978). Church music and the Christian faithLondon:Collins Liturgical Publications.

Schultz, D. (2010). The Heritage Singers. Available:http://www.iamaonline.com/history/The%20Heritage%20Singer1.htm [Accessed 15 July 2014].

Scott, A. J. (2000). *Capitalism, cities and the production of symbolic forms.* School of Public Policy and Social Research.Los Angeles: University of California.

Shanahan, J. L. (1978). The consumption of music: integrating aesthetics and economics.*Journal of Economics*2: 13-26.

Singers. (2014). Singers. Available:www.singers.com/gospel/contemporary-christian-cds/?page=3[Accessed 22 December 2014].

Snizek, W. E. (1972). Hall's Professionalism Scale: an empirical reassessment.*American Sociological Review* 37: 109-114.

Sobiso, K (2012). 'Songs, sales and sin: The truth about gospel', Mail & Guardian viewed 27 December 2014, on http://mg.co.za/article/2012-09-06-songs-sales-and-sin-the-truth-about-gospel.

Spalding, A. W.(1962). *Origin and history of Seventh-day Adventists.*Washington, D. C.:Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Stearman, K. C.(1992). *Music in Seventh-day Adventist higher education: a rationale*. Institute for Christian Teaching Education Department of the Seventh-day Adventist.

Taylor, T. D. (2012). The sounds of capitalism: advertising, music and the conquest of culture.Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

UNCTAD. (2010). Creative Economy: a feasible development plan. Available: http://unctad.org/en/Docs/ditctab20103_en.pdf[Acessed June 2014].

Warren, R. (2000). *Purpose Driven Life*.Michigan: Zondevan.

Watson, T.(2003). Professions and professionalism: should we Jump off the bandwagon, better to study where it is going.*Int. Studies of Mgt. & Org* 32(2): 93-105.

Weekes, M. E. (2005).This house, this music: exploring the interdependent interpretive relationship between the contemporary black church and the contemporary gospel music.*Black Music Research Journal* 25(1/2): 43-72.

Wienandt, E. A. (ed.) (1974). *Opinions on church music*.Texas:The Markham Press Fund of Baylor University.

Zhang, Y. Wildermuth, B. M. (1974). *Unstructured Interviews*. https://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~yanz/Unstructured_interviews.pdf[Accessed July 2015].

APPENDIX

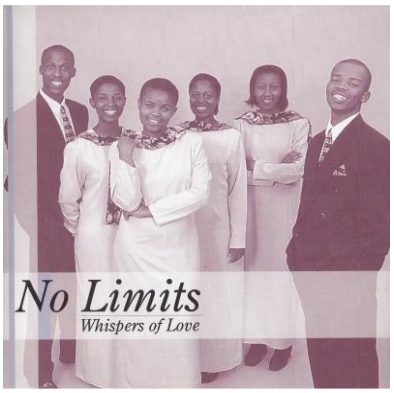
No limits Albums

DISCOGRAPHY

No limits Albums in chronological order



No Limits first album (1998)



No Limits second album (2000)



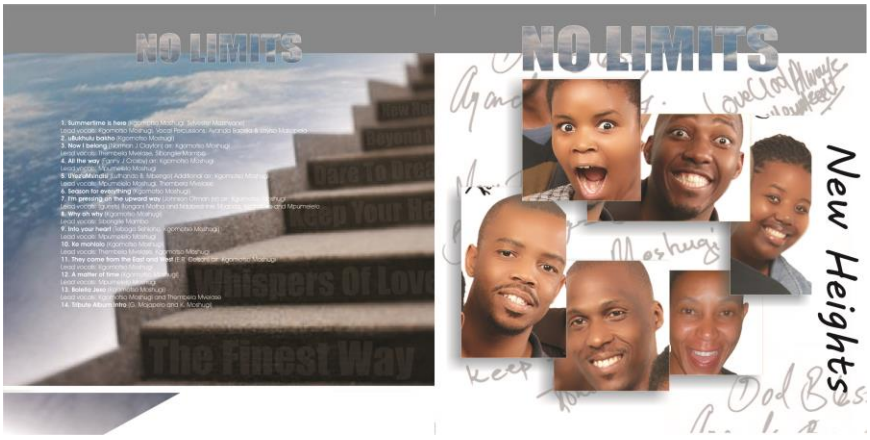
No Limits third album (2002)



No Limits fourth album (2004)



No Limits fifth album (2006)



No Limits sixth album (2010)

Semi-Structured Interviews

Choice of question type: Useful data was collected from different role players in the No Limits value chain. The questions were crafted in a way that prompts responses that will generate the data required for the study.

Questions for musicians in the church

1. What is your role in the church?

2. Do you think that the church and market contexts agree with each other and why?

3. What are your expectations when you are invited to present music in a church event or programme?

4. What are your reasons for participating in church events or programmes?

5. What do you think the church must do to support musicians?

6. What do you think musicians must do to support the church?

7. What advice would you give to church leadership in their dealings with musicians?

Questions for the church leadership

1. What is your role in the church?

2. Do you think that the church and market contexts agree with each other and why?
3. Will you describe your encounter(s) with No Limits?

4. What are your expectations when you invite musicians to a church event or programme?

5. What is a make or break for you in allowing musicians to participate in your church event or programme?

6. What is your distinction between professional musicians and ordinary musicians in the church?

7. What does the church do in helping musicians to keep playing their part in the church events or programmes?

8. What should the relationship between the church and the musicians look like?

9. What is your view on musicians who work professionally in the industry?

10. What advice would you give to musicians in the church?

Questions for industry practitioners

1. What is your role in the music industry?

2. Will you describe your encounter(s) with No Limits?

3. Do you think that the church and market contexts agree with each other and why?

4. What is a make or break for you in partnering or working with musicians in the music industry?
5. Do you work with musicians across different genres or do you have a specific type that you work with?

6. What are the differences between gospel musicians and other type of musicians you have worked with?

7. What type of musicians do you prefer to work with?

8. What are your expectations when working with gospel musicians?

9. What have been your challenges and breakthroughs in working with gospel musicians?

10. If you could give advice to gospel musicians, what would it be?

Questions for consumers

1. What is your role in the music industry?

2. Will you describe your encounter(s) with No Limits?

3. Do you think that the church and market contexts agree with each other and why?

4. What music do you prefer and why?

5. How do you consume your preferred music?

6. What does gospel music mean to you?

7. Where do you consume gospel music?

8. What would you change about the gospel music experience you get and why?

9. What would you not change about the gospel music experience you get and why?

Questions for No Limits members

1. What has been your role in No Limits?

2. Why did you become a member of No Limits?

3. Do you think that the church and market contexts agree with each other and why?

4. What were your expectations of the church?

5. What were your expectations of the market?

6. How have all these changed over the years?

7. What has kept you as a member for the duration of your stay?

8. What made you leave?

9. What would make you leave?

10. Where would you like to see No Limits in its relations with the church and the market?

11. What do you think it would take to get No Limits to where you would like it to be?